

HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTION

By Lynn V. Connell

IN OUR AGE of impenitence and carnal security we rarely find a person that is, or cares to be, awakened to the depravity of his sinful nature. Most speak well of themselves and are, they say, not as bad as others. Professors show ignorance of the Holy Triune God by referring to their mistakes or “little sins” as really being not so bad. Religious boasters have “taken care of” their eternal destiny question by a “profession of faith.” Preachers everywhere speak falsely in our Lord’s Name (Jer. 14:14) while the Holy Spirit and His awakening, disturbing ministry is totally absent from their churches.

In most churches the Holy Spirit is never even mentioned. “Getting saved” is by the free will ability of man.. They say all have faith or the potential of it and this natural faith just needs to be exercised. Their salvation lies in the will and power of men. But God says “ALL MEN HAVE NOT FAITH” (2 Thes. 3:2), that Christ is “THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER” (Heb. 12:2) of saving faith, that faith is “the Gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Other groups may give lip service to the Holy Spirit, speaking of their being once lost and “shaken over hell,” confidently testifying that they were saved from hell. This man-centered “gospel” of salvation *from hell* is a false refuge, for our Lord will save His people “FROM THEIR SINS” (Matt. 1:21). Others who are left in the love of sin and self, regardless of profession, shall perish (John 8:21 & 2 Tim. 3:1-8). Then other churches mistake concern over outward and gross sins for Spiritual Conviction. Any person, if he ever has any terror of the judgment to come, would desire a “fire escape” saviour.

Religion offers the sinner professions, churchianity, programs and duties to quieten his troubled conscience. But the Holy Spirit upbraids the sinner in his soul for *who* and *what* he is and lays him low in the dust before God’s law of Justice.

Knowing nothing of the inward corruption of the heart, Religion will persuade individuals to agree to a “formula for safety” and then consider *that* as salvation. They say “the still small voice” is the Holy Spirit and if heeded they are saved and if not heeded they miss their “only chance to be saved.” Ah, but the Lord’s own people are made “willing in the day of His power” (Psalm 110:3), and they “shall come” to Christ (John 6:37). These religious folks tell the seeker to “repeat the sinner’s prayer and you’ll be saved.” Oh what a deception! What hypocrisy! A Holy God hates all lip service (Matt. 15:8). Only those given a broken and contrite heart (Isa. 57:15) will know the agony of a heart that cries out to the Lord throughout their entire earthly pilgrimage, “GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME THE SINNER.” This prayer is not merely *said*, but is a continuous heart-cry after a Glorious God and *for* a vital, spiritual, life-giving, daily walking relationship *with* the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:3-6).

Only the Holy Spirit, by giving the sinner a new nature, can work these impressions in the soul. The natural man cannot receive them (1 Cor. 2:14). While no natural man seeketh after God, all men do seek their own personal safety. They seek security, relying on false concepts and imaginary idol-gods, but none seeketh the God of the Bible (Rom. 3:11). Until the Sovereign Holy Spirit is pleased to make God in His Holy character *real* in the heart, we’ll never know the evil of our sinful nature, our guilt and death due it. There is no salvation unless the rebellious mouth is stopped in submissive agreement with a Holy God concerning our just condemnation (Rom.3:19). “I AM VILE” must become our cry. If all our objections are not subdued by the

Lord, be assured that we know nothing of true Holy Spirit Conviction and are yet in our sins (Jer. 2:23 & 1 Sam. 15:23).

Until the Holy Spirit kills in us our false ideas of God and reveals Him in reality in our hearts, we'll never grieve over our proud sinful self. We can only know the depth of our evil hearts through the revelation of Him Who is altogether PURE. "He that doeth evil hath not seen God" (III John 11). This conviction is more than a few uncomfortable moments in a religious service, but it is constant conviction: "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3) — heavily laden with unutterable groans—broken with tears—weeping in sin-sickness for the healing and cleansing of the Great Physician. This is the day-and-night experience of a SEEKING, CONVICTED LOST SINNER. Yes, wounded and bruised, complaining of our pollution, we seek nothing other than to know the PRECIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Ah, my friend, has there been such a discovery in our wicked breasts that puts us on our faces in agony for our heinous, rebellious treatment of God in His nature, glory, purity, justice and commands? Do not think that a mere agreement with this doctrine will suffice! Is your heart still hard and sleepy? Are you not greatly affected, wounded and made to groan under such a burden (Isaiah 29:9-10)? The Holy Spirit brings more than a mere *awareness* of sin, but He wounds *utterly*, putting us in *deep* distress, lost, feeling and mourning our terrible distance from the justly offended Sovereign. Mere *professors* can take comfort in their duties and dead works but the *truly awakened sinner* sees the rottenness of his very best efforts and judges himself that God has every right to doubly damn him for such filthy rags. He cries, "Lord, I'm as vile as the devil himself! Oh, the sin and rebellion that lurks in my heart! I am the vilest wretch that ever lived!" Yes, our Lord slays every sinner that He brings unto Christ and makes that sinner a lifelong debtor to HIS FREE MERCY.

The Holy Spirit shows us the purity of His Holy Law as the reflection of God's Holy Character and of His will. Poor sinners see how Holy God is and agree with Him that all sin must and will be punished (Romans 7:12). As He shows us the spirituality of His Holy Law, we see how vile we really are. Oh, the deceitfulness of our natural depraved hearts when we think well of ourselves because our outward lives are "decent and moral." When the Light of God's Holiness shines into our proud corrupt hearts, then we see "that every imagination of the thoughts" of our hearts "is only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). To realize my *rebellion* against God's Holy Law in practice, and my absolute *deadness* towards Him by nature, casts a *terror* into my mind as an awakened sinner. Only when we see our inward corruption is the sin nature revived and the convicted sinner dies (Romans 7:7-9). He dies to all his hopes and abilities, works and professions. His supposed strength is crushed. He not only sees and acknowledges his sinful nature that "cannot be subject" to our Lord (Romans 8:7), but he is deeply cut and greatly affected by the horror of his own incurably wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Then he is smitten in anguish of soul for his death in sin and his defiant walk therein against the Lord of Glory. The Holy Spirit will make his sorrow for it so exceedingly bitter that the awakened sinner will have an intense desire to be rid of all sin.

As the Holy Spirit continues to show the sinner the inflexible perfection of God's Holy Law, the sinner continues to see in contrast his utter vileness. He despairs of all self-help and creature-help as he views the Law which cannot be altered and will not compromise. He cannot please or satisfy a holy God. One self-centered desire or one wandering thought from the Law-Giver demands his damnation. ALL HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS BECOMES FILTHY RAGS. Now the cry of the sinner is "I AM THE CHIEF OF SINNERS! If I perish, I get my just dues. As

sinful as my acts have been, they are nothing in comparison to this wicked *heart!*” “I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God” (Galatians 2:19).

The Lord must crush this proud, self-help spirit out of us, making us stoop as vile and helpless before Him, or we will never desire, and He will never give us, His precious SON! The crushed and broken sinner now freely bows under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be disposed of by Him AS HE WILLS (Matthew 8:2). A soul unwilling to bow is yet unhumbled and God resists him (Lamentations 3:7-8).

While *professors* think they can make a little confession or dedication and be accepted, the truly *awakened* sinner begs of the Lord for a New Heart. The Law has shown him that all his duties, works or actions are SIN. Awakened sinners know that they must be condemned for the least sin, and they can do nothing but sin (Romans 7:7). Oh what polluted, filthy beggars in the dunghill. By the spirituality of the law, we see how pure, how Holy God is. Then how wretched, how vile I am in His Holy sight! Have you, my reader, ever seen this?

Having wounded the poor sinner, the Holy Spirit humbles him. The wounded soul can never be healed except by the hand that wounded it (Isaiah 40:5-7). It is not the first work of the Holy Spirit to give faith to the elect sinner; He only gives faith to those in whom He has worked a true sense of sin, guilt, pollution and misery. The Lord convinces the sinner that he has no faith, CANNOT BELIEVE. With a God-wrought separation from the love of sin the sinner desires to be spiritually married to the Lord Jesus Christ, but he cannot get to the Lord, cannot close with Him, cannot “believe” and easily settle it! Then how wonderful is a saving revelation of a Precious Christ to such a poor beggar. How sweet is the Lord’s GIFT of faith to a helpless worm!

The gospel reveals grace to no one but sinners, sinners in extreme misery. The gospel saith not merely that Christ is come to SAVE, but to save POOR, HELPLESS SINNERS, His people from their sins. It reveals that God justifies not mere men, but He justifies THE UNGODLY. It reveals that Christ died NOT for all, but He died for the bankrupt in spirit, for sinners who were enemies, making satisfaction for such needy ones. Then the gospel news is sweet ONLY to *awakened* sinners who see and feel the misery of sin and the fruits of it.

Says our Lord, “I CAME NOT TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS TO REPENTANCE.” By *righteous* is not meant such as are sincerely so, for there are none, but such as think and feel themselves so. By *sinners* is not meant all men or all manner of impenitent and hardhearted persons, but such as think and feel themselves lost sinners and mourn because of it. God the Father sent the Lord Christ only unto such (Matthew 11:25-27). He is sent not to heal the half-hearted but the broken-hearted. Indeed, He is sent to make men broken-hearted who have been hard-hearted. He is not sent to heal them until then. Our Lord leaves the ninety-nine who see no need of repentance in their wilderness of deception. But that one lost sheep — who feels itself so, who feels the need for the Saviour to come and seek, find and save him, who cannot come and find Christ of himself — the Lord Jesus will come unto and ONLY unto such a lost one. Amen. •

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