

The Holy Spirit the Convicter

by Roy Hession

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, revealing the truth about ourselves as sinners, and requires a response of honesty and confession in order to bring us to repentance and cleansing.

Scripture: John 16:8

Topics: "Conviction of Sin", "Role of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Roy Hession emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the Convicter, whose primary task is to reveal our sins and lead us to repentance. He explains that the Holy Spirit shines the light of truth on our hearts, exposing self-deception and urging us to respond honestly to our shortcomings. Hession highlights that true confession, without reservations, is essential for receiving forgiveness and cleansing from sin. He illustrates that the Spirit's conviction is not limited to specific times but is a continuous process, requiring our willingness to see and acknowledge our faults. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit advocates for Christ, reminding us that our sins are not just ethical failures but acts that have dethroned Jesus, calling us to a deeper relationship with Him.

Transcript

FOR simplicity's sake we can divide the Holy Spirit's work as the Advocate of the Lord Jesus into two.

First of all, He comes to reprove or convict us of sin and bring us to repentance. Jesus said, 'When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin ... because they believe not on me' (John 16. 8-9). Three times in the well-known chapters in John on the Holy Spirit (chapters 14, 15 and 16), He is called by the Lord Jesus 'the Spirit of truth'. Truth here does not mean a body of doctrine, but the revelation of facts as they really are. This means that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the truth about ourselves as sinners. Silently and inexorably He is shining the white light of truth all the time on the thoughts and reactions of our hearts, the words of our lips and the deeds of our hands. Everything which is of self-centredness and sin is revealed as such, no matter how we dress it up and rationalise it. He is concerned to shatter the realm of illusion about ourselves in which we have been living, and bring us to true self-knowledge. His great concern is that we should know the truth for He is the Spirit of truth. The response He requires is simply the response of honesty which says 'Truth, Lord' (Matt. 15. 27) to all He shows us about ourselves, without self-excuse or hiding anything. This is what is meant by 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts' in Psalms 51. The same phrase, 'Thou desirest' comes a little further down the same Psalm, only this time it is 'Thou desirest not sacrifice'. Put these two together and you discover the

message of the Psalm, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice but truth in the inward parts'. So often activity, even Christian service, can be a cloke to hide the truth both from ourselves and from others. The Holy Spirit is against all such self-deception and sham. It is truth and not sacrifice which He requires in such a case.

This is what is meant too by the phrase 'doeth truth' in John 3.21. There we read that whereas he that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd, it is he that does truth who comes to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. We would have thought that the opposite of 'doing evil' would be doing good, but not with God. With Him the opposite of doing evil is 'doing truth', that is honesty about our evil. Before we ever try to do good where we have done evil, He wants a full exposure to Him of that evil, a simple saying of 'Truth, Lord' to what He is showing us. He would much rather have us turn back the past leaves than turn over a new leaf, for when we turn over a new leaf we of necessity hide the former leaf, and when sin is hidden the Blood of Jesus cannot cleanse us nor we ourselves be brought to peace. The promise of forgiveness and cleansing is conditioned on simply confessing our sins (1 John 1. 9). We do not have to ask for forgiveness if we have confessed our sins. We get it on the spot the moment we confess. But all the asking in the world will not bring peace to our hearts if there is a reservation in our confession. This is so not only between man and God but it is also seen to be ineffectual between man and man. Who of us have not found ourselves saying to another in our attempt to get right with him something like, 'Please forgive me if I have wronged you' and wondered why it did nothing to heal the breach. There is no 'if'; let us confess we have wronged him, and we may be surprised at the speed at which the grace of God reaches us, and very often the forgiveness of man too.

This then is the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the shining of the light of truth, and the response of truth which is required of us. And this shining of the light of truth is going on all the time, as silently and as inexorably as the shining of the sun. It is surely inconceivable that the Holy Spirit only convicts of sin at special seasons of spiritual awakening, and is content to let us off at other times. There is no 'out of season' time for the Holy Spirit. If we have not been conscious of conviction of sin, it is not because He has not been convicting, but rather because we have not been willing to hear and to see. It is easy to avoid conviction of sin, for the Spirit's voice is gentle. Only those who are eager to be convicted will hear His voice, and they only will be eager because they hunger for the Lord Jesus and know that this is the only way by which they will be freed from the things that separate them from Him, whom they have begun to love.

Sometimes we are in a condition where no conviction seems to come to us and we think all must be well. Then we might meet some other Christians who are praising God with a fresh testimony of how the Spirit has convicted them on some particular point and the Blood of Jesus has cleansed them at that point. We look on with wonder, feeling that this is not our experience. Is it that we have got beyond the need of being dealt with about such things, or is it that we are just not seeing them as they are? So often it is the latter. And the reason why we are not seeing these, what we may call smaller things, is that there is some larger, more basic matter we are not willing for God to deal with. Let us imagine, to illustrate, a high wall, which casts a strong shadow in the bright sunlight. In that shadow the many weeds growing there are hardly noticed. But when that large wall is removed, the light then shows up the smaller weeds, each one casting its own shadow, and then they can be removed. To 'walk in the light' with God (1 John 1.7) simply means to say yes to what that light reveals. This may mean the removing of some very real barrier between us and God. But that may not lead to less conviction of sin but rather more, for now the Lord can show us the smaller day-to-day things that spring up so easily from our fallen natures. But conviction is always followed

by cleansing if we are quick to say, 'Yes, Lord'.

Notice, however, that in this work of conviction the Holy Spirit is all the time acting as the Advocate of the Lord Jesus, which means that He always speaks to us of our sin in relation to Christ. He does not convict us of sin as something merely unethical or contrary to the ten commandments, but as that which has dethroned the Lord Jesus and caused His death upon the Cross. The Spirit is not content till we have been helped to look upon Him whom we have pierced and mourned for Him. Indeed the nature of sin of which He convicts us is described as 'of sin because they believe not on Me.' This suggests that the larger all inclusive sin is unbelief, the unwillingness to avail ourselves of the redemption of Christ, and that, in turn, is because of our stiff-necked obstinacy and hardness of heart. He has not been dealing with us very long over something before the issue shifts from the sin in question to the unbroken attitude, the obstinacy and the self-justification we manifest over His dealings.

What an illustration we have of the Spirit's conviction and of our unwillingness in the story of the servants of Naaman pleading with their master when he was unwilling to obey the prophet's word to 'go and wash in Jordan seven times!' He was willing for anything but that. That would have meant stripping, and the extent of his leprosy being seen. But his servants came and pleaded with him so tenderly (for they loved him much), 'My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?' (2 Kings 5. 13). How glad he was that he yielded to their gentle entreaties, for his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child. Even so the Holy Spirit holds us gently to the one thing we do not want to do because of our pride, 'Go and wash at the foot of the Cross of Christ.' We fear the stripping that repentance involves us in and that we shall be seen for what we really are. But how glad we are when we do yield, for we emerge cleansed and made whole through the Blood of Christ.

It is clear, then, that in the Spirit's contending with us, He is acting all the time as the Advocate of the Lord Jesus, only desiring that we should bow our heads to Him and acknowledge Him King on the new point at issue.

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