

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S THREEFOLD CONVICTION OF MEN NO. 1708

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”
John 16:8-11.*

THE Apostles had a stern task before them. They were to go into all nations and proclaim the Gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem. Remember, only two or three years before they were simple fishermen engaged upon the Galilean Lake—men of little or no education, men of no rank or standing. At best they were but Jews and that nation was despised everywhere, while these peasants were not even men of repute among their own nation! Yet these men were to turn the world upside down! They were told by their Lord that they would be brought before rulers and kings for His sake and that they would be persecuted wherever they went. They were to proclaim the Gospel in the teeth of the imperial power of Rome, the ancient wisdom of Greece and the fierce cruelties of barbaric lands. And they were to set up the kingdom of peace and righteousness.

At the very time when they were about to receive their commission, they were also to lose the bodily Presence of their great Leader. While He was with them, they had felt no fear. If they were puzzled at any time by the Scribes and Pharisees, they resorted to Jesus, and they were rescued from bewilderment. Never man spoke like that Man! Never did such wisdom and prudence dwell in any mind as dwelt in the mind of Christ! His Presence was their protection, the broad shield behind which they securely stood, whatever shafts might be shot at them by their adversaries. But now that He was to depart out of the world unto the Father, they would be deprived of their fortress and high tower—they would be as children bereft of their father, or, at best, as soldiers without a general. Here was a sad case. Work given and power withdrawn—a battle beginning and the conquering Captain leaving.

How happy it was for these disciples that our blessed Lord could tell them that His going away would be for their gain rather than for their loss! For when He was gone, the Spirit of God would come to be an Advocate *for* them and *with* them, and by His power they would be able to silence all their enemies and achieve their mission! The Holy Spirit was to be their Comforter, that they might not be afraid, and their Advocate, that they might not be baffled. When they spoke, there would be a power within them suggesting their words, a power with those words convincing their hearers, and a power in their hearers causing the word spoken to abide in their memories—that power would be Divine, the power of the Holy Spirit, who is One God with the Father and the Son.

It is one thing for men to speak, and quite another thing for God to speak through men. The work of proclaiming the Gospel to the world was far too great for the 12, but it was by no means too great for the Spirit of God! Who can limit His power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? The Holy Spirit being their Helper, these feeble men were equal to the task which God had committed to their trust. The Presence of the Holy Spirit was better for them than the bodily Presence of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus could only have been in one place as to His corporeal Presence, but the Holy Spirit could be everywhere! The sight of Jesus would but appeal to the senses, but the power of the Holy Spirit touched the heart and worked spiritual life and saving faith! Thus, by His own withdrawal and the sending of the Spirit, our Lord furnished His servants for the conflict.

We will, at this time, observe what the Holy Spirit did as an Advocate. The passage cannot be fully understood unless we give it three renderings. But I do not pretend that even then, we shall have pressed from this choice cluster, all the generous wine of its meaning! To my mind, it is a compendium of all the work of the Spirit of God. By our three readings we shall see much—first, the Spirit of God goes with the preaching of the Gospel to reprove men of sin—and so to embarrass them in the presence of the preacher of righteousness. Secondly (and this is a much more blessed result), to

convict men of sin and so to lead them to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And, thirdly, the ultimate result of the Holy Spirit's work will be to convict men before all intelligent beings of having been guilty of the grossest sin—having opposed the most perfect righteousness and of having defied the most glorious judgment. We shall try to see the meaning of the passage through these three windows.

I. First, we believe that a promise is here made to the servants of Christ that when they go forth to preach the Gospel the Holy Spirit will be with them TO REPROVE MEN. By this is meant, not so much to save them as to *silence* them. When the minister of Christ stands up to plead his Master's cause, another Advocate appears in court, whose pleadings would make it hard for men to resist the Truth of God. Observe how this reproof was given with regard to sin. On the day of Pentecost the disciples spoke with many different tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Men from all countries under Heaven heard themselves addressed in their native tongues! This was a great marvel and all Jerusalem rang with it!

And when Peter stood up to preach to the assembled multitude and told the Jews that they had crucified the Holy One and the Just, the signs and wonders worked by the Spirit in the name of Jesus were a witness which they could not refute. The very fact that the Spirit of God had given to these unlettered men the gift of tongues was evidence that Jesus of Nazareth, of whom they spoke, was no impostor! It was laid down in the old Jewish Law that if a man prophesied and his prophecies did not come to pass, he was to be condemned as a false prophet. But if that which he said came to pass, then he was a true Prophet. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ had promised the outpouring of the Spirit, which had also been foretold in reference to the Messiah by the Prophet Joel. When, therefore, that mark of the true Messiah was set upon Jesus of Nazareth by the coming of the Holy Spirit and the working of miracles, men were reprov'd for having refused to believe in Jesus.

The evidence was brought home to them that they had, with wicked hands, crucified the Lord of Glory—and so they stood reprov'd. All the subsequent miracles went to prove the same thing, for when the Apostles worked miracles, the world was reprov'd of sin because it believed not on Christ. It was not that a few disciples testified to the sin of the race, but the Holy Spirit, Himself, made men tremble, as by His deeds of power, He bore witness to the Lord Jesus and exhibited the fact that in crucifying Jesus, the world had put to death the Incarnate Son of God! Do you not see the terrible power with which the first disciples were thus armed? It was more to them than the rod in the hand of Moses with which he smote Pharaoh with so many plagues. It needed all the willfulness of that stiff-necked generation to resist the Holy Spirit and refuse to bow before Him whom they had pierced—they were full of malice and obstinacy—but in their secret hearts they were sore put to it and felt that they were fighting against God.

Do you not see, too, dear Friends, how the working of the Holy Spirit with the Apostles and their immediate followers was a wonderful rebuke to the world concerning the matter of righteousness? Jesus was gone and His Divine example no longer stood out like clear light reprov'ing their darkness—but the Holy Spirit attested that righteousness and compelled them to feel that Jesus was the Holy One and that His cause was righteous. The teaching of the Apostles, sealed by the Holy Spirit, made the world see what righteousness was as they had never seen it before! A fresh standard of morals was set up in the world and it has never been taken down—it stands in its place to rebuke, if not to improve! The world was then sunk in the uttermost depths of vice—even its good men were loathsome! But now another kind of righteousness was exhibited in the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit came to set the seal of Divine approval to it so that if men continued in sin, it might be against light and knowledge, for they now *knew* what was righteousness and could no longer be mistaken upon that point. God was with the preachers of a new righteousness and by many different signs and wonders He attested the cause of the Gospel.

Now, Brothers, we also rejoice in this, seeing that the witness of the Truth of God is for all time and we know of a surety that the Kingdom which our Lord Jesus has set up among men is Divinely sanctioned as the Kingdom of Righteousness which, in the end, shall grind to powder the powers of evil! We are the covenanted servants of a Lord whose righteousness was declared among men by the personal witness of God the Holy Spirit. Are you not glad to be enlisted in such a service? Oh, world, are you not embarrassed for resisting such a kingdom? These 12 fishermen could not, of themselves, have exhibited a new standard of righteousness among men! They could not, on their own, have set before all nations a higher ideal of moral excellence! But when the eternal power and majesty of the Godhead vouch'd for the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, the course of the Apostolic Church became like that of the sun in the heavens!

“Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” None could stand against them, for, as when the morning breaks, the darkness flies and the bats and the night birds hasten away, so when the messengers of mercy proclaimed the Righteousness of God, man’s hypocrisy and self-glorying fled away! Then, too, they were made to feel that a judgment had come; that somehow the life and the death of Jesus of Nazareth had made a crisis in the world’s history and condemned the way and manner of the ungodly. All historians must confess that the turning point of the race is the Cross of Christ. From that moment the power of evil received its mortal wound! It dies hard, but from that hour it was doomed. At the death of our Lord, the heathen oracles were struck dumb. There had been oracles all over the world, either the product of evil spirits or of crafty priests, but after the Christian era the world ceased to believe in these voices and they were no more heard.

Systems of false worship, so firmly rooted in prejudice and custom that it seemed impossible that they should ever be overthrown, were torn up by their roots by the breath of the Lord. The Apostles might have said to all the systems of falsehood, “as a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence.” Men could not help perceiving that the Prince of Darkness had been cast down from his undivided power and that he spoke, from then on, with bated breath. The Seed of the woman had met the old serpent and, in the duel between them, He had gained such a victory that the cause of evil was henceforth hopeless. Moreover, the thought flashed upon humanity more clearly than ever—there would be a Day of Judgment! Men heard and felt the truth of the warning that God would judge the world, at the last, by the Man, Christ Jesus!

The dim forms of Rhadamanthus on a cloudy judgment seat and of the assembly before his throne, and of the crowds divided according to their lives, now began to assume another and far more definite shape. It was written on the heart of mankind that there is a judgment to come! Men will rise again! They shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the things done in the body, whether good or evil. The world heard this and the tidings have never been forgotten! The Holy Spirit has reproved men by the prospect of judgment! The Holy Spirit attested the life of Christ, the teaching of the Apostles and all the grand Truths of God that were contained therein, by what He did in the way of miracles and by what He did in the way of enlightening, impressing and subduing human hearts. Henceforth man is accused and rebuked by the great Advocate! And all who remain in opposition to the Lord Jesus, remain so in defiance of the clearest proofs of His mission. He who rejects human testimony when it is true is foolish, but he who despises the witness of the Holy Spirit is profane, for he calls the Spirit of Truth a liar! Let him beware lest he so sin against the Holy Spirit as to come under the most terrible of curses—for it is written of him that speaks against the Holy Spirit—“he has no forgiveness.”

Brothers and Sisters, does not that put the Apostles in quite a different position from that in which they appeared to be? If we judge according to sense and carnal reason, their adventure was Quixotic, their success was impossible! Everybody would have said to them, “Go back to your nets and to your boats. What can you do against the established system of Judaism in your own country? And if that is too hard for you, what will you be able to do in other lands? There are nations that have been tutored in their own learning for thousands of years and have become adept in all the arts and sciences! They have brought all the charms of poetry, music and statuary to support their idolatrous systems—you are fools to think that you unlearned and ignorant men can ever overturn all this!”

Would not prudence agree with this? Yes, but if *God* is in these men—if He that dwelt in the bush at Horeb and made it burn, though it was not consumed—will dwell in them and each one of them shall be gifted with a tongue of fire, this is a different business altogether! Surely, He that made the world, could make it new! He that said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” could command light to shine upon the moral and spiritual night. Thus much upon the first reading of the text. Let us advance to that which will more interest you.

II. The Holy Spirit was to go with the preaching of the Word of God TO CONVINCING MEN of three great prominent Truths of God. This was to be a *saving* Word—they are to be so convinced as to repent of sin, to accept of righteousness and yield themselves to the judgment of the Lord. Here we see as in a map, the work of the Spirit upon the hearts of those who are ordained unto eternal life! Those three effects are all necessary and each one is, in the highest degree, important to true conversion. First, the Holy Spirit is come to convince men of sin. It is absolutely necessary that men should be convinced of sin.

The fashionable theology of the day is—"Convince men of the goodness of God! Show them the universal fatherhood and assure them of unlimited mercy. Win them by God's love, but never mention His wrath against sin, or the need of an Atonement, or the possibility of there being a place of punishment! Do not censure poor creatures for their failings. Do not judge and condemn. Do not search the heart or lead men to be low-spirited and sorrowful. Comfort and encourage, but never accuse and threaten!" Yes, that is the way of *man*—but the way of the Spirit of God is very different! He comes on purpose to convince men of sin, to make them feel that they are guilty, greatly guilty—so guilty that they are lost, ruined and undone! He comes to remind them not only of God's loveliness, but of their own *unloveliness*—of their own enmity and hatred to this God of Love and, consequently, of their terrible sin in thus ill-using One so infinitely kind.

The Holy Spirit does not come to make sinners comfortable in their sins, but to cause them to grieve over their sins! He does not help them to forget their sin, or think little of it, but He comes to convince them of the horrible enormity of their iniquity! It is no work of the Spirit to pipe to men's dancing—He does not bring forth flute, harp, dulcimer and all kinds of music to charm the unbelieving into a good opinion of themselves—He comes to make sin appear sin and to let us see its fearful consequences! He comes to wound so that no human balm can heal! He comes to kill so that no *earthly* power can make us live! The flowers bedeck the meadows when the grass is green, but lo, a burning wind comes from the desert and the grass withers and the flowers fall away. What is it that makes the beauty and excellence of human righteousness to wither as the green herb? Isaiah says it is "because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it."

There is a withering work of the Spirit of God which we must experience or we shall never know His quickening and restoring power. This withering is a most necessary experience and, just now, needs much to be insisted on. Today we have so many built up who were never pulled down; so many filled who were never emptied; so many exalted who were never humbled that I, the more earnestly, remind you that the Holy Spirit must convince us of sin or we cannot be saved! This work is most necessary because without it there is no leading men to receive the Gospel of the Grace of God. We cannot make headway with certain people because they profess faith very readily, but they are not convinced of *anything*. "Oh, yes, we are sinners, no doubt, and Christ died for sinners"—that is the free-and-easy way with which they handle heavenly mysteries—as if they were the nonsense verses of a boy's exercise, or the stories of Mother Goose!

This is all mockery and we are weary of it. But get near a real sinner and you have found a man you can deal with—I mean the man who is a sinner and there is no mistake about it—he mourns in his inmost soul that he is so. In such a man you find one who will welcome the Gospel, welcome Grace and welcome a Savior. To him the news of pardon will be as cold water to a thirsty soul—and the Doctrines of Grace will be as honey dropping from the comb! "A sinner," says one of our songsters, "is a sacred thing"—the Holy Spirit has made Him so. Your sham sinner is a horrid creature, but a man truly convinced of sin by the Spirit of God is a being to be sought after as a jewel that will adorn the crown of the Redeemer!

Note here, that the Spirit of God comes to convince men of sin because they never will be convinced of sin apart from His Divine advocacy. A natural conscience touched by the Spirit of God may do a good deal in the way of showing a man his faults. It may thus make him uneasy and may bring about a reformation of life. But it is only the Spirit of God that, to the full extent, convinces a man of sin so as to bring forth repentance, self-despair and faith in Jesus. For what is the sin that you and I are guilty of? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is not easy to tell, but this I know, that the extent of sin is never known till the Spirit of God reveals the secret chambers of the heart's abominations. We do a thousand things that we do not know to be sin till the Spirit of God enlightens us and pleads the cause of holiness in us.

What natural man, for instance, ever laments over evil thoughts or desires, or the imaginations which flit across his mind? Yet all these are sins and sins which cause a gracious heart the deepest distress! If we were never actually to *commit* evil, yet if we *desire* to do so, we have already sinned! And if we feel pleasure in thinking of evil, we have already sinned. This poison is in our nature and shows itself in a thousand ways. The fact that we not only sin, but are, by nature, sinful, is one which our pride kicks against—and we will not learn it till the Spirit of God teaches it to us. Neither does any man know the exceeding sinfulness of sin till the Light of God falls upon the black mass from the Holy Spirit. Every sin is, as it were, an assault upon God's Throne, Glory and life. Sin would dethrone the Most High and destroy Him if it could—but men do not see this. They talk of sin most lightly and know not that it scatters firebrands and death.

I tell you, when the Spirit of God makes a man see sin in its naked deformity, he is horrified! When I saw, or thought I saw, the heinousness of sin, it was intolerable and I had no rest in my spirit. Some such sight we must all have, or we shall never look to the Lord Jesus to take away our sin. None but those whose wounds smart are likely to apply for the heavenly balm. The Holy Spirit dwells upon one point in particular—"of sin, because they believe not on Me." None see the sin of unbelief except by His light. A man thinks, "Well, if I have not believed in Christ, that is a pity, perhaps, but still, I was never a thief, or a liar, or a drunk, or unchaste. Unbelief is a matter of very little consequence. I can set that right at any time." But the Holy Spirit makes a man see that not to believe in Christ is a crowning, damning sin, since, "he that believes not has made God a liar"—and what can be more atrocious than that?

He who believes not on Christ has rejected God's mercy and has done despite to the grandest display of God's love! He has despised God's unspeakable Gift and trampled on the blood of Christ! In this he has dishonored God on a very tender point. He has insulted Him concerning His only-begotten Son! How I wish that the Spirit of God would come upon unbelievers, here, and make them see what they are and where they are with regard to the one and only Savior! How shall they escape, who neglect so great a salvation? It will not matter how feebly I speak this morning if the Spirit of God will only work by the Truth of God on you—you will perceive the greatness of your crime and you will never rest until you have believed on the Lord Jesus—and found forgiveness for your high offense against the bleeding Lamb!

So far, then, upon the first operation of the Holy Spirit. The next work of the Spirit is to convince men of righteousness, that is to say, in Gospel terms, to show them that they have *no* righteousness of their own and no means of working righteousness—and that apart from Grace they are condemned! Thus He leads them to value the righteousness of God which is, upon all them that believe, a righteousness which covers sin and renders them acceptable with God. Lend me your ears a moment while I call your attention to a great wonder! Among men, if a person is convicted of wrong-doing, the next step is judgment. A young man, for instance, has been in the service of an employer and he has embezzled money—he is convicted of the theft by process of law and found guilty. What follows next?

Why, judgment is pronounced and he must suffer the penalty! But observe how our gracious God interpolates another process. Truly, His ways are not our ways! "He shall convince of sin." The next step would be judgment, but no, the Lord inserts an up to now unknown middle term and convinces "of righteousness." Be amazed at this! The Lord takes a man, even when he is sinful and conscious of that sin, and makes him righteous on the spot by putting away his sin and justifying him by the righteousness of faith, a righteousness which comes to him by the worthiness of Another who has worked out a righteousness for him! Can that be? Brothers and Sisters, this seems to be unthinkable—so impossible that it needs the Spirit of God to convince men of it!

I may now set forth the great plan whereby the Lord Jesus is made of God unto us righteousness! I may show how the Son of God became Man that He might fully keep the Law of God for us and, having done so, and having added His passive obedience to His active service, He presented to His Father a complete vindication of His injured Law so that every man that believes on Him shall be delivered from condemnation and accepted in the Beloved! I might also tell how Christ's righteousness is set to our account so that faith is reckoned unto us for righteousness, even as was the case with faithful Abraham. Yet all my labor will be in vain till the Spirit shall make it plain! Many hear the gladsome tidings, but they do not receive the Truth of God, for they are not convinced of it. They need to be *persuaded* of it before they will embrace it—and that persuasion is not in my power.

Did I hear one remark, "I cannot see this way of righteousness"? I answer, No, and you never will until the Spirit of God convinces you of it! Note well the great point of the Spirit's argument—"Of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more." Our Lord was sent into the world to work out a righteousness and here, He says, "I go." But He would not go till He had done His work. He says, also, "I go to My Father." But He would not go back to His Father till He had fulfilled His Covenant engagements. "I go to My Father," that is, I go to receive a reward and to sit upon My Father's Throne. But He could not have received this Glory if He had not finished His appointed work! Behold, then, Christ has finished a righteousness which is freely given to all them that believe! And all those who trust in Christ are, for His sake, rewarded as righteous before God—and are, in fact, righteous, so that Paul says, "Who is he that condemns?"

His ground for asking that question is the same as that which the Spirit uses in my text. Paul says, "It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." He

quotes, as the Holy Spirit does, the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of the great Intercessor as the proof positive that there is a perfect righteousness for all believing sinners! I know that many will say, "This is making people righteous who are not righteous" and, therefore, they will raise many objections. Just so! This is the Glory of God, that He justifies the ungodly and saves sinners by Christ. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity."

"I do not see it," cries one. And our answer is, "We know you do not! We are not in the least surprised that you reject our testimony—we never expected you to receive it unless the arm of the Lord should be revealed and the Holy Spirit should convince you of righteousness." No man comes to Christ who is not drawn of the Father and enlightened by the Spirit! But if the Spirit convinces you, we shall soon hear you sing—

*"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress!
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."*

Dear people of God, pray hard that the Spirit of God may, even now, convince unbelievers that the only true righteousness for mortal men is that which comes not by the works of the Law, but by the hearing of faith!

But then comes a third point, the Spirit of God is to convince men of judgment. To whom is this judgment committed? "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son." The true penitent feels that if he had all his sins forgiven him, yet it will not serve his turn so long as he lies wallowing in sin. He feels that the great enemy of his soul must be dethroned, or else forgiveness, itself, will afford him no rest of heart. He must be rescued from the *power* as well as from the *guilt* of sin, or else he abides in bondage. He must see the power of evil hewn in pieces before the Lord, as Samuel hewed Agag of old. Listen, O troubled one! You *shall* be set free, for, "the prince of this world is judged." Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil—and on the Cross, our Redeemer judged Satan, overcame him and cast him down!

Satan is now a condemned criminal, a vanquished rebel. His reigning power over all Believers is broken. He has great wrath, knowing that his time is short, but that wrath is held in check by his Conqueror! In His passion, our Lord fought Satan foot to foot and overcame him, spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Do you believe this? May the Spirit of God convince you of it! O tried Believer, the Lord Jesus overthrew the devil for you! He crushed the powers of darkness for you! Believing in Him, you shall find evil dethroned in you and all the forces of sin hurled from their high places! You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Again, I ask, do you believe this? Christ is made of God unto us sanctification—He saves His people from their sins—He makes them holy and so breaks in pieces their enemy.

Though it will cost you many a conflict and the beaded sweat may, in the hour of temptation, stand upon your brow as you fear that you will fall from holiness, yet the Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet, shortly, for He has already bruised him under His own feet on your behalf! The Spirit of God is needed to convince our unbelieving hearts that it is so. Most men dream that they must overcome sin by their own strength. Alas, the strong armed man still keeps the house against our feebleness. You have a pretty piece of work before you if, in your own strength, you venture on this conflict. I can hear the devil laughing at you even now! This leviathan is not to be tamed by *you*. Job would say, "Will you play with him as with a bird?" Do you think the devil is as easily managed as a woman carries her pet bird on her finger and puts it to her lip to peck a seed?

Can you draw out leviathan with a hook? Will he speak soft words unto you? Will you take him to be a servant forever? Your arrows cannot come at him, nor your sword wound him! "Lay your hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more." A Divine power is needed and that power is ready to display itself if it is humbly sought! Many who are convinced of the righteousness of Christ are not yet fully convinced that evil is judged, condemned and cast down. They are haunted with the dread that they may yet perish by the hand of the enemy. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, see the need of the Holy Spirit to advocate in your heart the cause of and Truth of God—and make you believe that the Lord Jesus has supreme power over every enemy!

I sometimes meet with a Christian who tells me the world is all going to the bad, the Gospel is being utterly defeated, Christ is routed, the devil is waving the black flag and shouting victory. I know how terrible is the conflict, but I believe that my Lord Jesus has judged the whole kingdom of evil and, in that fact I see Satan fall like lightning from Heaven! Our Lord must reign! His enemies must lick the dust! We shall judge the fallen angels at the Last Great Day and, meanwhile, a believing life is a life of triumph over the arch enemy! In the power of the Spirit it shall be proven that truth is

mightier than error, love is stronger than hate and holiness is higher than sin, for the Lord's right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory! Behold how the ascended Savior leads captivity captive! See how He comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, for He has trodden sin and Hell in the winepress and now He travels in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save!

Let me run again over this ground, that we may not overlook anything. Dear Friends, those of us who are saved still need the Holy Spirit with us every day to convince us of sin! Good men do, at this hour, most complacently, things which, in clearer light, they would never think of doing! May the Holy Spirit continually show us layer after layer of sin, that we may remove it. May He reveal to us rank after rank of sin, that we may conquer all its forces. May He especially make known to us the sin of not believing in Christ, for even *we* have our doubts and fears. After a sermon concerning sin, the poor child of God cries out, "I dare not believe! I am afraid I shall be lost, after all." This unbelief is another sin. Strange way of escaping from sin by plunging into it!

To doubt the Lord is to add sin to sin! No sin is more pernicious than the sin of not believing. Whenever our heart distrusts the Lord, we grieve His Spirit—therefore we always need the Holy Spirit to convince us of this evil and bitter thing—and to lead us to trust after a child-like fashion. Any mistrust of God's promise; any fear of failure on God's part; any *thought* of His unfaithfulness is a crime against the honor of the Divine majesty! Oh, convincing Spirit, dwell with me from day to day convincing me of sin and especially making me to feel that the worst of all evils is to question my faithful Friend. So, also, may you always have the Spirit of God dwelling with you, convincing you of righteousness.

May those of you who are, indeed, Believers, never question but what you are righteous before God. We who believe are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus! Are we assured of this? If so, do not think and talk as if you were still under the curse of the Law, for you are no longer in any such condition. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Oh, may the Spirit of God convince you of that every day—and convince you of it on the ground that Jesus is reigning yonder at the Father's right hand!. The interest of each Believer in His Lord is clear and sure. If Jesus is there, I am there. If the Father has accepted Him, He has accepted me!

Do you catch the logic of it? You are *in* Christ, you are one *with* Him—as He is, so are you in Him! Hold fast to the fact that you are not condemned. How can you be? You are at the right hand of God in Christ. You, condemned? Why, you are "accepted in the Beloved," for your Representative is accepted by God and made to sit upon His Throne! Jesus is exalted, not for Himself, alone, but for *all* those who believe in Him! May the blessed Spirit fully convince you of this grand Truth of God!

And, next, may He convince you of judgment—namely, that you have been judged and your enemy has been judged and condemned. The Day of Judgment is not a thing to be dreaded by a Believer. We have stood our trial, and have been acquitted. Our Representative has borne the penalty of our sin. Our chastisement is passed, for Jesus has borne it—He was numbered with transgressors. There is, now, no curse for us! There can be none—Heaven, earth, Hell cannot find a curse for those whom God has blessed—since the Lord Jesus "was made a curse for us." May the Spirit of God come on you afresh, my dearly Beloved, and make you confident and joyful in Him who is the Lord our righteousness, by whom evil has been judged, once and for all!

II. Last of all, let us read our text by rendering it, "convict"—"The Spirit of God will CONVICT the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." There is the world. It stands a prisoner at the bar and the charge is that it is and has been full of sin. In courts of law you are often surprised with what comes out. You look at the prisoner and he seems to be a quiet, respectable person. And you say, "I should not think *he* is guilty." But the advocate who has engaged to plead the cause of righteousness stands up and gives an outline of the case—and you speedily change your mind, until, as the evidence proceeds, you say to yourself, "That is a villain if ever there was one."

Now hear the Spirit of God! The Spirit came into the world to make all men know that Jesus is the Christ. And He attested to that fact by miracles that could not be questioned, miracles without number! He has, moreover, attested the truth of the Gospel by the conversion of myriads, whose happy and holy lives have been a proof that Jesus Christ was, indeed, sent forth from God. But what did this wicked world do with Christ? They gave Him a felon's death! They nailed Him to a cross! By this, the world is condemned! We need no further evidence. The world is convicted—self-condemned

by the slaughter of Him who was Incarnate Goodness and unbounded Love! The world is base enough to desire to slay its God even when He comes on an errand of love!

Take the accused away! The world's guilt is proven beyond question. The wrath of God abides on it. What follows upon this? The trial is viewed from another point. The world has declared that the Gospel is not righteous, that the system which our Lord has come to establish is not true. Up to this day the world is continually raising objections, trying to confuse Believers and, if possible, to defeat our most holy cause. But the Spirit of God, by His teaching, proves that the Gospel is full of righteousness and, by all His operations through the Word of God, He proves that the Gospel is holy, just, good and tends to make men pure, godly, peaceable and holy. By sanctifying men through the Gospel so that they lead gracious lives, the Holy Spirit proves that the Gospel is righteous!

This process grows more and more complete as time rolls on. Were not the world unrighteous, it would, long ago, have yielded to the holy message and its holy Messenger. But it will be forced to acknowledge the Truth one day. The Holy Spirit makes the world know that Christ is righteous by flashing into its face the fact that Christ has gone—gone up to Glory, at the right hand of God—and this could not have been had He not been the Righteous One. When the world shall see Jesus enthroned, at the last, and all mankind shall behold the Son of Man on the clouds of Heaven, what conviction will seize on every mind! There will be no agnostics, then! Not a skeptic will be found in that day! Christ seen at the Father's right hand will end all unbelief!

And then the Spirit of God shall make men see the judgment. Before the day actually comes, they shall perceive that since Christ has judged the devil; since Christ has cast him down from his high places and his power over the world is already broken, assuredly He will smite all that are in the dominion of Satan and will not allow one of them to escape. The cause of evil is judged and its case is desperate. Oh, how the Spirit of God will convict men at that last day when they hear the Judge say, "Come, you blessed of My Father," or, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire." Brothers and Sisters, will you be convinced by the Holy Spirit, now, or will you wait till then? Shall it be the convincement of Grace or the conviction of wrath? The Spirit still bears witness with us who preach the Gospel—will you yield to that Gospel and believe it, now? Or will you wait until the blaze of the last tremendous day? Which shall it be?

I think I hear you say, "The Gospel is true." Why, then, do you not believe it? If you confess "sin," why are you not washed from it? If there is "righteousness," why do you not seek it? If there is "judgment," why do you not ask to be so cleansed that you need not be afraid of it? Oh, Sirs, the most of men act as if they were born fools! If they were sick and we had a sure medicine for them, they would rush to us for it! If they were poor and we brought them gold, they would trample us down in their vehemence to snatch at wealth!

But when there is Christ to be had, the Divine remedy for sin—Christ to be had as a perfect Righteousness, Christ to make them stand securely at the last dread day—they turn their backs upon the heavenly Gift! Oh, Spirit of God, win these madmen! Bring back these fools and make them sane and wise, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

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