

John 16-5-15
The advantage of the Spirit

Preamble:

Israel trip Feb. 2025 (19 months from now)

First bus sold out (50 plus people) in six days (wow!!!)

We are adding a second bus. This will sell out fast as well...

Signing up now does not guarantee you a spot, we need 70 sign ups total to justify two busses. Next step—go to the church website and fill out a two-minute survey to get your name on the list for the second bus.

Prayer for illumination:

Sermon introduction:

Have you ever felt abandoned?

Maybe you were abandoned by close friends.

Maybe you were abandoned by a sibling.

Maybe you were abandoned by a parent or boss.

Maybe you were abandoned by a spouse.

No one likes to be abandoned. This brings us to John 16. The disciples felt like Jesus was about to abandon them.

Let me provide some brief context. Theologians call John chapters 14-16 the upper room discourse. Why? This block of teaching happened in an upper room just hours before Christ was arrested, tried, and crucified. This was Christ's last block of teaching before he died.

In the upper room, at the end of John 15, Jesus promises the disciples that they will be hated, persecuted, and murdered for following him. And then, a few sentences later in chapter 16, Christ tells them that he is going to leave them.

Put yourselves in their sandals. They were probably thinking, "Jesus, you just said how hard our life is going to be for following you. You just told us that people are going to hate us. And now you are telling us that you are going to leave us? Why would you abandon us? Certainly, life would be better if you stuck around."

Maybe you have felt the same way? When the money is tight, the stress mounts, your relationships are a mess, and your health is worse—you may feel like God will, or has already abandoned you.

What should we do in these situations? We must remember the incredible teaching of Jesus Christ. In John 16, Jesus said you will be better off if I leave, because then the Spirit will come.

Said another way...

Prop: **It is better to have the Holy Spirit inside of us, then Jesus next to us!**
(repeat)

How in the world is this better? Because of what the Spirit does. What does the Spirit do? The Spirit does many things. Our text mentions four...

*The spirit empowers the saints.
The spirit convicts the sinners.
The spirit guides the saints.
The spirit magnifies the savior.*

First, the spirit empowers the saints.

When will the Spirit empower the saints? Only when Jesus leaves!

Read verses 1-4?

John 16:5-7 (ESV) — 5 But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' **6** But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

Their hearts are filled with sorrow because Jesus told them that persecution is coming and that he is leaving.

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.

These are astonishing words. They are so astonishing that they are hard to believe. Jesus, the divine son of God says to the disciples, that it is to their advantage for him to leave them. For the Holy Spirit will not be present with them, until Jesus leaves them.

These words are hard to believe. Why? Jesus is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. He is God in the flesh. It sure seems like it would be a huge, massive, gigantic, incalculable advantage to have Jesus present with us. Doesn't it? But Jesus says that there is something more advantageous than having him with us. What could possibly be more advantageous? He says that it is better to have the holy Spirit within us.

How is this better?

Jesus is not indicating that He and the Spirit will not simultaneously minister to God's people. They will! Furthermore, Jesus is not indicating that the Spirit is ontologically superior to him.

He is simply reminding them of the fact that all the blessings of the New Covenant, applied by the Holy Spirit, will not be theirs until he dies, rises from the grave, and pours out the Spirit.

The blessings of the New Covenant are prophesied in several places in the OT (Isa. 11:1-10; 32:14-18; 42:1-4; 44:1-5; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:17-20; 36:24-27; 37:1-14; Joel 2:28-32).

Under the New Covenant, God promises to regenerate our hearts, write his laws on our hearts, give us spiritual gifts, and then empower us for service. These promises will not be applied until Jesus dies, rises from the grave, and pours out the Spirit at Pentecost. Why? The Spirit can't dwell inside of us until Christ purifies us from the guilt and stain of sin.

Only when Christ leaves the disciples will the spirit empower them for new covenant service.

Illustration:

Pastor J.D. Greear tells the story of a young man named Brennan (not his real name). He was a smart, articulate, and well-liked college student at Greear's church.

But Brennan had a dark secret. He was enslaved to porn and the sin of homosexuality.

By the time he finally confessed his sins to a pastor, he was totally broken, dejected, and depressed. At this point he had tried everything—he made vows, he got rid of the internet, he memorized the Bible, but nothing seemed to work. His "problems" seemed to be getting worse not better.

He would do well for a season and then he would fall, do well and then fall again. It was a vicious cycle. Eventually he checked himself into an intensive counseling center.

Greear writes,

"Brennan showed up at my house eight months later, noticeably different in his demeanor. I asked him what he had learned. "I didn't learn anything new," he said. "I learned to lean on the Holy Spirit. I always knew he was in there, but I didn't know how to relate to him."

Brennan went on to say, "These temptations are still with me, and I suppose always will be. But I have found in the Spirit of God a power more potent than the lusts of my flesh. Being filled with God the Holy Spirit has done more for me than all the seminars I sat through or coping techniques I mastered." (Greear, *Jesus Continued*, 19-20)

Application:

Why is it better to have the Spirit inside of us than Jesus next to us? Because the spirit's presence inside of us empowers us to please God.

The spirit also empowers us to endure persecution (this is the immediate context).

He empowers us to serve the body of Christ with gifts.

He empowers us for bold witness.

He empowers us to experience the assurance of salvation.

Have you experienced the Spirit's presence and power in your life?

How do we tap into this power? Spiritual breathing (Eph. 5:18).

First, the spirit empowers the saints. But there is more to his ministry...

Second, the spirit convicts sinners

What specifically does the Spirit convict sinners of? A few things...

The spirit convicts of sin.

John 16:8-9 (ESV) — 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

The word "sin" is in the singular indicating that a specific sin is in view (i.e., the sin of not believing in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God). This is the only sin, ultimately, that damns people to hell.

The spirit convicts of sin. In addition...

The spirit convicts of righteousness.

John 16:8–10 (ESV) — 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

Some hold that this refers to God's righteousness, or even to justification, but these interpretations do not explain why the world is convicted of righteousness. More plausibly, the world is convicted of its self-righteousness (e.g., displayed by the self-righteousness of many of the Jewish religious leaders throughout John's Gospel).

The spirit convicts of sin.

The spirit convicts of righteousness. In addition...

The spirit convicts of judgment.

John 16:8–11 (ESV) — 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; **11** concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Verse 11 is difficult to interpret. Jesus could be saying that the Spirit convicts the world of coming Judgment, due to their sin and self-righteousness. Or the spirit convicts the world of their false judgments about Jesus. Both are true.

Summary—the Spirit convicts unbelievers of sin, self-righteousness, and coming judgment.

illustration:

Augustine of Hippo is one of the most brilliant and influential figures in all of church history. Before he was a Christian, he was a very immoral man. He loved to sin. He stole things, he lied, he was proud, and he was very enslaved to sexual sin.

He tried to control his lusts apart from Christ but failed miserably.

One afternoon, he went into the small garden behind his house, where he could sit in the shade under a tree. As he sat there, he became very agitated and began to pull his hair out and swing his arms around as he felt his life falling apart.

Then he got up, walked over to a fig tree, and fell on his knees in agony. He could not change himself. In that moment, he heard a small child next door singing a song in Latin. The refrain was "Tolle lege, Tolle lege, Tolle lege." Which means "take up and read, take up and read, take up and read."

Augustine was convinced that this was the voice of God speaking to him. So, he grabbed the nearest Bible, took it up, and read. His eyes fell on Romans 13:13-14.

"Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

These words jumped off the page at Augustine. Immediately he experienced tremendous conviction of sin. He knew that he was a sinner, he knew that he was in deep trouble, and he knew that he needed God's grace. As a result, he cried out to God for mercy and the Western world was never the same.

It was the Spirit that convicted Augustine of sin, no one else could.

Application:

If in fact, it is Spirit that convicts sinners...

We must ask the Spirit to do his convicting work.

Most people don't experience much conviction.

Both research and experience show that most people believe that they are basically good, that God is generally pleased with them, and that they can hope for some kind of heaven when they die.

Maybe this describes you...

You think I have never killed anyone, or stolen anything, and I recycle, and drive a hybrid car. I'm really a pretty good person. Not realizing that God requires perfection and that all sin is an affront to his holiness.

Most people don't see their sins the way God does.

Since, only the Spirit can bring about the conviction of sin, we must pray that he would convict our loved ones. No amount of eloquence, persistence, and persuasion will bring conviction to others. Only the Spirit can perform this crucial function.

Furthermore, **We must align our message with the Spirit's convicting work.**

In other words, we must be willing to talk about the nature of sin and the coming judgment.

We must seek to persuade others that sin is their greatest problem. If they are not convinced they have a problem, they will not turn to Christ for a solution.

Finally, **We must ask if we have experienced the Spirit's convicting work.**

According to one scholar,

Conviction is not merely the admission that you have sinned, just like everyone else. Rather, it is the confession that you are a heinous breaker of God's righteous law and a rebel against God's holy rule, justly deserving eternal condemnation. Only the Spirit of God working on the soul can bring this conviction. (R. Philips)

The spirit does many things...

The spirit empowers the saints.

The spirit convicts the sinners.

Third, the spirit guides the saints.

How does the Spirit guide the saints? Through the Scriptures!

John 16:12-13 (ESV) — 12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot 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 authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth. All truth does not mean all truth about everything (science, math, and history). "All truth" in the immediate context refers to all the truth about Jesus, his gospel, and eternal life.

Notice, that the Spirit will not speak on his own authority, he will only speak what he hears from the Father and the Son. In other words, he will only speak truth from God.

How does the Spirit guide us into all truth today? The same way. He guides us into all truth by helping us understand what the father and the son have spoken. Where have they spoken? In the pages of sacred Scripture.

It is the Spirit's ministry to guide us into the truths of Sacred Scripture. Theologians call this the doctrine of illumination.

Illustration:

I used to have 20/10 vision. This meant that I could read something from 20 feet away that someone with 20/20 could read from 10 feet away. My eyes were very good.

Everything changed after college. I can remember being at church and struggling to read the song lyrics on the screen above the stage.

My first pair of glasses instantly made a huge difference.

About a year later I was sitting in Hebrew class at seminary with my glasses on and I could not read the white board.

I got some new glasses.

With my new glasses on I eventually had a hard time reading street signs.

I'm now on my fifth/sixth prescription. My eyes are getting worse and worse. Now they are so bad that when I take my contacts out, I can't which son is standing 20 feet away.

When I put my glasses on or my contacts in, everything changes. I can see things clearly...

When we try to read the Bible apart from the Spirit's help things get blurry. We need the Holy Spirit to give us illumination. Asking for the Spirit's illuminating power is like putting on a pair of glasses.

Application:

Illumination is more than understanding the truth of Scripture. Illumination also involves relishing in the truth, experiencing the truth, and wanting to apply the truth to our lives.

When reading the Bible, we must always begin by praying, "Spirit of God help me understand, love, and apply what I read."

Finally, pray for the preached word on Saturday nights and Sunday morning...

*First, the spirit empowers the saints.
Second the spirit convicts the sinners.
Third, the spirit guides the saints.*

Fourth, the spirit magnifies the savior.

How does he magnify the savior? By constantly glorifying him.

John 16:14-15 (ESV) — 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **15** All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Many theologians argue that the Spirit's central work is glorifying Christ (v. 14a). Jesus says, "He (the Spirit) will glorify me, for he will take what is mine (i.e., my teaching) and declare it to you. This is more than the Holy Spirit passing on the message of Jesus. It includes the Holy Spirit causing affection to well up in our hearts for Jesus.

The holy spirit is constantly magnifying/glorifying Christ (v. 14a) by pointing us to his person and work.

Illustration:

Theologian J. I. Packer was walking towards a cathedral where floodlights illuminated a large stained-glass window. In that moment, he realized that the Spirit is like the floodlights. He writes,

When flood-lighting is well done, the floodlights are so placed that you do not see them; you are not in fact supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you are meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make it visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you see it properly. (Keep in Step with the Spirit, Packer)

Packer goes on to write,

It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, "Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me," but always, "Look at him, and see his glory; listen to him, and hear his word; go to him, and have life; get to know him, and taste his gift of joy and peace." (Keep in Step with the Spirit, Packer)

Application:

The spirit's job is to magnify Christ.
Is he magnifying Christ in your life.
When someone is "spirit filled" they will be very Christ like...

They will have a keener interest in Jesus.
More delight in Jesus.
More love and devotion to Jesus
More reliance and trust on Jesus,
More obedience to Jesus...
And more of a desire to tell others about Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit magnifies the person and work of Christ for us, everything changes.
This should be our prayer...

Conclusion:

I'm not sure what you are facing this week.

Unemployment?
A rocky marriage?
Mounds of guilt and condemnation?
Discouragement or depression?
Severe job or school stress...

When facing these challenges, we often think, if only Jesus was physically with me, right by my side, then I would survive, probably even thrive. According to Jesus, it is more advantageous that he leaves us, so that the Holy Spirit can dwell inside of us.

On this side of the cross and Pentecost, Jesus is with us, not physically, but now he is able to dwell inside of us through the Holy Spirit. And, he promises to never leave us or forsake us.

Therefore, you have everything you need to thrive. Let's pray...