

The Holy Spirit Convicts of Sin?

“And having come, **He [Holy Spirit] will convict the world concerning sin**, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgement: **concerning sin indeed**, because **they do not believe in Me**; and **concerning righteousness**, because **I go away to the Father and you behold Me no more**; and **concerning judgement**, because **the ruler of this world has been judged.**” John 16:8-11

The person who is not convicted of any Sin is a person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose sins are Once and for All washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. However, **the world because it does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ therefore are convicted of Sin.** Though at times this has been attributed to the sin of unbelief the question has to be asked: How can the Holy Spirit convict the world of the sin of unbelief of the One they have not heard of or known? Paul in Romans says, “How then shall **they call on Him whom they have not believed?** And how shall **they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?** And how shall they hear apart from preaching?” Romans 10:14 So the world is convicted of the consequences of their unbelief that is of the **[present Adamic state] under Sin**, while the believer is convicted of the **[present Spirit state] of righteousness** because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**” John 8:24

The Lord made it clear here, it is not that you die of “the sin of unbelief,” but “you will die **[IN]** your Sins.” As a consequence of not believing I am the Messiah. Even if we consider, it was of “the sin of unbelief” the Holy Spirit convicts the world, how is the sin of unbelief toward Christ expressed in conviction? **Conviction is an act of bringing to remembrance.** The Lord said, “**Now because I speak the truth**, you do not believe Me! **Which of you convicts me concerning sin?** If I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me?” John 8:45-46 The Lord is saying, “You know I always speak the truth, and you yourselves know you have no grounds to doubt My words [What Sin can you point to in Me?] then why do you not believe Me?” Then the Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning Sin means to identify where one may have fallen short. This is not to say the Holy Spirit is a fault finder, however everyone outside of Christ is under Sin therefore CANNOT be convicted of anything else but of the present fallen sinful state. This being said not all are treated the same way.

Jesus Christ preached to the Pharisee and Scribes as well as to the common sinners to each accordingly. The Lord raised up every downtrodden and outcast while He brought low every self exalted, self righteous by showing the failure of their hypocrisy. “**Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low**; The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; **The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.**” Isaiah 40:4-5 Likewise the Holy Spirit, [the Other Comforter] also treats those in the world accordingly.

“**God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses to them**, and having put into us the word of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:19

Here we need to see the difference between Conviction and Condemnation. Condemnation is an act of exacting judgement for imputed sin, it is the effect. “**As through one trespass, it is unto condemnation [death] to all men.**” Romans 5:18 And the Law was a ministry of condemnation. Jesus said to the woman caught in the act of adultery, “Has no one condemned you?” Meaning has no one cast a stone at you for the sin of adultery? So God, “not reckoning their trespasses” against the world means, He is not condemning the world. Likewise the Holy Spirit does NOT condemn unbelievers but He brings them to the realisation of the consequence of their sins in order to compel them to seek mercy from God.

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”
Proverbs 28:13

Covering our sins is a natural response that started in the garden, “Then **the eyes of both of them were opened**, and they knew that **they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.**” Genesis 3:7 So in the world we are very well adapted at covering our sins, to the point of deluding ourselves. The men who accused the woman caught in adultery had successfully covered their sins even from themselves and were willing to stone her because her sins were uncovered. But when Christ said, “**The one sinless among you, let him cast the first stone at her.**” John 8:7 His words struck their hearts and everyone of them left, being convicted [reminded] of their own sins. Here we see conviction without condemnation. So the word “Convict” in the statement, “He [the Holy Spirit] **will convict the world** concerning **sin**,” is an act free of All Condemnation.

When Jesus confronted the woman at Jacob’s well, He brought to mind her sins without condemning her and through it He brought her to faith in Him. “**For you have had five husbands, and he whom you have now is not your husband.**” [John 4:16-26] He spoke to the woman caught in adultery in full knowledge of her sin and set her free without condemning her. “**Neither [do I] condemn you. Go and sin no more from now on.**” [John 8:4-11] The woman who washed His feet with her tears, He knowing her sins were many, freely forgave her without any condemnation. “**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**” [Luke 7:37-50] So the outcast, the despised and those on the fringes **who felt the weight of their sins** were gladly received by Him. He had no need to convince them of their need but He freely gave them the remedy. Everyone bruised and broken, He lifted and restored. “**A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.**” Isaiah 42:3

So the greatest hindrance to our salvation is not the depth of the depravity of our sins but our failure to see our need for a Saviour. And the self righteous could not see their need for a Saviour, so the Lord was specifically stern toward them in order to break down the merit of their own self justification. To Nicodemus who came and boasted of his knowledge, the Lord's method was to expose his lack of understanding, “**You are the teacher of Israel, and do you not know these things?**” [John 3:1-21] To the young rich ruler, who boasted in his works of keeping the Law, was to expose the idolatry of his heart, that he loved money more than God. “**If you desire to be perfect, go, sell what you are possessing, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me.**” [Matthew 19:16-22]

And to the Scribes and Pharisees who boasted in the Law, He brought to light every instance of their failure exposing they themselves do not keep the Law. “**Has not Moses given to you the Law, and none of you keeps the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?**” John 7:19 So in every instance they sought to enforce a Law, He countered by exposing their own failure in upholding that very Law. So The Lord brought to mind how trapped they were in the deceitfulness of sin. “**If you were blind, you would have no sin. But since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.**” John 9:41 They failed to see how Sin is accommodating when addressing self but harsh when addressing others. “**They tie up burdens heavy and hard to bear and lay them on the shoulders of men; but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.**” [Matthew 23:1-33] So every mountain and hill was brought low through the revelation of failure [of Sin].

“Therefore be it known to you, men, brothers, that **through this One, [forgiveness of sins] is proclaimed to you. And in Him everyone believing is justified from all things from which you were not able to be justified in the Law of Moses.**” Acts 13:38-39

Likewise the world ruled by the law of sin and death also needs convincing of the need for forgiveness of sins in Christ. Paul recalling his first visit to the Corinthians said, “For **I decided to know nothing** among you **except Jesus Christ and Him having been crucified.**” 1 Corinthians 2:2 Meaning his main focus was the preaching of the forgiveness of sins to the Gentiles. That is the Gospel’s central core is the forgiveness of sins which by itself necessitates the realisation of one’s shortcomings. People who know they are sinners and have fallen short are far more willing to seek forgiveness in Christ than those who are justified in their own eyes. The same conditions the Lord encountered in the streets of Israel is also encountered in the world. So the Holy Spirit also seeks to save us from our delusion of self righteousness to bring us to the realisation of our fallen state without bringing the slightest bit of condemnation. It is the absence of condemnation that draws sinners to God and not the lack of conviction of sins.

“Therefore we are **ambassadors for Christ, as though God is beseeching through us.** We implore on behalf of Christ: **Be reconciled to God.**” 2 Corinthians 5:20

Now there are two incidents recorded in Acts that clearly illustrate the working of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of sin. The first is, the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, when he was just filled with the Holy Spirit and he spoke to the residents of Jerusalem and **brought to mind** their part in crucifying Jesus, “Him delivered up by the determinate plan and foreknowledge of God, **you put to death, having crucified Him by lawless hands.**” Act 2:23 And Act records as a consequence, “**They were pierced to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles, “**Men, brothers, what shall we do?**” [vs. 37] Here the conviction of sin produced a positive result, those who heard being convicted of the part they played sought repentance and 3000 were saved that day.

The second incident is when Stephen was brought before the religious leaders [self-righteous]. Now when Stephen spoke Acts records, “And having looked intently on him, **all sitting in the Council saw his face as the face of an angel.**” Acts 6:15 The significance of this statement is to hit home the point it was the Holy Spirit speaking through him. Jesus said, “**And you will be brought also before governors and kings on account of Me, as a testimony to them** and to the Gentiles. And when they deliver you up, do not be anxious how or what you should speak; **for in that hour you will be given what you should say, for you are not those speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**” Matthew 10:18-20 So this time also the Holy Spirit brought to mind the part they played in condemning Christ, and also of their failure to keep the Law. “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? **And they killed those having foretold about the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you have now become betrayers and murderers,** you who **received the Law** by the ordination of angels, **and have not kept it.**” Acts 7:52-53 Only this time the conviction of sin resulted in murder not repentance. “Now hearing these things, **they were cut to their hearts and began gnashing the teeth at him.**” [vs. 54]

“**But if all prophesy, and some [unbeliever or uninstructed] should come in,** he is **convicted by all,** he is **examined by all,** and **the secrets of his heart become manifest.** And thus having **fallen upon his face,** **he will worship God,** declaring that **God is certainly among you.**” 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

Here we have a general outline of how the Holy Spirit Himself works through the gift He gives to believers to bring conviction to both unbeliever and uninstructed [babes in Christ] through the revelation of the secrets of the heart. The term, “the secret of the heart,” can apply to all manner of thoughts, but the main purpose is to convince people of the reality of God, accordingly. One such example is the Lord dealing with Simon the Pharisee who criticised the Lord and belittled another. “And the Pharisee, the one having invited Him, **having seen, spoke within himself,** saying, “**If this were a prophet, He would have known who and what the woman is who touches Him; for she is a sinner.**” Luke 7:39 So the Lord answered him according to the secret thought of his hearts showing He knew exactly who she was and how she was more

justified than him. "I say to you this: **Her many sins have been forgiven**, for she loved much; **but to whom little is forgiven, he loves little.**" Luke 7:47

So the work of the Holy Spirit can be illustrated in this simple example. A person who is sick may lack knowledge of the available medicine OR may be refusing to acknowledge/know of the sickness OR may even be self-medicating. However he will still be experiencing the symptoms of that sickness; the pain and discomfort. So how does the doctor convince such a person to take the medicine? He asks the patient of his symptoms; Are you down, heavy and burdened? If so, he points him to the medicine. Now it is NOT the guilt of not taking the medicine that was killing the patient but the consequence of the sickness. Likewise, How is the effect of sin manifested in our lives? In destructive behaviours, pain, hurt, failures, bondages, addictions, emptiness and so on. So the Holy Spirit holds up Christ on the cross and says to the one who knows is bitten look here.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, says the Lord, putting My Laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them into their mind," and, **"Their sins and their lawless acts, I will remember no more.**" Hebrews 10:16-17

Paul quoted this Scripture to show because of Christ's sacrifice Sin is put away once and for all. God has already provided the remedy in Christ but it is applicable ONLY to those who take it. God gave the Law to Israel but He also made provision in the Law to anyone who wanted to enter into a covenant with Him. [Isaiah 56:3-7] The same principle applies here though He does not judge nor condemn the world because of the cross of Christ, "the acceptable year of the Lord" Luke 4:19 However He can clearly call to mind the sins of the world if it served to bring them to salvation. **None remembrance of Sin is part of the clause of the Covenant in Christ.** Revelation shows, "And the dead were judged out of the things **having been written in the books, according to their deeds.**" Revelation 20:12 Even though Christ has paid for the Sins of the world, the deeds of the dead [died in Sin] were brought to remembrance. So a covenant must be entered into otherwise the benefits do not apply.

"So indeed [**God, having overlooked the times of ignorance,**] now commands all men everywhere to repent, because **He set a day in which [He is about to judge the world in righteousness] by a Man whom He appointed**, having provided a guarantee to all, [**having raised Him out from the dead.**]" Acts 17:30-31

God judged the world for failure of obedience [Sin] in death through Adam, "**The wages of Sin is death.**" Romans 6:23 Now God will also judge the world in righteousness of faith [unto] life. The Lord said, "The one **hearing My word and believing the One having sent Me**, he has eternal life and **does not come into judgement**, but has **passed out of death into life.**" John 5:24 That is, it is a judgement of the right to life through Christ. The key point being related throughout this text is, **Adam has to do with Sin but Christ has to do with Righteousness.** So through Adam we are judged for Sin which is the judgement of works but through Christ we are judged for Righteousness which is the judgement of faith.

Therefore the Holy Spirit is NOT convicting the world of the Sin of unbelief toward Christ because it is NOT an act of Sin. Sin is an act of missing the mark measured against the concept of right and wrong. However in order to express unbelief toward Christ one must by default know of Him. And if we do know of Him and have chosen to reject Him, then we are charged with a far more [detrimental] offence than Sin. Paul said of Israel, "**For being ignorant of the righteousness of God** and seeking to establish [their] own righteousness, **they did not submit to the righteousness of God.**" Romans 10:3 So this charge has to do with rejecting God's own Righteousness and it is considered as an act of rejecting God Himself. When Israel failed to enter the promised land through a bad report God saw it as if they had rejected Him. "How long **will these people reject Me?** And how long **will they not believe Me?**" Numbers 14:11 Which is

symbolic for us to consider in present time, of the invitation to enter into His rest and the Heavenly Jerusalem, God's own residence.

“Because of **the forbearance of the sins having taken place beforehand**, in the forbearance of God, for the **showing forth of His righteousness in the present time**, for Him **to be just, and justifying the one of the faith of Jesus.**” Romans 3:25-26

We belittle Unbelief toward Christ when we attribute it to an act of Sin, that is the weight of the charge is not fully illustrated. **It is not a matter of right or wrong doing but of faith.** Paul conveyed this point by contrasting the past Adamic dispensation where mankind was judged for his sinful works against the present where God's Own righteousness [His very works] is openly put on offer for sinful mankind to receive or even to judge. So he says, **“To demonstrate His Righteousness in the present time.”** Therefore the Rejection of Christ is the rejection of the means by which God justified Himself in justifying ungodly mankind. **That is God sacrificed His Son to justify Himself in Justifying us.** So it is an offence that bears far more weight than the act of Sin. The Lord said, “The one hearing you hears Me; and the one rejecting you rejects Me; and **the one rejecting Me rejects the One having sent Me.**” Luke 10:16

“**Anyone having set aside the Law of Moses [dies without mercies]** on the basis of two or three witnesses. [**How much worse punishment]** do you think will he deserve, the one **having trampled upon the Son of God**, and having **esteemed ordinary the blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified, and **having insulted the Spirit of grace?**” Hebrews 10:28-29

Again Paul makes a useful comparison for us between Sin and Righteousness. He first pointed out how the rejection of Moses' Law which specifically dealt with Sin resulted in the punishment of death. Then he shows the rejection of the Son of God, the disregard for the blood of the covenant and insulting the Spirit of Grace for Righteousness meriting a far more fiercer punishment than death. Paul by attributing a far more worse punishment than death, proved clearly Unbelief toward Christ is NOT deemed as Sin which otherwise would have merited the punishment of Death. But a whole New Category of punishment is deemed worthy for such an offence. And he showed the weight of the offence with, **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** [vs.31] And the Lord said, “Indeed rather you should **fear the One being able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.**” Matthew 10:28

The final point is, the judgement that concerns Christ is in the future, so **None have been judged for this offence Yet**, “He is about to judge the world in righteousness.” We can only be convicted of the act we know we have committed. And we through the knowledge of good and evil know of all the wrong we have done. So the Holy Spirit convicts the world of Sin purely for the purpose of administering the remedy [Jesus Christ]. **Only those who knew they were bitten by the fiery serpents looked at the brazen serpent on the pole.** We are convicted of righteousness of faith because we are already made righteous in Him. However the Holy Spirit CANNOT convict the world of the offence of Unbelief towards Christ because we are not YET judged for it NOR have we fully realised our failure. **So Conviction regarding Christ can only manifest at His revelation, when faith has given way to sight.**

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and [**then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.**] And **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.**” Matthew 24:30

The basic essence for us to get hold of here is the Holy Spirit convict according to our nature. Therefore The Lord CANNOT convict the world of righteousness NOR will He convict the children of God of Sin.