

Comfort in Conviction

“I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:7, 8). The first thing that the Holy Spirit does in the way of comforting is to convict of sin. But does the Holy Spirit condemn? Christ did not come into this world to condemn it. There is a difference between conviction and condemnation, and in the recognition of this difference we get the Lord. Many suppose that when the Lord reproves, it is a sign of his anger against us.

Conviction is showing a man that he is guilty. *Condemnation* is the putting of the sentence upon him. We are already under condemnation, because of transgression. Now the Lord comes to us and convicts us by his Spirit, but when He has brought us to this place where we are convicted and acknowledge the fact that we have sinned and are worthy of death, just here the Lord comes in and takes away the condemnation. He carries us to that point, and then the sentence is remitted.

God describes Himself as the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3, 4). *He comforts us by showing us sin. The comfort of God’s reproof lies in the fact that the very thing, which causes the conviction, is the righteousness, which is given to take away the sin for which we are convicted.*

Now what is the purpose of the comfort, which the Lord gives us? —That we may be able to comfort any who are in trouble. God gives us His Spirit in order that we may be able to minister the same to others. So before we can be of any use in proclaiming the message of the Gospel to others, we must receive this comfort in the conviction of sin.

Here is the line between condemnation and justification. We may hold back and pass into condemnation, or we may yield and have no condemnation. If when the conviction comes we accept it, and the righteousness, which brings the reproof, then there is no condemnation. But “this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). When the Holy Spirit comes, the light is come. It is shining into our hearts to make us see where we have been making mistakes and failings. Many things, which we thought virtues, we find to be vices. Our diffidence was trust in ourselves, and the fear that we thought was modesty and goodness we find is simply self-love

and sensitiveness and the fear of what somebody might say. *We thought it was an evidence of our humility, when it was pride.*

This is evidence that “your light has come!” Now if we cling to self, that light will be condemnation and become darkness, and “if therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). We had been in darkness all the time, because the light, which was shining, had not been received. Now if the light shines and we allow it to become darkness, we are worse off than before. But yielding to it, we who sometimes were darkness become “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).

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