

Conviction of Sin--Awakening

by John Newton

The sermon emphasizes the importance of conviction of sin for spiritual growth and the role of the word of God in true awakening and salvation.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 6:5, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 1:31, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Conviction Of Sin", "Gospel Awakening"

Description

John Newton reflects on the struggle of truly understanding the depth of sin and the need for a clear revelation of God's holiness to balance it. He acknowledges his own shortcomings in feeling the weight of his sin and expresses a desire for a deeper sense of humility and dependence on God. Newton emphasizes the importance of the Gospel in awakening souls, highlighting that external signs or experiences can only lead to true transformation when accompanied by the truth of God's Word penetrating the heart.

Transcript

August 14, 1770.

My Dear Sir,

Your letter did me good when I received it, at least, gave me much pleasure; and I think it has given me a lift while I have been just now reading it. I know not that I ever had those awful views of sin which you speak of; and though, I believe, I should be better for them, I dare not seriously wish for them. There is a petition which I have heard in public prayer-Lord, show us the evil of our hearts. To this petition I cannot venture to set my Amen, at least, not without a qualification. Show me enough of Thyself to balance the view, and then show me what Thou pleaseth. I think I have a very clear and strong conviction, in my judgment, that I am vile and worthless, that my heart is full of evil, only evil, and that continually. I know something of it, too, experimentally; and, therefore, judging of the whole by the sample, though I am not suitably affected with what I do see, I tremble at the thought of seeing more. A man may look with some pleasure upon the sea in a storm, provided he stands safe upon the land himself, but to be upon the sea in a storm is quite another thing. And yet, surely, the coldness, worldliness, pride, and twenty other evils under which I groan, owe much of their strength to the want of that feeling sense of my own abominations with which you have been favoured: I say, favoured; for I doubt not but the Lord gave it you in mercy, and that it has proved, and will prove, a mercy to you, to make you more humble, spiritual, and dependent, as well as to increase your ability for preaching the Gospel of His grace. Upon these accounts, I can assure

you that, upon a first reading, and till I stopped a moment to count the cost, I was ready to envy you all that you had felt. I often seem to know what the Scripture teaches, both of sin and grace, as if I knew them not; so faint and languid are my perceptions, I often seem to think and tell of sin without any sorrow, and of grace without any joy.

I have had some people awakened by dreams, as you had by streamers [aurora borealis?]: but, for aught I know, we are no less instrumental to the good of these, than to any other person, upon whom, when we look, our hearts are ready to exult, and say, See what the Lord has done by me. I do not think that, strictly speaking, all the streamers of the north are able to awaken a dead soul. I suppose people may be terrified by them, and made thoughtful, but awakened only by the word. The streamers either sent them to hear the Gospel, or roused them to attend to it; but it was the knowledge of the truth brought home to the heart that did the business. Perhaps the streamers reminded them of what they had heard from you before. Two persons here, who lived like heathens, and never came to church, were alarmed by some terrifying dreams, and came out to hearing forthwith. There the Lord was pleased to meet with them. One of them died triumphing; the other, I hope, will do so when her time comes. Whatever means, instruments, or occasions He is pleased to employ, the work is all His own; and, I trust, you and I are made willing to give Him all the glory, and to sink into the dust at the thought that He should ever permit us to take His holy name upon our polluted lips. I am, &c.

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