



SERVE 4

John 15 v 18 to 16 v15

The Work of the Holy Spirit

We are continuing a series on the work of the Holy Spirit and how he empowers us to **SERVE** the Body of Christ – the local church.

It is surely encouraging that Jesus' preparation for his impending departure includes severe warnings about the reality of being a Christian in a hostile world. It is preceded by the command to 'love one another' (15:12 to 17) and followed by a detailed outline of how the Spirit will work in their lives. The order is significant. Jesus is saying that firstly we need the strength of each other's love if we are to survive in a world that is hostile to the gospel but we will not be left alone as God's Holy Spirit will always be there to love and support us.

1. Some people don't think the world is hostile to the person of Christ
Is that your experience?
Where have you encountered hostility?

Jesus makes clear that discipleship is often costly – whoever chooses to follow him will experience the kind of conflict Jesus himself faced. He explains that the hatred of the world is a continuation of the hatred that followed him round. He gives them the reason – they are no longer part of the world because Jesus has chosen them 'out of the world' (v19).

2. Are you conscious that your citizenship is not in this world – you are now a child of the Kingdom of God?
Physically we belong to the world we all live in, so what does Jesus mean when he says he has 'chosen us out of the world'?

As followers of Christ, we should not be surprised if things happen to us as they happened to Jesus. (v 20 & 21). Jesus' ministry provided words (v22) and works (v24) that pointed to God. Now Jesus has been seen and heard no one can escape being guilty of sin (v24). No one can claim they haven't heard the words of Jesus or seen his 'signs'.

3. Does this mean that no one today can argue they are not aware of their sinfulness and be aware of what it means to deserve God's judgement on their sin?

The third promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit occurs in verse 26 and following. The first two are in John 14:16 & 26. The Spirit's role is to testify about Jesus – to make Jesus known. The disciples are told they too must bear witness to the truth about Jesus. (v26 & 27). So the Spirit will teach us so that we can teach others about Jesus

4. Does this mean that we are all called to teach others about Jesus?

They are told to testify because they know about Jesus because they have 'been with him from the beginning'. 'Going astray' (16:1) seems to imply not just moral failure but a failure to witness. Have we used a too narrow definition of 'going astray'?

The passage from 16:4b onwards contains yet another promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus also re-iterates that he must leave them (16:5) and he is so aware that he will not be around to absorb the hostility he had become used to. But he will be with them 'in spirit' as they bear the brunt of the inevitable persecution.

5. The coming of the Holy Spirit is dependent on Jesus' departure. So, Jesus argues that it is good for him to go so the disciples can experience the coming of the Holy Spirit. (v7). We learn more about the Spirit's role in v8.

Have you considered that the Spirit's role is to bring conviction of sin?

What other roles does the Holy Spirit have?

It seems that the Holy Spirit is at work in people to make them aware that they are sinful people and need a Saviour to deal with their sin. Even before we are aware of it, he is at work in our minds to make us aware that we need to accept our need of salvation.

6. Talk about the time before you were a Christian and God was at work in you before you came to faith. If that's true for you, that was the work of the Holy Spirit convincing you that your life without Christ was going nowhere.

Share some testimonies of how God worked in your life.

For most, if not all of us, that means we are under God's judgement (v11). That is not the final judgement but God's verdict on our sinfulness. That judgement condemns 'the prince of this world' (Satan) but for us makes us acutely aware that God's judgement does not condemn us because we have a Saviour who stood in our place. It is the Spirit who reveals all that to us.

7. Talk about times you have felt convicted by your own sin and how God has graciously forgiven you – 1 John 1 is worth a read.

And there is still more of the role of the Holy Spirit – he is the 'spirit of truth' (v12). It is the Holy Spirit who opens up God's word to you and you realise it is a word of truth from God himself. It may be

- When you read your Bible in the quiet of your room
- When someone says something in your small group that really strikes you
- When a preacher says something that feels as though s(he) is speaking directly at you
- When you are thinking about an issue and you really feel you get an answer from God
- Can you think of other times?

We read that the Holy Spirit only 'speaks what he hears' (v13). That means when you hear the Spirit speak to you that is a word straight from God

8. What should be our response when we hear God speak?

Can you remember occasions where God appears to be speaking straight at you?

Notice that Jesus wants things to be 'known to you' (v15)

Take some time to thank God that he does speak into our lives. Just as he promised the Holy Spirit to his bereft followers, he promises that the Holy Spirit will be our guide through all the changing scenes of life.