

The Spirit's convicting work

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[0 : 00] John's Gospel, chapter 16, and reading at verse 8, referring to the Comforter, when he is come, the Holy Spirit, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, of sin because they believe not in me, righteousness because I go to my Father and ye see me no more, of judgment because the Prince of this world is judged.

Some folk think that religion is just a matter of good works, of trying your best, of doing what you can.

And maybe you think you're doing not too badly. It's the natural religion. It's the obvious. It's what everybody thinks.

I go to church. I say my prayers. I'm kind to people. I help people. I keep the commandments. I keep the Sabbath day. I don't tell lies or steal.

I'm a good living person. I'm just as good as anyone else. I'm better than many another person. I think I'll be all right. I hope I'll be all right.

[2 : 02] The vast majority of people in the world believe that. And a good number of free church people as well. Some of you tonight, although you might not admit it, you too are trusting in your own goodness to get to heaven.

You think you're doing quite well. You're trying your best. And you hope in that way to please God, to placate his righteousness, and to get a place in heaven.

But what you need is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in order to show you your sin, to make you feel your sin and your guilt and the wrath of God which is against you.

Without the Holy Spirit, you will go on all your days complacent in your own goodness until on the judgment day it strikes you like a hammer on your head that you're unrighteous and a sinner and on the way to hell.

You need the convicting work of the Spirit. Now there are others, and they believe in the need to be converted and the need that you have of faith in Christ and that the only way of salvation is by repenting and believing in Jesus.

[3 : 49] But they regard it as something that they can do. Something they can do anytime. Whenever they want, they can turn to the Lord.

Whenever they wish, they can make their peace with God. It's something they do. They let Christ into their hearts. Christ can't come in until you open the door.

You are in command. You are in control. You can be converted anytime you like. But that's not true either.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Until you're born again, you're flesh.

And everything you do is fleshly. And the only way to be converted is to be born of the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 52] You need the Spirit to convict you of sin, to reprove you of sin, to reprove you of righteousness, and to reprove you of judgment to come.

Why are we seeing so few conversions in our own day? Here in the sky or throughout Scotland.

Why are there so few conversions?

The reason is obvious. Because the Holy Spirit is largely withdrawn. The Holy Spirit is not working. He is not convicting people of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

And therefore they're not being converted. The Spirit can convert people whenever he likes. And that's why it's so important for you and me to pray for the Holy Spirit.

that God would pour out his Spirit upon us so that we would see not people marching merrily on in their self-righteousness and going down to the pit.

[6 : 04] Or see people marching merrily on in their complacency, thinking they can turn to the Lord and be converted when they like.

so that we would see men and women struck down with a concern of soul, convicted of their sinfulness and of the wrath of God, aware of their lack of righteousness and that their only hope is in Jesus Christ.

Oh, that we would pray then for the Spirit to come in power. Is that not what our meetings next weekend are all about? Meetings particularly about revival because don't we need revival? Are we not so lifeless and so spiritually dead, so hard-hearted, so cold spiritually, so worldly, so carried away with the things of this world?

We see so few conversions, we see so little happening. Should we not pray and pray earnestly that the Lord would pour out His Holy Spirit upon us as He did in days gone by in this island and in other islands and in other places when a mighty work of God's Spirit was performed and multitudes were turned from sin unto God.

[7 : 43] Oh, Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years. Don't wait for some future date, but come now in the very middle of the years.

Come now and bring new life to Your church. Come now, Lord, and set us Christians on fire for You. Come, Lord, and convict sinners of their sinful condition and make them to cry for mercy just as it was on the day of Pentecost when, through the preaching of the inexperienced preacher Peter, 3,000 souls cried out, men and brethren, what must we do?

What must we do to be saved? In the passage before us, Christ is telling of His departure. He is going to leave the world. For three years, He has been going up and down the land of Palestine preaching, performing miracles, calling people to repentance and calling them to enter into His kingdom and meeting sometimes, very often indeed, with very little response.

But now He says, I go away. And He says, it is expedient for you that I go away. It's necessary because if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.

[9 : 25] And this is what you need, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. But if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And Christ departs via the cross of Calvary, finishing the atoning work, He ascends up on high.

And 50 days after His resurrection, He sends the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, on the day of Pentecost.

If I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, the Holy Spirit will reprove or convict or convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

The Holy Spirit has come and the Holy Spirit is in sky. And the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of one here and one there.

We would love to see the Spirit working in more hearts. And we would love to see the Spirit more powerfully working in the hearts of those in whom He is working.

[10 : 40] But we must rejoice that the Spirit is here and the Spirit has not forsaken us. But let us cry, O Spirit of Jehovah, come and work again more powerfully, more dramatically, more effectively and efficiently, more savingly in the lives of the people of Portree and the people of Skye and the people of Scotland and the people of 1994.

We see here the Spirit's work set before us under three headings. Reproving the world of sin, reprovng the world of righteousness and reprovng the world of judgment to come.

Let's look at these three points tonight and see what we can learn from them. First, the Holy Spirit reproves or convinces the world of sin.

What's the biggest problem in evangelism today? What is the difficulty? Why do we find it so hard to evangelize?

Why is it so difficult to get an audience? Because people don't feel sin.

[12 : 27] sin. They're unaware of their sinfulness and they don't feel their guilt and they don't feel the wrath of God which is coming upon them.

There is a lack of conviction of sin. People don't feel guilty or afraid. Why? Why is there such a lack of conviction of sin?

for one thing because there's an ignorance of God's law and people think that they are keeping God's law when they're not. There's an ignorance of God's law but also people are experts in justifying themselves and in making excuses for their sinful works.

and further sadly in so much preaching and in so much pulpit teaching there has been such a stress upon the love of God that people forget that God is angry too with sinners.

People forget that there's wrath in God there's such a stress upon the love of God oh glorious love wonderful love the love that sent Christ into the world to die on the cross for sinners but they don't ask the question why did Christ suffer so much why was it expedient for him to go through Gethsemane and Golgotha why the blood and the sweat and the tears and the death the agony because our God is a consuming fire a consuming fire burning hating sin who will in no wise pardon the guilty a God who is angry with sinners every day and people forget that and they think [14 : 45] God is some soft sentimental being that's growing blind in his old age and a bit dottery and mellowing and he won't mind although you break his commandments and although you transgress his ordinances he doesn't mind though you go astray he doesn't care but God does care I am the same I change not that's what he says the God of judgment the God of wrath the God who hates sin what we need today is the Holy Spirit to direct arrows of conviction to penetrate the armor of excuses and ignorance and unbelief with which men and women surround themselves and there's some of you and you've got armor plating around you which is terribly thick you've heard the gospel for so many years and you're experts are turning aside every word of entreaty of command of pleading and of prompting that you hear calling you to repentance and to faith in

Christ I love the story of Micaiah the Lord's prophet it you remember how Jehoshaphat and Ahab were planning to go to fight against the Syrians at Ram of Gilead and Jehoshaphat said is there not a prophet of the Lord of whom we will inquire whether this is a proper venture for us and so Micaiah was called I hate him said Ahab because he always speaks evil of me what do you say Micaiah Micaiah told Ahab in no uncertain terms that if he went to Ram of Gilead he would die there take him away said Ahab take him away to the prison and feed him on bread of affliction miserable diet until I come back victorious from the war and off

Ahab went to fight against the Syrians with the words of Micaiah ringing in his ear if you come back from Ram of Gilead I have not spoken the word of the Lord and Micaiah is carted off to prison and so Ahab and Jehoshaphat go out into the battle and Ahab says to Jehoshaphat you dress yourself up in your royal robes but I'll just go in ordinary armor so that people won't know who I am the Syrians they won't know Jehoshaphat went out in his royal robes and the Syrians when they saw him they thought aha there's there's the king of Israel there's Ahab so they made a special attack upon Jehoshaphat and Jehoshaphat fled for his life and there was Ahab doing quite well fighting away in the battle everything was going great for him and then those who had been chasing Jehoshaphat returned and one of them drew a bow at a venture had a shot in the dark at the Israelites but oh it wasn't a shot in the dark that arrow went like a guided missile right through the air and it found out the one soldier that it had to find out ah but Ahab was covered in armor it made no difference the arrow found the chink in the armor and penetrated that chink and wounded Ahab mortally you see how the Lord works there's no defending yourself from God's arrows once they start flying and friends what we need tonight and what we need next weekend and what we need to see and portray generally and throughout our land is the

Lord's arrows of conviction directed by his own hand penetrating through the armor the resistant armor that sinners have built around themselves penetrating to the very heart sometimes God's conviction begins with individual sins maybe you've spoken blasphemy maybe you took God's name in vain took it lightly on your lips and you begin to feel guilty about it and the guilt increases and increases or maybe it's some sabbath breaking that you were involved in and you become convicted of it and it gets worse and worse and you feel more and more guilty or maybe it's stealing or maybe it's some immorality something you've done and you know you shouldn't have done it and the conscience keeps speaking and the Holy

[20 : 46] Spirit is stirring up that conscience more and more and more the conscience troubles you and worries you and then the conviction turns to the very worst sin of all what's the worst sin of all it's not murder and it's not rape and it's not abusing children the worst sin of all is the sin of unbelief the sin of rejecting Christ oh you say I don't reject Christ I believe in Jesus but is your belief in Jesus just some kind of vague belief or is it real so real that you put your trust in Jesus that you depend on him that you trust in him with all your heart and cast yourself upon him rejoicing in him as your saviour unbelief is the greatest sin the sin of not receiving the unspeakable gift you know how you're hurt if you give a gift to somebody and they don't acknowledge it if you give a gift to somebody and he turns and walks away and doesn't want it you're grieved you're hurt but friends

the greatest sin of all is to turn away from the greatest gift of all and the greatest giver of all from God who is offering to us his only begotten son to be our saviour and every one of you tonight who are unconverted and every one of you who are outside of Christ are guilty of this sin of unbelief

God at great cost provided for men and women our way of salvation why do you neglect it and despise it and think so little of it oh that you would appreciate tonight the wickedness of being an unbeliever I wish you were all believers there are some here who are believers but there are some of you and you're not believers if you were all believers your place would be at the Lord's table but you know that your place is not at the Lord's table because you're an unbeliever believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved but you don't believe you're not saved why do you not believe why will you not take Christ why will you not receive him for yourself it's not that he is not offering himself to you he is the problem is that you will not receive him you do not want him you don't want your life to be changed you don't want your life to be turned upside down you don't want Christ you close your ears you harden your heart oh that the

Holy Spirit would direct his arrow even tonight into your heart and convict you of the wickedness of rejecting Christ of despising so great salvation of trampling under foot the blood of Christ what a terrible thing to do to trample the precious blood of Christ under foot but that's the way unbelief is described in the book of Hebrews there remains no more sacrifice for sin there remains no other way of salvation salvation since you have trampled under foot the blood of Christ and counted it an unholy thing something which you can despise oh but I don't despise it but you do if you don't value it and if you don't believe in Jesus and if you don't receive him and trust in him you're despising him the spirit reproves the world of sin our prayer tonight is that the

Holy Spirit would convict you of sin convict you of this greatest sin of sin because they believe not on me that is the greatest sin and that's the sin you need to be convicted of of sin because they believe not on me if only people were convicted of that sin how easy it would be to preach the gospel and to evangelize if only people could see their unbelief and could see the wrath of God which was upon them could see their sinnerhood and their lostness and how they deserve hell how easy it would be to tell the good news the glad tidings of the

Savior so that's the first thing that the spirit does in the lives of men and women he convicts them of their sin and particularly and specifically of the sin of unbelief secondly the spirit convicts the world of righteousness I made reference to this already how most people in the world have a righteousness you have a righteousness every one of you here tonight consider yourself in a certain way righteous you look at others somebody like Robert Black the wickedness of his life and you think how terrible how evil and you think of yourself as far better than him you're not as evil as that are you that wicked man murdering three lovely little children and perhaps others as well in a most cruel and horrid fashion you compare yourself with others and you think yourself better than many a one there's the self righteousness self contentedness self complacency you go to church and you keep the commandments and you do good deeds but if only the spirit were to convict you and convince you that all your righteousness is as filthy rags the only clothes you have are the rags of sin your best deeds are sin of righteousness because

[29 : 13] I go to my father and ye see me no more you see the holy spirit convicts us that there's only one way of righteousness one way of salvation one way to get on a right standing with God and to be justified and that is Christ's way of going to the father via the cross earning righteousness for us taking our sins upon himself and our lack of righteousness and bestowing upon us his righteousness why was Christ scourged whipped why was he mocked why was a crown of thorns placed upon his head why were the nails hammered through his hands why was he lifted up on

Calvary's cross why was he left to die why was the wrath and curse of God poured out upon him in my place condemned he stood you and I are justified by his resurrection Saul the Pharisee he hated this Saul was so good living he was so clever he was always praying he was always reading his bible he was always in church he was always doing good deeds he was better than any others who were around him he had done so well and this message about Jesus he hated it why Saul Saul it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks what pricks the pricks of conscience the pricks of the holy spirit the pricks of his own righteousness the balloon of his own righteousness being pricked by God he says the commandment came sin revived and I died the commandment which was ordained unto life I found to be unto death what does he mean he means that more and more as he went along and as he understood the commandment thou shalt not covet the more the sin within him was coveting looking at other people seeing other people coveting things other people had sin

revived he tried to conquer sin he tried hard to overcome it but sin revived and he died his righteousness died it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks and finally he falls on his knees helpless before

Christ and he says Lord what wilt thou have me to do what wilt thou have me to do the spirit convicts the world of righteousness shows us that our own righteousness is filthy rags and will never save us our own good works our own honesty our own uprightness our own religiosity it will never save us the only hope for us is the free gift of Christ's righteousness the imparted righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone is a very important part of scripture teaching modernists sneer at it they regard it as old fashioned hellfire preaching but it's scripture it's in the bible it's there from the beginning of the bible to the end and if you reject this from the bible you reject the bible as a whole you can't take part of the bible and leave the rest if you reject this you're rejecting something which is central to the whole message start at the beginning of

Genesis and there you find judgment Adam and Eve and paradise everything beautiful everything good this sin and judgment comes they're cast out misery and death enter their experience pain and childbirth comes upon the woman sweat and earning a living comes upon the man suffering and death comes to the whole human race judgment go on a little bit in the history of the bible and see the ancient world in its sin and its rebellion against god and what happens judgment a flood destroys the whole world apart from Noah and his family go on a little bit further and you find [36 : 45] Sodom and Gomorrah wickedness practiced there and what happened judgment go on a bit further find Babylon mighty and powerful a great empire destroyed why judgment come into the new testament and what's Jesus speaking about so often judgment the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched a worm eating away forever gnawing away a fire that burns on and on and on and on through the endless ages of eternity a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth Christ is always speaking about it and here we have it judgment because the prince of this world is cast out there's something obvious something that has happened the prince of this world has been cast out just think of the situation that existed at the time of

Jesus the whole wide world lay under the power of the wicked one apart from a tiny little remnant of people in a little corner called Israel the whole of the rest of the world known and unknown was in the power of the wicked one and what happened we look at the world today and we find millions of Christians in every country of the world there are Christians today even in far off islands like the Isle of Sky you find Christians thousands of miles from Jerusalem and there are Christians in this little island out in the Atlantic Ocean Christians are to be found across the world a world that lay in the power of the wicked one what does that tell us it tells us that the prince of this world has been cast out how can you go into a strong man's house and rob him of his goods unless you first tie up the strong man and then you can spoil him of his goods and that what

Jesus tells us that he did him he grabbed hold of the strong man satan and he tied him up of judgment because the prince of this world is cast out satan is cast out it's so obvious if only we are the spiritual eyes to see it satan who dominated the world no longer dominates it in the same way christ he's saving his people and christ is claiming for his inheritance the ends of the earth the whole world now is the prince of this world cast out judgment satan has been judged and all who are on satan's side will be judged will be condemned with him satan has been overthrown already and so will all his followers be all that the holy spirit would convict you tonight of judgment so that you would flee from the wrath to come so that you would appreciate the danger you are in and kiss the son lest in his wrath you perish from the way kiss the son of

God kiss him in faith make your peace with him the devil has been cast out and all the followers of the devil will be cast out with him kiss the son and make peace with God through him are you still a follower of satan still sitting in darkness still going on in the ways of the world the ways that lead to the pit oh that the Holy Spirit would convict you tonight and make you aware of judgment friends there's three things here that you need to know first that you're a sinner yes you're a sinner every single one of us here are sinners I'm a sinner but there's some sinners and there's saved sinners and there's other sinners and they're still going on in sin and what's the critical thing the sin of unbelief are you still an unbeliever still unconverted still not accepting

Christ still not trusting in him sin the sin of unbelief how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation if we neglect Christ you need to know that you're a sinner and you need to know that you're guilty about being you need to know that you are unrighteous that your righteousness is

good for you don't stand you in good stead on the judgment day there's only one righteousness that will do Christ has gone to the father and by the way that he has gone through suffering righteousness for everyone who will accept that free gift from him you need to be convinced of your own righteousness convinced of the value of the righteousness of [43 : 57] Christ and a third thing you need to be convinced of I wish you'd be convinced of it tonight that you're going to be judged even the devil's been judged he's been judged already judgment is something God has been doing ever since he created this world and ever since the devil and he am he he who the what you can have it he been ■■■ by allowing for his and should hack for the