

"NOW WE KNOW THAT WHAT THINGS SOEVER THE
LAW SAITH, IT SAITH TO THEM WHO ARE UNDER
THE LAW: THAT EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED,
AND ALL THE WORLD MAY BECOME GUILTY BEFORE
GOD."

(ROMANS 3:19)



5.

"CONVICTION," said Cletus. "What you are experiencing is conviction of your sin."

"What do you mean, Uncle?" asked Benjamin, with a puzzled look on his face.

"The fact that you have been made aware that you are spiritually dead—God is trying to show you your need of Christ. You see, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin, righteousness and judgment. The key verse on it is John 16:8 which says, 'And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' Jesus taught that when the Holy Spirit came, He would reprove the world of these three things."

"Uncle, what does the word 'reprove' mean?"

"It means to convince or convict. It is like a prosecuting attorney giving his closing argument to the jury. He is trying to convince them to find the defendant guilty of the charges. The defendant will be convicted of the crime and become known as a convict as he goes to jail or prison. The Holy Spirit works like a prosecuting attorney to convince you of your guilt before God. He shows you that you are a guilty sinner who deserves God's wrath and judgment. He also convinces you that there is mercy and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ."

"What does the Bible mean when it says that He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment? What are these three things?"

"That's a good question, Nephew!" replied Uncle Cletus. "The Bible explains itself. That's usually true. When you can't understand something in God's Word, keep reading. Typically, it will explain itself."

Cletus pointed to the verses, and Benjamin read, "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 ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:8-11)

"The sin that the Holy Spirit convicts you of is the sin of

unbelief. In other words, He shows you that you have never believed in Christ to the saving of your soul."

"But Uncle!" cried Benjamin. "I do believe in the existence of Jesus. I believe in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

"Good," said Cletus, "you are doing well. The Bible says, 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.' (James 2:19) You see, you are doing as well as the devils to believe that there is a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Believing those facts will not make you into a Christian."

The ghostly hand began to scrawl the word UNBELIEVER on the dirty wall of Benjamin's tomb. "Oh, now I see!" screamed Benjamin. "I have never put my faith in Christ to save me from my sins. I have only believed some facts about Him. I am no better than the devils!"

"That's it, Benjamin," said Uncle Cletus in a kind voice. "You see that now, because the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you."

"What about the second thing, Uncle? What about righteousness?"

"Yes, Benjamin, the second thing is righteousness. First, He convicts of sin: second, of righteousness. 'Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.' Notice that the Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin because THEY do not believe, but He reproves the world of righteousness because YE will see Him no more. He is talking, there, to the disciples: to the Christians. The key thing to understand is this: the Spirit shows the lost that they have never believed in Christ, but He convinces the Christians that they need to live righteous lives."

"Why?" asked Benjamin, in a confused tone.

"Because," said Cletus, "while Jesus was on earth, He shined a righteous light with His life. He showed us how we ought to live. He taught that we should not lie, cheat, hate or steal. He shined a very intense light! When He went back to the Father, because the disciples would not be able to see Him, He sent the Holy Spirit to shine the light of righteousness in His place. This was so that His followers would see their sins, repent, and live the way they should."

"How does convincing Christians to live right help to get the lost saved?"

"How would you expect people to know that they are missing something, unless they can see it in someone else's life?"

"That makes sense. I always looked at you and Aunt Bertha

and thought, you know, I would like some of their peace and joy. I always felt kind of guilty when I was around you because I knew that what I was doing, the way I was living, was wrong. You always seemed like a light in a dark world."

"I'm only a light as I reflect Jesus, Benjamin," said Cletus humbly. "When Jesus was on earth, He was the light of the world. Jesus said, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' (John 9:5) Now, Christians represent Jesus to the world of lost sinners. Jesus said to His followers, 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' (Matt. 5:14-16) We are to shine the light of Jesus Christ to this dark world by doing good works. That is one of the reasons why your aunt and I go to church so often. We need the fellowship of other believers, and the preaching of the Word of God to encourage us and convict us of where we are falling short. When the Spirit of God points out our sins through the preaching of the Word of God, we repent. Your aunt and I try to live according to the Bible so that the world can see the light of Jesus through our lives!"

"I see!" said Benjamin. "And that is why I always feel guilty around you, and uncomfortable when you talk about sin, Jesus, and church. The light of your godly life exposes my sins!"

"Benjamin, look at what the Bible says here: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' (Romans 3:23) We have all sinned. We have broken God's laws. That's what sin is. Sin is breaking God's laws."

Just then, the bodiless hand began to write Benjamin's sins on the wall of the tomb. They were scribbled, one by one, before him:

LIES

CHEATING

LUST

STEALING

COVETOUSNESS

LACK OF FAITH

"Stop! Stop!" cried Benjamin. "I know that I have sinned! I am unrighteous. I need salvation!"

Suddenly, Lucifer appeared in front of the fireplace with a hateful look on his face. "I am truly disappointed in you Benjamin, falling for this foolish man's ignorant fairy tales. You do not need salvation! You need RELIGION. Ah, religion will make you happy and will calm your troubled conscience."

"I don't know, Uncle," said Benjamin. "Maybe what I need is just some religion. I'll start going to church. I'll start reading my Bible."

"Benjamin, you have broken God's laws! God is not going to just excuse your sins because you become religious. Going to church will no more make you into a Christian than going to a garage will make you into an automobile!"

"He's crazy!" shouted Lucifer. "He ought to be committed to an insane asylum for the mentally deranged. Christianity, as he practices it, will make you look like a big fool. Believing the Bible to be literally true: no person with an education believes that nonsense. He's absolutely out of his mind; mad!"

"Look, Benjamin," said Cletus, "breaking God's laws is a serious thing. Take the Ten Commandments for instance. The first is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' (Exodus 20:3) Have you ever put anything in your life before God?" Benjamin nodded his head. "Then that thing was a god you had before the Lord! Have you ever stolen?"

"I took some pens at work one time."

"Have you loafed on the job?"

"Of course!"

"Then you have stolen your employer's time as well as his pens."

"Have you ever looked on a woman in lust?"

"All the time on the internet, I'm afraid."

"Then, according to Jesus Christ, you have broken the 7th Commandment."

"Which is?"

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)

"I have never committed adultery!"

"Jesus said, '...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' (Matthew 5:28) Your internet pornography is internet adultery in God's eyes."

"Well, I can't stop looking! I think I would rather go to hell than stop!"

"That's a serious thing, Benjamin. Saying you would rather look at pornography than to go to heaven is foolish. Jesus said, 'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' (Matthew 5:29) Hell is so bad that it would be better to lose an eye than to have your whole body burn there. When you look at those pictures, you are looking at someone's daughter, wife, or sister."

"I see," said Benjamin, ashamed.

"Have you ever taken God's name in vain?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. G_d it's hot in here! Can we not open a window or something?"

"You just did it."

"Did what?"

"You just took God's name in vain. You used His name in a common, non-reverential manner. That is blasphemy!"

"I'm going to hell for sure."

"Look, we're all sinners. I deserve hell just as much as you. The difference in my life is Jesus Christ!"

The hand with no body continued to write Benjamin's sins on the grave wall. There were so many now that Benjamin couldn't keep up. The filth and darkness of the tomb was everywhere. It seemed to enter into Benjamin and pollute his insides. Everything in him felt like dirt and darkness. Wickedness and devilry seemed to flow from his being. Benjamin felt like he was going to explode and have a great flow of filthy iniquity course out of his miserable heart.⁸

"I am damned!" cried Benjamin, as he fell to his knees. "I am guilty! Completely guilty of the charges. God has pointed out my sins. I am a hopeless sinner."

"There is hope," said Cletus.

"In religion," said Lucifer.

"In Christ?" asked Benjamin.

8. For a discussion on emotions and salvation, see page 91, question 5.