

## The Holy Spirit and Conviction How to Know God's Will

The scripture for this sermon is found in John, chapter 16, verses 7 through 11, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. 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." I want to ask three questions.

First, who is the Holy Spirit? Unless we know the answer to this, it will not do us any good to proceed with the topic. Do you know who the Holy Spirit is? If we are Christians, the Holy Spirit is our senior partner in the Christian life. Coming to us as the great gift of the risen Christ, He abides in our hearts to purify and to impell us for life and service. Without His help, the Christian life is impossible and only as we consciously lean on Him will our lives be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. May I remind you then that the Holy Spirit is a person not a mere influence. Note that the personal pronouns, "He" and "Him" are constantly applied to the Spirit. John 16:7, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go

not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; But if I depart, I will send HIM unto you." Verse 8, "And when HE is come, HE will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Verse 13, "Howbeit when HE, the spirit of truth, is come, HE will guide you into all truth; for HE shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever HE shall hear, that shall HE speak: and HE will show you things to come." Verse 14, "HE shall glorify me: for HE shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Holy Spirit can do things that only a personality can do. Such as "speaking", John 16:13, "Howbeit when He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself: But whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." Not only does He, the Holy Spirit, SPEAK, but He also INTERCEDES. According to Romans, the 8th chapter, the 26th verse, "Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities: For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And the Holy Spirit can also be grieved, as only a personality can be grieved, for we read in Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Now the second question, do you have the Holy Spirit? People have been variously classified: rich, poor, high, low, wise or ignorant; bound or free; friend or foe; Jew or Gentile; Protestant or Catholic; Liberal or conservative; but the Bible has another classification. Do you possess the Holy Spirit or do you not? It is most important that you do possess the Holy Spirit. From Romans 8:9 states very clearly, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His." Acts, the 19th chapter, we notice this very question was asked on one occasion, "Do you have the Holy Spirit?" Now, on this occasion, when the Apostle Paul asked this question of certain disciples to be found in Ephesus, they answered. "Why, we didn't even

know that the Holy Spirit was given.” Today, when we ask people, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” they do not reply like these disciples replied in the 19th chapter of Acts, people today know that the Holy Spirit has been given, but they seem not to know whether they have the Holy Spirit. We ask, “Do you have the Holy Spirit?” People say, “Well, I think so”, or sometimes they say, “I hope so”, or “I would like to think that I have it.” How can we know that we have the Holy Spirit? It’s so very important that we have the Spirit. If we don’t have the Spirit, then we are not a Christian. We can know that we have the Spirit in these ways: First of all, we can know that we have the Spirit if we have obeyed God’s plan for salvation. In Acts 2:38 Peter said unto them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Do you have the Holy Spirit? If you have done what Peter told the people to do on the Day of Pentecost, then you know that you have the spirit, because we have been promised the spirit if we will repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then we can know that we have the Spirit because the Spirit testified to the Lordship of Jesus. I Corinthians 12:3, “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” Then we can know that we have the Holy Spirit because he testifies to the fatherhood of God. In Romans 8:15, “For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, ‘Abba, father’.” And we can know that we have the Holy Spirit because He testifies to our own sonship. Romans 8:16, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Then we can know that we have the Spirit if we manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23, “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, tenderness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.” Then we can know that we have the spirit if we go through life unafraid. II Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not

given us the spirit of fear but of power, of love, and of sound mind." So we know who the Spirit is. We see how we can know that we have the Spirit.

The third question — What does the Holy Spirit do for me? What does the Holy Spirit do for you? First of all, the Holy Spirit UNITES us to Jesus Christ and makes us priests of God. Ephesians 2:18, "For through Him, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Secondly, the Holy Spirit ASSURES us of our POSITION as children of God. I John 4:13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." Then thirdly, the Holy Spirit will TEACH us. I John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in Him." And then fourthly, the Holy Spirit will LEAD us. Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Holy Spirit will help us to fight sin and give us the victory. Galatians 5:16, "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The Holy Spirit will help us in our prayer life. Romans 8:26,27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And then, of course, the Holy Spirit will one day raise us from the dead. Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Let us study number 4 of the 7 things that are listed that the Holy Spirit will do for you. The Holy Spirit will lead you. The title of the sermon is, "The Holy Spirit and Conviction." We all know what the will of God is concerning our lives as far as our

past sins. God's will is that we be pardoned of our past sins, that we be saved, that we be forgiven, that we be made perfect through Christ, so that we can someday stand before Him. "The Holy Spirit and Conviction" . . . I looked up this word, "Conviction", in the dictionary, and according to Webster's Dictionary, "Conviction" is the "state of being convicted, a doctrine, or proposition which one firmly believes, a state of being gratified by evidence." Now as we read in John 16:7-11, the Holy Spirit convicts in three areas. The Holy Spirit has come to convict us of sin, and if we are Christians, every one of us has been convicted of the reality of sin. This is something that many modern day men do not want to be convicted of, and do not want to accept. I remember the University of Cincinnati professor who made this statement, "We should not punish a man for the sin of adultery or murder any more than you would convict and sentence a man for tuberculosis or cancer." He went on to say, "Sin is not really sin, sin is social maladjustment." Now, it is the task of the Holy Spirit to reveal the fallacy of this position by convincing men of the reality of sin. I've been convinced of the Holy Spirit of my sins. The Holy Spirit convicts, secondly, in the area of righteousness. Not only does the Spirit show man His state of perdition but reveals at the same time Jesus Christ, whose righteousness and divinity approved by His resurrection and return to the Father's side. The Holy Spirit convicts thirdly, in the area of judgment. Logic is immediately seen here. Since Jesus was victorious over His greatest enemy, Satan, He will ultimately succeed in bringing judgment upon ALL of His enemies. Peter's Pentecostal sermon is a marvelous example of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in the areas of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Pentecostal crowd was convicted of sin as the Apostle Peter preached the rejection and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by this crowd. Then they were convicted of righteousness by the Spirit as Peter preached that Jesus is resurrected and glorified before His Father. And then they were convicted by the Holy Spirit of judgment as Peter preached of the great and

notable day of the Lord, and as he cried out, "Save your selves from this untoward generation." Now, I want to try to show how this Holy Spirit convicts us, even as Christians. The Holy Spirit convinces us as Christians of God's will. For we read in Romans 8:14 that the Holy Spirit leads us, the Holy Spirit convicts us, even as Christians. The Holy Spirit convinces us of God's will. I believe that God has a purpose for every one of our lives. I believe that there's a work for Jesus, that none but you can do, and that your lives can be truly happy, peaceful, joyful, victorious, thrilling, only if you know God's will and do it. But to know God's will seems to be a major problem for most people. Ministers all over America are constantly asking the question, "Where shall I preach?" "Shall I preach in California, Florida, North Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, or where shall I go?" "If I could only know what God's will was for my life, I would do it — I would go where he wants me to go." I hear Sunday School teachers constantly asking this question, "What is God's will for my life?" "Shall I continue to teach this class or do something different?" Elders and deacons ask this same question. "Is it God's will for me to be an elder or deacon or should I resign this position and do something else?" Young people are faced with this question always, "What shall I do with my life?" "Shall I be a minister, a missionary, a doctor, a lawyer, a nurse?" Oh, what is God's will? People want to know! And I would venture to guess that if the truth could be known, probably at least 95% of this very audience would say, "I would be so happy if I could just know for sure what God's will for my life is!"

I want to call your attention to the 25th Psalm, listen to the prayer the Psalmist prayed. Here is a man who really wanted God to lead him. He really wanted to know God's will. "Unto thee, O Lord, Do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy

paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: For thou are the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; for they have been ever of old." Don't you see how this man pleads with God to be shown God's will? "Show me thy ways, O Lord", he prayed. "Open my eyes that I might see what you want me to see." "Lead me in thy truth." "Guide my steps, Lord." "Teach me thy path, direct my mind, that I might think in the way that thou wouldst have me think." I have found that most people in the world today are drifters. Life for the average person is very haphazard. Most folks do not know God's will or God's purpose. They do not feel that they are being led by God. They feel that they are living in a spiritual fog. Three weeks ago, I was invited to Corinth, Mississippi to speak for one week at the local high school in a spiritual emphasis week. They gave me an office at the school and the Juniors and the Seniors were invited to make appointments and to come by anytime that they pleased during the morning and/or afternoon and talk about any problem that they might have. During that week that I was at Corinth, I do not know how many teenagers came by the office during the day to counsel with me and to talk about their problems, but I do know this — that every single young person that came in to talk seemed to be in a spiritual fog. They wanted to know what God's will was for their life. They were trying to decide, trying to determine which way to go, what college to attend, what to be, how to spend their time in this world. Now to prove my point I want each of you to ask yourself this very pointed, personal question. "Am I quite certain, right now, that I am doing God's will?" Some of you may be filling station operator, some of you may be a grocery store keeper, some of you may be mechanics, some of you may be salesmen, some of you may be housewives, many of you are preachers, and preachers' wives, but I still ask you the same question; "Are you sure that what you are going to do is God's will?"

I shall never forget hearing W.R. Walker speak when he was

82 years old. He made a most remarkable statement. He said, "If I had my life for Jesus to live over again, I would not change any major decisions that I've ever made, because I never make a decision in my life without praying for God's will, for God's leadership. Therefore, every major decision in my life was just what God wanted me to do. I am convinced of it." I was amazed when I heard Brother W.R. Walker make that statement at the age of 82. At the time I heard him make that statement I was only 18 years old and I could think of many things in my life that I would change, even at the age of 18, if I had my life to live over again. But I have often thought about that statement that W.R. Walker made and I realize now how he could say such a thing. Brother W.R. Walker was being led by God's Spirit in his life as he walked with Christ, and being led by the Spirit being guided by the Spirit of the will of God. He would not change any decision that he had made. I'm sure that right now many people are thinking, "Why I have a problem that I am facing right now. Shall I resign the church where I am and go somewhere else, shall I go to the mission field, shall I do this or that? I would desperately like to know God's will?" Dr F.B. Meyer was out on a ship. He had made some kind of ocean voyage and was coming back home. It was night time and it was a stormy night. He was upon the bridge with the captain as the ship approached the harbor. The entrance was very, very narrow. Because of the roughness of the water and the narrowness of the entranceway, Dr Meyer became nervous and he finally asked the captain, "How can you guide a ship through stormy waters into such a narrow entrance as this harbor has without danger of wrecking the ship?" The captain said, "Why, it's very easy, do you see those red lights? I just keep maneuvering the ship around out here in open water until I get those three red lights in a straight line and when they are in a straight line, then I steer straight towards them, and that brings me safely into the harbor."

The Holy Spirit provides three red lights to guide us,



whereby we can be convicted and convinced of God's will for our lives.

**I. The first red light, of course, is the Bible.** Now you may be saying, "Well, how in the world can the Bible guide me?" In the first place, we need to remember that the Bible contains words dictated by the Holy Spirit. In II Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." When we read the word of God, then the Spirit begins to work on us, the Spirit begins to convict us, the Spirit begins to convince us, and guide us and to lead us, for these are the words of the Holy Spirit. And remember, according to I Corinthians 2:9-13, we need the help of the Spirit in understanding the word of God, dictated by inspiration of the Spirit of God, but as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the thing which God prepared for them that loved Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Allen Redpath tells about how he was convinced that he ought to go into the ministry. He was a business man. Somehow he felt that he ought to give up his business and become a preacher, but he wanted to do God's will. He didn't want to make this decision on his own so he got out a piece of paper and he divided it in two columns. In one column he put down "Reasons why I should be a preacher." In the second column, "Reasons why I should NOT be a preacher." Then he began to study the Bible. Every day as he studied his Bible, if he found a scripture which would give him another reason for going into the ministry, for verifying any reason that he had already written down, why he thought he should go into the ministry, he'd write it down. If he found anything that would convince him that it was the will of God not to go in the ministry, he'd put that down in the other col-

umn. He studied his Bible for one full year and at the end of the year, he had pages and pages of scripture providing reasons why he should be a preacher and could not find one single scripture to convince him that he should not be a preacher. And so this was the way that God guided him to make this decision. Now I know, you and I, we think we know what the Bible says, and so when we are faced with a problem, faced with a decision, we want to know God's will and we want to be convicted and we want to be convinced, instead of turning to the Bible, we say, "Well, I know what the Bible says," and we overlook the first red light.

It reminds me of that fellow who got on a bus. He sat down and the man that he sat beside said, "Buddy, would you give me a light?", and he pulled out a cigarette and held it there and the man who sat down just looked straight ahead and didn't say a word. So the man repeated his request a second time. He held the cigarette out and said, "Would you give me a light?" and the man ignored him. Well, he raised his voice and sort of punched the other man and said, "Can't you hear me? I want to know if you have a match or a lighter. Will you give me a light?" The man looked straight ahead, didn't even change expressions. Well, this so disgusted the man who had made the request that he jumped up and pulled the cord and got off at the next corner and stomped away in disgust. The man who was sitting behind punched this fellow and said, "What's the matter with you? You're about the most unfriendly person that I ever saw in my whole life. He asked a very sane and sensible request. If you didn't want to give him a light, why didn't you say, 'No, I don't have a match', or 'I don't have a lighter', or 'I don't want to give you a light.' Why did you just sit there like that? Why didn't you say something?" And the man said, "Well, it's like this, when he asked me for a light, if I said, 'Yes, I'll give you a light' then he would have said, 'Thank you' and I'd have to say, 'You're welcome.' The next thing you know he'd have said, 'It's a nice day, isn't it?' and I'd have said, 'Yes, it's a nice day.'

Then he'd say, 'Who do you think is going to win the game?' Then I'd have to express my opinion and we'd get into a conversation over that and pretty soon he'd say, 'Let's get off at the next corner and I'll buy you a cup of coffee', and so I'd have to say, 'O.K.' We'd have a cup of coffee and I'd have to say, 'Come home and I'll have you for supper tonight' and so he'd say, 'O.K.' We'd go home and I have a beautiful 16 year old daughter and I'd have to introduce him to her and then he'd fall in love with her and he'd marry her and have a whole bunch of kids, then he'd go and die, and I'd have to raise the kids, and just think of all the trouble if I'd given him a light!" That's just about the way we have reacted to the Bible, so far as being convinced, guided, led by the Spirit of God. We have said, "We know what the Bible said", so now we have neglected that first red light. Somebody said that 90% of the trouble that most Christians have come from a neglect of Bible reading.

**II. The second red light, the Holy Spirit, himself.** When you become a Christian, you received the Spirit of Jesus Christ. One of the purposes of God's Spirit in your life is to guide you, to convict you, to convince you of the will of God. When I was 15 years old, I first believed that I ought to be a preacher, but I wasn't convinced, I wasn't convicted, so I waited, and I thought about it, and I prayed about it for a whole year. I was 16 years old and I felt a little more strongly I ought to be a preacher, but I still wasn't persuaded, and I waited another year. When I was 17 years old, the pressure of the Holy Spirit upon my life became so terrific I had no peace, I couldn't think about anything else. It was on my mind night and day. I prayed about it. I talked about it, I thought about it, and I was pressured! I made the decision, if this be God's will, I'll do my best, and immediately I had peace. This is the way God's Spirit helped to convince me of that decision. Whatever it is that we're trying to decide, we need to seek God's will and the Spirit will help us if we will recognize the pressure as it is brought to bear upon our life. Pressure from the Spirit, himself.

**III. The third red light, "Outward circumstances."** There finally comes a time when every door will be shut except the one that God has left open. When I was 17 years old, this is how the doors all shut, and the one door opened for me. I was so shy, and so bashful, and backward, I couldn't speak to anyone, I couldn't stand up and offer a public prayer, or make a public speech, or do anything else. As I walked down the street, if I saw someone coming I knew, I'd run and hide in the alley rather than speak to them. That's how backwards I was and I kept thinking to myself, "How could I be a preacher? It's a disgrace the way my personality is so warped that I can't even speak to people, or stand up in front of anyone." And yet, there is this pressure, tremendous pressure. All at once, out of the clear blue, one day my preacher, Russell Martin, approached me and he said, "Reggie, there's a little church out there three miles. It's had to close down because they don't have a preacher. I want you to go out there next Sunday and preach." The door was opened! I told him, "No, I couldn't do it." I made all kinds of excuses and tried every way on earth to get out of it, but he wouldn't take "no" for an answer. He'd help me get the sermon, he'd go out there with me, he'd do this, he'd do that. I went out and tried and 22 people showed up for that first service. He persuaded me to go back again and again. To bolster my courage, he sent my high school chum, Lloyd Cameron, with me and Lloyd would sing and I would get up and try to preach. After we went out there just a few Sundays, down the aisle came an old 71 year old woman, tears streaming down her cheeks. She had never accepted Christ, had never belonged to any church, and she said, "I want to become a Christian." I was so convinced, I was convicted, I believed that I was led by the Bible, by the Spirit, by outward circumstances.

When the Apostle Peter was in prison, it was not until he walked up to the iron gates that it became an open door. There are times in our lives when we wait, and we wait, and we wonder, and we read our Bible, and we pray for God's Spirit to

lead us, but we've got to wait for that open door, the outward circumstances. When all three red lights are in line, then we know.

Many of you have heard of Imogene Williams. She went to China originally. The communists ran her out, as they did all of our other missionaries. Then she went to Thailand. There she was working near Dr Dooley before his death. Imogene Williams became interested in the lepers and began to do work in the leper colony. One day a mother and father brought a 12 year old boy in to Imogene to be examined and she knew immediately that the child had leprosy. She knew the child would have to go to the leper colony so that he could get the proper medicines and treatment, but you can imagine how the parents felt when she told them that the child would have to go to a leper colony. The boy became hysterical, the parents said, "No! No! We will not do it!" and they took him back home. Two weeks later they came back, they realized he had to go. There were no "ifs" or "ands" about it. He had to go. He was so much worse and so they gave their child into the care and keeping of Imogene Williams. She took him to the leper village. There he began to receive the medicines. He responded and soon he was feeling fine. But he was very disinterested. He was homesick. He resented being there, he wanted to be back with his parents, but Imogene continued to work with this lad and took him through that year in school. Then the second year came. During the second school year, he seemed more anxious to learn. She began to make progress. Then he responded to the teaching of the Bible that she had been giving, and he indicated that he wanted to become a Christian. Imogene had the joy of seeing this boy accept Christ. Everything changed, he became a happy boy and he was so eager to learn in school and such a delight to work with. A few weeks after he became a Christian, Imogene happened to overhear this boy talking to one of the other boys in the leper village who was not a Christian. The boy who had become a Christian said, with enthusiasm, "You know, I'm glad I got

leprosy because if I hadn't gotten leprosy, I never would have become a Christian." He was happy because he had been convicted and convinced of God's will for his life.

The Lord once had a job for me, but I had so much to do, that I said, "Lord, you get somebody else or wait until I get through." I don't know how the Lord came out, no doubt He got along. But I felt kind of sneakin' like, for I knew that I had done Him wrong. And one day I needed the Lord and I needed Him right away, but He didn't answer my call at all and I could hear Him say, "I've got too much to do. You get somebody else or wait until I get through." So now when the Lord has a job for me, I never try to shirk. I drop whatever I have on hand and go do the Lord's work. For my affairs can run along or wait until I get through, for nobody else can do the work that God has for me to do. And nobody else can do the work that God has for you to do.