



The Conviction of the Spirit (John 16:7-11)

Section I: Christian Beginnings Lesson #3

The Spirit actively works in the world of unbelievers, carrying out the work of conviction, warning, reproof, and refutation. When He reveals the glory of Jesus we see our failure and guilt. This revelation compels us to repent and seek salvation in Jesus Christ.

A) The Holy Spirit's Conviction (John 16:7-8)

"I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment"
(John 16:7-8)*.

Conviction

- of sin
- of righteousness
- of judgment

- The Spirit is sent to believers (the "you" in v. 7 are the disciples). "The world" (v. 8) refers to unbelievers; those who reject truth. The Spirit primarily, but not exclusively, convicts the world through the witness of Scripture and believers, the Church.
- "Convict" describes God's way of heightening our longing to know Jesus and awareness of unbelief and brokenness. The revealing light of the Spirit unveils the glories of Jesus while exposing the darkness of Satan and unredeemed humanity.
- God is clearly the initiator preparing the unbelieving human heart & mind to positively respond to God through the gospel of Christ.
- The witness of the conscience (Rom. 2:13-15) and the conviction of the Holy Spirit are distinct but cooperative phases that lead the sinner to a growing awareness of their need for Jesus.
- Verse 8 introduces three specific ways that the Holy Spirit leads unbelievers to salvation: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Summary: The Holy Spirit reveals Christ and the world's need for repentance: *"For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"* (2 Cor. 4:6)

B) The Holy Spirit's Conviction of Sin (John 16:9)

"Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:9).

- This Greek word for sin (*harmartia*) in verses 8 and 9 means to miss the mark or target (Ro 3:23).
- Here the sin highlighted is the rejection of Jesus. The Spirit also points out a person's moral failures including things he or she did or actions neglected that are an offense to the Holy God.
- Conviction of sin is the crisp consciousness that one senses when failing God's revealed, holy standards. The Spirit is always revealing sin in order to move one to repentance and forgiveness. For a Christian this conviction moves beyond a sense of guilt to a longing for the beauty and joy of holiness.
- In John 16 the reason given for the Spirit's conviction of sin is "Because they do not believe in Me". This describes the unbelieving world that has no faith in Jesus the Christ.

Summary: One aspect of the gospel is the preaching of man's departure from God's holy standard seen in our wayward behavior. The Spirit reveals unbelief (the rejection of Jesus) as the most serious offense of the world.

C) The Holy Spirit's Conviction of Righteousness (John 16:10)

"And concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me" (John 16:10).

- "Concerning righteousness" describes the second way the Holy Spirit convicts through revealing Jesus as the Righteous One. The Jews in the Gospel of John have counted Jesus among the sinners (John 9:16, 24) but they are very wrong! The resurrection, ascension and glorification of Jesus will attest to his righteousness. (Acts 2:32-33)
- Today we see this error when people explain away either the divinity or the humanity of Jesus.
- This conviction does not equal salvation but only part of the convicting process. When we see the glory of Jesus we begin to understand our need for His righteousness in place of our sin.
- Throughout the Apostolic witness in the New Testament we see the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead as a vital part of the good news! The resurrection is proof of the righteousness of Jesus. (Acts 2:24, 3:15, 10:40, 13:30, 17:31)

Summary: The Spirit reveals that the world is wrong about Jesus. He alone is righteous!

D) The Holy Spirit's Conviction of Judgment (John 16:11)

"And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:11).

- "Concerning judgment" is a natural followthrough of the unbelief and inadequate view of Jesus pointed out in the first two areas.
- The Jews counted Abraham as their father because they were biological descendants. However, Jesus points out that because they call him a sinner they are actually children of the devil (John 8:39-47). The devil's nature and actions have already been judged by God; by extension the world is also judged. Belief in Jesus is the only way to escape judgement!

Summary: To discuss our sin but not bring up the threat of judgment is to leave out the sad end of the world's current trajectory. The Spirit reveals the truth about sinful humanity and Jesus the righteous so that we may believe and receive salvation and new life!

Final Summary:

- The careful and deliberate work of the Holy Spirit in an unbeliever's life makes them aware of their sin, unbelief and coming judgment. This prepares people to receive the gospel to lead a person to salvation, and thus, we see the love of God working through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

- What is the difference between the conviction of the human conscience and the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
- If you are a Christian, how did you experience the conviction of the Spirit leading to salvation? If you are not a Christian, what has made you come to church or curious about Jesus?
- Since the Church is the primary witness to the world. How should Christians relate to unbelievers? If you are a believer, how are you doing with serving as a witness for Jesus?

*All scripture references from New American Standard Bible (NASB)