



Conviction

Conviction is the total soul response to Bible doctrine when in violation of it and when being exposed to that personal violation. It involves an understanding of the violation of the doctrine in question, the conscience of the believer reveals that you personally have violated the doctrine in question, the volition accepts the responsibility for that violation, and the emotions often feel the pain of that violation.

There is a great deficiency in the minds of most believers as to what is bona fide conviction. There is great confusion on the part of believers on the difference between conviction within a believer and guilt within a believer.

There is a need to clarify what God has provided to produce conviction and what man provides to produce guilt. There is a real need to see that as legalism has a way of putting human pressure on a person through guilt, grace has a way of bringing responsibility to bear upon a person through conviction.

Since a large part of the Word and the communication of it is designed to produce conviction in the life of a believer, it is imperative for a believer to understand the purpose of communication and content of the Scriptures. There is a need on a practical basis for information that will enable a believer listening to a message and to doctrinally evaluate their own response to it. Were they encouraged by the message, troubled, convicted, made guilty, etc.?

There is a need to clarify the relationship between being in or out of fellowship and the matter of conviction and guilt. There is a need to clarify the difference between conviction and its accompanying factors, with guilt and its factors, with feeling guilty and its accompanying factors. There is a need to clarify what type of communication technique contributes largely to the production of bona fide doctrinal conviction.

Probably one of the greatest reasons for the study of conviction and guilt is that because guilt is one of the big tools of legalism and is associated with the subjects legalism has most thoroughly abused, its grace counterpart is avoided lest it too become a tool for legalism. For example, giving and money are two of the big legalistically abused doctrines. Church attendance and doubtful things are two other areas of abused doctrines in legalistic circles.

In the attempt to steer clear of any connection of legalism with many major doctrines of the Scripture, we have swung the pendulum too far and have completely omitted one of the major doctrines of the Scripture, the doctrine of conviction.

Greek and Hebrew Words For Conviction

The doctrine of conviction is set forth from the usage of several Greek and Hebrew words. In John 8:46 and 1 Corinthians 14:24, the word “convicts” and in Jude 1:15 the word “convict” is ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and means to convict, accompanied with shame of the person convicted, to correct by word, to call to account of, to show one’s fault, to chasten, to correct, to punish, to bring to light, to expose. No one could show Jesus Christ to be at fault. No one could correct Him. Jesus Christ makes direct reference to the factor of “being convicted.” Before there can be bona fide conviction, two things must be true. The one doing it or bringing it must be doctrinal and the one being convicted must be guilty of doctrinal error. Neither were the Jews right nor the Lord wrong.

"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John 8:46,



NASB)

"But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all;" (1 Corinthians 14:24, NASB)

"to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 1:15, NASB)

In 1 Corinthians 14:24, conviction will be experienced by the unbeliever. Conviction will be experienced by the unlearned, both a result of the preaching of the Word, not by dramatics, not by ecstasies, not by legalism.

In Titus 1:9, "refute" is also ἐλέγχω (elegchō) where the stability and the maturity of the communicator using doctrine is designed for the conviction of the evil speaking believers. This is done again by the preaching of sound doctrine of the pastor. The results of this conviction is the closing of their mouths and is designed for this particular purpose.

"holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:9, NASB)

In James 2:9, "convicted" is also ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and means that conviction can only be established when the actions, thoughts, or words of a person can be compared with the absolute standard of God's requirement. Therefore, when the Word is taught, it convicts the person of being in error with the text, therefore, guilty of violating it.

"But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." (James 2:9, NASB)

In Luke 3:19, "reprimanded" is also ἐλέγχω (elegchō) where Herod was reprimanded by the preaching of John the Baptist and therefore drastic results came to John. When people are convicted of their sin, they resort to all kinds of actions to eliminate the immediate source of their conviction.

"But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done," (Luke 3:19, NASB)

In John 3:20, "exposed" is ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and refers to people taking certain precautions to keep their sins from being exposed. People avoid the taking in of Bible doctrine because it makes them uncomfortable when doing so. The positive person is not defensive but open to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:20, NASB)

In John 16:8, the word "convict" is also ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and is referring to one of the functions of the Holy Spirit.

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;" (John 16:8, NASB)

In Ephesians 5:13, "exposed" and in Ephesians 5:11, "expose" is ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and means that it is the responsibility of the individual believer to live in such a way that their life and lips are a constant convicting force in the lives of others.



"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." (Ephesians 5:13, NASB)

"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;" (Ephesians 5:11, NASB)

2 Timothy 4:2 provides the procedure for bringing doctrinal conviction to believers in a local assembly. "Reprove" is ἐλέγχω (elegchō) and means to expose, show one's fault, to correct. First the person is exposed to the violation of doctrine. "Rebuke" is ἐπιτιμάω (epitimaō) and means to charge one with the wrong, to tax with a fault, to admonish one sharply. "Exhort" is παρακαλέω (parakaleō) and means to encourage, entreat, console, to strengthen.

"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2, NASB)

As an example, suppose that in a cafe or business, a man was found dead on the floor. Immediately, the authorities would be summoned. He would be pronounced dead by the coroner. Then, upon close examination, evidence shows that he had been murdered. So, the truth of the murder is exposed to all in the cafe. That would equal exposing the truth. When a person hears doctrine, first they are exposed to the truth.

Secondly, the matter of rebuke comes in where the police office in authority charges them with the crime. This would be like teaching on the failure of people to doctrinally give, then turn to the congregation and say, "I mean you." Thirdly, the matter of exhortation comes in where the person is encouraged on how to overcome the defect, the fault, the guilt.

Fourthly, the person will understand academically the violation of the doctrine. They will then make a personal application to themselves volitionally. Their conscience will immediately relate that they have violated the standard of the Word of God. The emotions may have a variety of responses depending upon what type of make-up they have. If, in the course of the teaching, they had gotten out of fellowship, they will reverse the process. They will start by feeling sorry or guilty of the sin. Then they will devise some human viewpoint way of correcting the matter. All they are now doing is complicating the problem.

In Acts 18:28, "refuted" is διακατελέγχομαι (diakatelegchomai) and means to powerfully convince, to confute with rivalry and effort or in a contest.

"for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." (Acts 18:28, NASB)

In Acts 5:33 and Acts 7:54, "cut" is διαπρίω (diapriō) and means to saw asunder, to saw through the soul, the mentality, to cut to the heart.

"But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them." (Acts 5:33, NASB)

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him." (Acts 7:54, NASB)

In Acts 2:37, "pierced" is κατανύσσω (katanussō) and means to pain the mind sharply, to agitate it, vehemently, the emotion of sorrow, to smite the heart with sorrow.

"Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37, NASB)



In Nehemiah 5:13, “shaken out” is נָעַר (nâ‘ar) and means to shake out and is used of those who will be shaken out for not performing their promises. It means to shake up, to stir up, to be in violent commotion.

"I also shook out the front of my garment and said, 'Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.' And all the assembly said, 'Amen!' And they praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise." (Nehemiah 5:13, NASB)

In Psalms 50:21 and Proverbs 30:6, “reprove” is יָכַח (yâkach) and means to argue with, prove, correct, judge, show to be right, to convict, reprove, correct, rebuke.

""These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes." (Psalms 50:21, NASB)

"Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar." (Proverbs 30:6, NASB)

In Job 32:12 and Psalms 141:5, it means to refute, to reprove, to show to be wrong.

""I even paid close attention to you; Indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, Not one of you who answered his words." (Job 32:12, NASB)

"Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it, For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds." (Psalms 141:5, NASB)

In 2 Samuel 7:14, “correct” means to correct error, deserved discipline.

""I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men," (2 Samuel 7:14, NASB)

In Job 5:17, “reproves” means to correct, to convict.

""Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." (Job 5:17, NASB)

In Proverbs 3:11 and Proverbs 29:1, “reproof” is תּוֹכַחַת (tokachath) and means to discipline, chasten, and admonish with severity.

"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof," (Proverbs 3:11, NASB)

"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy." (Proverbs 29:1, NASB)

Conclusions

Conviction is the total soul response to a doctrine that is violated when a person is exposed to their personal violation. There are three basic stages of conviction. There is the self-examination stage done in private. There is the verbal communication, also in three stages. The test by God, possibly of two types. It could be a test to exercise positive volition or a test to expose negative volition. 2 Cor. 13:5-10; 2 Tim. 4:2.

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves



may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete. For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down." (2 Corinthians 13:5-10, NASB)

"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2, NASB)

The factor of conviction is the bridge between academic knowledge and application. The first stage of conviction is done on a private basis and has two expressions. In Matthew 26:41, “temptation” is πειρασμός (peirasmos) and “testing” in Luke 8:13 means to test yourself for the purpose of ascertaining quality, what you think, how you will behave, to examine as to the mental attitude and overt application of learned doctrine, used in a good sense. This is examination of your application of a learned doctrine. If a person finds that they are not “behaving” or applying doctrine properly, then they turn to the next term.

"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." " (Matthew 26:41, NASB)

"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. " (Luke 8:13, NASB)

In Romans 12:2, “prove” is δοκιμάζω (dokimazō) and means to test yourself, examine yourself to see whether you are genuine or not. This is the examining of academics. Often the reason why a person is not applying a doctrine is that they do not really believe it even though they understand it.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2, NASB)

The personal examination stage of conviction or leading to conviction is designed to eliminate the next step which would be verbal communication in public assembly. Paul makes this very clear in 2 Corinthians 13:10 where he says when I come and have to use “severity.” Actually, the Greek means sharply, severely, curtly.

"For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down." (2 Corinthians 13:10, NASB)

The second stage is the verbal communication in conviction found in 2 Timothy 4:2. Reprove means to expose the violation of a doctrine. Rebuke means to charge the person with the violation. Exhort means to challenge and motivate the person to a positive response to correct the doctrine.

"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2, NASB)

The total soul response in conviction is brought about in a four-fold way. First, the mentality must know of the violation of the doctrine. In their mind, the person must understand what is a violation of a given doctrine. Secondly, in fellowship or out of fellowship, the Holy Spirit convicts the person by showing that the doctrinal standard in the conscience has been in violation in application. In other words, the person knows the doctrine, but is not obeying it or applying it. This then can produce guilt in the



conscience.

Thirdly, the will must now respond to the fact of the infraction of the doctrine. If the person is in fellowship, but just didn't know they were violating the doctrine, they are still immediately out of fellowship because it is a sin. When they finally confess their known sins using 1 John 1:9, they are restored to fellowship and can move on to correct application as divine good production. If they were violating the doctrine while out of fellowship, the application may or not work, but either way it will be human good and they are still out of fellowship.

Fourthly, the emotions have whatever pain that may be associated with the violation. If the person confesses the doctrinal violation using 1 John 1:9, is restored to fellowship and accepts the correction, they may still have the pain of conviction in the emotions, but this is not to be confused with guilt feelings.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)

The third stage of conviction is the testing stage. From God's standpoint, it also has several factors. If a person goes negative upon being convicted in verbal communication in public assembly, then the test God would bring would be to correct them. Examples of this would be the testing of Israel in the wilderness that were designed to convict Israel of their mental attitudes.

If a person goes positive upon being convicted, sometimes God will test the volitional decision of the person to apply, by bringing adversity that makes the application more difficult. Examples of God testing for "exercise" are found in Luke 22:28, Acts 20:19, 1 Peter 1:6, and Genesis 22:1.

"You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;" (Luke 22:28, NASB)

"serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;" (Acts 20:19, NASB)

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials," (1 Peter 1:6, NASB)

"Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."" (Genesis 22:1, NASB)

Guilt feelings are a result of negative volition. Therefore, the old sin nature takes the fact of your guilt and reverses the process of soul response. Instead of moving from intelligence to conscience, to volition, and then emotions, the old sin nature takes the fact and moves from the emotions (pain) to the conscience (guilt feelings) to the volition for a solution which immediately decides on the human viewpoint solution held forth by the mentality.

If at the point of conviction, the believer accepts the responsibility of their violation, and is positive to correction of it in application, they enters a five stage plan to bring their academics now to application.

The stages of positive volition when convicted involve mental attitude positive volition with a desire to apply the doctrine as in Psalms 119:106 and Psalms 119:112. Second, there is wise planning as in the book of Proverbs and the lesson on purpose in Proverbs 20:18. Third, God directs the single daily steps as in Proverbs 16:9. Fourth, there is daily walking means each day taking the step God directs by approaching the application. Fifth, there is maximum application of academics. This is spiritual maturity.



"I have sworn and I will confirm it, That I will keep Your righteous ordinances." (Psalms 119:106, NASB)

"I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, even to the end." (Psalms 119:112, NASB)

"Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance." (Proverbs 20:18, NASB)

"The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps." (Proverbs 16:9, NASB)