

Session 3 Holy Spirit Conviction: Contending for Ultimate Power (Jn. 16:8-11)

“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)

I. THE ULTIMATE POWER IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS SUPERNATURAL CONVICTION

- A. Jesus described one of the most important ministries of the Holy Spirit—to convict, convince, and correct people concerning the truths about sin, righteousness, and judgment. This includes the Spirit convincing the world of *its* sin, *its* righteousness (as inadequate), and *its* judgment (its false views). The Spirit will do this as He supernaturally fastens truth on the heart so that one’s conscience is deeply troubled, leading them to repent. This is supernatural work that is much more than human gifting, personality, and presentation—it cannot be imitated or produced by sincere human zeal.

⁸When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.
(Jn. 16:8)

- B. In the face of persecution and great sorrow (Jn. 15:18-6:5), Jesus promised to help by sending the Spirit to empower them especially with supernatural conviction (Jn. 16:8). Here, Jesus elaborated on what He had just promised them about the Spirit *testifying to and through them* (15:26-27). This supernatural activity of the Spirit is essential in empowering the end-time Church to walk in victory.

¹⁹...the world hates you...²⁰they will also persecute you...²⁶When the Helper comes, whom I shall send from the Father...He will testify of Me. ²⁷And you will bear witness...
(Jn. 15:19-27)

- C. John 16:8 has captured my life and directed my focus in prayer and vision for revival since 1978 when I read biographies of George Whitefield (1714-1770), David Brainerd (1718-1747), Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), and John Wesley (1703-1791) who lived during the *First Great Awakening* in America (1730-1755). Charles Finney (1792-1875) preached during the *Second Great Awakening* (about 1800-1850). The meetings at Cane Ridge, Kentucky (early 1800s) had 25,000 in attendance.

- D. I encourage all to become students of revival to see how God works and how much He is willing to do through prayer. I read the biographies of these men over and over. Their stories gave me a vision in my twenties to see many come to salvation in context to supernatural conviction.

- E. The spirit of conviction was the primary work of grace in the First and Second Great Awakenings in America. These men preached with great power seeing God’s word as a sword, fire, and hammer.

¹²The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
(Heb. 4:12)

²⁹“Is not My word like a fire...and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?
(Jer. 23:29)

- F. Supernatural conviction can be released many ways such as through preaching, singing, writing, drama, media productions, etc.

- G. George Whitefield was 22 years old when he began to preach to gatherings of ten thousand. As the power of God descended on them, they cried out for mercy. Jonathan Edwards preached the famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. He read it by candlelight in the evening meetings, yet people wailed under the conviction of sin. In 1857, Charles Finney preached in New York City along with others—in his biography, he wrote that 500,000 new converts came to Jesus that year.
- H. Throughout history, when the spirit of conviction has been fully manifested, the Word took hold of the hearts of people until they were powerfully converted. We see this throughout the book of Acts.
- ³⁷*When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter... “What shall we do?”*
³⁸*Peter said, “Repent...” ⁴¹that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴²They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...⁴³*Fear came on every soul (Acts 2:37-43)**
- ⁴*Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number came to be...five thousand...*
³¹*When they had prayed, the place...was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness...³³*And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.* (Acts 4:4, 31-33)*
- ⁴⁴*While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. (Acts 10:44)*
- ²³*...[Barnabas]...had seen the grace of God... ²⁴a great many people were added to the Lord.*
²⁶*...for a year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people.* (Acts 11:23-26)
- I. This is the essence of what happened in Asia in Acts 19. Paul prayed for more of the release of conviction or revelation of God’s heart. This is the ultimate manifestation of God's glory in this age.
- ¹⁰*All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus [from the revival in Ephesus]...*
²⁰*So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed [throughout all Asia] (Acts 19:10, 20)*
- ¹⁷*that the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know...* (Eph. 1:17-18)
- J. This power is essential in the generation that Jesus returns as sin reaches fullness (Dan. 8:23; Rev. 9:21), with many false teachers who deceive (Mt. 7:15, 22-23; 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mk. 13:5-6, 22; Lk. 21:8; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13; 2 Pet. 3:2; 1 Jn. 2:18; 4:1; Rev. 13:14; 18:23; 19:20).
- K. This will be one of the most significant aspects of the end-time move of the Spirit on Israel and the nations. One of the most significant aspects of “Presence worship” is conviction unto obedience.
- ¹⁰*“I will pour on...the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me...Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son...” (Zech. 12:10)*
- L. The supernatural release of the spirit of prayer (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26) is a sovereign work of the Spirit that is released in God’s sovereign timing in a nation or geographic area. It is as sovereign as the Lord having a time for the spiritual drought to lift over USA as confirmed on August 23, 1983.
- ²⁶*...the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* (Rom. 8:26)

II. THE SPIRIT'S CONVICTION OF SIN (JN. 16:9)

- A. The Spirit convinces people of the truth about sin—the fact, folly, filth, and fruit of it (Rom. 3:23). He reveals our sin to us; otherwise we would never see ourselves as sinners. He convicts people so that they are compelled to seek for God's mercy through Jesus.

⁸He will convict the world of sin...⁹because they do not believe in Me. (Jn. 16:8-9)

- B. The world has different views of what they define as “sin” as in a set of moral codes or duties. Many view sin as particular activities. The Spirit will empower the Church with conviction at an unprecedented level in the end times when sin reaches fullness (Dan. 8:23) and when many reject the authority of the Word (Ps. 2:3). The Spirit will powerfully clarify and confirm God's views sin.
- C. ***Because they do not believe in Me:*** Jesus presented unbelief as the way to see the true nature of sin. Belief in Christ is to embrace His rightful leadership as King and the truthfulness of His remarkable claims. To refuse to believe this is a charge of treason against Him as King (Jn. 20:28).
- D. Jesus is the greatest revelation of God's beauty that was ever given to the human race. The essence of all sin is unbelief in Jesus as the God-Man who has all glory and authority.
- E. This root sin is to refuse Jesus' leadership in their lives. It is thus the first sin of which the Spirit convinces men. Sin here is not one on a long list of moral failures but is choosing another god. It is this sin that puts self at the center of things as the reason for being and for refusing to believe. This is the sin of seeing themselves as the highest authority in their life—even above God.
- F. All disobedience is sin, but this is placed first and is deemed as the sin of chief magnitude, the principal one of which all men are guilty.
- G. Throughout the New Testament this is regarded as the sin that is pre-eminently offensive to God.
- H. Unbelief is far more than an error of judgment. It is aversion of heart. Unbelief exposes our moral problem, not our intellectual struggle. Jesus said that men love the darkness rather than the light. Some imagine their main issue in refusing Jesus is due to their intellectual difficulties in accepting His claims, but Jesus said it was a moral issue and that anyone can know the truth (Jn. 7:17).

¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (Jn. 3:19)

¹⁷If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. (Jn. 7:17)

III. THE SPIRIT'S CONVICTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (JN. 16:10)

- A. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth about righteousness. The multi-faceted diamond of righteousness includes Jesus' innocence, holiness, imparted righteousness, how much God loves and values righteousness in our lives (Heb. 1:9), and that Jesus' message is right and not debatable (Ps. 2:3).

¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more...” (Jn. 16:10)

- B. The Father's declaration of Jesus' innocence is diametrically opposed to the world's view of Him. Jesus was condemned by the highest authority of the nation as being guilty. The world regarded Jesus as a sinner (Jn. 9:24) and itself as righteous (Lk. 18:9).

- C. ***I go to the Father:*** His resurrection and His exaltation to the Father vindicated Jesus in all things. The ascension of Jesus is the guarantee and proof of His righteousness and that His atoning death was accepted by the Father and thus assured His ability to impart it freely to sinful people. They assumed Jesus would decay in the tomb. Jesus' installation into the splendor at the Father's right hand vindicates His righteous life (12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5; 1 Tim 3:16).
- D. Jesus' ascension proves that His atoning death was righteous and accepted (Acts 2:33-36).
³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see...³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus...both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:33-36)
- E. ***You see Me no more:*** Jesus entered His resurrected glory (Rev. 1:12-18). To see Him after that would be a great and rare privilege. They should see Him no longer in a lowly state of humiliation,

IV. THE SPIRIT'S CONVICTION OF JUDGMENT (JN. 16:11)

- A. The prince of this world has already been judged and defeated. The verdict of the heavenly court rendered, "Guilty!" to Satan the prince of the world (Jn, 12:31; 14:30). If Satan was defeated and judged by Jesus, we can be sure no other power can stand before Him. On the day of judgment, all of Jesus' enemies shall be also be judged even as Satan was. John vividly describes Satan's final defeat in the book of Revelation (Rev. 14:17-20; 19:17-21; 20:1-3, 7-10).
¹¹Convict of judgment: because the ruler of this world is judged. (Jn. 16:11)
- B. The Spirit convicts the world of the judgment that is coming on it and on them for its sins. God's judgment is the most politically incorrect doctrine that is hated by all who reject His Word.
- C. The resurrection of Jesus brought judgment on Satan and his kingdom (Col. 2:15).
¹⁵Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [His death and resurrection]. (Col. 2:15)
- D. Since the ruler of the world stands condemned, his children can expect the same treatment (Jn. 8:44). The prince of the world and all who side with him stand condemned. They are wrong in thinking that God's judgment will not come to them since God already judged the ruler of this world.
- E. The guilty verdict of the court is rendered against all the opponents of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will convince them of Jesus being invested with power to execute judgment because Satan has already been judged by Jesus' work on the cross. The great head of darkness is already condemned.
- F. God's judgment is revealed and the world's deception about God's judgment is exposed by the Spirit supernaturally convincing unbelievers as the Gospel is preached.
- G. The world has a prince, yet we hear little about "this prince of the world" in cultural conversations.

V. THE RELATIONSHIP OF ANOINTED PREACHING AND THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

- A. There is a dynamic relationship between anointed intercession and anointed preaching. Both require a supernatural work of the Spirit in and through us. Holy Spirit anointed preaching pierces the heart in a very deep way that is even more powerful than raising the dead physically.
- B. I read Brainerd's biography nearly daily for almost 5 years. I noticed a *cause-effect dynamic* in the grace of God in Brainerd's ministry. When God granted him unusual grace in prayer with groaning (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26), then power on his preaching usually followed to bring people to Christ.
- C. Leonard Ravenhill spoke of a time that Brainerd was lying in the snow for several hours under the burden of the spirit of prayer (*travail*). He sweat so much that the snow melted around him. The next day, when he preached to unbelievers, the power of God fell on his Native American audience.
- D. Brainerd embraced regular fasting and prayer, seeking to be anointed with the *spirit of prayer*. I set my vision to seek for the Spirit's "gift" of the *spirit of prayer* that results in anointed preaching.
- E. In the spring of 1982 in St. Louis, *God showed me the relationship of the spirit of prayer* (anointed intercession) *to anointed preaching to win new souls*. One Saturday night in March, for the first time, a spirit of prayer (*travail*) sovereignly fell on me in a prayer time. I wept for souls for almost one hour. I said to myself, "This is what Brainerd experienced. Tomorrow I will see if an unusual release of grace to win souls is on my Sunday morning message." It was a "holy experiment" in the grace of God. The next morning as I preached, about 100-200 people were weeping during my message. I could hear their soft cries as I preached. During our altar calls, we often had one or two people get saved each Sunday. On this day, about 20 unbelievers came forward and wept at the altar over their sin, with a new desire to be saved.
- F. Two months later, in May 1982, the same thing happened again to me during my Saturday night prayer time with almost the exact same results during my Sunday morning message.
- G. We moved to Kansas City in November 1982. On April 3, 1983, at 6am, I was preparing for my Easter Sunday message. Suddenly, I began to *travail* in prayer for the lost souls that would be at the Easter service. It lasted for about two hours. I drove to the church, weeping for souls. At about 9am, the spirit of prayer (*travail*) came on me for another hour. The leaders shouted through my office door that the 10m service was starting. The grace of prayer continued on me past 11am. My eyes were slightly swollen from weeping. I was late in getting to the pulpit to preach. However, my message was unusually oppressed. I was confused. I invited people to come forward to be saved. No one came. Five minutes later, about 100 people were talking and mingling at the altar area.
- H. Among the people, I saw three visitors standing in the altar area with their eyes closed, praying. When I put my hand on the first man, he instantly fell to the ground and wept openly. He cried, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" I went to a lady who was praying with her eyes closed and said, "Would you like prayer?" She nodded. I put my hand on her, and she fell to the ground weeping and groaning, "God, forgive me! Give me mercy." The same thing happened to the third person.

- I. Bob Jones was speaking to several at the back of the sanctuary. He said to me, “You have had quite a day today. I saw it all last night in a vision. The Lord set you up to go fishing today. You were in a little fishing boat with the Lord. You were excited because the Lord put a net in the boat. You grabbed the net for a big catch today, but the Lord grabbed your hand and said, ‘You can’t throw the net today’ [*the net refers to mass evangelism*]. You were disappointed. He gave you a fishing hook, and you knelt down at the side of the boat and made three strokes in the water and pierced three fish through their heart.” (They represented the three souls saved that very morning.)
- J. Bob continued, “In God’s sovereign time, He ***will give this youth movement 1,000 times more power to pierce hearts*** than you had today. They will be authorized to use His net. The nets will be full. The Lord told me that He set you up to understand this vision. Do not leave the place of praying for souls. A great anointing of the Spirit’s conviction will be released in God’s timing.”
- K. In July 1988, Bob Jones spoke at a Bible study one Saturday night. I was not there. He said, “Tonight is going to be a big night for Mike. He will receive a visitation from an angel who will give him a ***promise about intercession and souls from the gospel of John***. He may not even know that an angel visited him.” At 2:30am that morning, I was awakened from a sound sleep. I instantly began to travail with a spirit of prayer for the harvest in Kansas City for an hour. It was a sudden, sovereign work of the Spirit similar to what happened to me on Easter Sunday in 1983.
- L. The Spirit spoke to me, “In My sovereign timing, I will supernaturally anoint prayer in your midst, and it will result in a great harvest of new souls in this city.” He said, “***I will draw them*** (Jn. 6:44). First, I will draw the intercessors into the anointing of the spirit of prayer, then I will draw the harvest in great numbers through them.” The next day I spoke what the Spirit said to me from John 6. Several told me what Bob said the night before about me preaching from John that day.
- M. I see a connection between the power conviction being released and “Holy Spirit” travail that is sovereignly initiated in contrast to that which is stirred up by the flesh.
- ⁶³***It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. (Jn. 6:63)***
- ¹²***As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (Jn. 1:12-13)***
- N. Jeremiah called for the wailing women to mourn over the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites. This call for mourning was a common practice in ancient times when a city was about to face disaster, such as war, invasion, or destruction. The wailing women were professional mourners who were skilled in expressing grief and sorrow. This was like saying, “Call the ‘funeral company’ because you will soon need them.” This verse is taken out of context by some well-meaning intercessors who are seeking to stir up the Spirit’s activity in a prayer meeting.
- ¹⁷***Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for skillful wailing women, that they may come. (Jer. 9:17)***
- O. God commanded Jeremiah not to pray for Judah several times (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11-12). This emphasized the severity of His judgment against Judah due to their persistent rebellion.
- ¹⁶***“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. (Jer. 7:16)***