

To Your Advantage

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[0 : 00] John 16, verse 1 down through verse 15. I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.

But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, where are you going?

But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you.

But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer.

[1 : 02] Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Thanks, Emily. How do you understand God?

How do you understand God? How do you hold the tension between believing that there is only one true God, and yet also recognizing that that one God exists in three distinct persons?

How do you hold that tension? Where in your Bible would you turn in order to try to prove your position? How do you understand specifically the Holy Spirit?

[2 : 17] Is the Holy Spirit some kind of a spiritual, supernatural supplement? Like we might take vitamins, you know, but you can kind of take it or leave it.

Maybe you take it, maybe you don't. Maybe it helps, maybe it doesn't. Some kind of a spiritual, supernatural supplement. Is that how we understand the Holy Spirit?

In the opening verses of his gospel, the apostle John introduces the mystery of the distinct persons within the unity of God.

These verses, I suspect, may be familiar. This is John chapter 1 and verse 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And verse 14, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[3 : 25] And verse 18, No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. Why does John begin his gospel this way?

Because this is the only way for readers to comprehend who Jesus is, and what he accomplished. If John intends for his readers to come to believe in Jesus, then they need to understand who is this Jesus, and how is he able to do these wonderful works that he's doing?

They must understand who Jesus is. And so John begins by laying out these truths. John wants us to know from the very outset that Jesus is the Word who was with God from the very beginning.

He wants us to know that the Word enjoys fellowship with God. He wants us to know that it was the Word who took on flesh and became a man, and that it was the Word who is the Father's only Son,

and that it was the Word who is God and reveals God.

[4 : 47] John reveals the Father and the Son here in these opening 18 verses of his gospel. And there's a third member of the Godhead, but you haven't met him yet because you haven't had a chance.

But he was also with the Father and the Son in the beginning. The Old Testament begins this way, Genesis 1 verse 1, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

And notice these words, And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. The Hebrew Scripture does reveal a little about this third person of the Godhead.

But in John chapter 14, Jesus reintroduces the Spirit to his disciples. The Spirit, whom Jesus calls another helper, will continue Jesus' ministry to his disciples.

Here's John chapter 14 and verse 16. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[6 : 22] You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. So Jesus was sent by the Father, and Jesus acts as God's agent on earth, speaking the Father's words, doing the Father's works, glorifying the Father.

And now Jesus says, I'm going to send the Spirit, and the Spirit will function as my agent, repeating my words, doing my works, and glorifying me.

John chapter 15 and verse 26. But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

And verse 26 of chapter 14. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Let's not overlook in this verse that Jesus calls the Spirit the Holy Spirit. In John 17, Jesus will refer to the Father as Holy Father.

[7 : 56] Jesus is saying something about the Spirit. What is he saying? By calling the Spirit holy, Jesus is asserting what the first two verses of Genesis reveal, that the helper, the Spirit of truth, is also God.

Here's article two from our statement of faith that we have drafted. We believe that there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite, intelligent spirit whose name is I am, the maker and supreme ruler of heaven and earth, inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

Do you ever put off starting some homework? Maybe a house project that you are not looking forward to, like cleaning a bird out of a vent or a bird's nest, whatever is left in there, out of a vent. This is a house project I am putting off. I am not looking forward to this. Maybe you procrastinate at work or maybe you're one of those folks who likes to delay a hard conversation and maybe you decide, I don't think I can have this conversation, so I'm just going to write it as an email.

Don't do that. Don't delay the conversation if you must, but go have the conversation, but that's a different sermon. In John 16, a fuse is about to be lit that will lead to Jesus' crucifixion.

[9 : 51] The clock is ticking. Jesus does not have much time left. And Jesus has delayed this hard conversation with his disciples.

Why? Because he has always been with them. And so Jesus has been able to absorb lots of the persecution.

When the people come, the Pharisees come, the religious leaders come, and they go at the disciples and Jesus, it's Jesus that they are really wanting to get at.

And so Jesus has been able to absorb lots of the persecution, lots of the hard life that the disciples have been sort of perhaps oblivious to.

But now, Jesus is just moments away from leaving them. The clock is ticking. Judas is about to show up. And he will betray Jesus into the hands of his enemies.

[10 : 48] This conversation cannot be delayed any longer. Jesus is leaving, and life will be hard for the followers of Jesus.

They will face persecution, and they will be tempted to apostatize. We might say, to deconstruct faith. They will be tempted to walk away from the faith and say, it's not worth it.

It's too hard to follow Jesus. And so Jesus lovingly prepares them for what is to come. Chapter 16 and verse 1.

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God.

And they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me. But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

[12:00] I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me. And none of you ask me, where are you going?

But because I have said these things to you, sorrow, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.

It is to your advantage that I go away. The last three years with Jesus have undoubtedly been the best three years of the disciples' lives.

It is not surprising that their hearts overflow with sorrow, like a child pouring milk into a bowl of cereal. But verse 7 is surprising and I think a little puzzling.

How can Jesus leaving them be an advantage? This seems counterintuitive, doesn't it? If being with Jesus is the very best thing, then not being with Jesus must certainly be among the worst of things.

[13:17] But Jesus says his departure is to their advantage. That it is better for them that he leaves.

Look again at verse 7. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away.

For if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

If I told you that I was Batman, you would be rightly frustrated with me and think I was just telling you a joke.

But if I tried to convince you by saying, well, I could be Batman because you've never seen me and Batman in the same place at the same time.

[14:26] Now you've got yourself a bit of a riddle, don't you? Jesus is not saying that it is impossible to have both him and the Holy Spirit in the same place at the same time.

We know at Jesus' baptism that the Father spoke from heaven, Jesus was being baptized, and the Holy Spirit came down and rested on Jesus in the form of a dove.

So we know Jesus is not using this kind of a thing like I would say, you haven't seen me in Batman. We can't both be in the same place at the same time. Jesus is not saying that. Jesus is saying something about sequence, not the card game.

He's saying something about what must happen first and what must happen after. God's great work of redemption requires that Jesus suffer and die on the cross for the sins of his people.

The Spirit comes only after Jesus has returned to the Father's right hand. Jesus' death and burial and resurrection and ascension must occur before the Spirit arrives because the Spirit's great work in the work of redemption is to convict sinners and to convert them into believers in Jesus.

[15:55] Jesus went and the Spirit was sent to convict in order to convert. Jesus is saying something to us about sequence.

He must go to the cross. He must be raised and ascended to the Father's right hand and then the Holy Spirit will come. Look in your Bible at verse 8.

And when he comes, the helper, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, the comforter, when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment concerning sin because they do not believe in me, concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer, concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.

the Spirit's work in the world in verse 8 includes nuances of at least three English words.

The first is to expose the way that flipping on a light switch exposes the Lego so that you do not step on it in the dark room.

[17:26] But the problem with expose is that it lacks the necessary negative overtones that Jesus is describing here. Unless if you think perhaps of exposing yourself to the sun's harmful radiation or perhaps the shame of indecent exposure.

Expose. The second word that we need to understand is the word convince. Convince. But the problem with convince is that it seems mostly intellectual, mostly academic.

And the Spirit's work is much more than just convincing sinners to assent to some core doctrines. Convince lacks the weight of personal responsibility.

The third word and it's the word that is used in most English translations is convict. And this is like a jury that deliberates and then delivers a verdict.

But we know this, don't we? A just verdict does not necessarily mean that the accused will admit wrongdoing. You can be guilty with ever admitting your own guilt.

[18 : 48] conflict. And so we need all of these nuances, expose, convince, convict, all of them help us to kind of wrap our hands around what is the Holy Spirit's work in the great plan of redemption.

The Holy Spirit's work, Jesus says, is convicting unbelievers of sin, of righteousness and judgment, first of sin. people don't refuse God's grace because they don't understand it.

People refuse God's grace because they don't think they need it. Sin must be exposed so that the sinner is convinced of their guiltiness before God.

Only then when a sinner has been shown their sin will that sinner turn to God for forgiveness. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts in order to convert.

Secondly, he convicts of righteousness. Because of these nuances that we've talked about of guilt and shame in the Greek word that we get translated as convicts, I think it's best to understand this as self-righteousness.

[20 : 08] A person must be convinced that their good deeds will not outweigh their bad deeds.

And on the contrary, their very best efforts to earn God's favor are not only hopelessly inadequate, but shamefully disgusting to God.

We learn this way back in Isaiah 64. This is verse 6. We have all become like one who is unclean.

And our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

You cannot earn a relationship with God by doing anything. God's righteousness is only received by faith. And it is the Holy Spirit then who convicts of our self-righteousness that leads to conversion.

And he also convicts sinners concerning judgment. Sinners must be exposed to God's holiness.

They must clearly see the weighty glory of the perfection of Jesus.

[21 : 20] They must be convinced that their sin perpetually makes them fall short of God's standard. They must be convinced that their failure to perfectly measure up to God's standard.

Makes them guilty before God and deserving of his judgment. The Holy Spirit convicts in order to convert.

He convicts unbelievers of their sinful unbelief. He convicts unbelievers of their inability to be right with God on their own terms. And he convicts unbelievers of their guiltiness in light of God's holiness.

guiltiness that demands judgment. Notice as Jesus teaches his disciples about the work of the Holy Spirit that he also affirms the Spirit's place in the Godhead.

Look at verse 12. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

[22 : 33] When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak.

He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. all, all that the Father has is mine.

Therefore, I said that he, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Helper, will take what is mine and declare it to you. Jesus never spoke or acted in his own initiative.

We know this from his earlier dealings with the Pharisees in the Gospel of John. He always only did and said exactly what the Father told him to say and do.

And the Son's absolute obedience to the will of the Father crushes any argument that Jesus is a mere mortal or that he is a competing God.

[23 : 53] God. Think about it similarly when you think about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't think or act in his own initiative.

Jesus promises that the Spirit will guide the disciples in all truth by speaking only what he hears.

And by his dependence on the Son, the Holy Spirit ensures the beautiful unity within the Trinity.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Just as the Son glorifies the Father throughout his earthly ministry culminating in the cross and the resurrection, so the Holy Spirit by his ministry on earth glorifies the Son.

His central aim with believers is to reveal to them more and more of the glory of Jesus and to make us more and more and more like Jesus.

Look again at Article 2. The Holy Spirit's ministry of glorifying the Son is beautiful proof of the unity of the Godhead.

[25 : 12] There are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal in every divine perfection and execute distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, what are you waiting for? Ask yourself, how am I experiencing the Holy Spirit's work right now?

Is he convincing me of my sin and stubborn unbelief? is he exposing my shameful self-righteousness?

Is he convicting me of my guilt that deserves God's judgment? Oh, friend, the Spirit convicts in order to convert.

Please pay attention and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to save you. Repent of your sin and believe in Jesus. At this point in the evening here in John 16, the disciples are already deeply troubled.

[26 : 26] And then Jesus says to them, they will put you out of the synagogues. They will kick you out of your community.

They will erase your identity. They will refuse to acknowledge you in public. They will treat your children like orphans. they're going to throw a funeral and mourn for you as though you are dead.

And I'm leaving you. But I want you to tell them about me.

Now we don't have any record that Peter said it but I have to believe he was thinking it right? That's impossible. if we're shunned and I don't have any friends no one is going to listen to me.

Who will hear when we go and tell people if this is the way that we are being treated? Jesus I know I know but I will send the Holy Spirit and he will do the work of convicting the world of sin and righteousness and judgment and it will be better for you because he will dwell with you he will always be with you steadfast where would you be without the Holy Spirit how would your life be different if the spirit had not convicted you in order to convert you to faith in Jesus what if we didn't have the spirit in us continuing to expose our shameful self righteousness convicting us of our sinful unbelief does it stir your heart does it still stir your heart to worship when the

[28 : 46] Holy Spirit reminds you of the judgment that Jesus bore! in your place so that you can continue to be forgiven like the disciples some of us have been kicked out of community some of us have been ghosted canceled we say these days maybe we're being avoided in public places and we may face more and far worse persecution than that it is better for now that Jesus intercedes for us at God's right hand and that the Spirit the Comforter the Helper is with us so let's honor the Holy Spirit as more than a supernatural supplement we desperately need his ministry in our lives we need his ministry to make our gospel efforts effective we need his ministry to make us more like

Jesus we need his ministry to help us understand and interpret and apply scripture we need his ministry to comfort us when we are grieving and we need the Holy Spirit's ministry to preserve us in faith until Jesus returns to bring us home let's pray father we are grateful to have your word and we are grateful for this time that we have been privileged to look into it we recognize that we have merely scratched at the surface of what you have told us about yourself and how you have revealed yourself through our savior the lord jesus christ and how you have given the spirit to us please forgive us for the ways that we forget who you are and what you have done for for the ways that we minimize the harmonious work that was completed by you father and by you our savior the lord jesus and blessed holy spirit thank you for your work on our behalf father would you please forgive us for the ways that we in particular are inclined to forget the work of the holy spirit forgive us for the ways that we quench his work in our lives forgive us for the ways that we minimize his power over sin forgive us for the ways we run again and again and again back to our sin forgetting that the power of sin has been broken and that we are united to our savior jesus and that all of the power of the resurrected lord flows to us through the gift of the holy spirit forgive us father for thinking that we are somehow able to keep ourselves to preserve ourselves in faith apart from the gracious work of the holy spirit holy spirit would you please do work in our hearts right now as we pause and quiet our hearts before you in preparation for celebrating communion together give us courage to confess and to repent father we rejoice in knowing that it is the spirit who gives life and that the flesh is no help at all that we have received by grace through faith new life through the work of the holy spirit and that this new life is ours because of what

Jesus accomplished for us on the cross thank you for the privilege of celebrating that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ we humbly receive the forgiveness that Jesus purchased by his blood thank you Lord Jesus for continuing to intercede on our behalf please help us as we continue in our time of worship in the name of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ we pray

amen