

Convicted of Righteousness

Jesus talking about the Holy Spirit said in John 16:8 - “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.”

Everyone should know what it means to be convicted of sin. Pastor Tony has done a good job of talking about the dangers of judging others. But what does it mean to be convicted of righteousness?

To fully understand this we have to go all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

In Gen 2 – We are told that in the middle of the Garden were two trees the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (TKGE). God commanded the man “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Read Gen 3:1-7

Apparently the two trees were right next to each other because Adam and Eve were there to eat the fruit from the tree of life and Satan was there hanging out in the TKGE. I say this because I seriously doubt that Satan would be allowed to touch much less eat the fruit from the tree of life.

Satan led off with a lie and Eve called him on it but somehow she managed to misquote what God had said. The death was not an immediate physical death but a spiritual death. Before they ate the fruit I believe the reason that they didn't know that they were naked is because their skin reflected the glory of God. Just like Moses's face did when he was talking to God in the tent of meeting. Moses hid his face with a veil until the glory faded. So after eating the fruit the glory of God faded from their skin and then they saw that they were naked. I do not believe that they were ashamed of their skin but were ashamed that they were no longer reflecting the glory of God.

They were kicked out of the Garden and no longer allowed to eat from the tree of life. As you see in the lineage of Adam that the further you get away from the last time he ate from the tree of life the shorter man's life span becomes. It was because of the lingering effects of the tree of life that people lived so long.

Satan was hanging out in the tree of knowledge of good and evil because his source of power is rooted in it. TKGE is a biblical model of the Law. It is through

the Law that we derive our knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge of good and evil causes us to focus our attention upon ourselves. Sin is empowered by the law; not just because the evil is revealed but the good as well. The knowledge of good and evil will drive us towards corruption (evil) or towards self-righteousness (good), both of which lead to death. This is the righteousness that the Spirit convicts us of.

Paul called the Law “the ministry of death” and the “ministry of condemnation”
II Cor 3:7-9

The tree of life is a biblical model of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus’s ministry is the “ministry of the Spirit” and the “ministry of reconciliation” which leads to true righteousness. We have the seeds from the fruit of both trees inside of us. It is a constant battle as to which seed that we will choose. The Old Testament is the Law and the New Testament is Grace. But if you read the New Testament with a heart that is operating from the seed of the TKGE the New Testament will just become Law to you. If your religion is based upon compliance with written commandments instead of a living relationship with God it is a religion that leads to death.
II Cor 3:6 – “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

When we read the scriptures by the Spirit they will testify of Jesus and will come to life. The bible was not meant to take the place of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Knowing the book of the Lord should not be our goal; our goal should be to know the Lord of the book. Our spirituality is not found in conforming to the letter but by the forming of Jesus within us. Studying and knowing the scripture is vital to this process so don’t think that you don’t need the scriptures. We are capable of changing our behavior to a certain degree mostly to get something that we want. But only the Spirit can change a person’s heart.

The first act of creation was to bring forth light. The very next thing God did was separate the light from the darkness. When we are born-again the light “Jesus” is created in us. Next He begins to separate the light from the darkness in our hearts. This allows us to examine our own hearts and see for ourselves just how corrupt we really are. But thank God He doesn’t stop there as long as we abide in Him it is

His goal to not just separate the light from the darkness but to shine His light on the darkness and push out the darkness.

“We can only worship that which we know!”

Do you know Jesus? I am not asking you if you have been born-again. Do you know Jesus?

Let’s take a little test:

Has the Bible, the church or your ministry replaced Jesus as the object of your devotion?

What about your job?

What about your children?

Now let’s talk about some things to watch out for.

We are in the middle of the Presidential election process and the candidates are making a lot of promises. They are promising safe streets, an end to economic problems, unemployment, the restoration of our national dignity and military strength. How popular do you think they would be if they actually delivered on these promises?

Adolph Hitler promised these things and he delivered on every one of them. Hitler didn’t lead off his campaign with I am going to conquer the world and round up all of the Jews and use them as slaves until they are too weak then kill them. No Hitler came as an angel of light and actually used the church in Germany as a springboard to power. Pastor Julius Leutheuser actually taught that “Christ has come to us through Adolf Hitler.” Not all pastors were duped there were some dissenters such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He stood against Hitler and his powerful political and military might with nothing but spiritual power. He died but his life still speaks to us today.

The point is that the good from the TKGE is very deceptive and more dangerous than the evil. We can easily recognize the evil and say no thank you but it is the good that will cause us to stumble. The good that is in us will never redeem or save us from the evil that is also in us. The good is still from the same tree as the evil and both lead to death. Do you trust in the government or even a pastor more than Jesus?

Our discernment must be more than just being able to distinguish good from evil; we must know the Lord's voice and follow Him only. We must be able to discern what is from the TKGE and what is from the Tree of Life.

The apostles after Jesus taught (Mark 10:17-27) "...that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." in exasperation said "Who then can be saved?" Jesus answered "for man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Do you trust in your wealth more than Jesus?

Mat 24:5 – "Many will come in My name saying I am the Christ, and will deceive many."

Not everyone who claims to be a Christian is one.

Mat 7:21-23 – "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform miracles?' then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

You are not saved by your works or spiritual gifting. You should never think that you earned salvation or that it is even possible to earn it.

Remember that it was the religious leaders the "good moral people" who had Jesus crucified. Sinners and the demon-possessed humbled themselves before Jesus. The religious leaders held Him in contempt.

Sin is a symptom of a much deeper problem. What man needs is more than just behavioral changes. Sin is not just a few wrong things we have done it is the nature of what we are. To repent means to renounce all that we are our transgressions and our righteousness. Phil 3:9 "... be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

Saul had to be struck blind before he could see. Sooner or later all who come to Jesus will be struck blind. We need to be blind to the natural before we can see in

the Spirit. We are transformed as we behold the glory of the Lord we cannot transform ourselves. We should not look at Him then look back at ourselves comparatively. Our calling is not to be imitators of Christ, but to have Christ formed within us. (II Cor 3:18)

I Thes 5:21 – “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.” The exhortation here is to hold fast to the good. The TKGE will cause you to hold fast to what is wrong with the intent of challenging the positions of others. This will lead you to become a mean-spirited “heresy hunter”. They usually end up doing more damage to the church through causing divisions than would have been done by the “hersies” they are trying to confront. Most Christian denominations agree on approximately 98% of their doctrines they have separated over the 2% on which they disagree. Some of us are so deceived that we not only think that we can make ourselves into what we should be, but others as well! It’s not your job man. Leave it to the Holy Spirit it is His job to lead us into all truth. Now if someone teaches something that you want clarification on that is fine just go to the person in private and talk to them about it. Do not put it on the internet or write a 10 page letter about what you disagree with. I don’t think the pastors have ever received a 10 page letter where the writer is telling them about how much they agree with what they said.

Now let’s talk about some things to be looking for.

Abraham was able to believe God because he was a man of spiritual vision. He understood that “the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” II Cor 4:18

Abraham was able to offer Isaac as a sacrifice because he had seen the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus confirmed this in John 8:56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.”

Abraham prophetically saw the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and he believed that his son Isaac was a type of the coming Messiah. This is why he made Isaac carry the wood for his own sacrifice because he saw Jesus carrying His own cross. Abraham believed that just as Jesus was raised from the dead so would Isaac. Heb 11:19

When Abraham left the only land that he had ever known he did not know where he was going, but he did know what he was looking for. Heb 11:10 – “He was looking for the city which has foundations.”

I Cor 3:11 – “No man can lay a foundation other than the One which was laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

What are you looking for?

Martha understood accurately the doctrine of resurrection. She knew her brother Lazarus would rise again on the last day. Her hope was in the doctrine of resurrection not in Jesus. He redirected her hope by saying “I am the Resurrection.” John 11:25

When John the Baptist saw Jesus passing by, he said “Behold the Lamb of God!” Hearing this John and Andrew left the Baptist and began to follow Jesus. When Jesus saw them following He turned to them and asked them “What do you seek?”

Why are you following Jesus?

John and Andrew answered Jesus “Lord, where do you dwell?”
Jesus said “Come and you will see.”

Jesus asked Peter “And who do you say that I am?” Peter replied “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus responded “On this rock I will build my Church.” The rock is not Peter it is the revelation of who Jesus is. He will build His church on our ability to recognize Him and to see where He dwells. His dwelling place is in our hearts so we need to be looking for Jesus in each other. Now there is just one Christ and we are not Him and there is one Holy Spirit and it is not us. But when Jesus is formed in us by the power of the Holy Spirit we should be able to see Jesus in others. When we start seeing Jesus in each other it will be easier to forgive and to love one another.

John the Baptist said in John 3:30 – “He must become greater; I must become less.” That is true for all of us.