

WHAT IS HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION?

JOHN 16:7-11 • TV084A

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John 16:7-11

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

I’m going to speak to you today on the subject: **“WHAT IS HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION?”**

And I want you to open your Bible to the book of **John chapter 16** and I will be reading from my texts, **verses 7-11**. That’s **John 16:7-11**.

And our subject today and I think most of you will be interested in this and I trust that I will be enabled of the Holy Spirit to help you on the subject: **“WHAT IS HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION?”**

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Now let's read the text in **John 16:7**: *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; (now this is our Lord speaking, speaking to his disciples before Calvary, before the crucifixion, before he died for our sins) I tell you the truth. It is expedient, it is necessary for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come. But if I depart I will send him, (the Comforter, the Holy Spirit) unto you:*

“And when he is come he will convict (or convince) the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; of sin because they believe not on me, of righteousness, because I go to my Father and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

Now my friend, what our Lord calls salvation, what the Master calls the new birth, eternal life, is more than just giving mental agreement or mental assent to religious facts; salvation is much more than that.

And then salvation is much more than a reformation of life. The Pharisees had that. They reformed their lives but they did not know God for salvation is more than just reforming your life, as we like to say, “Turning over a new leaf.”

And then salvation is more than performing certain religious duties, going through religious ceremonies and taking part in religious ordinances such as baptism or communion or the Lord's Table. Salvation's much more than going to church on Sunday and taking part in religious activities.

And salvation is a lot more than an affiliation with a religious organization or a religious denomination. A man is not saved because he is religious or because he is moral or because he is a theologian or because he is part of a religious organization.

According to the Master, according to our Lord Jesus Christ salvation is a living union with a living Lord, *“It is to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”* And this is affective by the Holy Spirit.

And salvation is a new birth. That's what Christ said, *“You must be born again.”* And Paul said, *“If any man be in Christ he's a new creature.”* And this new birth called regeneration, quickening, an awakening, a new creation and is effective by the Holy Spirit. We are born of the Spirit and born of God.

And then salvation is a true knowledge of the true God. It's not just to worship a God or some God or any God or to have a God or be sincere in your worship of a God; it is to know the true God.

That's what David is talking about when he said: *“As the deer panteth for the water brooks so panteth (or hungers) my soul for thee the living God, the true God. There is but one God and one Mediator between God and men and that's the man Christ Jesus.”* So, salvation is to have a living union with that living God, to know the true God.

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And then salvation is the life and nature of God restored unto us having lost that nature in the Garden of Eden because of sin. We have that nature restored to us by the Spirit of God in regeneration.

That's what salvation is. Salvation is to have the life and nature of God restored to us by the Holy Spirit; by the Holy Spirit's work and by Holy Spirit conviction; that's what we're talking about, Holy Spirit regeneration, the power of God's Spirit in salvation. That's our subject today.

Now, if a man misses this, if he misses Holy Spirit conviction, if he misses the miraculous, indwelling, quickening power of the Holy Spirit in conviction; he's going to miss repentance.

Paul said that; he said: "I never would have known sin if the law had not said, *'thou shalt not covet,'* if the Spirit of God had not brought the law to my understanding, called it to my heart." We never would have understood what sin is and we never will understand what sin is if the Holy Spirit doesn't reveal it to us. And if we don't know what sin is, how can we repent of sin?

So, if a man misses Holy Spirit conviction he's going to miss repentance. And our Lord said, *"Except ye repent you'll perish."* And then if a man misses repentance he's going to miss faith.

We can never turn to Christ unless we turn from our idols. *"No man can serve two masters."* You can't believe if you haven't repented and you can't repent if you haven't believed. Repentance and faith go together. Where you find one you find the other.

Someone said repentance and faith is like a sheet of paper; it has two sides. We turn from our idols to the living God. So, if a man misses Holy Spirit conviction he's going to miss repentance.

And if he misses repentance he's going to miss true faith. And if he misses faith he's going to miss Christ because the Scripture says, *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life and he that believeth not the Son of God shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

Our Lord said, *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life."* And when He sent His disciples out to preach He said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*

"Without faith it's impossible to please God." So, if you miss faith you'll miss Christ. And if you miss Christ; now listen to this, if you miss Christ you will miss heaven because heaven is the abode of Christ, heaven is the kingdom of Christ, and heaven is the dwelling place of Christ.

And heaven is ours because we are in Christ. That's the reason we are heirs of heaven and heirs of eternal life because Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. We are in Him and what He has we have. Paul called us: *"Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."*

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So, if I miss Holy Spirit conviction, I'm going to miss repentance. I'll have nothing of which to repent. If I miss repentance I'm going to miss faith because I can't turn to Christ if I don't turn from my idols and my false god.

And if I miss faith I'll miss Christ. And if I miss Christ I'll miss heaven because heaven is the abode of Christ. He said to the thief, *"Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."*

Paul said, *"To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."* Heaven is to be in Christ, it is to be with Christ, it is to be a joint-heir with Christ. And Paul again said: *"I have a desire to part and be with Christ which is far better."*

So do you see the necessity of Holy Spirit conviction? It is absolutely essential. The Holy Spirit must perform a work for us if we are to be redeemed, if we are to be restored, if we are to be regenerated, and if we are to be saved. We are going to have to be an object of the Holy Spirit's powerful and miraculous work.

All right; let's look at something else now: the Holy Spirit, this Holy Spirit conviction of sin, this Holy Spirit conviction of our inability is not the goal. Now, don't make it the goal; some people do, some people look for an experience.

We're not looking for an experience; we are looking for a relationship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit conviction is necessary; it's essential, but it is not the end and it is not the goal. If I attain unto Holy Spirit conviction, if I'm made an object of Holy Spirit conviction; that's not the end, that's the means of grace, just like the Word of God, just like the preaching of the Gospel. These are means of grace.

The end or goal of all means of grace is to bring us to Christ. That's the goal and that's the object that brings us to the Lord Jesus Christ who said, *"Come unto me and I'll give you rest."*

There's no rest in the law. There's no rest in Holy Spirit conviction. There's no rest in an experience. There's no rest in a mourner's bench. There's no rest in feeling my guilt; the rest is in Christ. That's where the peace is. He said, *"My peace I give unto you."*

So, Holy Spirit conviction while it is vital and while it is necessary and while it is a means of grace, it is not the end, it is not the goal, it is not the object of God's Spirit just to make you miserable; it's to bring you to rest in Christ.

He said, *"Blessed are they that mourn; they shall be comforted."* Don't be content to mourn. Don't be content until you are comforted. *"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be filled."* Don't be content to hunger only or to thirst only; ask God to give you the filling, the filling of Christ.

Listen to this now, four things; this is important:

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A man may be a chosen vessel unto God like Saul of Tarsus but that man is not saved until he comes to faith in Christ.” Saul wrote; he said: *“We were children of wrath even as others. We were fulfilling the lust of our flesh, the desires of the mind, and the lust of the eyes:*

We were following the prince of the power of the air just like everybody else and God quickened us and awakened us and brought us to faith in Christ. That’s when we were saved.

And then a man may tremble before the Holy Law of God like Israel trembled at Sinai, but until that man is brought to faith in Christ, to receive Christ, he’s not saved. He may be a chosen vessel, he may tremble before the law, but we must be brought to rest in Christ, to trust in Him, to enter into Him by faith.

A man may hear the true prophet of God. He may hear the true preacher of the Gospel like the Ethiopian Eunuch who heard Phillip. But that man is not restored, he is not saved, until he rests in Christ, or until he comes to saving faith.

And then a man may undergo deep, personal, conviction of sin, like the Publican in the temple who cried: *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* But that man is not saved until he rests in Christ.

You see, election or conviction, or the preaching of the Gospel, or an experience of mourning over sin, is not the end. Those are means of grace. Those are means that God uses to bring us to salvation, to rest in Christ.

Christ is our salvation. And we must never stop short of a willing, loving, continuing faith in Christ. That’s what the Holy Spirit is doing in saving God’s people. He’s bringing us to rest in Christ.

Paul said something about that in **Galatians 1:15**; he said, *“God who separated me from my mother’s womb, (but I wasn’t saved from my mother’s womb), and called me by his grace, (but I wasn’t saved just by the Holy Spirit’s call); he was pleased to reveal his Son in me.”*

Oh now, that’s when I came to assurance and confidence. That’s when I came to rest is when God revealed his Son in me and I came to rest in Christ. I came to trust Him because only Christ can justify us before God.

Only Christ can cleanse and put away our sins and our guilt. Only Christ can free us from the curse and penalty of the law. Only Christ can speak peace to our troubled soul. Only Christ can make us accepted and robe us in His righteousness, and seat us in victory at the right hand of God, only Christ.

I want to lay that foundation before I get to answer in the answering this question; what is Holy Spirit conviction?” Holy Spirit conviction is vital, essential, and necessary.

Holy Spirit conviction is not the end, it’s not the goal, and it’s not the object of a work of grace.

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The goal and end and object of a work of grace is to bring you and me to rest in Christ, to trust in Christ, to believe in Christ, and to live in Christ.

All right, let's look at our text again now in **John chapter 16:7**; the Lord Jesus said: *"It is expedient; (that word means essential, it is necessary) for you that I go away."*

Now, in these verses and in others, when our Lord talks about going away; He's talking about His death. He's talking about the crucifixion, He's talking about dying on the cross; that's what He's talking about.

He said that over here in **John 14:1-3**; He said to the disciples, they were troubled, He told them He was going away, that He was going to be killed, and they were troubled and filled with sorrow, and He said, *"Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions and if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*

By His death; that's how He prepared heaven for us, by dying for us, by cleansing our sins, by making us Sons of God, by justifying us before the Holy Law and righteousness of God.

And then in **John 16:5** He said, *"I go my way unto him that sent me."* So, when our Lord talks about going away He's talking about his death on the cross, His burial and His resurrection. And His going away, His death is necessary for about four reasons, more than that, but here are four that I'm going to give you:

First of all: He goes to open for us a way into the Holiest of all, into the presence of God!

We have no way unto the presence of God except through Christ. He said: *"I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."* That's the way to God; it's by the way of the cross.

They wrote a song about that:

**"The way of the cross leads home
There's no other way but this,
I'll never get sight of the gates of life
If the way of the cross I miss."**

So Christ has gone to make a way for us into the Holiest of all, into the presence of God!

Secondly: And then He goes away to take possession of heaven in our stead, to enter in and possess the land for His people and preparing a place for us!

Thirdly: Then He goes to the Father's right hand to intercede for us!

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Christ is our Intercessor. He's our Advocate. He's our lawyer; He pleads our case. He presents His wounds, He presents His blood, and He presents His obedience. He pleads not our merit, He pleads His. He pleads not our righteousness, He pleads His. So, He goes to intercede.

Fourthly: Then He goes to make an effectual atonement for us. One old writer said, "To transact all saving business between God and the sinner. He's gone to transact all saving business between God and the sinner"

Now, notice the next thing; He says: "*It's expedient for you that I go away. If I go not away, if I die not, the Holy Spirit will not come, the Comforter will not come.*" Now, this is a fact and if you will think about it a moment you'll see how true it is and it's very easy to understand what I'm about to say; Christ said, "If I don't die on the cross, if I don't go away, the Holy Spirit will not come."

Now here's the reason that He will not come, if Christ does not die, if Christ does not honor God's Law, if Christ does not honor God's justice and satisfy it then there's nothing for the Holy Spirit to do if He comes, there's no work for Him to perform as far as we're concerned. He has nothing to bring.

He would have no Gospel to reveal if Christ doesn't die. He would have no blood to sprinkle if Christ does not die. He would have no salvation to apply if Christ does not die. He would have no righteousness to reveal if Christ does not die.

He would have no comfort to give. Why have a comforter if He can't comfort? Well, then our comfort is that Christ died for our sins; that's the comfort and that's the only comfort. Christ Jesus puts away all of our iniquities and reconciles us to God. That's our comfort.

He said: "*If I go not away the Comforter will not come.*" There's no reason for Him to come; He has nothing to do, no blood to sprinkle, no salvation to apply, no righteousness to reveal, no comfort to give. "*But, when he comes, (and He has come), he will convince the world of sin.*"

Now, what is Holy Spirit conviction? Perhaps we can best answer that question by telling you first of all what it's not and then telling you what it is.

First of all: Well, Holy Spirit conviction I know this, it is not just the troubling of the natural conscience.

That's not Holy Spirit conviction because every man has a conscience. Every man's conscience is troubled to an extent, to a degree, when he does wrong. Every person's conscience is troubled, so, this special regenerating, awakening, quickening, Holy Spirit conviction is not just a troubling of the natural conscience.

Secondly: Holy Spirit conviction is not just a head knowledge of the fact that sin is wrong. It's not just the head knowledge; it's not just to be convinced that sin is wrong

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I think that just about everybody knows sin is wrong and so that's not Holy Spirit conviction. If a man says: "Well, I know sin's wrong;" well that doesn't mean that you have Holy Spirit conviction; I expect everybody knows sin is wrong.

Thirdly: Then Holy Spirit conviction is not just to give assent or mental agreement to what the Bible says about sin.

I think that just about everybody would do that. I think that everybody knows it's wrong to kill, and wrong to steal, and wrong to curse, and wrong to lie, and wrong to bear false witness, and wrong to commit adultery, and wrong to take God's name in vain. Most people know right from wrong.

So this is not Holy Spirit conviction just because a fellow knows he's a sinner, just because a fellow knows what the Bible says about sin, and just because a fellow knows right from wrong, and just because a fellow says "Well, I agree that these things ought not to be done." That's not Holy Spirit conviction.

First of all: Well, what is it? True Holy Spirit conviction that leads to repentance and leads to faith and leads a sinner to rest in Christ, it is to personally, individually, to feel and experience the bitterness and the wretchedness of my own guilt and my own sin.

Now, it's one thing to know that vinegar is sour. It's another thing to taste it. And that's the difference; in real Holy Spirit conviction and nominal law conviction. Under nominal law conviction we know that sin is evil.

For when the Holy Spirit does a work of grace in a man's heart he doesn't only know that sin is bitter; he tastes it, he feels it, he experiences it, he personally is made aware of the bitterness and the guilt, and the "*exceeding sinfulness,*" Paul said of sin. It's a personal revelation and it comes home with real inward experience.

Secondly: Holy Spirit conviction is a real sense of the fact that my sins are against God!

Now, most everybody knows that they've done this person wrong or that person wrong or another person wrong but Holy Spirit conviction reveals the fact to me that my sins are against God.

That's what David said; "*Lord; my sins are ever before me. Against thee and thee only have I sinned.*" Now, a man under Holy Spirit conviction when he grieves over his sins, whether he's caught or not, whether he's discovered or not, whether he's exposed or not; he grieves over the fact that his sins are against God. "*That's Godly sorrow that worketh repentance.*"

Thirdly: And then real Holy Spirit conviction; is a real sense of the justice and righteousness of God in condemning and punishing my sins.

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Now, let me ask you some personal questions here and you'll know whether or not you have been made an object of Holy Spirit conviction:

First of all: Would God be just to condemn you, judge you, and cast you out of His presence? Would he be just? How do you answer that, yes or no? Would God be just?

Now if you've been made an object of Holy Spirit conviction your answer is "yes he would." My sins are worthy of death. My sins are worthy of condemnation. My sins are so real to me and they are so obvious to me and they are so critically against God that I ought to be condemned.

Secondly: Do I deserve to be an object of God's wrath or an object of God's mercy, yes or no, which?

Do I deserve to be an object of God's wrath? Do I deserve to be an object of God's wrath or His mercy? Well, if you're an object of Holy Spirit conviction you'll say: "I deserve God's wrath for *"the wages of sin is death"* and my sins ought to be punished. My sins are worthy of eternal condemnation."

That's what Job said; *"Lord behold; I'm vile, I'm vile."* That's what Isaiah said; *"Woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips."* That's what David said: *"O God against thee have I sinned."* That's what Peter said: *"Lord; depart from me for I am a sinful man."*

"Now, if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive us. But he that covereth his sin shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy" for Holy Spirit conviction is a conviction of the real sense of God's justice and righteousness in condemning me.

Fourth: I'll tell you something else about Holy Spirit conviction; it takes a three-fold direction or course.

First of all: If you are an object of Holy Spirit conviction God will show you your sinful nature, that's right; He will show you the nature of sin, that's the root of sin, that's the thing within me which produces the products of sin.

And then he will not only convince you of the root of sin and the nature of sin; that's what Paul was talking about in **Romans 7** when he said: *"I find the law present with me that when I would do good evil is present, when I would do good I find the law, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to sin."* That's the nature of sin with which I was born.

Secondly: And then Holy Spirit conviction takes this course; it convicts us of the actual commitment of sin or the expression of sin, and that's (s-i-n-s)

That's what I've said and that's what I've done and that's what I've thought and that's what I performed, you see. That's the expression of sin.

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Not only that; but Holy Spirit conviction convinces us of the totality of sin “*that even my righteousness’s are filthy rags.*” Even the best prayer I ever prayed has sin in it. And the most righteous work that I’ve ever performed has sin in it. And the best day of my life has been a day of flesh and sin. “*And in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*”

That’s what our Lord’s saying; “*When the Holy Spirit has come he will convince men of sin and of righteousness because I go to my Father.*” This righteousness is the perfect righteousness of Christ which we don’t have, which God requires, which we must have if we’re to be saved.

And he convinces us of judgment because “*the prince of this world is judged.*” Someone said, “I know my sins are pardoned, I know my sins are put away, yet I feel in my being the motions of sin and yea, the presence of sin. Will Satan someday rise up to condemn me?” No; he’s been judged and he’s been put away.

What is Holy Spirit conviction? Do you now know!