

# The Sinner Arraigned and Convicted

by Philip Doddridge

*Philip Doddridge's sermon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing one's guilt before God and the serious implications of rebellion against His law.*

**Scripture:** Job 9:20, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Hosea 6:1, Hosea 11:9, Romans 3:23, James 4:17, 1 John 3:20

**Topics:** "Original Sin", "Conviction Of Guilt"

## Description

Philip Doddridge preaches about the necessity of conviction of guilt in true religion, emphasizing the rebellion against God that all men are born under His law and have violated it. He appeals to the reader's conscience to acknowledge their sins and the inexpressibly great evil of breaking God's law, highlighting the aggravations of guilt from knowledge, divine favors received, conscience overborne, God's Spirit resisted, and vows broken. The sermon concludes with a sinner's confession under a general conviction of guilt, acknowledging the rebellion, ingratitude, and countless multitudes of sins committed against God.

## Transcript

1. Conviction of guilt necessary.--2. A charge of rebellion against God advanced.--3. Where it is shown--that all men are born under God's law.--4. That no man hath perfectly kept it.--5. An appeal to the reader's conscience on this head, that he hath not.--6. That to have broken it, is an evil inexpressibly great.--7. Illustrated by a more particular view of the aggravations of this guilt, arising--from knowledge.--8. From divine favors received.--9. From convictions of conscience overborne.--10. From the strivings of God's Spirit resisted.--11.. From vows and resolutions broken.--12. The charges summed up, and left upon the sinner's conscience.--The sinner's confession under a general conviction of guilt.

1. AS I am attempting to lead you to true religion and not merely to some superficial form of it, I am sensible I can do it no otherwise than in the way of deep humiliation. And therefore supposing you are persuaded, through the divine blessing on what you have before read, to take it into consideration, I would now endeavor, in the first place, with all the seriousness I can, to make you heartily sensible of your guilt before God. For I well know, that, unless you are convinced of this, and affected with the conviction, all the provisions of Gospel grace will be slighted, and your soul infallibly destroyed, in the midst of the noblest means appointed for its recovery.

I am fully persuaded that thousands live and die in a course of sin, without feeling upon their hearts any sense that they are sinners, though they cannot, for shame, but own it in words. And therefore let me deal faithfully with you, though I may seem to deal roughly; for complaisance is not to give law to addresses in

which the life of your soul is concerned. 2. Permit me therefore, O sinner, to consider myself at this time as an advocate for God, as one employed in his name to plead against thee and to charge thee with nothing less than being a rebel and a traitor against the Sovereign Majesty or heaven and earth.

However thou mayest be dignified or distinguished among men; if the noblest blood run in thy veins; if thy seat were among princes, and thine arm were "the terror of the mighty in the land of the living," (Ezek. 32:27) it would be necessary thou shouldst be told plainly, thou hast broken the laws of the King of kings and by the breach of them art become obnoxious to his righteous condemnation. 3. Your conscience tells you that you were born the natural subject of God, born under the indispensable obligations of his law.

For it is most apparent that the constitution of your rational nature, which makes you capable of receiving law from God, binds you to obey it. And it is equally evident and certain that you have not exactly obeyed this law, nay, that you have violated it in many aggravated instances. 4. Will you dare to deny this? Will you dare to assert your innocence? Remember, it must be a complete innocence; yea, and a perfect righteousness too, or it can stand you in no stead, farther than to prove, that, though a condemned sinner, you are not quite so criminal as some others, and will not have quite so hot a place in hell as they.

And when this is considered, will you plead not guilty to the charge? Search the records of your own conscience, for God searcheth them: ask it seriously, "Have you never in your life sinned against God?" Solomon declared, that in his days "there was not a just man upon earth, who did good and sinned not;" (Eccl. 7:20) and the apostle Paul, "that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) "that both Jews and Gentiles (which you know, comprehend the whole human race) were all under sin." (Rom. 3:9) And can you pretend any imaginable reason to believe the world is grown so much better since their days, that any should now plead their own case as an exception?

Or will you, however, presume to arise in the face of the omniscient Majesty of heaven, and say, I am the man? 5. Supposing, as before, you have been free from those gross acts of immorality which are so pernicious to society that they have generally been punishable by human laws; can you pretend that you have not, in smaller instances, violated the rules of piety, of temperance, and charity? Is there any one person, who has intimately known you, that would not be able to testify you had said or done something amiss!

Or if others could not convict you, would not your own heart do it! Does it not prove you guilty of pride, of passion, of sensuality, of an excessive fondness of the world and its enjoyments? of murmuring, or at least of secretly repining against God, under the strokes of an afflictive providence; of misspending a great deal of your time; abusing the gifts of God's bounty to vain, if not, in some instances, to pernicious purposes; of mocking him when you have pretended to engage in his worship, "drawing near to him with your mouth and your lips while your heart has been far from him?" (Isa. 29:13) Does not conscience condemn you of some one breach of the law at least?

And by one breach of it you are, in a sense, a Scriptural sense, "become guilty of all," (Jam. 2:19) and are as incapable of being justified before God, by any obedience of your own, as if you had committed ten thousand offences. But, in reality, there are ten thousand and more chargeable to your account. When you come to reflect on all your sins of negligence, as we do on those of commission; on all the instances in which you have "failed to do good when it was in the power of your hand to do it;" (Prov. 3:27) on all the instances in which acts of devotion have been omitted, especially in secret; and on all those cases in which you have shown a stupid disregard to the honor of God, and to the temporal and eternal happiness

of your fellow-creatures: when all these, I say, are reviewed, the number will swell beyond all possibility of account, and force you to cry out, "Mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head." (Psal. 40:12) They will appear in such a light before you, that your own heart will charge you with countless multitudes; and how much more, "then, that God, who is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things!" (1 John 3:20) 6.

And say, sinner, is it a little thing that you have presumed to set light by the authority of the God of heaven, and to violate his law, if it had been by mere carelessness and inattention? How much more heinous, therefore, is the guilt, when in an many instances you have done it knowingly and willfully! Give me leave seriously to ask you, and let me entreat you to ask your own soul, "Against whom hast thou magnified thyself? Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice," (2 Kings 19:22) or "lifted up thy rebellious hand?"

On whose law, O sinner, hast thou presumed to trample? and whose friendship, and whose enmity, hast thou thereby dared to affront! Is it a man like thyself that thou hast insulted? Is it only a temporal monarch--only one "who can kill thy body, and then hath no more that he can do?" (Luke, 12:4) Nay, sinner, thou wouldst not have dared to treat a temporal prince as thou hast treated the "King Eternal, Immortal," and "Invisible." (1 Tim. 1:17) No price could have hired thee to deal by the majesty of an earthly sovereign, as thou hast dealt by that God before whom the cherubim and seraphim are continually bowing.

Not one opposing or complaining, disputing or murmuring word is heard among all the celestial legions, when the intimations of his will are published to them. And who art thou, O wretched man! who art thou, that thou shouldst oppose him? That thou shouldst oppose and provoke a God of infinite power and terror, who needs but exert one single act of his sovereign will, and thou art in a moment stripped of every possession; cut off from every hope; destroyed and rooted up from existence, if that were his pleasure; or, what is inconceivably conceivably worse, consigned over to the severest and most lasting agonies?

Yet this is the God whom thou hast offended, whom thou hast affronted to his nice, presuming to violate his express laws in his very presence. This is the God before whom thou standest as a convicted criminal; convicted not of one or two particular offenses, but of thousands and ten thousands; of a course and series of rebellion and provocations, in which thou hast persisted more or less ever since thou wast born, and the particulars of which have been attended with almost every conceivable circumstance of aggravation.

Reflect on particulars, and deny the charge if you can. 7. If knowledge be an aggravation of guilt, thy guilt, O sinner, is greatly aggravated! For thou wast born in Emmanuel's land, and God hath "written to thee the great things of his law," yet "thou hast accounted them as a strange thing." (Hos. 8:12) Thou hast "known to do good, and hast not done it;" (James 4:17) and therefore to thee the omission of it has been sin indeed. "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?" (Isa. 30:28) Wast thou not early taught the will of God?

Hast thou not since received repeated lessons, by which it has been inculcated again and again, in public and in private, by preaching and reading the word of God? Nay, hath not thy duty been in some instances so plain, that, even without any instruction it all, thine own reason might easily have inferred at? And hast thou not also been warned of the consequences of disobedience? Hast thou not "known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death?"

Yet, thou hast, perhaps, "not only done the same, but hast had pleasure in those that do them;" (Rom. 1:32) hast chosen them for thy most intimate friends and companions; so as hereby to strengthen, by the

force of example and converse, the hands of each other in your iniquities. 8. Nay more, if Divine love and mercy be any aggravation of the sins committed against it, thy crimes, O sinner, are heinously aggravated. Must thou not acknowledge it, O foolish creature and unwise!

Hast thou not been "nourished and brought up by him as his child, and yet hast rebelled against him?" (Isa. 1:2) Did not God "take you out of the womb?" (Psal. 22:9) Did he not watch over you in your infant days, and guard you from a multitude of dangers which the most careful parent or nurse could not have observed or warded off? Has he not given you your rational powers? and is it not by him you have been favored with every opportunity of improving them? Has he not every day supplied your wants with an unwearied liberality, and added, with respect to many who will read this, the delicacies of life to its necessary supports?

Has he not "heard you cry when trouble came upon you?" (Job 27:9) and frequently appeared for your deliverance, when in the distress of nature you have called upon him for help? Has he not rescued you from ruin, when it seemed just ready to swallow you up; and healed your diseases, when it seemed to all about you, that the residue of your days was cut off in the midst? (Psal. 102:24) Or, if it has not been so, is not this long-continued and uninterrupted health, which you have enjoyed for so many years, to be acknowledged as an equivalent obligation?

Look around upon all your possessions, and say, what one thing have you in the world which his goodness did not give you, and which he hath not thus far preserved to you? Add to all this, the kind notice of his will which he hath sent you; the tender exhortations which he hath used with you, to bring you to a wiser and better temper; and the discoveries and gracious invitations of his Gospel which you have heard, and which you have despised; and then say, whether your rebellion has not been aggravated by the vilest ingratitude, and whether that aggravation can be accounted small? 9.

Again, if it be any aggravation of Sin to be committed against conscience, thy crimes, O sinner! have been so aggravated. Consult the records of it, and then dispute the fact if you can. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding;" (Job 32:8) and that understanding will act, and a secret conviction or being accountable to its Maker and Preserver is inseparable from the actings of it. It is easy to object to human remonstrances, and to give things false colorings before him; but the heart often condemns, while the tongue excuses.

Have you not often found it so? Has not conscience remonstrated against your past conduct, and have not these remonstrances been very painful too! I have been assured, by a gentleman of undoubted credit, that, when he was in the pursuit of all the gayest sensualities of life, and was reckoned one of the happiest of mankind, he has seen a dog come into the room where he was among his merry companions, and has groaned inwardly and said, "O! that I had been that dog!" And hast thou, O sinner, felt nothing like this?

Has thy conscience been so stupified, so "seared with a hot iron," (1 Tim. 4:2) that it has never cried out for any of the violences which have been done it? Has it never warned thee of the fatal consequences of what thou hast done in opposition to it? These warnings are, in effect, the voice of God; they are the admonitions which he gave thee by his vicegerent in thy breast. And when his sentence for thy evil works is executed upon thee in everlasting death, thou shalt hear that voice speaking to thee again in a louder tone and a severer accent than before; and thou shalt be tormented with its upbraiding through eternity, because thou wouldst not, in time, hearken to its admonitions. 10.

Let me add farther, if it be any aggravation that sin has been committed after God has been moving by his Spirit on the mind, surely your sin has been attended with that aggravation too. Under the Mosaic dispensation, dark and imperfect as it was, the Spirit strove with the Jews else Stephen could not have charged it upon them, that through all their generations "they had always resisted him." (Acts 7:51) Now, surely, we may much more reasonably apprehend that he strives with sinners under the Gospel.

And have you never experienced any thing of this kind, even when there has been no external circumstance to awaken you, nor any pious teacher near you? Have you never perceived some secret impulse upon your mind, leading you to think of religion, urging you to an immediate consideration or it, sweetly inviting you to make trial of it, and warning you, that you would lament this stupid neglect? O sinner, why were not these happy motions attended to? Why did you not, as it were, spread out all the sail of your soul to catch that heavenly, that favorable breeze?

But you have carelessly neglected it: you have overborne these kind influences. How reasonably then might the sentence have gone forth in righteous displeasure, "My Spirit shall no more strive." (Gen. 6:3) And indeed who can say that it is not already gone forth? If you feel no secret agitation of mind, no remorse, no awakening while you read such a remonstrance as this, there will be room, great room to suspect it. 11. There is indeed one aggravation more, which may not attend your guilt--I mean that of being committed against solemn covenant engagements: a circumstance which has lain heavy on the consciences of many, who perhaps in the main series of their lives have served God with great integrity.

But let me call you to think to what this is owing. Is it not that you have never personally made any solemn profession of devoting yourself to God at all--have never done any thing which has appeared to your own apprehension an act by which you have made a covenant with him, though you have heard so much of his covenant, though you have been so solemnly and so tenderly invited to it? And in this view, how monstrous must this circumstance appear, which at first was mentioned as some alleviation of guilt!

Yet I must add that you are not, perhaps, altogether so free from guilt on this head as you may at first imagine. Has your heart been, even from your youth, hardened to so uncommon a degree that you have never cried to God in any season of danger and difficulty? And did you never mingle vows with those cries? Did you never promise, that, if God would hear and help you in that hour of extremity, you would forsake your sins, and serve him as long as you lived? He heard and helped you, or you had not been reading these lines; and, by such deliverance, did as it were bind down your vows upon you; and therefore your guilt, in the violation of them, remains before him, though you are stupid enough to forget them.

Nothing is forgotten, nothing is overlooked by him; and the day will come, when the record shall be laid before you too. 12. And now, O sinner, think seriously with thyself what defence thou wilt make to all this. Prepare thine apology; call thy witnesses; make thine appeal from him whom thou hast thus offended, to some superior judge, if such there be. Alas! those apologies are so weak and vain, that one of thy fellow-worms may easily detect and confound them; as I will endeavor presently to show thee.

But thy foreboding conscience already knows the issue. Thou art convicted, convicted of the most aggravated offences. Thou "hast not humbled thine heart, but lined up thyself against the Lord of heaven," (Dan. 5:22,23) and "thy sentence shall come forth from his presence." (Psal. 17:2) Thou hast violated his known laws; thou hast despised and abused his numberless mercies; thou hast affronted conscience, his vicegerent in thy soul; thou hast resisted and grieved his Spirit; thou hast trifled with him in all thy pretended submissions; and, in one word, and that his own, "thou hast done evil things as thou couldst."

(Jer. 3:5) Thousands are no doubt already in hell whose guilt never equaled thine; and it is astonishing that God hath spared thee to read this representation of thy case, or to make any pause upon it. O waste not so precious a moment, but enter attentively, and as humbly as thou canst, into these reflections which suit a case so lamentable and so terrible as thine.

Confession of a Sinner convinced in general of his Guilt.

"O God! thou injured Sovereign, thou all-penetrating and Almighty Judge! what shall I say to this charge! Shall I pretend I am wronged by it, and stand on the defence in thy presence? I dare not do it; for 'thou knowest my foolishness, and none of my sins are hid from thee.' (Psal. 69:5) My conscience tells me that a denial of my crimes would only increase them, and add new fuel to the fire of thy deserved wrath. 'If I justify myself, mine own mouth will condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it will also prove me perverse;' (Job 9:20) 'for innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are,' as I have been told in thy name, 'more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me.' (Psal. 40:12) I am more guilty than it is possible for another to declare or represent.

My heart speaks more than any other accuser. And thou, O Lord, art much greater than my heart, and knowest all things. (1 John 3:20) "What has my life been but a course of rebellion against thee? It is not this or that particular action alone I have to lament. Nothing has been right in its principles, and views, and ends. My whole soul has been disordered. All my thoughts, my affections, my desires, my pursuits have been wretchedly alienated from thee. I have acted as if I had hated thee, who art infinitely the loveliest of all beings; as if I had been contriving how I might tempt thee to the uttermost, and weary out thy patience, marvelous as it is.

My actions have been evil, my words yet more evil than they! and, O blessed God, my heart, how much more corrupt than either! What an inexhausted fountain of sin has there been in it! A fountain of original corruption, which mingled its bitter streams with the days of early childhood; and which, alas! flows on even to this day, beyond what actions or words could express. I see this to have, been the case with regard to what I can particularly survey. But, oh! how many months and years have I forgotten, concerning which I only know this in the general, that they are much like those I can remember; except it be, that I have been growing worse and worse, and provoking thy patience more and more, though every new exercise of it was more and more wonderful.

"And how am I astonished that thy forbearance is still continued! it is because thou art 'God, and not man.' (Hos. 11:9) Had I, a sinful worm, been thus injured, I could not have endured it. Had I been a prince, I had long since done justice on any rebel whose crimes had borne but a distant resemblance to mine. Had I been a parent, I had long since cast off the ungrateful child who had made me such a return as I have all my life long been making to thee, O thou Father of my spirit!

The flame of natural affection would have been extinguished, and his sight and his very name would have become hateful to me. Why then, O Lord, am I not 'cast out from thy presence?' (Jer. 52:3) Why am I not sealed up under an irreversible sentence of destruction! That I live, I owe to thine indulgence. But, oh! if there be yet any way of deliverance, if there be yet any hope for so guilty a creature, may it be opened upon me by thy Gospel and thy grace! And if any farther alarm, humiliation, or terror be necessary to my security and salvation, may I meet them and bear them all! Wound my heart, O Lord, so that thou wilt but afterwards 'heal it;' and break it in pieces, if thou wilt but at length condescend to bind it up." (Hos.6:1)

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