

The Conviction We Need!

by Robert Wurtz II

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Holy Ghost conviction for genuine conversion and spiritual growth, and highlights the role of prayer and preaching in promoting revival.

Scripture: Genesis 6:3, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 29:1, Isaiah 29:9, Jeremiah 25:15, Matthew 3:8, John 16:8, Acts 2:37, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "True Conversion"

Description

Robert Wurtz II preaches on 'The Necessity of Holy Ghost Conviction,' emphasizing the crucial role of genuine conviction of sin by the Spirit of God for true conversion. He highlights the danger of relying on human methods over the moving of the Spirit in leading people to Christ. Wurtz discusses the need for repentance when God convicts, warning against delaying response to the Spirit's prompting. He delves into the profound impact of Holy Ghost conviction, which confronts individuals with their sin and leads to a real encounter with God.

Transcript

The Necessity of Holy Ghost Conviction

In order for any person to be genuinely CONVERTED they must first be genuinely CONVICTED of their sin by the Spirit of God. I personally believe that the lack of genuine conversions in our day can be traced directly back to a lack of genuine conviction of sin. The lack of conviction is the result of Christians having the mistaken notion that they can win people to Christ by their own methods and programs. Few still believe that it takes the moving of the Spirit of God to genuinely save a person from their sin. Most take it for granted that just as soon as they open their mouth to speak about salvation or the bible that the Holy Spirit is just going to automatically show up.

Ministers, ministering in their own power is one of the many great tragedies of our day. They lean upon their own abilities and knowledge and training- and less on the Spirit of God. This is evident in the absence of genuine conversions to Christ. For those who have experienced genuine Holy Ghost conviction, they have not merely heard a sermon about God- but are brought into a real encounter with Him. The reality of God comes home in the midst of great Holy Ghost conviction.

Apart from this conviction, the unbeliever may deceive themselves into believing that they are a good person and don't really need God. Apart from the moving of the Holy Spirit faith in Christ will not seem

real, and the sermon will seem like a bunch of talk.

When God Convicts- You MUST Repent!

Many have the mistaken notion that they will repent when THEY get ready. This is dangerous thinking because the Spirit of God will not always strive with man. Moreover, God will send people who continue to sin with a high hand a spirit of slumber. Thomas Shepherd writing in 1645 pens these words. "When the wills and affections of men drink at fountains of forbidden pleasure, God will cause them to experience spiritual drunkenness. When they insist on imbibing the things their hearts should be weaned from, things, which should be bitter to them, God will give them up to this. In this sense the Prophet calls the Kings, Priests and People, "The drunkards of Ephraim" (Isaiah 28:1; Jeremiah 25:15-18). The Lord puts His cup of just judgments into the hands of those he intends to destroy and bids them take their pleasure in sins. They lose all fear of death and judgment even when both are at their very doors."

John 6:44 reveals plainly that no one can come to the Father unless they are drawn of Him. The Spirit of God is striving with all of man to some degree. The intensity of this striving is greatly increased upon an individual when men and women travail in prayer for their soul. On the other hand, as stiff-necked sinners refuse God He will give them over to their sins. Isaiah 29:9 gives us a glimpse into this process. Here we read, "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger but not with strong drink. For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes." Thomas Shepherd comments again on this saying, "Sometimes it means spiritual judgments because of sin and therefore refers not so much to misery in general as to spiritual misery, when the Lord gives men up to a reprobate spirit... Jeremiah speaks of the calamity of the people in their being dashed one against another. Drunkenness prepares them for this misery." Every time you resist the Holy Ghost when He convicts of sin you are that much more difficult to reach because of the combination of your own hardness and God's response to your highhandedness.

Conviction- A Confrontation With God!

Conviction is God personally confronting you over you sin. Conviction in part is the illumination and revelation of a person's guilt before God. It is an added sense of the dreadfulness of your sin beyond that which is naturally produced in the conscience. The Holy Spirit came into this world to CONVINCe man of sin. Robert Murray M'Cheyne writes, "The most powerful sermon in the world can make nothing more than a natural impression; but when God works through it, the feeblest word makes a supernatural impression. Many a poor sermon has been the means by which God hath converted a soul. Children of God, O that you would pray night and day for the lifting up of the arm of God!" And when God 'raises His arm' to confront men and women in their sin- they cannot help but be bowed low.

The word of God will bare fruit on its own even if a minister were to get up and preach without seeking the Lord; but that fruit is nowhere near to the level that God's word can produce under the God given unction of the Holy Spirit. M'Cheyne continues, "Oh, brethren! Conviction of sin is no slight natural work upon the heart. There is a great difference between knowing that vinegar is sour, and actually tasting and feeling that it is sour. There is a great difference between knowing that fire will burn us, and actually feeling the pain of being burned. Just in the same way, there is all the difference in the world between knowing the dreadfulness of your sins and feeling the dreadfulness of your sins. It is all in vain that you read your Bibles and hear us preach, unless the Spirit use the words to give sense and feeling to your dead hearts. The plainest words will not awaken you as long as you are in a natural condition. If we could prove to you,

with the plainness of arithmetic, that the wrath of God is abiding on you and your children, still you would sit unmoved--you would go away and forget it before you reached your own door. Ah, brethren! He that made your heart can alone impress your heart. It is the Spirit that convinceth of sin."

This is why it is imperative that we yield to the Spirit of God when He is dealing with us. Genesis 6:3 tells us clearly that the Spirit of God will not always 'strive' with man. Charles Finney comments on this in his message titled, 'The Spirit Ceasing To Strive.' Here he writes, "It should always be understood that whenever the Spirit can really be said to "strive" with an individual, that individual must be resisting. But what is intended by his striving? This striving, then, I would observe, is not a physical striving, but a moral influence, persuading, reasoning and convincing." Moreover, Finney describes the great danger for those who continually resist. He continues, "One word more. When the Spirit strives men are in great danger of putting off submission day after day till at length the Spirit leaves them. They try to think about religion, but do not come to the point. Ah! They do not know the infinite danger they are in of being left amidst all this palaver (idle chattering). Ah! "While thy servant was busy here and there, behold the Spirit was gone." They must wait till they have done this thing or that thing, and thus they go on; day after day the Spirit strives with them till at length he takes his flight. You should reflect that every moment you are resisting, you are in infinite danger of his leaving you. "My Spirit shall not always strive." (Genesis 6:3)

Holy Ghost conviction is not a pleasant thing. It is the very revelation of your filth and iniquity in the eyes of God. Real Holy Ghost conviction moves beyond the emotions and attacks the will. It may weigh upon a person with such heaviness and agony that observing it carries a similar effect to watching a child take a spanking. In an age of humanism this is near unacceptable. When the weight of God's dealing settles down upon the people- many cannot handle it and will seek to uplift the atmosphere of the place where the sermon is going forth or the 'spirits' of the person being convicted. The humanistic way is to lift up a person who God has laid low under their sins. God has used great conviction to humble them and instead of God lifting them up ministers try to lift them up with various methods of turning their minds from the weight of their sin. It is as though they are trying to distract the person from the moving of the Holy Ghost. The great revivalists never did such a thing. They allowed God to do His work thoroughly. The revivalists took an approach like unto the method described by Ray Comfort, they preached law to show the people their crimes before God and when the people were humbled under the weight of their sin they offered them the Gospel.

Pray and Preach

Charles G. Finney understood that without the Spirit of God he could do nothing. He was helpless within himself to bring men and women to repentance and faith. But what he could do was pray and preach. He could pray until he prevailed with God and conviction of sin came. He could patiently prepare and preach. Just like the lawyer he studied to be, he would spend days or weeks annointedly bringing a case against the people as if they were both the defendant and the jury. When it was over with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit had compelled them to concur with the guilty verdict that God has passed down to them already.

Charles Finney utterly relied upon God when he went to the pulpit. He relied upon God to give him both the right words to speak and the unction with which to deliver them. The results were astonishing. It was not uncommon for the Spirit of God to come upon a person with such great power that they would fall from their seats or cry out in agony in the services. At times the people had to be stilled or the preaching could not continue for the crying.

Lessons From the Past

In the fall of 1827 the Second Great Awakening was well underway. Finney had been dealing with great resistance to the revival at New Lebanon while preaching there when a woman by the name of Miss S almost begged Finney to come to her town of Stephenson. Finally he was able to go and the enemy was greatly moved to try and stop this revival. Finney recounts, "Accordingly the next Sunday, after preaching the second time, one of the young converts at New Lebanon offered to take me up to Stephentown in his carriage. When he came in his buggy to take me, I asked him, "Have you a steady horse?" Oh yes!" he replied, "perfectly so;" and smiling, asked, "What made you ask the question?" "Because," I replied, "if the Lord wants me to go to Stephentown, the devil will prevent it if he can; and if you have not a steady horse, he will try to make him kill me." He smiled, and we rode on; and, strange to tell, before we got there, that horse ran away twice, and came near killing us. His owner expressed the greatest astonishment, and said he had never known such a thing before."

No doubt the devil knew that God was about to pour out his Spirit on this church that was near in shambles. The former pastor (Mr. B) of the church had backslidden and become an infidel. But there were a couple of women that were travailing in prayer for a move of God in the face of insurmountable opposition. God answered their prayer!

Finney recounts some of the events of the services as God began to move, "The spirit of prayer in the meantime had come powerfully upon me, as had been the case for some time with Miss S. The praying power so manifestly spreading and increasing, the work soon took on a very powerful type; so much so that the Word of the Lord would cut the strongest men down, and render them entirely helpless. I could name many cases of this kind. One of the first that I recollect was on Sunday, when I was preaching on the text, "God is love." There was a man by the name of J, a man of strong nerves, and of considerable prominence as a farmer, in the town. He sat almost immediately before me, near the pulpit. The first that I observed was that he fell, and writhed in agony for a few moments; but afterwards became still, and nearly motionless, but entirely helpless. He remained in this state until the meeting was out, when he was taken home. He was very soon converted, and became an effective worker, in bringing his friends to Christ." (End of quote)

One man was sitting in his seat unable to move the conviction was so great. Finney finally had to get up and go to him. There was another man on the other side of the pulpit during the same message that was so overpowered by the conviction that he was unable to leave. These were just some of the examples of what was happening.

Charles Finney had afterward made an appointment to preach in their schoolhouse. He writes, "On that street, and when I arrived the house was very much crowded. I took for my text: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." The Lord gave me a very clear view of the subject, and I was enabled to bring out the truth effectively. I told them that I understood that there was not a praying family in that whole district. The fact is; the town was in an awful state. The influence of Mr. B, their former minister, now an infidel, had borne its legitimate fruit; and there was but very little conviction of the truth and reality of religion left, among the impenitent in that town. This meeting that I have spoken of, resulted in the conviction of nearly all that were present, I believe, at the meeting."

As time went on the revival spread in that neighborhood; and that in one family, there were seventeen hopeful conversions. Finney recalls, "But there were several families in the town who were quite prominent

in influence, who did not attend the meetings. It seemed that they were so much under the influence of Mr. B, that they were determined not to attend. However, in the midst of the revival, this Mr. B died a horrible death; and this put an end to his opposition." Before it was all over God had opened a door to have nearly all those who would not attend the meetings to come and many of them had been hopefully saved.

The Revival at Wilmington

In conclusion of this lesson I would like to point out a situation that Charles Finney faced that is similar to what we see in our churches today. It happens that he had to deal with a group of theology students and others that were of the persuasion that people must wait on God to act sovereignly if there were to ever be a revival. This was not a view of God's sovereignty that we would likely hold to today, but one in which lent to fatalism and passiveness. It is similar to our day in this regard- that bad theology and beliefs can greatly hinder a revival. The traditions of men also hinder a move of God and pride or stubbornness is a great reason for it all. Ideas long held and methods long held can at times hinder the moving of God and snuff out a revival.

Charles Finney writes, "As soon as I could see my way clear to leave Stephentown, therefore, I went to Wilmington, and engaged in labors with Mr. Gilbert. I soon found that his teaching had placed the church in a position that rendered it impossible to promote a revival among them, till their views could be corrected. They seemed to be afraid to make any effort, lest they should take the work out of the hands of God. They had the oldest of the old-school views of doctrine; and consequently their theory was that God would convert sinners in His own time; and that therefore to urge them to immediate repentance, and in short to attempt to promote a revival, was to attempt to make men Christians by human agency, and human strength, and thus to dishonor God by taking the work out of His hands. I observed also, that in their prayers there was no urgency for an immediate outpouring of the Spirit, and that this was all in accordance with the views in which they had been educated."

Conviction on the Pastor!

Bad theology can aid in the enemies ability to snuff out all desire to see a move of God among men. We are told in scripture to pray and to take the Gospel to the world, but many are just "waiting on God." What it often amounts to is an excuse for laziness and a justification based on some pretense of piety. What is worse is when people hold views that they refuse to admit are wrong- when they know they are wrong. This would be a situation Finney would soon meet head on.

Finney continues, "It was plain that nothing could be done, unless Mr. Gilbert's view could be changed upon this subject. I therefore spent hours each day in conversing with him on his peculiar views. We talked the subject all over in a brotherly manner; and after laboring with him in this way for two or three weeks, I saw that his mind was prepared to have my own views brought before his people. The next Sabbath, I took for my text: "Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" I went thoroughly into the subject of the sinner's responsibility; and showed what a new heart is not, and what it is. I preached about two hours; and did not sit down till I had gone as thoroughly over the whole subject, as very rapid speaking would enable me to do, in that length of time. The congregation became intensely interested, and great numbers rose and stood on their feet, in every part of the house. The house was completely filled, and there were strange looks in the assembly. Some looked distressed and offended, others intensely interested. Not infrequently, when I brought out strongly the contrast between my own views, and the views in which they had been instructed, some laughed, some wept, some were manifestly

angry; but I do not recollect that anyone left the house. It was a strange excitement. In the meantime, Mr. Gilbert moved himself from one end of the sofa to the other, in the pulpit behind me. I could hear him breathe and sigh, and could not help observing that he was himself in the greatest anxiety. However, I knew I had him, in his convictions, fast; but whether he would make up his mind to withstand what would be said by his people, I did not know. But I was preaching to please the Lord, and not man. I thought that it might be the last time I should ever preach there; but purposed, at all events, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, on that subject, whatever the result might be."

So what happened with the pastor? What happened with the church? The church was very much in agreement with the message of Finney, but he was not out of the woods yet. I must here remark, that it would be a sad thing that God would have to raise up a whole generation of young preachers to replace those who refuse to minister the true Gospel for whatever reason. We see it in our day that humanism and secularism has so influenced preaching- that I'm afraid most have lost sight of what true preaching really is.

Finney later went to the house of the Pastor, Mr. Gilbert. He recounts, "When I arrived at Mr. Gilbert's, his wife accosted me as soon as I entered, by saying, "Mr. Finney, how dared you preach any such thing in our pulpit?" I replied, "Mrs. Gilbert, I did not dare to preach anything else; it is the truth of God." She replied, "Well, it is true that God was in justice bound to make an atonement for mankind. I have always felt it, though I never dared say it. I believed that if the doctrine preached by Mr. Gilbert was true, God was under obligation, as a matter of justice, to make an atonement, and to save me from those circumstances in which it was impossible for me to help myself, and from a condemnation which I did not deserve."

'New School' To Them- 'Old School' To Us

Just at this moment Mr. Gilbert entered. "There," said I, "Brother Gilbert, you see the results of your preaching, here in your own family;" and then repeated to him what his wife had just said. He replied, "I have sometimes thought that my wife was one of the most pious women that I ever knew; and at other times I have thought that she had no religion at all." "Why!" I exclaimed, "she has always thought that God owed her, as a matter of justice, the salvation provided in Christ; how can she be a Christian?" This was all said, by each of us, with the greatest solemnity and earnestness. Upon my making the last remark, she got up and left the room. The house was very solemn; and for two days, I believe, I did not see her. She then came out clear, not only in the truth, but in the state of her own mind; having passed through a complete revolution of views and experience. From this point the work went forward. The truth was worked out admirably by the Holy Spirit. Mr. Gilbert's views became greatly changed; and also his style of preaching, and manner of presenting the Gospel. So far as I know, until the day of his death, his views remained corrected, 'new school' as opposed to the 'old school' views which he had before maintained.

Remarks:

In closing I would like to simply ask; are you willing to return to the old path of preaching with Holy Ghost conviction? Are you willing to fast and pray until the Spirit of God descends upon the congregation with great power and conviction? Are you willing to see God confront the unrepentant personally for their sins? Can you bare the weight of a solemn service for hours or days?

What level of conviction is needed in our day of declension? How much prayer and fasting will it take to raise to the hand of God's Holy Ghost conviction to meet 'handily'- with the highhandedness of our times?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-wurtz-ii/the-conviction-we-need-2/>

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