

Convincing of Sin and Righteousness (Reading)

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The Spirit of God convinces of sin and righteousness, and offers Christ freely to the vilest of sinners.

Duration: 57:47

Scripture: Psalm 119:18, Psalm 147:3, Matthew 5:34, John 16:8, John 17:17, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in convincing people of their sin and righteousness. He highlights that the Word of God, when preached and read, is a powerful instrument in the hands of God to bring about supernatural impressions on the hearts of individuals. The preacher urges believers to pray for the intervention of God in their lives and to recognize the seriousness of sin and the urgency to repent. He concludes by encouraging the congregation to love and serve God wholeheartedly, demonstrating their faith through acts of compassion and generosity towards others.

Transcript

Congregation, we have a sermon this morning that was written by the Reverend Robert Murray McShane, and the text is from John 16, verse 8. And when he, that is the comforter, and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. The title of the sermon is Reproof of Sin and Reproof of Righteousness, and those are the points. Reproving the world of sin and reproving of righteousness.

Before we begin reading, just a definition. The word reprove is not one we commonly use anymore. And in other translation, a word that is, or two words that are very similar to convey the meaning, is convincing and convicting.

And so, as I read through the sermon, we'll use those words. It's the idea of not only being corrected, reprov'd, but being fully persuaded to be convinced. And so, we have those two points.

Reproving the world of sin and reproving of righteousness. The first work of the Spirit is to convince of sin. He shall reprove or convince the world of sin because they believe not in Me.

It is curious to remark that wherever the Holy Ghost is spoken of in the Bible, He is spoken of in terms of gentleness and love. We often read of the wrath of God the Father, as in Romans 1. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men. And we often read of the wrath of the Son of God.

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way. But we nowhere read of the wrath of God the Holy Ghost. He is compared to a dove, the gentlest of all creatures.

He is warm and gentle as the breath. Jesus breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. He is gentle as the falling dew.

I will be as the dew unto Israel. He is soft and gentle as oil, for He is called the oil of gladness. The fine oil wherewith the high priest was anointed was a type of the Holy Spirit.

He is gentle and refreshing as the springing well. The water that I shall give Him shall be in Him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. He is called the Spirit of grace and supplications.

He is nowhere called the Spirit of wrath. He is called the Holy Ghost, which is the Comforter. Nowhere is He called the Avenger.

We are told that He groans within the heart of a believer, helping his infirmities, so that He greatly helps the believer in prayer. We are told also of the love of the Spirit. Nowhere of the wrath of the Spirit.

We are told of His being grieved. Grieve not the Holy Spirit. Of His being resisted, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.

Of His being quenched, quench not the Spirit. But these are all marks of gentleness and love. Nowhere will you find one mark of anger or of vengeance attributed to Him.

And yet, brethren, when this blessed Spirit begins His work of love, mark how He begins. He convinces of sin. Even He, all-wise, all-mighty, all-gentle and loving, though He be, cannot persuade a poor sinful heart to embrace Christ without first opening up His wounds and convincing Him that He is lost.

When the surgeon comes to cure a corrupted wound, when He removes the bandages and lays open the deepest recesses of your wound and shows you all its venom and infection, do you call Him cruel? May not His hands be all the time the hands of gentleness and love? Or when a house is all on fire, when the flames are bursting out from every window, when some courageous man ventures to alarm the sleeping inmates, bursts through the bar door and with eager hand shakes the sleeper, bids him awake and flee a moment longer and you may be lost, do you call Him cruel? Or do you say this messenger of mercy spoke too loud or too plain? Ah, no. Why then will you blame the minister of Christ when He begins convincing you of sin? Do you think that the wound of sin is less venomous or deadly than a wound in the flesh? Do you think the flames of hell are less hard to bear than the flames of earth? The very Spirit of love begins by convincing you of sin. And are we less the messengers of love because we begin by doing the same thing? Oh then, do not say that we have become your enemy because we tell you the truth.

What is this conviction of sin? I would begin to show this by showing you what it is not. First, it is not the mere smiting of the natural conscience. Although man is utterly fallen, yet God has left natural conscience behind in every heart to speak for him.

Some men by continual sinning sear even their conscience as with a hot iron, so that it becomes dead and past feeling. But most men have so much natural conscience remaining that they cannot commit open sin without their conscience smiting them. When a man commits murder or theft, no eye may have seen him, yet conscience will make a coward of him.

He trembles and is afraid. He feels that he has sinned and he fears that God will take vengeance. Now, that is not the conviction of sin here spoken of.

That is a natural work which takes place in every heart. But conviction of sin is a supernatural work of the Spirit of God. If you have had nothing more than natural, ordinary smiting of conscience, then you have never been convinced of sin.

Secondly, it is not any impression upon the imagination. Sometimes when men have committed great sin, they have awful impressions of God's vengeance made upon their imaginations. In the nighttime, they almost fancy the flames of hell burning beneath them. Or they seem to hear the doleful cries in their ears telling of coming woe.

Or they fancy they see the face of Jesus all clouded with anger. Or they have terrible dreams when they sleep of coming vengeance. Now, this is not the conviction of sin which the Spirit gives.

This is altogether a natural work upon the natural faculties and not a supernatural work of the Spirit. If you have nothing more than these imaginary terrors, you have had no work of the Spirit. Thirdly, it is not a mere head knowledge of what the Bible says against sin.

Many unconverted people read their Bibles and have a clear knowledge that their case is laid down there. They are sensible. They know very well what they are in sin.

And they know just as well that the wages of sin is death. One man lives a swearer and he reads the words and understands them perfectly. Swear not at all.

The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Another man lives in the lust of the flesh and he reads the Bible and understands these words perfectly. No unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Another man lives in habitual forgetfulness of God. Never thinks of God from sunrise to sunset and yet he reads, the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the people that forget God. Now in this way, most unconverted people have a head knowledge of their sin and of the wages of sin.

Yet this is far from the conviction of sin. This is a mere natural work in the head. Conviction of sin is a work upon the heart.

If you have had nothing more than this head knowledge that you are sinners, then you have never been convinced of sin. What then is this conviction of sin? It is a just sense of the dreadfulfulness of sin. It is not mere knowledge that we have many sins and that God's anger is revealed against them all, but it is a heart feeling that we are under sin.

It is a feeling of the dreadfulfulness of sin, of the dishonor it does to God, and of the wrath to which it exposes the soul. O brethren, conviction of sin is no slight natural work upon the heart. There is a great difference between knowing a thing and having a just sense of it.

There is a great difference between knowing that vinegar is sour and actually tasting and feeling that it is sour. There is a great difference between knowing that fire will burn us and actually feeling the pain of being burned. Just in the same way, there is all the difference in the world between knowing the dreadfulness of your sins and feeling the dreadfulness of your sins.

It is all in vain that you read your Bibles and hear us preach unless the Spirit used the words to give sense and feeling to your dead hearts. The plainest words will not awaken you as long as you are in your natural condition. If we could prove to you with the plainness of arithmetic that the wrath of God is abiding on you and your children, still, you would sit unmoved.

You would go away and forget it before you reached your home. Ah, brethren, He that made your heart can alone impress your heart. It is the Spirit that convinces of sin.

To apply this truth, first, learn the power of the Word as it is read and preached. It is but an instrument in the hand of God. It has no power of itself except to produce natural impressions.

It is a hammer, but God must break your hearts with it. It is a fire, but God must kindle your bosom with it. Without Him, we may give you a knowledge of the dreadfulness of your condition, but He alone can give you a just sense and feeling of the dreadfulness of your condition.

The most powerful sermon in the world can make nothing more than a natural impression. But when God works through it, the feeblest word makes a supernatural impression. Many a poor sermon has been the means by which God has converted a soul.

Children of God, all that you would pray night and day for the lifting up of the arm of God. Secondly, learn that conversion is not in your own power. It is the Spirit alone who convinces of sin, and He is a free agent.

He is a sovereign Spirit and has nowhere promise to work at the bidding of unconverted man. He has many on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. Perhaps you think you may take your fill of sin just now and then come and repent and be saved.

But remember, the Spirit is not at your bidding. He is not your servant. Many hope to be converted on their deathbed, and they come to their deathbed and yet are not converted.

If the Spirit be working with you now, do not grieve Him. Do not resist Him. Do not quench Him, for He may never come back to you again.

I come to the argument which the Spirit uses. These are two arguments by which the Spirit usually gives men a sense of the dreadfulness of their sin. First, the law.

The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Now we know that what thingsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. The sinner reads the law of the great God who made heaven and earth.

The Spirit of God arouses his conscience to see that the law condemns every part of his life. The law bids him to love God. His heart tells him he never loved God, never had a thought of regard toward God.

The Spirit convinces him that God is a jealous God, that His honor is concerned to uphold the law and destroy the sinner. The Spirit convinces him that God is a just God, that He can by no means clear the guilty. The Spirit convinces him that He is a true God and must fulfill His threatenings.

Have I said it and shall I not do it? The sinner's mouth is stopped and he stands guilty before God. The second argument which the Spirit uses is the Gospel. Because they believe not on Jesus.

This is the strongest of all arguments and therefore is chosen by Christ here in this passage. The sinner reads in the Word that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And now the Spirit convinces him that he never believed on the Son of God.

Indeed, he does not know what it means. For the first time, the conviction comes upon his heart. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The more glorious and divine that Savior is, the more is the Christless soul convinced he is lost. For he feels that he is out of that Savior. He sees plainly that Christ is an almighty ark riding over the deluge of God's wrath.

He sees how safe and happy the little company are that are gathered within. But this just makes him gnash his teeth in agony. For he is not within the ark.

And the waves and the billows are coming over him. He hears that Christ has been stretching out the hands all the day to the chief of sinners, not willing that any should perish. But then he never cast himself into those arms.

And now he feels that Christ may be laughing at his calamity and mocking when his fear comes. Oh yes, my friends, how often on the deathbed when the natural fears of conscience are aided by the Spirit of God, how often when we speak of Christ, His love, His atoning blood, the refuge to be found in Him, how safe and happy are all that are in Him, how often does the dying sinner turn it all away with the awful question, but am I in Christ? The more we tell of the Savior, the more is their agony increased. For they feel that it is the Savior they have refused.

What a meaning does that give to these words? The Spirit convinceth of sin because they believe not in Me. Now, my friends, there are many of you who know that you never believed on Jesus, and yet, you are quite unmoved. You sit without any emotion.

You eat your meals with appetite for sin. You have never been convinced of sin. The Spirit hath never begun His work in your heart.

Oh, if the Spirit of Jesus would come upon your hearts like a mighty rushing wind, what a dreadful thought it would be to you this night that you are lying out of Christ. You would lose your appetite for this world's food. You would not be able to rest in your bed.

You would not dare to live on in your sins. All your past sins would rise behind you like apparitions of evil. Wherever you went, you would meet the Word without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world.

And if your worldly friends would try to hush your fears and tell you of your decencies, that you were not so bad as your neighbors, ah, how you would thrust them away and stop your ears and cry, there is a city of refuge that I have never fled to. Therefore, there must be a blood avenger. There is an ark.

Therefore, there must be a coming flood. There is a Christ. Therefore, there must be a hell for the Christless.

Secondly, some of you may be under conviction of sin. You feel the dreadfulness of being out of Christ and you are very miserable. Now, be thankful for this work of the Spirit.

Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father. God hath brought you into the wilderness just that He might allure you and speak to your heart about Christ. Be thankful you are not dead like those around you.

Do not lose these convictions. Remember, they are easily lost. Involve yourselves overhead and ears in business and work even on the Sabbath day and you will soon drive them away.

Indulge in a little sensual pleasure. Take a little diversion with companions and you will soon be as happy and careless as they are. If you love your soul, flee these things.

Do not stay. Flee away from them. Read the books that keep up your anxiety.

Wait on ministers that keep up your anxiety. Above all, cry to the Spirit who alone was the author of it that He would keep it up. Cry day and night that He would never let you rest out of Christ.

Oh, would you sleep over hell? Do not rest in these convictions. You are not saved. Many have come thus far and have perished after all.

Many have been convinced, not converted. Many lose their convictions and wallow in sin again. Remember Lot's wife.

You are never safe until you are within the fold. Christ is the door. Strive to enter in at the straight gate for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.

Now, I come to the second work of the Spirit from which He is properly called the Comforter. He will reprove the world of righteousness. When He has first broken the bones under a sense of sin, then He reveals the good physician and makes the very bones which He has broken to rejoice.

When He has first revealed the coming storm of wrath so that the sinner knows not where to flee, He opens the secret chamber and whispers, Come in hither. It may be you will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. When He has cast a light into the sinner's bosom and let him see how every action of his life condemns him and how vain it is to seek for any righteousness there, He then casts light upon the risen Savior and says, Look there.

He shows the Savior's finished sufferings and finished obedience and says, All this is yours if you will believe in Jesus. Thus does the Spirit lead the soul to accept and close with Christ freely offered in the Gospel. Brethren, He is no minister of Christ who only terrifies and awakens you, who only aims at the first work of the Spirit to convince you of sin and aims not at the second work of the Spirit to convince you of righteousness.

He would be like a surgeon who should tear off the bandages of your wounds and lay open their deepest recesses and then leave you like Israel with sores not closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. He would be like a man who should awaken you when your house was all on fire and yet leave without showing you any way of escape. I know there may be many of you quite offended because we preach Christ to the vilest of sinners.

It was so with the Pharisees and no doubt there are many Pharisees among us. When we enter into the haunts of wickedness and immorality and in accents of tenderness, proclaim the simple message of redeeming love that the wrath of God is abiding on sinners but that Christ is a Savior freely offered to them just as they are or when a child of sin and misery comes before us and the minister of Christ first plainly tells us of God's wrath against His sin and then just as plainly, with all affection, tells of Christ's compassion and freely offered righteousness, oh, how often the decent, moral men of the world are affronted. The very imagination that the same Savior is offered as freely to the vilest offscourings of vices as to themselves, this is more than they can bear.

What? They cry. Do you offer these wretches a Savior before they have reformed their lives? Before they have changed their character? I answer, yes. The whole not need a physician but they that are sick.

I beseech you to mark that this is the very way of the Spirit of God. He is the Holy Spirit of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He is the sanctifier of all that are in Jesus and yet, when He has convinced a sinner of sin, His next work is to speak peace, to convince that sinner of righteousness.

If you ask me, then why do I not say to the child of sin and shame, go and reform yourself. Become honest and pure and then I will invite you to the Savior. I answer, because even the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier does not do this.

He first leads the soul into the wilderness, then He allures it to come to Christ. He first shuts up the soul in prison under a sense of guilt and then opens a door, reveals Christ, an open refuge for the chief of sinners. Brethren, do not forget it.

He is the comforter before He is the sanctifier. Ah, then do not blame us if as messengers of Christ we tread in the very footsteps of that blessed Spirit. If even He, the holy, sanctifying Spirit whose breath is all purity, if even He invites the vilest sinner to put on these beautiful garments, the divine righteousness of Christ, do not say that we are favoring sin, that we are the enemies of morality if we carry this message to the vilest of sinners.

Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved. What is this righteousness? I answer, it is the righteousness of Christ wrought out in behalf of sinners. Now, righteousness means righteousness with respect to the law.

When a person has never broken the law but has rendered complete obedience to it, that person is righteous. Righteousness consists of two parts. First, freedom from guilt.

Second, worthiness in the sight of God. The righteousness of Christ freely offered to sinners includes both of these. There is freedom from guilt in Christ because He has gone to the Father.

When He came to this world, He came under a load of guilt. When He was an infant in the manger, He was under guilt. When He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He was under guilt.

When He sat down wearied at the well, He was under guilt. When He was in that dreadful agony in the garden, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, He was under guilt. When He was in His last agony on the cross, He was under guilt.

He had no sin of His own, and yet these are His words, "...innumerable evils have compassed Me about. My iniquities have taken hold upon Me so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of My

head.

Therefore, My heart faileth Me." Question. How do you know that Christ was under guilt? Answer. Because He was in pain.

He suffered the pain of infancy in the manger. He suffered weariness and hunger and thirst and great agonies in the garden and on the cross. But God has eternally connected guilt and pain.

If there were no guilt, there could be no pain. Because God hid His face from Him. My God, My God.

Now, God hides His face from nothing but guilt. Therefore, Christ was bearing the sins of many. He was all over with guilt.

He was as guilty in the sight of God as if He had committed all the sins of His people. What wonder then that God hid His face even from His own Son. But now, Christ is free from guilt.

He is risen and gone to the Father. When a man is lying under a debt, if he pays it, he is free from the debt. So Christ was lying under our sins, but He suffered all the punishment and is now free.

He rose and we see Him no more. When a man is banished as a punishment for so many years, it is unlawful for him to return to his country until the time has expired and the punishment is gone. But when the time has expired, then he is free from guilt in the eyes of the law.

He may come back to his home and his country once more. So Christ was banished from the bosom of the Father for a time. God hid His face from Him.

But when He had borne all that God saw fit to lay on Him, then He was free from guilt. He was free to return and so He did. He rose and went back to the bosom of the Father from which He came.

Do you not see then, trembling sinner, that there is freedom from all guilt in Christ? He is quite free. He shall never suffer anymore. He is now without sin.

And when He comes again, He will come without sin. If you will become one with Him, you too are free from guilt. You are free as Christ is.

You are as free as Christ is. You are as safe from being punished as if you were in heaven with Christ. If you believe on Christ, you are one with Him, a member of His body.

And as sure as Christ, your head is now passed from the darkness of God's anger into the light of His countenance, so surely are you, O believer, passed from darkness into God's marvelous light. Oh, what a blessed word was that of Christ just before He ascended. I go to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God.

God is now as much ours as He is Christ's. Question. What good is it to me that Christ is free from guilt? Answer.

Christ is offered to you as your Savior. There is perfect obedience in Christ. From the cradle to the cross, He obeyed the will of God from the heart.

When He came into the world, His word was, Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O God.

Yea, Thy law is within My heart. When He was in the midst of His obedience, still He did not change His mind. He says, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work. And when He was going out of the world, still His word was, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. So that is true what an apostle says, that He was obedient even unto death.

The whole law is summed up in these two commandments. That we love God and our neighbor. Christ did both.

He loved God perfectly. And He loved His neighbor as Himself. It was out of love to men that He came into the world at all.

And everything He did in the world and everything He suffered in the world was out of love to His neighbor. It was out of love to men that He performed the greatest part of His obedience, namely, the laying down of His life. Now this is the obedience of Christ.

And we know that it is perfect because He was the Son of God. And all that He did must be perfect. Also, because He has gone to the Father, He has ascended into the presence of God.

And how did the Father receive Him? We are told in Psalm 110, a door is opened in heaven and we are allowed to hear the very words with which God receives His Son. The Lord said unto My Lord, sit thou on My right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool. So then, God did not send Him back as one who had not obeyed perfectly enough.

God did not forbid His presence as one unworthy to be accepted. But God highly exalted Him, looked upon Him as worthy of much honor, worthy of a seat on the throne at His right hand. O how plain that Christ is accepted with the Father! And how plain that His righteousness is most lovely and all divine in the sight of God the Father! Hearken then, trembling sinner, this righteousness is offered to you.

It was wrought just for sinners like you and for none else. It is for no other use but just to cover naked sinners. This is the clothing wrought of gold and the raiment of needlework.

This is the wedding garment, the fine linen, white and clean. Oh, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should ye refuse your own mercies? Become one with Christ by believing and you are not only pardoned as I showed you before, but you are righteous in the sight of God.

Not only shall you never be cast into hell, but you shall surely be carried to heaven as surely as Christ is there now. Become one with Christ. And even this moment, you are lovely in the sight of God.

You are as much accepted in the sight of God as is the Son of Man, the Beloved that sits on His right hand. The Spirit shall be given you as surely as He is given to Christ. You are as sure to wear a crown of glory as that Christ is now wearing His.

You are as sure to sit upon Christ's throne as that Christ is now sitting on His Father's throne. Oh, weep for joy, happy believer. Oh, sing for gladness of heart.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. What is conviction of righteousness? Let us show what it is not.

First, it is not an impression upon the imagination.

Just as men have often imaginary terrors, so men have also imaginary views of Christ. And of the glory of being in Christ. Sometimes they think they see Christ with the bodily eye.

Or sometimes they think they hear words born upon their mind telling of the beauty of Christ. Now, this is not the conviction of righteousness. Indeed, such things may accompany true conversion.

There is no impossibility in it. Paul and Stephen both saw Christ. But one thing is certain.

Conviction of righteousness is very different from this. It is a far higher and nobler thing given only by the Spirit of God. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.

Secondly, it is not a revelation of any new truths not contained in the Bible. When the Spirit revealed Christ to the apostles and prophets of old, He revealed new truths. New truths concerning Christ.

But when He convinces a sinner of the righteousness of Christ, He does it by opening up truths contained in the Bible. If He revealed new truths, then we might well put away our Bibles and sit alone waiting for the Spirit to come down upon us. But, this is contrary to the Bible and experience.

David prays, Open thou my eyes, that I may see wonders. Where? Not in heaven above or in earth beneath, but out of thy law. It is through the truth that the Spirit always works in our hearts.

Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. Therefore, when you look for conviction of righteousness, you are not to look for new truths not in the Bible, but for divine light cast upon old truths already in the Bible.

Thirdly, it is not mere head knowledge of what the Bible says of Christ and His righteousness. Most unconverted men read their Bibles, and many of them understand very wonderfully the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Yet, these have no conviction of righteousness.

All awakened souls read their Bibles very anxiously with much praying and weeping, and many of them seem to understand very clearly the truth that Christ is an all-sufficient righteousness. Yet, they tell us they cannot close with Christ. They cannot apply Him to their own case.

Again, the devils believe and tremble. The devil has plainly much knowledge of the Bible, and from the quotation he made to Christ, it is plain that he understood much of the work of redemption. Yet, he is the none better for it.

He only trembles and gnashes his teeth the more. Ah, my friends, if you have no more than the head knowledge of Christ and His righteousness, you have no more than the devils have. You have never been convinced of righteousness.

What then is conviction of righteousness? The answer, it is a sense of the preciousness and the fitness of Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel. I have said it is a sense of the preciousness of Christ, a feeling of His preciousness in the heart. I before showed you that there is all the difference in the world between knowing a thing and feeling a thing, between having a knowledge of a thing and having a sense of it.

There is all the difference in the world between knowing that honey is sweet and tasting that sweetness. So as to have a sense of it, there is a great difference between knowing that a glove will fit the hand and

putting it on. And so as to have a sense of its fitness, just so, there is all the difference in the world between having a head knowledge of Christ and of His righteousness, and having a heart feeling of His fitness and preciousness.

The first may be acquired from flesh and blood or from books. The second must come from the Spirit of God. The third must come from the Spirit of God.

Again, being convinced of righteousness is a sense of the fitness of Christ. It is conceivable that a person may have a sense of Christ's preciousness without having a sense of His fitness. Some awakened souls appear to feel that Christ is very precious, yet they do not dare to put Christ on.

They seem to want a sense of His fitness in their case. They cry out, Oh, how precious a Savior He is to all His people. Oh, that I were one of His people.

Oh, that I were hidden in His bleeding side. And yet they have no sense of His fitness to be their Savior. They do not cry out, He just fits my case.

He is the very Savior for me. For if they felt this, they would be at peace. Their lips would overflow with joy.

But no, they dare not appropriate Christ. Now then, conviction of righteousness is to have such a sense of Christ as leads us without hesitation to put on Christ. And that I have called a sense of His fitness.

It gives me no comfort to know that Christ is a precious Savior to others unless I know He is a precious Savior to me. If the flood is coming on, the windows of heaven opening and the fountains of the great deep broken up, it gives me no peace to know that the ark is for others unless you tell me that it is an ark for me. You may tell me of Christ's righteousness forever and of the safety of all that are in Him.

But if you would comfort me by the news, you must convince me that that righteousness is fit for me and is offered to me. Now this is what the Spirit does when He convinces of righteousness. This and this only is the conviction of righteousness.

O brethren, it is no slight work of nature to persuade a soul, even an anxious soul, to put on Christ. Flesh and blood cannot reveal Christ unto you, but my Father which is in heaven. No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

Let me speak a word to three classes. First, to the unawakened. See how far you are from salvation.

Many of you may be saying in your heart, it is quite true, I am not at present a saved person, but I am not very far from the Kingdom of God. I just have to repent and believe on Jesus and I am saved. And since this is so short and simple a matter, I may do it any time.

I may enjoy the world and its pleasures a little longer, and then when death or disease threatens me, it may be a good time to become anxious. Now, all this argument proceeds from falsehood. You think you are not far off from salvation, but ah, my friend, you are as far from salvation as anyone could be.

That is in the land of the living. There is only one case in which you could be farther from salvation, and that is in hell. You are as far from salvation as anyone that is out of hell.

You may have such head knowledge of sin without the Spirit, but only He can convince you of sin. I wish you to see that there is a second divine work needful on your heart before you can believe. The Spirit must

convince you of Christ's righteousness.

And can you be easy when you are at such a distance from salvation? Can you go now and sit down to a game of chance to while away the time between this and judgment? Can you go and laugh and be merry in your sins? How true then did Solomon say, the laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. A loud noise for a moment then everlasting silence. A short blaze and a dark eternity.

Secondly, to the awakened. Remember, unless you attain to conviction of righteousness, your conviction of sin will be all in vain. Remember, anxiety for the soul does not save the soul.

Sailors in a shipwreck are very anxious. They cry much to God in prayers and tears. And yet, though they are anxious men, they are not saved men.

The vessel goes to pieces and they are all drowned. Travelers in a wilderness may be very anxious. Their hearts may die within them.

Yet, that does not show that they are safe. They may perish in the burning sands. You are so much afraid of the wrath of God, it may be God has mercy stirred up in these anxieties in your bosom, but you are not yet saved.

Unless you come to Christ, all will be in vain. Many are convinced who are never converted. Many are in hell now who were once as anxious to escape as you.

Remember, God only can give you this conviction. The Spirit convinces of righteousness. It is not flesh and blood that can give you a sense of the preciousness of Christ.

It is true. The Bible and preaching are means through which God works this conviction. If you be truly awakened, I know how anxiously you will wait on these means, how you will search the Scriptures with tears and lose no opportunity of hearing the preaching of the Word.

But still, the Bible and preaching are only means of themselves. They can only make natural impressions on your mind. God only can make supernatural impressions.

Cry then to God. But remember, God is a sovereign God. Do not cry to Him to convert you as if it were a debt He owed to you.

There is only one thing you can claim from God as a right. That is a place in hell. If you think you have any claim on God, you are deceiving yourself.

Lie at the feet of a sovereign God, a God who owes you nothing but punishment. The God who alone can reveal Christ unto you. Cry night and day that He would reveal Christ unto you.

That He would shine into your darkness and give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. One glimpse of that face will give you peace. It may be you shall be hid in Him in the day of the Lord's anger.

And thirdly, to those of you who have come to Christ, oh, what miracles of grace you are! Twice over you have been saved by grace when you were loathsome in your sins and yet asleep. The Spirit awakened you. Thousands were sleeping beside you.

He left thousands to perish, but awakened you. Again, though awakened, you were as loathsome as ever. You were as vile in the sight of God as ever.

Only you dreaded hell. In some respects, you were more wicked than the unawakened world around you. They would not come to Christ because they felt no need.

But you felt your need yet would not come. You made God a liar more than they, yet God had mercy on you. He led you to Christ, convinced you of righteousness.

So, you are twice over saved by grace. Oh, to grace, how great a debtor! What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits? Will you not love Him with all your heart? Will you not serve Him with all you have? And when He says, feed this poor orphan for My sake, will you not say, Lord, when I give for Thee, it is more blessed to give than to receive? Amen. Let's pray.

Lord, again we ask Thee, bless Thy Word, O Holy Spirit. Turn us. Change us.

Make us to see clearly and to understand Thy Word as it is, even as Thou dost understand it. Though it may be in a small way because of our poor, weak minds, Lord, grant it. But may it be in our hearts because of Thy work.

Give us a clear view of these things and give us repentance from our errors. We may think to be so safe in Christ will make us careless. And it's better to be anxious, Lord.

Save us from such foolishness. For Thou art not honored when we are not trusting Thee as a little child, even in the worst and the most impossible circumstances. Lord, help us.

Grant, O Holy Spirit, us to remember Thy Word and to think upon it. We will throw it away if left to ourselves. Save us, we pray, for Thy glory in Christ.

We ask it all in His name. Amen.

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