

## What Does It Mean To Be Convicted By God?

The Bible tells us that the Holy Ghost will convict the world of sin (see John 16:8).

To help us understand what the conviction of sin is, we can look at what it is not. First, it is not simply a guilty conscience or even shame over sin. Such feelings are naturally experienced by almost everyone. But this is not true conviction of sin.

Second, conviction of sin is not a sense of trepidation or a foreboding of divine punishment. These feelings, too, are commonly experienced in the hearts and minds of sinners. But, again, true conviction of sin is something different.

Third, conviction of sin is not merely knowledge of right and wrong; it is not an assent to Scripture's teaching about sin. Many people read the Bible and are fully aware that the wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23).

They may know that "no immoral, impure or greedy person... has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (see Ephesians 5:5).

They may even agree that "The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). Yet, for all their knowledge, they continue to live in sin. They understand the consequences, but they're far from being convicted of their sins.

The truth is, if we experience nothing more than a pang of conscience, anxiety at the thought of judgment, or an academic awareness of hell, then we have never truly known the conviction of sin. So, what is real conviction, the kind the Bible speaks of?

The word convict is a translation of the Greek word *elencho*, which means "to convince someone of the truth; to reprove; to accuse, refute, or cross-examine a witness." The convicting Spirit of God acts as a prosecuting attorney who exposes evil, reproves evildoers, and convinces people that they are guilty of violating the nature of God, by transgressing the laws of God, and consequently stand in desperate need of a Savior.

To be convicted is to feel the sheer loathsomeness of sin. This happens when we've seen God's beauty, His purity and holiness, and when we recognize that sin cannot dwell with Him (see Psalm 5:4).

When Isaiah stood in the presence of God, he was immediately overwhelmed by his own sinfulness: "Woe to me!... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (see Isaiah 6:5).

To be convicted is to experience an utter dreadfulness of sin. Our attitude toward sin becomes that of Joseph, who fled temptation, crying out, “How could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (see Genesis 39:9).

We are convicted when we become mindful of how much our sin dishonors God. When David was convicted by the Holy Ghost, he cried out, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (see Psalm 51:4). David saw his sin primarily as an affront to a holy God.

We are convicted when we become intensely aware of the wrath it exposes to our souls (see Romans 1:18 & Romans 2:5).

When the Philippian jailer fell at the apostles’ feet and cried, “...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” He was under conviction (see Acts 16:30). He was certain that, without a Savior, he would die.

When the Holy Ghost convicts people of their sins, He represents the righteous judgment of God (see Hebrews 4:12).

There is no appeal of this verdict. The Holy Ghost not only convicts people of sin, but He also brings them to repentance (see Acts 17:30 & Luke 13:5).

The Holy Ghost brings to light our relationship with God. The convicting power of the Holy Ghost opens our eyes to our sins and opens our hearts to receive His grace (see Ephesians 2:8).

We praise the Lord for the conviction of sin. Without it, there could be no salvation. No one is saved apart from the Spirit’s convicting and regenerating work in the heart. The Bible teaches that all people are, by nature, rebels against God and hostile to Jesus Christ. They are “dead in trespasses and sins” (see Ephesians 2:1).

Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (see John 6:44).

Part of that “draw” to Jesus is the conviction of sin.

A genuine convicting work of the Spirit can be traced back to the most fundamental attribute and root system that has historically welded men to God and a dimension that is greatly needed in our lives today. A diminishing if not altogether missing element of spiritual activity in so many areas of our life, but ever so needed— “the fear of God.”

The fear of God cultivates conviction within our hearts, which in turn produces a godly sorrow for our sin that ultimately leads a person to repentance. The taproot of our salvation greatly depends on a residual and resident fear of God.

Of all the spiritual ground lost in this generation, it's the fear of God we miss the most. Now it's shout, shout, shout, all night... ALL NIGHT!! Lights, camera, action. Program and production highlight the talents of men. The parade of flesh is all but endless. As Laodicea discovered in Revelation 3, we, too, are witnessing today God standing outside His own church door, knocking and attempting to re-enter.

Absent in our preaching and singing is the spirit of conviction that in bygone days, one could "cut it like a knife" as it seemingly hovered in the building. From pre-service prayer, singing, testimonies, preaching, and altar services, conviction was a constant companion in our midst throughout the entire time we were assembled together. Saints enjoyed it, sinners expected it, and be sure, all identified with it. The metal of yesteryear's churches was defined by their ability to cultivate and maintain a strong spirit of conviction in their services. It was an honorable hallmark of credibility and stability. That residual deep drawing of God's presence from start to finish—and beyond... as deep called unto deep.

Psalms 73:21

21) Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

Acts 2:37

37) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

2 Chronicles 5:13-14

13) It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the LORD;

14) So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

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