



His Presence in Hard Places (John 15:18-16:33)

Contrary to the main message of prosperity preachers, Jesus told His disciples to expect tough times, opposition, & persecution.

But...Jesus also promised the Presence of the Holy Spirit, to walk with His disciples through both the good & difficult days to come.

* All Scripture is from the CSB (Christian Stand Bible) unless otherwise noted.

Catch the Context Last week we asked the question, "**Are you CONNECTED to the King?**" Jesus gave **5 evidences** that demonstrate the desires and practices of His disciples:

- 1) **LOYAL** "Remain in me and my words remain in you." (Jn 15:7-9)
- 2) **PRAYERFUL** "Ask whatever you want and it will be done for you." (Jn 15:7,13-14)
- 3) **OBEDIENT** "If you love me, you will keep my commands." (Jn 15:10-12) If you don't (love Jesus), you won't (obey Him) - (Jn 14:24).
- 4) **LOVING** "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 15:12-13)
- 5) **MISSIONAL** "I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain." (Jn 15:16)

Don't desire or demonstrate any of those FRUITS? Examine whether you really are CONNECTED TO THE KING.

BIG TRUTH: CONNECTED People are CHANGED People.

Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving to prepare a place for them, He promised to return (John 14:1-3) AND **promised to send the Holy Spirit to live IN them** (John 14:16-17). Today we hear the last words of Jesus to His disciples before the cross. He warns them that difficult days lay ahead. But He promises **HIS PRESENCE in HARD PLACES**.

John 15:18-21 (CSB) ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, **because you are not of the world**, but I have chosen you out of it, **the world hates you**. ²⁰ Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you**. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But **they will do all these things to you on account of my name**, because they don't know the one who sent me.

Christians are often surprised when their kind actions & truthful words are met with opposition and persecution. Remember that JESUS was often met with persecution as well, and we need to be prepared when **the world hates you** (disciples of Jesus), because lost people hate being confronted about sin and the need for a Savior. The people who heard and saw Jesus were especially accountable.

John 15:22-25 ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ The one who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I had not **done the works among them that no one else has done**, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: *They hated me for no reason.* [*Ps. 69:4]

These people saw and heard the works and words of Jesus. They saw and heard things that **no one else has done**. Jesus never lied, never broke the law, cheated anyone, and never mistreated anyone. Jesus healed the sick, spoke the truth, showed compassion to thousands, yet...many people hated Him, to death. Yet there would be **a powerful Presence in the middle of the persecution**.

John 15:26-27 ²⁶ "When the **Counselor** comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the **Spirit of truth** who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Counselor is the Holy Spirit. The term here translated "**Counselor**" (NET/NIV = *Advocate*; ESV/NAS = *Helper*), "is a judicial title describing someone aiding a legal argument."¹ His Presence will help the disciples of Jesus **testify** (speak for Jesus) despite the opposition & persecution. **The Spirit of truth** would empower them and speak THROUGH them.

¹ Gary M. Burge, *John, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 421.

Not wanted His disciples to be blindsided, Jesus revealed what faced them in the future.

John 16:1-4 ¹ "I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling. ² They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ They will do these things because they haven't known the Father or me. ⁴ But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn't tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.

This is exactly what Paul (aka Saul of Tarsus) would later do, really believing that he was **offering service to God**. After all, the Scriptures commanded blasphemers of God to be killed.

Leviticus 24:16 ¹⁶ And **he who blasphemes Yahweh's name certainly shall be put to death**; the whole community certainly shall **stone him**. As the alien, so the native shall be put to death at blaspheming His Name.

With Paul's approval, this is what happened to 1st century follower of Jesus named Stephen (Acts 7:57-60).

* Read **Acts 3-5** and see how the disciples of Jesus responded after His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:40-42 ⁴⁰ After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. ⁴¹ Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name**. ⁴² Every day in the temple, and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

How in the world could they be so BOLD?

John 16:5-7 ⁵ But now I am going away to him who sent me, and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Yet, because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away **the Counselor** will not come to you. **If I go, I will send him to you.**

The outward Presence of Jesus would **go away**, but the indwelling Presence of **the Counselor** (Holy Spirit) would come to both *COMFORT* and *EMPOWER* Jesus' disciples. THAT'S how they stood so boldly during the persecution in Acts. Even when *the SAME GUYS* who arrested, tried, & convicted Jesus of blasphemy - warned them to stop telling people about Jesus, they refused.

And after disobeying that warning, all the apostles were arrested and again warned to stop teaching in Jesus' name (Acts 5:27-28). And here's how they responded.

Acts 5:29-32 ²⁹ Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than people. ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² **We are witnesses** of these things, and **so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.**" [* Look back at Jn 15:26-27]

The Spirit was also coming to **convict** the enemies of Jesus, like a prosecuting attorney "presenting irrefutable evidence of the guilt of the world before God."²

John 16:8-11 ⁸ When he comes, **he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment**: ⁹ About sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Convict the world about sin. "Convict the world" can be translated "prove the world wrong" (NET).³ The coming death of Jesus proved that people, not Jesus, were the ones guilty of **sin**. Jesus died for the sinful world (Jn 3:16). Those who refuse and **do not believe** are no less accountable for their sin. Their unwillingness to believe (trust) Jesus shows the depth of their depravity.

Convict the world about righteousness. The question will come - where is Jesus? The response - He has gone **to the Father** proving that HE ALONE is righteous.

Convict the world about judgment. Jesus had earlier said it was time for the world to be judged and the **ruler of this world** to be cast out (Jn 12:31).

² Grant R. Osborne, John: Verse by Verse, ed. Jeffrey Reimer et al., Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 376.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 534. - The verb ["convict"] occurs eighteen times in the New Testament (cf. Mt. 18:15; Lk. 3:19; Jn. 3:20; 8:46; 1 Cor. 14:24; Eph. 5:11, 13; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9, 13; 2:15; Heb. 12:5; Jas. 2:9; Jude 15, 22; Rev. 3:19). Arguably, in every instance the verb has to do with showing someone his sin, usually as a summons to repentance

John 16:12-15 ¹² "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. ¹³ When **the Spirit of truth** comes, he **will guide you into all the truth**. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. ¹⁴ **He will glorify me**, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.

Notice the language that is used: The Spirit of truth is NOT some impersonal force like electricity in a bulb. The Spirit is PERSONAL, as is the Father and the Son. ONE GOD - 3 Persons. Don't make the mistake of referring to the Spirit as "it". The Spirit **convicts the world, indwells, empowers, comforts, & guides disciples**, and **glorifies Jesus**.

John 16:16-22 ¹⁶ "A little while and you will no longer see me; **again a little while and you will see me.**" ¹⁷ Then some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this he's telling us: 'A little while and you will not see me; again a little while and you will see me,' and, 'Because I am going to the Father?'" ¹⁸ They said, "**What is this he is saying, 'A little while'?** We don't know what he's talking about." ¹⁹ Jesus knew they wanted to ask him, and so he said to them, "Are you asking one another about what I said, 'A little while and you will not see me; again a little while and you will see me?'" ²⁰ Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but **your sorrow will turn to joy**. ²¹ When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. ²² So you also have sorrow now. But **I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice**, and no one will take away your joy from you.

Jesus is talking about His resurrection! In a few short hours Jesus will be ripped away from them. His disciples will scatter, hide, and experience immense **sorrow**. But it will NOT last! **In a little while their sorrow will turn to joy**, when Jesus rises from the dead and appears to them on multiple occasions. WE will see Him one day too! But until then, we are NOT alone. We know the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:23-24 ²³ "In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, **anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.**" ²⁴ Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. **Ask and you will receive**, so that your joy may be complete.

Up until this point, the prayerful phrase, "In Jesus' name" had never been uttered. But there was a time coming, when disciples of Jesus would **ask the Father in Jesus' name** (by His authority and for His glory), and the Father would answer. Jesus encouraged them with words they taught the next generation of disciples, "**Ask and you will receive**". When God answers prayer it results in **joy**, to know that God hears, cares, & responds to our requests!

John 16:25-33 ²⁵ "I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. A time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ **On that day you will ask in my name**, and I am not telling you that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father." ²⁹ His disciples said, "Look, now you're speaking plainly and not using any figurative language. ³⁰ Now we know that you know everything and don't need anyone to question you. By this we believe that you came from God." ³¹ Jesus responded to them, "Do you now believe?" ³² Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³ I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. **Be courageous! I have conquered the world.**"

How could knowing they would be **scattered** and **leave Jesus alone** help the disciples **have peace**? When it happened they wouldn't just remember that Jesus mentioned their failure, but He also mentioned His **conquering the world** and calling them to **be courageous**. The resurrection of Jesus was going to change the trajectory of their lives! Yes, they would experience **suffering in this world**, just as we have/will. But thought it all, they could look to the resurrection of Jesus be reminded of **HIS PRESENCE IN HARD PLACES**. And so should we.

- *If you think God DOESN'T WANT to forgive you, then you don't understand **God's gracious heart**.*
- *If you think God ISN'T ABLE to forgive you, then you don't comprehend **God's gracious gift - JESUS!***

You haven't gone too far for God's grace!

James 4:6-8 ⁶ **...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** ⁷ Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.** Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

He WANTS to and is ABLE to forgive us. Humble yourself before Him. Seek Him in prayer, Scripture, and with genuine repentance. Ask a mature believer for help.

- * **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What impacted you most from the teaching today?
2. With all the warnings Jesus gave His disciples about future persecution, why is it that so many American Christians are surprised or shrink back when *WE* experience persecution?
3. **Read John 16:8-11.** What role does the Holy Spirit play to impact our lost world? How does it encourage you to know that it is the Spirit's job to convict our world?
4. **Read John 16:12-15.** What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of the believer? How does this encourage you?
5. **Read John 16:16-22.** How significant was the resurrection of Jesus for the 1st century disciples? What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make in your daily life?
6. **Read John 16:23-24.** Tell the story of a prayer that God answered for you, that gave you great joy. How do answered prayers encourage you to seek & trust God more?
7. **Read John 16:31-33.** Have you ever felt like God isn't WILLING or ABLE to forgive your sin? Why did you feel that way? How does Jesus' forgiveness of His first disciples and pointing to their future usefulness encourage YOU?