Colossians 3:21 & Ephesians 6:4 John 16:7-11

***Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*** (Part 6: Our Comforter and Corrector)

One night, a wife found her husband standing over their infant's crib … As she watched him ... looking down at their very first child, she saw on his face a mixture of emotions: disbelief, delight ... amazement … skepticism ... enchantment … Touched by this unusual display... and the deep emotions it aroused ... with eyes glistening … she slipped her arm around her husband … "A penny for your thoughts," she said … "It's amazing!" he replied .... It’s just amazing … "I just don't see how anybody ...... could make a crib like that ... for only $65.95." *(Pause)*

Ok, before you roll your eyes too deeply, maybe we should give that father a break … because many people have a similar problem … on a *spiritual* level … there are *many* ... who see only ... the outside framework ... and miss the miracle that lies within.

We’ve spent a lot of time over the last 5 weeks trying to *avoid* that mistake … to instead recognize the miracle of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and being *filled* by that Spirit … There are those who believe that the Holy Spirit is some kind of inanimate object, much like the crib that held the newborn baby. They see only the outside, the framework … These people accept the idea that God's Holy Spirit can live within us, but they do not think that the Spirit does very much. Thus ... they miss out on the miracle of what the Holy Spirit can give to each one of us.  
 In the Gospel of John, Christ clearly states the importance of the Holy Spirit ... to each believer:  "It is for your good ... that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Comforter (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.... When he comes, he will *convict* the world of guilt in regard to sin … and righteousness ... and judgment. "

I found it interesting that in just a few verses Jesus describes the Spirit as a ***comforter*** and then immediately as someone who ***convicts*** our hearts … It may seem strange … but if you think about it, the people who love us most in the world do the same thing … and on *Father’s Day*, I think particularly of parents … A good father will *both* comfort/encourage his child, as well as discipline them – Paul says the same in his letters, and he describes *both* sides of that responsibility in Ephesians 6:4 – “Fathers don’t provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” ***[Pause]***

Let’s explore this two-sided role of the Holy Spirit, and how these roles go together … Let’s start with the Spirit as Comforter … to understand what Jesus really means. Many times in my past, I have felt closest to God when nearness to him was a *necessity*. The Bible says that the Spirit comes to us in situations where we would normally be afraid.

We experience the Holy Spirit guiding us in difficult or seemingly desperate situations … like when we receive an unexpected phone call telling us that a close family member has been in an accident … or when we learn of the mass shooting in Orlando, where one individual blinded by hate kills 50 people … As one of our members said in response to the question, “What does the Holy Spirit do?” … “He comes to us when we need him the most.”  ***[Pause]***

            Jesus refers to the Spirit as the *Comforter*.  So let me ask: “Why would we need to experience the Comforter, if our lives are already comfortable?”  Think about it … It’s those who choose to count the cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, who forsake the patterns of this world, who embrace the struggle of sacrifice, who put it all on the line for the sake of Christ and His gospel … these are the ones who will most need the Comforter … who will cling to and trust in Christ’s promise to be *“with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Mt. 28:20).  Though this verse is true for all believers, if we haven’t come to a place where we have experienced our desperate need, if we tend to avoid the people and places that could potentially threaten our comforts, what need have we of the Comforter?

Let me share a story from Francis Chan in his book, *Forgotten God* … He once had dinner with a man in Seoul, Korea. This man was one of 23 missionaries who were held hostage by the Taliban in Afghanistan in July of 2007. For those who don’t know the story, the Taliban executed two of the missionaries before a deal was reached with the government of South Korea and the missionaries were released … This man told Chan about the horrors of being locked up in a cell, knowing that martyrdom was a strong possibility. He also shared about the amazing experience they had on the last day they were all imprisoned *together*, before being split up and isolated … Each of the 23 missionaries surrendered their lives to God that night and told him they were willing to die for His glory.

One of them had a small Bible that the missionaries secretly ripped into 23 pieces so each could glance at Scripture when no one was watching … The Word and the Spirit got them through *40 days of imprisonment* … with both *comfort* and *convicting* … Chan writes this, “Now that they have been back home for a while, several of the team members have asked this man, ‘Don’t you wish we were still there?’ … He tells me that several of them experienced a deep kind of intimacy with God in the prison cell that they haven’t been able to recapture in the relative comfort of their current lives.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Now, to many of us that desire to be back in prison will sound strange at best, and maybe even delusional. Nevertheless, they describe the precious gift of intimacy and comfort that the Holy Spirit offers us. It is a security that’s priceless, and worth virtually any loss of temporal safety and earthly comfort. ***[Long Pause]***

Now, let’s look at the *complementary* side of this work of the Holy Spirit – his work to ***convict*** *and* ***correct*** us. According to Jesus, one of the purposes of the Spirit was to seek and save the lost by convicting (or convincing) them of certain things – the actual verses say “he will convict the world concerning *sin* and *righteousness* and *judgment*.” At the heart of the matter, Jesus is telling us that the Spirit reveals our spiritual bankruptcy, our inability to save ourselves.

Oswald Chambers put it this way: "Conviction of sin is one of the rarest things that ever strikes a man. It is the threshold of an understanding of God. Jesus Christ said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict of sin, and when the Holy Spirit rouses the conscience and brings him into the presence of God, it is not his relationship with men that bothers him, but his relationship with God … *[Paradoxically, the Comforter makes us very uncomfortable about certain things so we can find comfort in the right things] …*  “Conviction” - the word in the Greek carries the idea of *exposing* … Salvation takes place when we stop disagreeing with the truth of our rebellion against God."

So first, the Spirit makes people ***deeply aware of their sins***. Second, the Spirit makes us feel the NEED of ***God’s righteousness*** in our lives … And lastly the Spirit makes us sense the URGENCY to ***make a decision****,* because God’s judgment is a reality … A good *father* will seek to do *similar* things in the lives of his children … if they do something wrong, he will want them to not only admit they did wrong but *understand* why … to *feel* the wrongness so to speak … also, a father will want to cultivate in his children a desire for righteousness – not self-righteousness – but living with integrity and eternal principles. And a father will want his children to live in such a way, knowing their actions affect their future, that there are consequences for their choices and therefore to be wise and forward-thinking … As God’s children, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us in similar fashion …

I referred to the parable of the Prodigal Son last week. It’s fitting here again. In that story, we can see God’s Spirit “convicting” the wandering son of his sin, of his need for righteousness… and the urgency of his decision … all of which ultimately drove him into the forgiving, comforting arms of his father.  And that is the intended purpose of conviction in *our lives* as well – a “course correction,” where we are headed back into our Father’s loving arms…  ***[Pause]***

The story is told of a young girl who accepted Christ as her Savior and applied for membership in a local church. An old Deacon inquired of her, "Were you a sinner before you received the Lord Jesus into your life?" … "Yes, sir," she replied … "Well, are you still a sinner?"   
"To tell you the truth, sir, I feel I’m a greater sinner than ever" … "Then what real change have you experienced?"  … "I don’t quite know how to explain it," she said, "except I used to be a sinner running after sin, but now that I am saved, I’m a sinner running *from* sin!"  ***[Pause]***  
 So, convicted of ***sin***, *then*convicted of ***righteousness*** … However, it’s very important to point out that when Jesus talks about “righteousness” here, it’s not *our* righteousness. It’s not *us* trying harder to be good. Jesus says the righteousness the Holy Spirit convicts us of is shown by Christ going to the Father … in other words, Jesus is talking about the righteousness he provides himself, in accomplishing all his saving work. It’s THIS righteousness – that of Christ – that requires the work of the Holy Spirit for people to be convinced about it … No one else can do this; only the Spirit shows people that righteousness is not the acquiring of merit … not trying to earn your way back into the Father’s grace by being a hard-working hired hand …

It’s all about Christ’s atoning work … and here, we come full circle to the Spirit being our *Comforter* again. In the last verse, John 16:11, the work of *judgment* refers to the defeat of Satan on the cross … Justice is done in the overthrow of the evil one. All this work of the Holy Spirit is to be seen in connection to Jesus; conviction of *sin, righteousness* and *judgment* all relate to what Christ has done, and continues to do in our hearts by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is able to move upon the human heart in ways that we often would not believe. But He does so to make us aware of our *own needs* – for both *comfort* and *correction*.

Let me share a story before I close. Sociology professor Anthony Campolo recalls a deeply moving incident that happened in a Christian junior high camp where he served. One of the campers, a boy with spastic paralysis, was the object of heartless ridicule. When he would ask a question, the boys would deliberately answer in a halting, mimicking way. One night his cabin group chose him to lead the devotions before the entire camp. It was one more effort to have some "fun" at his expense. Unashamedly the spastic boy stood up, and in his strained, slurred manner -- each word coming with enormous effort -- he said simply, "Jesus loves me -- and I love Jesus!" That was all. *Conviction* fell upon those junior-highers. Many began to cry. Revival gripped the camp, and it had a dramatic effect on those youth for years to come … Revival is going to be the theme of next week’s sermon as we draw near the end of this series. But for today, I pray you would know both the *comfort* and the *conviction* of the Holy Spirit. Happy Father’s Day! Amen.

1. Francis Chan, *Forgotten God*, 108 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)