



# Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

When Jesus told His disciples that He was going to leave them and return to the Father in heaven, He assured them that He would send the Other Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who would convict [persuade, convince] the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:5-11). The Spirit's testimony is delivered by preachers, like Paul, whose presentation of God's Word was with full conviction (1 Thess. 1:5). It wasn't just so much talk, but it was accompanied in power and the Holy Spirit and delivered in bold confidence, assurance or conviction. There was no doubting these preachers believed the message with their whole heart (Acts 8:37). The result was converts whose reputation of strong faith and faithfulness was known throughout the world.

In these passages we see the progression of conviction, resulting in salvation.

Conviction is the act or process of convincing or the state of being convinced. A conviction is a strong, fixed belief formed by applying sound principles in arranging biblical truth to ascertain God's will concerning matters not specifically addressed in Scripture. There is room for liberty, therefore, in matters of conviction, for our convictions will vary within a range marked out by what God does say in the Bible.

Conviction determines our direction and our conduct. A person of conviction is a person of action and determination. Conviction produces courage to do what we have determined in all good conscience to be God's will. The late David Reagan, leader of the Antioch Independent Baptist Church in Knoxville, TN, says "a conviction is a convinced conscience." He also said a conscience that is "fed a steady diet of the word and submitted to God in a pure heart can help to guide us in many circumstances. . . . It can act as an early warning system against sin."

Our task is to bring people and God's Word together to effect conviction. Consider the process by which that is done.

## **CONVENE**

Conviction begins the moment we meet the Holy Spirit, Whose testimony of Jesus Christ exposes our sinfulness and deep need

## **Progression of CONVICTION**

- CONvene
- CONverse
- CONvinced
- CONvicted
- CONvert
- CONviction

of His cleansing blood.

## **CONVERSE**

The presence of the Holy Spirit is necessarily accompanied by His message. When we interact with Him through His spoken and written testimony, it evokes expression of conviction. The

thousands who heard Peter's sermon on Pentecost cried out of their conviction, "What must we do?" Directed by the Holy Spirit, Peter told them they must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. With many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:37, 38, 40). The writer of Hebrews affirms that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (4:12).

## **CONVINCED**

The progress toward conviction next requires concession and confession. Convinced of the truthfulness of the Holy Spirit's testimony, we pull down our defenses and resistance, genuinely conceding our failure and confessing our need.

## **CONVICED**

Conviction separates the righteous from the religious. The accusers of the adulteress were convicted by Jesus' words and writing on the ground, prompting them to retreat (Jn. 8:7-9). Conviction is not intended to cause retreat, but to effect godly sorrow resulting in repentance leading to salvation.

The conviction leading to conversion is that which puts at the forefront the reality that our sin has inflicted sorrow upon God. Those whose focus is upon the trouble their sin has caused them cannot be convicted or converted. Neither will they become people of conviction, because their motivation is self-centered rather than God-centered. Judas was convicted, but he committed suicide. Peter was convicted and responded with bitter tears. See Matt. 26:74-75; 27:3-5.

Preaching with conviction is to incite conviction of sin so as to produce conviction against sin; of unrighteousness to produce righteousness.

## **CONVERT**

Some people, when confronted with

convicting truth, will recoil and resist. Some will neglect the response conviction of sin should make. Felix is the classic example of conviction without a response (Acts 24:24-27).

Conversion involves real repentance, a change in the way we think and behave, in our attitude and action. Conviction and conversion is not merely feeling regret and guilt, but actually changing the course of life.

### **CONVICTION**

He who has humbled himself in the presence of the Holy Spirit and been convinced that His testimony concerning his sin is true will respond to that conviction by being converted by the Holy Spirit's power. His life will then be committed to ordering his life according to biblical precepts and principles. His life is one of deep conviction that is not characterized by carelessness or susceptible to compromise. He is willing to sacrifice social standing and even profit when protecting either would be at the expense of biblical conviction. He dares to be like Daniel and his three friends, willing to be thrown to the lions or into a fiery furnace if such is required to honor biblical conviction.

Noted apologist, author and speaker on the college circuit for decades, Josh McDowell, wrote, "Having convictions can be defined as being so thoroughly convinced that Christ and His Word are both objectively true and relationally meaningful that you act on your beliefs regardless of the consequences." ([Beyond Belief to Convictions](#), p 22)

Our primary purpose in life is to impact the world for Christ. This we will do only when the convicted become

people of conviction. Convicted because we have convened and conversed with the Holy Spirit, Whose influence convinced us that people are lost without Jesus. Thus convinced, we are converted from the very core of our being, the result of which is that we become people of strong and unwavering conviction.

David Hume, an 18th century British philosopher who rejected Christianity (and also is to blame for my near-failing grade in college Philosophy), met a friend who was on his way to listen to George Whitfield preach. Hume asked his friend, "Surely you don't believe what Whitfield preaches. Do you?" The friend replied, "No, I don't. But he does." The point is clear that we cannot expect the world to be convinced of something about which we are not ourselves convinced. When you speak about Jesus and present the Holy Spirit's testimony, which we know as the Bible, do it with conviction. Make it obvious that you are strongly convinced of its truthfulness and committed to its propagation.

Effectiveness in helping others progress toward conviction is increased when we are so well informed and educated in the Bible that we are unaffected by the changing winds of doctrine. Our convictions will prevent us from being influenced by the attitudes and actions of those around us, but will rather shape and impact them. Our testimony in the name of Jesus will convict sinners as they see our lives of conviction that avoid even the hint or appearance of sin but are uncompromising in righteousness.