

Message #53

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John

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JESUS AND THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE (Part 4):

WHY JESUS HAD TO GO AWAY

JOHN 16:5-33

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

In 1914 British explorer Ernest Shackleton (PROJECTOR ON--- ERNEST SHACKLETON) set out with a crew of 28 men to cross Antarctica. They took the three-masted ship Endurance (ENDURANCE 01) to get as close as they could to the southernmost continent. The expedition encountered problems that winter, which was actually summer in the Southern Hemisphere, as Endurance got caught in ice in the Weddell Sea near Antarctica. The crew and the ship spent most of 1915 drifting in the thick ice pack.

In October of that year the ship began to be crushed (ENDURANCE 2). So the men abandoned the ship and took all of their supplies onto the ice. Endurance sank a month later. The men set up tents and camped on the ice floe. (ICE FLOE) They spent more months drifting on the ice floe, hoping that they would come near an island.

In April 1916 the ice floe began to break up. So the men loaded up the three life boats they had saved from the Endurance (LIFE BOATS) and set off for Elephant Island, 346 miles from the place where Endurance had sunk. Five days later they made it safely to land. But the island was uninhabited and far from any shipping lanes. Shackleton made a decision that he would take five of the men and set out with supplies to try to reach South Georgia Island, almost a thousand miles away, which did have a whaling station. (SHACKLETON LIFE BOAT)

In spite of the hunger and the cold and the dangers and the shortage of food, all 28 men plus Shackleton were still alive. Shackleton was the glue that held this expedition together. His men called him "the Boss." He made the decisions that determined the path of the expedition. He managed the people problems and kept up the spirits of the men in desperate straits. Now he was leaving most of the men and setting off on a very dangerous voyage. The future for all of them was very uncertain. It must have

been a frightful moment for all of them when Shackleton and five crew mates set off into the dangerous sea.

Ernest Shackleton made it to South Georgia Island. To get to the whaling station, he and his men had to climb over a mountain range. They survived that and finally got to civilization. Shackleton ran into problems with the first couple of rescue boats that he used to try to get back to his men. Finally, after four and a half months, (RESCUE) he succeeded. The crew members left on Elephant Island were rescued, and all survived this remarkable experience.

Jesus and His disciples were on a remarkable expedition of their own. (PROJECTOR OFF) He was the glue that kept His crew together. He had the vision and the courage to keep them on track. But now at the Last Supper, tensions with the religious establishment were reaching a dangerous level. Jesus was also talking about leaving His men. In #16 of John's Gospel, He explains His need to do this. He is going to provide them with a rescue that is more significant than they could imagine.

In our study of John's Gospel we are moving quickly through Chapters 13-17 because we had a more detailed study of this Upper Room Discourse a few years ago. Last week we saw Jesus in His discussion with His eleven remaining disciples at this Passover meal in an upper room in Jerusalem just before His arrest convey two truths. In #15 Jesus compared Himself to a vine. He told the disciples that they had to stay close to Him, and they needed to expect hostility. Now in #16 Jesus explains why He must leave them.

(PROJECTOR ON--- THE DEPARTURE OF JESUS...) THE DEPARTURE OF JESUS MEANS TWO GREAT THINGS FOR HIS FOLLOWERS. Verses 5-33 of #16, which are found on p. 902 of the black Bibles under the chairs, will explain what those two things are.

I.

The first is that THEY WILL RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. (THE DEPARTURE... I. THEY WILL RECEIVE...) That is the message that I find in vv. 5-15. Look at vv. 5-7: **"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."**

The focus of the eleven remaining disciples is upon this anticipated loss of Jesus. They do not show much interest in where Jesus is going. But Jesus says that it is ultimately better for these disciples for Him to go away. This is necessary so that He can send the Helper.

Back in #14 we saw that Jesus used this term of the Holy Spirit. The original Greek word is "Paraclete." I argued that the best English translation is "Advocate." The Holy Spirit in this role comes alongside of Christians and defends them. The same term appears in #15. There we are told that He serves as a witness. (JOHN 15:26) In v. 26 Jesus says, **"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."**

In the Book of Acts we find that the previously timid disciples have a new boldness in telling about Jesus. This seems to be the result of power that comes from the Holy Spirit. The third Person of the Trinity is involved in this witness about Jesus.

Back in #7 of this Gospel, John explained Jesus' statement in the temple at the Feast of the Tabernacles about being the source of living water. (JOHN 7:39) Verse 39 says, **"Now this he [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."** In our study of that chapter, we saw that glorification referred to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The plan of God was that Jesus had to suffer and die and be resurrected and then ascend into heaven. Only then could he send the Holy Spirit. That initial sending happened at Pentecost, which is described in Acts #2. Jesus, in our passage, says that there are two things that the Holy Spirit will do for His followers.

A.

The first is that THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL CONVICT THE WORLD. (I. THEY WILL... A. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL...) Look at vv. 8-11: **"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, concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."**

A famous Greek scholar by the name of Westcott says that there are three concepts involved in the original Greek word for "convict." **First**, the term indicates an authoritative examination. It was used by the Greeks of a lawyer who was cross examining a defendant. **Second**, the term "convict" involves unquestionable proof. The lawyer who is convicting is using arguments that are very strong. They are

convincing. **Third**, there is a decisive judgment. The proof is so compelling that the one who convicts requires a decisive judgment. So conviction involves an authoritative examination, unquestionable proof, and a decisive judgment.

According to Jesus, it is the Holy Spirit who is the convicter. He is not just a defense lawyer for Christians. He is not just a witness who argues for the claims of Jesus. He is also a prosecuting attorney. The one being persuaded, however, is not a judge or a jury. It is the defendant himself. In this case, the defendant is called "the world." In our context, "the world" refers to the realm of unbelievers.

So Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit will cause non-Christians--- not all of them, but some of them--- to come to the point of acknowledging the validity of the case against them. This is not the same as conversion. It is a necessary preliminary step. It means that an unbelieving individual understands the issues involved, and he or she admits that the Holy Spirit is right in the case that is presented against him or her. What is it that the Holy Spirit convicts people about? Sin, righteousness and judgment.

Jesus uses the singular form "**sin.**" The Holy Spirit is not so much concerned about the individual sins of unbelievers as He is about their state of sin. Christians as well as non-Christians are sinners. The primary need is for individuals to recognize their status as sinners before a holy God. In v. 9 Jesus seems to be saying that the chief manifestation of the sins of unbelievers is that they have not believed in Him. What rectifies this situation is a trusting faith in Jesus.

The second aspect of conviction is **righteousness**. People may become aware of their status as sinners. The issue that arises after that is how one can become righteous. Is it by good works? By charitable giving? By religious rituals? By baptism? Jesus is claiming that He is the source of righteousness. The sacrifice of Himself on the cross was the payment for the sins of the world. This God-man died as our substitute. What is needed from us is a response of faith.

A Bible scholar and commentator by the name of Barclay writes, "**When you think of it, it is an amazing thing that men should put their trust for all eternity in a crucified Jewish criminal. What convinces men that this crucified Jew is the Son of God? That is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who convinces men of the sheer righteousness of Christ...**" (Gospel of John, NICNT)

The third aspect of the conviction of the Holy Spirit involves **judgment**. What awaits us if we fail to be reconciled to God? The evidence that judgment awaits people who are not reconciled to God is that the

ruler of the world has been judged. That ruler is Satan. He controls the world system, a system that operates in rebellion against God. The primary judgment against him came at the cross. It was there that the power which Satan had over people was removed. Faith in Christ and His work on the cross became the means by which people can be removed from their bondage to Satan and to sin. The resurrection was the proof that Jesus had accomplished this victory over him.

The sentence against him was announced at the cross, but it has not yet been carried out. According to #20 in the Book of Revelation, at the end of the Great Tribulation, Satan will be imprisoned for a thousand years. At the end of that time, he will be released for a short while, and then cast into the lake of fire.

This convicting work of the Holy Spirit is evident in the Book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes, and Peter preaches a sermon to the Jewish pilgrims who are gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. (ACTS 2:23) In v. 23 of #2 Peter speaks of sin: **"...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."** Then the Holy Spirit inspires Peter to speak of righteousness in vv. 31 & 32 (ACTS 2:31-32): **"[David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses."** Peter warns of judgment in v. 40. (ACTS 2:40): **"Save yourselves from this crooked generation."**

The Holy Spirit was truly at work. Many of these Jews were convicted. The text says that 3000 people responded and were baptized in the name of Jesus. The responsibility that we Christians have is to share the gospel and trust that the Holy Spirit will convict some and lead them to a trusting faith in Jesus.

B.

Besides convicting the world, Jesus says in vv. 12-15 that THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL GUIDE THEM INTO TRUTH. (I. THEY WILL... B. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL...) He says in v. 12, **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."** The apostles are too stressed and too immature. They have just been arguing about which of them is the greatest. Most importantly, they do not have the spiritual capacity to grasp the additional things that Jesus has to communicate. When the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, they will be better equipped to understand what they need to learn.

Verse 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 made a similar promise concerning the Holy Spirit in #14. (JOHN 14:26) He said in v. 26 that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and “[**He will**] **bring to remembrance all that I have said to you.”**

This was a promise of special significance to the eleven apostles, some of whom would become writers of the New Testament. The Apostle John also recognized the application that this promise would have to future Christians. In 1 John #2 v. 26 & 27 (1 JOHN 2:26) Jesus said, “**I write these things about those who are trying to deceive you. (1 JOHN 2:27) But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--- just as it has taught you, abide in him.**” The Holy Spirit will use the written word to guide us Christians into truth.

In v. 13 in our passage Jesus also says that the Holy Spirit will reveal truth about the future. (PROJECTOR OFF) This would seem to be a promise to tell His followers more about His future plans for the church and for His return and for the end of human history.

Jesus continues in vv. 14 & 15, “**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.**” The ultimate focus of attention of Jesus’ followers is to be the glory of God, specifically Jesus Christ.

It is clear from the Book of Acts that the first disciples of Jesus received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But when does this happen for Christians today? It would seem that it happens at the time when we put our trust in Jesus, when we truly become Christians. Rob in his Sunday School class last week was making reference to Romans #8 v. 9. (PROJECTOR ON--- ROMANS 8:9) In that verse, Paul tells Christians, “**You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.**” In other words, if a person does not have the Holy Spirit, he or she is not truly a Christian. Nowhere in the New Testament epistles are Christians instructed to ask for the Holy Spirit. They do not need to. If and when a person trusts in Jesus, he gets the Holy Spirit.

II.

The departure of Jesus means that His followers will receive the Holy Spirit. It also means that **THEY WILL HAVE A MESSAGE WORTH TELLING**. (II. **THEY WILL HAVE A MESSAGE...**) That is the lesson that I find in vv. 16-33 of #16. In vv. 16-18 we read, “**A little while, and you will see me no longer, and again a**

little while, and you will see me.’ So some of his disciples said to one another, ‘What is this that he says to us, “A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me” and, “because I am going to the Father”?’ So they were saying, ‘What does he mean by “a little while”? We do not know what he is talking about.’”

The disciples are still clueless. Jesus appears to be speaking about His death, after which they will not see Him, and then His resurrection, when they will see Him again. But after that He will ascend into heaven.

Verses 19-20: “Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, ‘Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, “A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me”? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.’”

The term “world” here refers to unbelievers, to those who are opposed to Jesus and His purposes. Those opponents are primarily the Jewish religious leaders and their followers. They regard Jesus as an imposter. He does not fit their expectations concerning the Messiah. He does not follow their rules, and He charges them with corruption. They cannot deny His power. So they claim that it must come from Satan.

The disciples will be grieved when Jesus dies. They will recognize that they have not acted bravely. They will be upset that Jesus appears to be dead and gone. But then they will experience joy when they see Him risen from the dead. It is perhaps significant that Jesus does not say that their grief will be replaced by joy, but rather that their sorrow will turn into joy. For over time they will come to recognize that their cause for grief, the death of Jesus, has tremendous spiritual implications. It means that their sins have been forgiven, that they have a ticket to heaven through faith in Jesus, that they have direct access to God, that priests and animal sacrifices are no longer needed, and that they have a message worth telling.

Verses 21 & 22: “When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” The thing that is the cause of a time of intense pain quickly becomes a source of blessing and joy. The anguish of childbirth is soon replaced by the joy of having an addition to the family. So it was with the death of Jesus.

Jesus continues in vv. 23 & 24, **“In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”** The “that day” is the day when the disciples see Jesus risen from the dead. Simply seeing the resurrected Jesus will answer many of their questions.

Jesus adds that the disciples of Christ will then have access directly to the Father. This is accomplished because of what Jesus has done. This access to God involves prayer. This is available to us today. We saw Jesus say a similar thing last week in #15. (JOHN 15:16) In v. 16 He told the disciples, **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”**

Praying in Jesus’ name is not using some kind of magical formula. It means praying as Christ’s representative. It means praying on the basis of His merits, on the basis of what He has done, especially in dying for us.

It also means praying according to His will. We don’t always know what His sovereign will is. But God has told us many things about what His prescribed will is. In other words, He has given us commands and principles in the Bible that tell us what our responsibilities are. When we pray according to this revealed will, according to what He has revealed to us about Himself and His plans in the Bible, we can be confident that our prayers will be effective. A byproduct of this commitment to pray in Jesus’ name is joy. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Continuing on in vv. 25-28, Jesus says, **“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”**

Jesus will speak more plainly and directly to these eleven men after the resurrection. The things that Jesus had said earlier will make more sense. After His return in the resurrection, Jesus will leave the world and go to the Father. It is necessary for Him to do that so that He can send the Holy Spirit. That

will happen at Pentecost. In Acts #2 we see the Holy Spirit come in dramatic fashion. Peter boldly preaches about Jesus, and 3000 people respond and are baptized.

Verses 29 & 30: **“His disciples said, ‘Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you come from God.’”** The eleven think that they get it. They really do not, at least not yet. They do have genuine faith in Jesus. They recognize that He comes from God. They just have not put all the information together yet.

According to vv. 31-33, **“Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.’”**

Jesus knows that their faith is weak. The content of their understanding is limited. Also their commitment is incomplete. They lack power. This will become obvious later in this same night. For when Jesus is arrested in Gethsemane, they will all run away. Peter musters up courage to show up at the hearing of Jesus before the high priest. But when servants accuse him of being with Jesus, he denies it.

The human tendency and temptation in telling stories about our personal experiences is to make ourselves look good. This is evident in the political leaders today. It is evident in other people in the news. It is often evident in the stories that we tell.

Jesus in v. 33 reminds the eleven--- and He reminds us--- that we live in an often hostile world. The message that His followers tell should have lasting significance. The eleven disciples and the Gospel writers who record their involvement with Jesus are honest about their failings. They acknowledge that they are dense and slow to believe. Their faith in Jesus and God the Father is often sorely lacking. The story that they tell is not about how great and wonderful they were. It is about how great and wonderful Jesus is. That is a message worth telling. That is a message that has power to change lives.

This is why God has a tendency to pick undeserving people to be the best storytellers. He does not want our stories to overshadow His story. The Apostle Paul was a smart, educated, religious leader. But in his early life he was a persecutor of Christians. He was involved in jailing them and killing them. He

describes himself in his letters in the New Testament as the worst of sinners. The message that Paul finds to be worth telling is the story of Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians #1 v. 27 (PROJECTOR ON--- 1 CORINTHIANS 1:27) he writes, **“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...”** So it is that God chooses someone like Billy Graham to be effective in telling stories about Jesus. He did not have the seminary education that most of us pastors have. Yet he was greatly used by God. Often the Lord picks people like ex-con Charles Colson to present a message worth telling. He was known as President Nixon’s hatchet man. He went to prison for his role in the coverup of the Watergate scandal. Yet he became effective in presenting the message worth telling about Jesus. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The message worth telling will focus on Jesus--- upon His death, resurrection, ascension, and the meaning that these events have for us. It will be a message that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Bruce Olson came from an upper class family in Minnesota. His father was an investment banker, and his mother was a socialite. At age 14 Bruce became a follower of Jesus. At age 16 he attended a missionary conference where a speaker spoke about tribal people in South America who needed to hear about Jesus. Bruce Olson decided that he had a message that the tribal people of South America needed to hear.

At age 19 he left college at the University of Minnesota and went to Venezuela. He learned about a people group along the Venezuela-Colombia border called the Motilone who had little contact with the outside world. He moved in with them and learned their language and culture.

Bruce Olson saw the many health problems that these people suffered, and recognized that rather simple medical procedures and treatments would often be of great help. But he wisely came to see that the best way to introduce such modern notions was to befriend and work with the medicine men and women of the various Indian villages. He won the hearts of all of the people, and he began to introduce the gospel to them. It was well received.

In 1988, Bruce was kidnapped by one of the Colombian Communist groups. He decided that his message was worth telling to them, too. He experienced the power of the Holy Spirit to boldly tell his message and to guide his captors into the truth. The Holy Spirit convicted many of them of the truth of his message.

Bruce Olson consistently won the trust of the guerrillas, teaching them to read, studying the Bible with them, and introducing them to Christ. When the Communist leaders saw the effect that he had on the various camps, he was moved to other camps. The pattern was repeated.

After a year of this, he was freed. It turns out that representatives of the country's Indian tribes had met and delivered an ultimatum to the guerrillas to free him. Many of the guerillas themselves wanted Olson to go free. One of their leaders told Olson, **"We will never forget you. You are the first person in our camp that we have captured that has been a friend and understood us. We esteem you."**

But, you see, the real story was not about Bruce Olson. It was about the message that he had which was worth telling. It was a message which was empowered by the Holy Spirit. That same message and that same power are available to us today. The issue is whether we will take advantage of opportunities to tell that story.