

# Of Sin, and of Righteousness, and of Judgment

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John 16: 8-11, *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged”*.

These words of Christ have, no doubt, caused much dispute and controversy over the many years. They have given me a great deal of trouble as well. It has not always been clear to me what Christ is here saying. I only pray that I have a measure of clarity on it now. It is only with careful studying and prayer to God that He will provide us with the light needed to see scripture for what it is saying. And a good test that can be used when trying to understand a scripture is, does it flow with the rest of God’s word, is it inline with those clear scriptures taught in God’s word that are easily understood?

Christ says, “When he is come”. The “he” is the comforter, the Holy Ghost, The third in the triune God. It might seem odd that He would be called the comforter, but as we continue in our thoughts it should become clear to us that His name “the Comforter” is very appropriate. He is coming to do a job, “He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”. The word “reprove” in this verse means, “To bring to light, to expose, to convict and convince”.

First notice must be taken that this task is of the Holy Ghost and not man. It is Christ who sends the Comforter to man, he did not say anything about us asking for the Comforter in order to receive it. The prerequisite for the Comforter coming is the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ into heaven, “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you”. It is not man doing some thing to accept the Comforter, or having to receive him in his heart. The second very important thing to notice is to whom it is applied; the world.

One would have to agree that whoever is included in this world, they will be convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment. If this world is speaking of all the human race, then it would stand to reason that all the human race will be convinced and convicted to those things afore mentioned. But this ideology goes directly contrary to God’s word. In John 8:43,47 Christ said, *“Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word”*. *“He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God”*. Christ said in John 10:27, *“My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life”*. Christ has a sheep; this is the world under consideration. The world is referring to the world of God’s elect. It is the same world found in John 3:16.

And it says he WILL reprove (convict/convince) the world. This has to be viewed in regeneration and after. It would be error to mix the gospel in with any of this work. To do so would only serve to make the gospel necessary for the Holy Ghost’s work in convicting the world of His elect. Therefore it would only be those that heard the gospel that would be under consideration, and this ideal is pure Calvinism. This work of the

Holy Ghost is applied to all of Gods elect in regeneration irregardless of nationality or religious up bringing. The extent of this knowledge may certainly vary according to those who hear the gospel. But to some extent, however small, the Holy Ghost reproves all of his after regeneration.

Let us now consider the appropriate order of sin, righteousness, and judgment as it pertains in these verses to the world of God's elect.

**Verse 9, "Of sin, because they believe not on me".**

While Christ walked this earth many did not believe that he was the Son of God. In John 14 Christ said, "ye believe in God, believe also in me". Isaiah 53 says, "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and of grief". While Jesus hung on the cross, there were those that said, "If he be the Christ, let him take himself down".

While there were those that did believe on Christ and were made to see their sins (i.e.- Mary who washed Christ's feet with her tears) man as a whole did not believe Christ while he was in this earth and as a result could not see their sins as exceedingly sinful. But in regeneration the Holy Ghost first convicts his elect of sin. This is an inward working on the now child of God. The regeneration of a child of God is the point that the Old Baptist stands on solid ground. And that stance is alone. No worldly religion puts this work solely in the hands of an all sovereign God. It is the Holy Ghost that does the convincing, not man! Man cannot convince a man who is spiritually dead of his sins, that takes the power of God.

Man has always been going away from God. 1Tim. 2:14 states, "*And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression*". Adam was not deceived but rather went knowingly against God. And man since that fall has been going away from God. Romans 3:9-18 shows us who man is without God. 1Cor. 2:14 tells us that that natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. Neither will depraved man seek after God (Psalms 10:4-7). The depraved unregenerate is happy right where he is; he has no remorse for his evil ways. And yet, without the Holy Ghost, his condition will never change. A dog's nature is to bark, you could never teach a dog to roar like a lion. Such is man, he cannot do what is good, his nature is not good but evil and he will only do what his nature is.

It is God that regenerates a man with a new nature. It is a working from the inside out, and not as the world would suppose, from the outside in. Proverbs 16:1 shows it is a working out, "the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord". Just like the tabernacle in the wilderness, it was built from the inside out. But when the tabernacle was completed the people would then come into it. Those things that work outside in are those blessings for the child of God. Romans 10:9 for example, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". That is speaking of a timely salvation.

But to the child of God, who was by nature the child of wrath even as others, there will be a convicting of his sins after regeneration. This brings about a great change in the one convicted. He no longer sees himself as a person who is self-righteous and prideful. All he can see is the weight of sin crashing down on him. The law is written on his heart and he feels to be dead! This law condemns him and for the first time he sees his wretched depraved state. Such was the account of Elder Wilson Thompson at an early age. Paul was convinced of sin in Romans 7. The creature is now made subject to vanity not willingly (Rom. 8:20). Now his sins are before him and he is seen as guilty. It stops the boasting mouth (Romans 3:19). Paul finally would cry out, "O' wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death". Now this condemned sinner feels to be isolated and deserted from any form of righteousness. He can now relate to Isaiah when he said, "We all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way". Now it is that this convinced and convicted sinner begins to search and look for help.

**Verse 10, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more."**

After the Holy Ghost convinces the sinner of his sins, He then convinces him of righteousness. And why is it the Holy Ghost does this convincing and convicting? Because Christ has gone to his Father and they will see him no more. And neither will the child of God see Him in this day. It must first be said that this righteousness is not speaking of any imputed righteousness that we have, for that knowledge comes about in the gospel. And as stated earlier, it would be error to include the gospel into any of this work that is here mentioned, for it is to the WORLD that it is applied to. Again, if this is in a gospel since then the world is only speaking of those who hear the gospel. But there are countless people who will never hear the gospel but will be in heaven with the Lord.

It is after that one is reproved of his sins that he is then reproved that there is one who is righteous. He no longer sees himself as high and mighty but now begins to understand that there is a "being" that is righteous. When Christ was in this world there were some that did see his righteousness. When he died on the cross it said in Luke 23:47, "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man". It was John the Baptist that came out of the wilderness crying, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world".

Now the sinner sees that he himself is unrighteous and that God is the sovereign righteous. It is with shame face that one then beholds his glory and begins to fear the wrath of a just and righteous God. He now has a clearer view of Christ and may even see him as a Savior. But though he sees Christ as a Savior he does not see Christ as his savior. This conviction just increases the weight he is now carrying. This brings about a great separation from God in his heart. He sees himself as a great sinner and God as a just and holy God and as a result he feels to be separated from God by a great gulf.

## **Verse 11, “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”**

The Holy Ghost reproveth of judgment. The word “is judged” implies “has been judged”. In John 12:31 Christ tells us when that judgment was, *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”*. The prince of this world (Satan) was judged on Calvary. Now that Satan has been judged, the Holy Ghost will reprove, convince, the born again child of God of judgment, judgment both for the world and for himself. This judgment goes in line with the work of the Holy Ghost. First he convinces us that we are sinners, and then that there is one that is righteous and holy. The last thing that he reproveth us of is that someone is going to have to suffer for our sins. In Luke chapter 18 we have a parable that Christ sets forth concerning the prayers of a Pharisee and a publican. It is not a parable about one who is a child of God and one who isn't. It is a parable about one who is educated by God and one who isn't. The publican was an educated sinner. He had been reproveth of his sins and saw a righteous God who would judge. Therefore his prayer was, “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

When God brings the child of God to this point, it is then that he perceives himself to be in real trouble. He also agrees with the righteous God concerning his judgment on him and would cry out, “And if my soul were sent to hell, thy righteous law approves it well”. It is at this point that the depraved sinner is made low. It was at this point that the Apostle Paul cried out, *“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”*

All of God's children will be reproveth of these things in their quickened life. And these reproveth come time and time again, I believe, to the child of God. It must be noted that while this is the work of the Holy Ghost in all his elect, the amount of conviction varies. Those in a distant far of land and in the dark recesses of Africa are indeed reproveth by the Holy Ghost. But it goes to reason that the child of God who is near or around the gospel or even some form of Christianity will most likely have a greater extent of this conviction. This is not to say that the gospel is required for this work of the Holy Ghost, it is not.

### **The gospel salvation**

Thus far we have shown the work of the Holy Spirit in the regenerated heart of man. Those convictions are not in any way something that the sinner finds cause to rejoice in. In fact he is now made subject to vanity, and it was while he was unwilling. The misconception that most people have is that when a child of God is born by the Spirit it is one of the happiest days of his life. That idea is far from the truth. As we have shown, one who is convicted of these things has found his self in a waste howling wilderness and finds no cause to rejoice but is weighted down with the load of sin on his back.

In Acts 11:14 it speaks of Peter who was to go to Cornelius's house and *“tell them words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”* What kind of salvation is he speaking of? Often times we get in a bad habit of telling what the gospel doesn't do. But we need to remember and speak on what the gospel does do! Cornelius needed salvation. And if

he needed salvation then it must stand to reason that he was in peril. But he did not need eternal salvation he already had that. What he needed was the salvation that comes through the gospel to the child of God who is troubled. One is troubled when he is reproved of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is the great salvation that the gospel brings! It brings rest to the troubled mind. Man in order to find peace from his convictions will have to justify and make a way to ease his discomfort. Many religions are man made and involve things that man has to do to go to heaven. It is these “things” that man relies on and finds a measure of peace. In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans Paul was praying for God’s people who were going about to establish their own righteousness and had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

It is the Holy Ghost who brings to the wanting hearts the sound of the gospel. It is in the gospel that the Holy Ghost is seen as the Comforter. It is in the gospel that he comforts the weary pilgrim. You see he can’t be a comforter to those who are already comfortable. But the Holy Ghost must first disturb the child of God, which is what takes place in his reproving, and then He can comfort them through the gospel. The Lord said in John 16:22, “*And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*”. The Holy Ghost brings life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Paul came to this conclusion in the last verse of chapter 7 and continued in chapter 8 of Romans. And this is the point that all will come to in the gospel. Salvation is seen to be all of God in the gospel. Romans 1:17 states, “for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”. That righteousness is also speaking of imputed righteousness. Romans 5:19 Paul says, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”.

When Christ said, “come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give thee rest”, he was speaking of the convicted child of God coming to him in the church. It is in His bride that we find comfort from the comforter. It is indeed a great comfort when we see that Christ paid the judgment on Calvary and our sins have been removed from us as far as the east is from the west. In Revelations chapter 20 it speaks of the final judgment of the unjust. It says that they will be judged according to their works, but thanks be to God we will be judged (or already have been) according to Christ’s work on Calvary. That is the news that we hear through the gospel that saves the troubled and weary heart.