

The Walk of Faith

Lesson 2: How the Holy Spirit works God's peace in our conscience

Read Jn 6.44-45, 65; 12.32; WSC 31

- The point of this second lesson is *to understand how the Holy Spirit assures our conscience of God's peace with us in Christ.*

- I. There's nothing more precious than *peace of conscience*. And there's nothing more dreadful than a *guilty conscience*. Sinners in hell will be forever and unceasingly be berated by a guilty conscience that's kept a perfect record of every sin and now forever accuses. The terror will be so bad that Christ refers to it as a gnawing, nagging worm that never dies in a torturous fire that's never quenched, Mt 13.41-42; Mk 9.42-48; Isa 66.24
 - A. But for every man "taught of God" (Jn 6.45), one of the greatest blessings of all is the peace and quiet brought to the conscience by the Holy Spirit through the application of the work of Christ to the soul, Isa 26.3; 1Tim 1.19; 3.9; Heb 9.14; 10.22; 1Pet 3.21. So exactly *how* does the Holy Spirit do this?
 1. He *enlightens the mind/heart* with the knowledge of the truth of God's judgment concerning a man, making it *so real* to him that he sees himself to be either guilty and under God's just condemnation or righteous and under God's just justification.
 2. He "carries with demonstration" the conviction of guilt, and the conviction of righteousness, to the conscience. —Let's look at each of these.
 - II. Regarding **the conviction of guilt**: the Holy Spirit brings the law of God to bear on a sinner's conscience and gives him a real heartfelt sense of his sin and misery before God so that he acknowledges himself a convict of the law, justly deserving all its penalties in time and eternity, Ps 51.3-5; 2Sam 12.13; Rom 7.9; Rev 6.15-17; Lk 18.13
 - A. Under His influence the sinner reads these words, *feels* the truth of them and sees *himself* in them, Rom 5.12; 3.10-19. His mouth is stopped. He has no plea to make to God. No excuse left. What the law says of him, he *knows* to be true. The law brings him in guilty before God and in his conscience he bears testimony to the law, that it speaks truly, Rom 7.9-12
 - B. Before this "Spirit-wrought conviction," he tried everything he could to run from such a judgment and prove it wrong. But now he gives over every self-righteous attempt and acquiesces. He knows he can't atone for his sins. He knows he can't make himself holy. He knows no way back to God, no way to be reconciled, no way to escape. He owns his guilt, confesses it, and casts himself on the mercy of God.
 - C. Does *your* soul know something of this experience? Do you know something of what it is to be dead in sin (Eph 2.1) and alienated from God (Eph 2.12)? Has God shown you your sin, your sinful nature, and your sinful estate? Has God brought you to agree with His law's condemnation of you? Has God's law stopped your mouth and dragged you before Him as a wretched criminal deserving of hell (Lk 18.13)?
 1. There's no walking with God in peace so long as you've not been brought, whole and entire, guilty before God in hopeless, helpless, surrender.
 2. This is what it means to have our mind or conscience enlightened, WSC 31.
 - III. Regarding **the conviction of righteousness**: the Holy Spirit sets up a door of hope, showing him the perfect righteousness of the God-man, wrought for such guilty creatures as he, Jn 14.6; 6.67-69. And He enables him to plead Christ's person and work in faith before the throne of justice, and to trust in it for his acceptance with God, by which means the believing sinner is justified before God, finding relief in his conscience and comfort in his heart, Rom 5.1-2; 7.24-25

- A. This is the work the Spirit undertook in the covenant of grace, to convince a soul of its acceptance before God through the imputed righteousness of Christ. He bears witness to Jesus (Jn 16.7-14), testifying to the believing soul that *He* is his righteousness before God (1Cor 1.30) and that he's accepted at the bar of God's Justice in the righteousness of Jesus imputed to him by grace and received by faith, Phil 3.8-9; Eph 1.6
 - B. Whenever the law or conscience or Satan accuses him, telling him that the unrighteous shall not inherit heaven and he is unrighteous, the Spirit enables him to plead the *truth* of what God has done on his behalf and the *state* of impenetrable safety into which faith in Christ has forever and unchangeably placed him, Rom 8.1-2, 10; Gal 3.26. The Spirit enables him to *confess* what he *was* in himself and yet all the while *rest* in what he *now is* in Christ, 1Cor 6.9-11
 - C. The Spirit brings home to his conscience *his blessed participation* in *all* that Christ did for him—as his Law-fulfiller in life and sin-atoner in death, his curse-bearer and redemption-worker on the cross, his Justifier in the resurrection, his Reconciler in the ascension, and his Sanctifier in the outpouring of His Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
 - D. And it's *here*, especially here, that the conscience is set at peace: by all that Christ has done for the believing soul, the Father is irreversibly and happily *reconciled* to us.
 1. In love the Father gave the Son to be our Mediator and work our reconciliation.
 2. In justice the Father then received all the Son's work on our behalf.
 3. In grace the Father demanded of Christ all that righteousness we owed and imputed to Christ on the cross all the sins we committed.
 4. In justice the Father condemned the sin-laden Son and exacted the *whole* payment.
 5. In love the Father put all the elect in the Son (2Cor 5.21) and now only looks on them as being *in Him*—righteous with His righteousness, sons in His Sonship, co-heirs of His inheritance, members of His Body.
 6. In a loving justice the Father then forgives us our sins, delights in us perfectly, rests in us joyfully, sings over us eternally, and beholds us with a peaceful countenance. He is our Father and would ever have us call Him so. He is our God and would ever have us look to Him for care, pray to Him for our needs, and run to Him for refuge.
- IV. Nothing, nothing in all the world can quiet the conscience but *this*: that God is reconciled to us and we to Him. And therefore this truth, brought home to the heart, cannot but quiet it.
- A. By it the Spirit silences guilt and produces peace with God. He comes with full, divine authority to establish this peace in the conscience, Eph 2.17-18. He brings home to the heart the record of that grand transaction of our justification enrolled in the court in heaven, transacted by the Eternal Three. The *Son* presented the evidence, the *Father* rendered the verdict, and now the *Spirit* delivers the happy news to the soul. —Can you believe it!?
 - B. Having fled to Jesus for refuge, the strife in our conscience is ended and peace fills the soul. Trusting to the sprinkled blood of Jesus for *pardon* and to the righteousness of Jesus for *acceptance*, we see God *reconciled* to us, which reconciles *us* to God, and by the Spirit of our adoption we now suddenly and every day cry, "Father!"

How is it, then, with *your* conscience? Is it at peace with a reconciled Father?

*If you've trusted in Christ for salvation and look to none but Him for your peace with God and your conscience still troubles you, then look again over all that He's done for you. Pray to God that the truth of His saving work might be *brought home* to your heart and mind with authority and efficacy so that you can walk today and everyday in happy fellowship with Him.

*And if you know this peace, then consider what unceasing praise you owe the Lamb of God, who washed you from your sins in His own blood, and what a life of devoted service you ought to render to the Lord of glory, who died to sin for you that you might live to God for Him.