

Sunday February 25th sermon: "The Comforter Reproves the World -- The God of All Comforts (Pt 46)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

John 16:7-11; Acts 7:51-58

Christ promised us something that He knows is better than His continued physical presence with us: the indwelling of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost of promise!

The Comforter would have no comforting work to do before the sacrifice was perfected. There would be no real peace with God, no final and full sense of forgiveness, no spirit of adoption to knit us to our God.

Rather than Christ staying physically with His people, better that He dies for us, and ascends to glory, and perfects our redemption, so that the Comforter may come, and comfort us by Christ's work on the cross.

The work of Christ on the cross and in glory as our high priest, is far better than His staying on earth, and teaching and doing miracles, but never dying to save us.

Because of Christ's death, the world keeps on hating Him and His people, but we are saved, and blessed, and promised everlasting life.

Christ tells us that the Comforter will reprove the world. This is speaking of the Holy Ghost's convicting power in the lost, either directly, or mostly through God's Word, often preached by believers.

Some false teachers deny that a specific work of the Holy Ghost is required for the saving of lost souls, but Christ sets them right.

Jesus tells us that the Comforter reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Every man is a sinner, but righteousness is required. Therefore, every man will be judged.

The reproof regarding sin, Christ explains, is because they don't believe on Him. Whoever does not believe on Christ is already condemned for that reason.

The Comforter reproves of sin, not just the sin of unbelief, but of all sin, since unbelief bars a sinner from being justified by the blood of Jesus through faith.

This sin of unbelief is particularly egregious since Christ has died, rose again, and ascended in glory to God. These three proofs the Comforter impresses upon the lost, whose sins remain with them, because they have not trusted in the sacrifice of Jesus that takes away sin.

The Comforter reproves the world of righteousness, because Christ now appears in glory, and we cannot see Him down here anymore.

Jesus preached the righteousness required by God – it must exceed the righteousness of any fallen man! In Psalm 40, Christ foretold, by His Spirit, His faithfulness to proclaim these truths during His ministry.

Now that Christ has departed, the Comforter takes up His task of urging the need for righteousness in poor lost men, and vindicating the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Wicked men denounced the obedience of Christ, and His perfection. They falsely called Him a sinner, and condemned Him to death, when He had done no sin at all.

But now that Christ is risen, exalted, and vindicated, the Comforter reproves the world of Christ's righteousness, and its wicked denial of it.

A powerful example of the Holy Ghost's reproof of wicked men's betrayal and murder of Jesus, is seen in the example of their murder of the martyr Stephen. He strongly accused the rulers of Israel of rejecting the Messiah, and of resisting the Holy Ghost.

When they gnashed their teeth against Stephen, the Holy Ghost revealed to him, then and there, the glory of Christ at the right hand of God, and Stephen conveyed that truth to those wicked men.

This was the very thing that Christ had declared at His trial to these same evil rulers: that one day He would be seen in power and glory, and then they would know that they had murdered the Son of God, the Holy One, Whom they desired to slay, and sent to the cross.

Here we see the Comforter sharply reproofing sinful men who deny Christ's righteousness, and doing so by asserting that Christ had ascended into the very presence and glory of the holy, righteous God!

They responded by murdering Stephen, Christ's witness. Thus, we discover that the reproof of the Comforter does not always lead to salvation. Often times, it leads to the ultimate destruction and judgment of the wicked. Either way, the conviction and reproof of the Comforter is there at work.

No doubt this horrific example was used by the Comforter to work a conviction in the heart of Paul, who was there at this murder, and approved of it. Later on, Paul submitted to Christ, and became His greatest apostle to the nations.

Finally, Christ promised that the Comforter would reprove the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Christ was already appointed by the Father as the judge of all the world. This is because Jesus is the God man, and sin must be judged in and by That Man of Calvary.

He has now taken away the sins of His people by His sacrifice at Calvary, and He thereby destroyed the prince of this world, the devil, who had a certain power of death over this lost rebellious world.

But if Satan is judged, the fountainhead of all rebellion against God, how can poor, weak, sinful men escape that judgment?

The Comforter reproves men of judgment, by urging that it will come to all sinners, as it has come to the devil. In the end, the devil loses, and the Holy Ghost impresses that truth home to the lost world.

How was the devil judged? Christ crushed him at the cross, and by the resurrection, stripped the devil of his power over death, liberating the Lord's people from the fear and judgment of death.

Christ did all this by taking upon Himself our humanity, our physical nature, and being slain and judged in our place, destroyed sin and death in His body.

Christ's death and Satan's destruction by it, are a strong rebuke to all who follow in rebellion after the devil. Sin has been judged in Christ, and those who refuse His Gospel salvation will likewise be judged, just as Satan has been judged.

The Comforter has this powerful basis to reprove the world of judgment: all sin will be judged by God, either in the Lord Jesus for His people, or in every sinner who refuses the Lord Jesus in exchange for loyalty to the prince of this world.

Note well, that the Comforter does not reprove the Lord's people in these ways! Not for sin, because we have believed on Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost in us! The Comforter preaches pardon and peace to us!

The Comforter doesn't rebuke us for righteousness, because we have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and His ascension to glory ensures us that we are accepted in Our Beloved, there with Him!

The Comforter doesn't reprove us of judgment, because the devil is defeated, and Jesus was already judged for us, in our place, for our crimes, and now we are set free!