

Walking In the Path of Conviction (Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—January 12, 2024

Greetings everyone. Today I'm going to speak to you on *conviction*. It's a powerful word in our language.

Conviction is important in our spiritual lives and the word *conviction* conjures up ideas of not only a guilty verdict from a courtroom setting, **but a solid or firmly held belief**, as in the idea that God's people should be convicted of what they believe.

These two related concepts surrounding this idea of conviction is what I would like to talk about today, **and walking in that path of conviction** throughout our physical lives. Let us begin by defining:

- What is conviction?
- Where does it come from?
- How do we build it?

These are important keys to a successful journey that God has called each one of us to travel. So, if we look that up in the dictionary, I looked it up in **vocabulary.com**: conviction is defined as:

something certain; a judgment of guilty in court and a strong belief are both convictions

In the legal world, when a judge or jury convicts someone of a crime, they find them guilty. This is called a conviction. Evidence is, of course, presented and weighted and a decision is made based on that evidence.

Looking up the Greek word used in the New Testament for conviction, I found it is 'elegchos,' It means *to scorn or to bring into contempt!* The term evolved in such a way that the emphasis falls more upon the conviction of guilt or the demonstration of guilt.

This is the meaning that has survived intact throughout the New Testament and the early Church writings.

Looking further at other sources, another overall definition of conviction or 'elegchos,' when it says to show people their sins and to summon them to repentance.

How is someone to know about sin? *I think we can answer that question quite easily: **The Law of God***, of course.

Romans 3:20: "Therefore, by works of law there shall no flesh be justified before Him; **for through the Law is the knowledge of sin.**"

Paul goes on to speak about how crucial the Law is:

Romans 7:7: "What then shall we say? *Is the Law sin? MAY IT NEVER BE!* But I had not known sin except through the Law. Furthermore, I would not have been conscious of lust, except *that the Law said, 'You shall not covet.'*"

The problem is that our natural human minds are hostile to God and His Law. It will do whatever it can to deceive itself into believing that it does not need God's Law,

That it's perfectly fine living by its own laws, which, of course, ***we know is living under bondage under Satan the devil!***

There is only one thing that can break through that barrier. How does that happen? *In one of the many Scriptures that tell us is found in*

John 16:7: "But I am telling you the truth. It is profitable for you that I go away because if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. However, if I go, I will send it to you. And when that one has come, it will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment" (vs 7-8).

Here, Jesus is speaking to His disciples. We see that *conviction* mentioned here is an action of the Holy Spirit, the power of God. Working within a mind of man/woman that can bring about a profound inner sense of guilt before God.

It leads to what we call a deep conviction of one's sinfulness and evil. A couple of verses later, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit *the Spirit of Truth!*

Verse 13: "However, when that one has come, *even the Spirit of the Truth*, it will lead you into all Truth, because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak. And it shall disclose to you the things to come."

So, in the process of conversion, of which conviction becomes a big part, the Holy Spirit reveals the Truth about the condition of the human heart.

In Rom. 7 Paul goes on there to describe how the Law, or the commandments, exposed sin for what it really was, awakening to this true state of his heart. He became convinced of his sin and saw that he was a dead man spiritually. So, God's Law exposed the sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. He could then recognize sin for what it really

is. Here are some Scriptures expounding on this thought.

James 2:9: “But if you have respect of persons, you are practicing sin, being convicted by the Law as transgressors;

Conviction is often translated as rebuke in the Bible. Jesus says that we are to convict brothers who sin against us.

Matthew 18:15: “So then, if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault between you and him alone. If he is willing to hear you, you have gained your brother.”

1-Timothy 5:20: “Those *elders* who sin *should be* corrected in the presence of all in order that the others also may fear.”

Of a particularly difficult church, Paul encourages Titus to *rebuke or to convict* them sharply so that they remain sound in the faith.

Titus 1:13: “This testimony is true. For this reason you *must* rebuke them severely, that they may be sound in the faith.”

Revelation 3:19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.”

Notice again that the word *rebuke* or you can substitute that by *convict*, a great is also derived from that same Greek word, ‘*elegchos*.’

So, brethren, there is something that is very important that I want us to take away from all the verses that we have just read.

It’s not just about proving guilt or condemning and locking away, *but it is about changing the mind!*

Remember, part of the definition we read earlier was ‘summon to repentance.’ God’s desire is to cleanse His people, wash them off, and give them freedom.

But of course, the natural mind of men is oblivious to our true spiritual condition. We are blinded many times and deceived by sin and cannot help ourselves or free ourselves.

By only God granting His Holy Spirit can our eyes be opened and we be convicted! Not only of our sinful state, but of all the Truth that comes from God.

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Unless God in His mercy and grace gives us that Spirit of Truth—as we read earlier—we are without hope! *We are without hope!*

So, before we become truly convicted regarding God’s incredible plan and the purpose for His creation, and all the details that surround that, which we will get into in a little bit. There must have occurred a conviction as in a court setting of just who we really are. Who we really are. Our guilt exposed seeing how our natural mind is opposed to God and His Plan and His way of life and admits that of and by ourselves we can do nothing about it. ***We cannot do it by ourselves!***

Then the understanding of Whose life had to be sacrificed to pay the penalty in our place. We know that was Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So true conviction lays the foundation for a fruitful Christian life. One who has experienced a deep and sobering revelation of our true state and is repulsed by it. ***True conviction leads to circumcision of the heart!***

This is the time of year—as we approach another spring Holy Day season, as we approach the Passover—when we should begin to focus and think about these topics more fervently. About the sacrifice that Jesus made for each one of us and for mankind. Then the responsiveness to that and realizing whether our commitments or convictions are truly solid should be important for us to assess.

Let’s expand on the conception of a conviction or of conviction a little bit more, because of the courtroom setting as I’ve been talking about. The idea that most commonly comes to mind, of course, is the conviction of guilt. But we are also to be guilty of living a Godly way of life. If the evidence of our life was proclaimed in accord, would we would we be convicted of that, that of living an Godly way of life?

We know that grace is extended to us. We accept not only our guilt, but that Jesus paid the penalty in our place. We have come to the point that we accept that and know that that is true.

Then we are given a Spirit that came from God and allows conviction of the heart so that we can be molded and changed from something hard and opposed to God to something malleable and able to be deeply convinced of the Plan of God. And more importantly, our role to play in that Plan of God.

So, what are we talking about? *This is where faith comes into play!* The definition of faith:

Hebrews 11:1: “Now, **faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things**

not seen.”

Here again, the word conviction that is used in this verse is none other than ‘elegchos.’

A weak, helpless human can now move from the conviction of sin to the conviction of faith. That is all about our response and our actions going forward.

Who gives us faith? Of course, we know the answer to that. ***God gives us faith!*** We are told to ask for faith from Him. Therefore, we know that He can provide it.

We also know that conviction is necessary and a crucial partner to faith. They work hand-in-hand together, and when one is missing, the other suffers. So ***faith is placing hope in God Himself!*** It is diligently seeking Him and not just what He can do for us. It is a belief that something is true or real and is not contingent upon human reason or justification.

By the faith of Jesus Christ Who is given to us, we can become convicted not only of things seen, ***but of the things unseen.*** Things that naturally cannot be seen, such as the state of our heart. So, ***as faith increases, so increases our conviction!***

We step out in faith and as a result can become convicted of something. Both are very important; they go hand-in-hand. But all the conviction in the world cannot move mountains or pluck up a mulberry tree. ***Only faith*** can do that!

Going back to the book of Hebrews, Paul several times urges the brethren to remember their earlier days and to regain the bold confidence that they once had. They had something to believe in.

But due to personal neglect, they were letting it slip away and they were trying to get back on track. That was Paul’s goal, to try to get them on track. Another way of paraphrasing Heb. 11:1 is ***faith is being sure of what we hope for!*** Being ***sure*** of what we hope for, ***certain or convicted*** of what we do not see!

So the person who really believes is convinced that the things he cannot see regarding God are real. So, from that perspective, ***he will act in fullness of hope!***

I know over the years we have heard many messages on faith, so I will not concentrate and focus on that too much further in this message.

I want to focus on ***conviction*** here more than faith. But it is important to realize and not forget and know that the two—conviction and faith—are related because they are very closely related and tied to one another.

Many claim to believe God, but what influence does this belief have on their behavior? If it has little or no influence, they are unconvinced people, ***people without conviction***, are only seeking an ***intellectual righteousness!***

Such belief is without certainty, and of course, is very weak. You could say it is lukewarm and gradually retreats instead of going forward. Those Hebrews that we read about had become this way under the pressure of time and trial.

So, brethren, our responsiveness can be effectively measured by the depth of our personal convictions to this way of life that we are trying to lead. That is what God is looking for. As I mentioned earlier in the defining of convictions, convictions are often also strong beliefs and principles that we hold very dear to our heart.

The Church is built are many convictions, such as the belief in the Plan of God for the redemption of all mankind and not just a select few.

When you have conviction:

- you are certain of something
- you are convinced of something
- you are not easily moved

God is looking at the intent of the heart, and we’ve mentioned this many times, ***not just on legalistic observance.***

Don’t get me wrong, these are closer commanded, of course, and part of the process. But that is not what lasts for eternity. ***A convicted heart, a convicted mind toward what they represent is what lasts and what God is truly looking for in us!***

I’ve covered the basics of what conviction is, but I’m going to expand a little further when considering this subject that we need to be aware of. It can be very helpful, ***extremely helpful***, for us in determining our level of conviction and of course help us grow in our convictions as we walk down the path.

1. **Society**

The society we live in, which surrounds us daily ***lives on preferences, not convictions!*** This is one obstacle that we need to be very careful of and not to fall into that trap.

They may believe that what they have is conviction, but in reality, they just prefer to live by standards that they can change with whatever is convenient or relative at the time.

A rapidly growing state of mind is to violently shun conviction of every kind, claiming to be open minded or tolerant.

We have to be careful. We should be able to recognize the folly of all that, and what it leads to and recognize the source of Truth regarding that.

We can all have preferences, as well. Preferences can be formed by our environment, our culture, and our traditions around us. But, brethren, it's very important *they must stay within the boundaries of our convictions based on God's Law and His way of life.*

That may sound very simple, but as has been proven over the years, it is not so easily understood or followed. You see, a preference can also masquerade as a strong belief. You can give all your wealth, all your energy, and all your time to your preference. But under the right circumstances, you will change.

So, a well understood example of this would be whether you believe, stand or fall, depending on what people around you do. ***IF*** you stand because of what others do or do not do, ***THEN*** your beliefs *are preferences, they are not convictions.*

A conviction is a belief that is held tightly because it is built, as we mentioned before, on faith and based on what God requires of each one of us. It does not matter about opinions of others or the physical conditions surrounding us.

When it comes to these types of conviction that we are talking about here, that is something that can only come from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit empowers us to see something differently and do something about it. ***Our lives and our behavior are to reflect that conviction!***

Another Scripture about faith, which I'm using here about conviction because they are closely tied together, and I can't emphasize that enough. It brings out the point:

James 2:18: "But someone is going to say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' *My answer is: You prove your faith to me through your works, and I will prove my faith to you through my works.*"

Verse 26: "For as the body without *the* spirit is dead, in the same way also, faith without works is dead."

As I mentioned before: ***faith should lead us to conviction, and conviction should lead us to action!***

We must act! There must be action behind the faith. ***We must live according to our belief!*** Preference can lead to action as well, *but is just based on our human desires!*

Action taken because of a changed heart and a changed mind is what proves the conviction that God is looking for. That results in the action that proceeds no matter what obstacles want to impede it. There are many, many obstacles that get in the way!

2. It takes courage and wisdom to act upon our conviction

You can ask yourself: How far would I go in expressing courage for my convictions?

The life we are called to is about making many, many such decisions. Judgment is now, as we know, on the house of God:

1-Peter 4:17: "For the time *has come for* judgment to begin with the household of God, and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the Gospel of God?"

God is extremely interested in our heart; I can't emphasize that enough. He finds out what is in our heart by what we do on a frequent, daily basis. Often by the seemingly small opportunities to show where we stand. Each one of those requires a certain degree of courage, as well as a certain degree of wisdom: to know what to do, to know what to say in various situations.

There are so many variables out there. But the Word of God is all about a whole way of life. That way is going to be constantly challenged in this world, in the society around us. Because the world's ways are ruled by a being who presently, of course, has control over the minds of all humanity. Do you know who that is? *Satan!*

Daily standing firm against that pressure demands courage on our part. Courage is a decision made by us. God can work to grow our faith and our conviction. ***But we must choose to turn that into action in our daily lives!***

God is not looking for robots! ***We make the decisions!*** Sometimes people are courageous, and sometimes they are not, by the decisions that they make. We know that the apostles were often challenged in their ministry. Some of what they were preaching was not very popular, especially to the religious authorities of the day.

Acts 4—Peter and John were addressing the Sanhedrin regarding the healing of a man who was lame and could not walk.

Acts 4:7: "And after placing them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or in what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with *the* Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we are examined this day as to a good work *done to the* infirm man, by what *power*

he has been cured, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarean, Whom you crucified, *but* Whom God has raised from *the* dead, by Him this *man* stands before you whole. This is the Stone that was set a naught by you, the builders, which has become the Head of *the* corner. And there is no salvation in any other, for neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (vs 7-12).

Verse 13: “Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlettered and uninstructed men, they were amazed; and they took note of them, that they had been with Jesus. Yet, seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they said nothing to oppose *them*. But after commanding them to go outside the Sanhedrin, they conferred with one another, saying” (vs 13-15).

Verse 16: “...‘What shall we do to these men? For a remarkable miracle has indeed come to pass through them *and is* manifest to all those living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. But that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them with a *severe* threat not to speak any more to anyone in this name” (vs 16-17).

Verse 18: “And after summoning them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered *and* said to them, ‘**Whether it is right before God to listen to you rather than to God, you judge, for we cannot but speak what we have seen and heard**” (vs 18-20).

This is a very telling story and phrase right there. We cannot but speak of the things we might think in that situation that these guys possibly were in some kind of mental agony or fearful. That was not the case! ***They were convicted and full of courage!***

They were threatened and released, but very soon they ended up in prison again because they did exactly what they said they were going to do. Why? ***Because they were happy to do it! Faith, conviction, and courage to act drove them to continue forward!*** What an amazing concept to understand.

Acts 5:27: “And they brought them in *and* set *them* before the Sanhedrin. And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not order you by a *direct* command not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, with *the* purpose of bringing this man’s blood upon us” (vs 27-28).

Verse 29: “But Peter and the apostles

answered *and* said, ‘We are obligated to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus Whom you killed *by* hanging *Him* on a tree. Him has God exalted by His right hand *to be* a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. And we are His witnesses of these things, as *is* also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him” (vs 29-32).

This story is one of the many examples that’s recorded for us in the Bible. These men, both John and Peter, were like us. They had strengths, but they also had weaknesses, just like we do. But in their struggle against the world, they stood firm when they were challenged.

How did they do this? Well, when challenges come, we will only have the strength to stand firm ***IF we have been living by the standards that we actually believe and preach!***

Living by it, the daily decisions made over a period of time, sometimes a long period of time, ***builds upon the conviction with the courage to stand by that conviction!***

3. **Time**

God is patient, and we know God is merciful. He knows that we, as weak human beings, need time to develop conviction; thus the title, ***Walking in the Path of Conviction.***

We are given a starting point, but it is our responsibility to build upon that within the time we have been given.

Now lest you think that I am just talking about our ability to stand in the face of external challenges or big scary things, it is much more than that! It is the daily, somewhat ‘little’ things that count and more that we actually realize.

One way to tell your level of conviction is the daily effort of maintaining a close relationship with God. Not just looking to Him for help when you need it, but working daily, committed to doing our part to make the relationship work.

We know that God does His part, and it should be our choice to do our part. It is so much easier to just be able to call out to the Superior Power that can bail us out of whatever situation we may find ourselves in. BUT, that is not a conviction, even if we are doing that diligently. That is the exact scenario that all too often can describe us if we are not careful.

If that describes us, we need to recognize that fact and seek some counseling and do something about it. What is the best solution for that? ***Prayer and fasting*** are very helpful tools to deal with that.

And not only that, but ***it takes courage that comes from conviction*** to continually work on our own weaknesses. Not to work on someone else's weaknesses, ***but your own personal weaknesses!***

I talked about this earlier, daily conviction of our natural tendencies and working to out them to death. That is our purpose. Remember, since we are working with the Holy Spirit, we are to walk uprightly! Walking not only in obedience to God, ***but walking before Him in such a way as to be very responsive*** when the Spirit of Truth points out areas in our lives that need to be dealt with. Basically, our weaknesses.

We need to grow sometimes more in sensitivity to the lead of the Holy Spirit. God has given us that Spirit, and we need to grow in sensitivity to that Spirit.

So, what am I saying here? ***IF*** our courage to tackle these things that come up is very weak, ***we need to pray earnestly for continued faith and strength given to us by the Holy Spirit, and conviction of the heart and start living by the Law of God and Word of God daily, even in the little things.***

God rewards those in the end by saying that ***those who are faithful with little can then be trusted with much!***

Facing the little challenges prepares us, draws us toward bigger challenges. And bigger challenges will be coming, ***guaranteed!***

So, let me sum this up a little bit more in a personal way. I am convinced that my sins killed Jesus Christ. By faith, I leave what seems natural to a physical human and embrace the Spiritual, ***which has the power to change the heart and convict the mind of the Law of God***, which is the mind of God as it applies to human life. It is the right way to live and all the nuances that come with that.

With that said, that should lead us to positive actions of growth. That's what it's all about, ***change in our life as we move forward!***

It also allows us to endure, and with endurance have courage, even through the trials that come our way and try to challenge our convictions.

Here is an example, and this has been talked about on numerous occasions. How many kept the Sabbath day? ***Some for the wrong reasons, but many did for the right reasons!*** And yet, ***they do not keep it today!***

It is easier to comprehend and understand why someone who kept it only for family pressure or the sense of community coming together, that was

easier to comprehend. It's easier to understand why they might not lead to conviction.

But it's harder to understand how many could keep it for so long:

- intellectually understand the purpose of the Sabbath Day
- able to spout Scripture off left and right, and recited exactly what it represented

Yet, the moment the Church leadership made the announcement that it was no longer necessary, they cast ***the seventh-day*** aside. They were relieved that they were ***'set free from the burdensome'*** requirement.

So we may ask ourselves, why? How can this be? ***I know that we have all asked that question!*** There had to be a breakdown somewhere in the chain. The only explanation is ***there had to be a breakdown somewhere in the chain!***

So you may say, okay, you might say, 'I have been through that. I've gotten that all figured out.' But I ask you now:

- How many are neglecting the aspect of assembling ourselves together for the Sabbath?
- How many people?
- How many brethren?

There are many reasons and there are many factors out there. I'm not trying to condemn anyone.

- How many are actually neglecting the aspect of assembling themselves together for the Sabbath?

I know there's countless excuses at times. But really, brethren,:

- Are there at times that they are all valid?

We were given the Sabbath Day, and it was meant to worship our Almighty God and come together for the common good, for edification, and very importantly, for the encouragement of one another.

It is just not about us; we must remember that it's not just about us. Frankly, one way of keeping the Sabbath is more of a preference when you think about it, and the other way is the result of conviction.

When challenges come, one of those will sustain and the other will not. You can apply this to many other topics, as well. I challenge myself. I challenge you, brethren, to really think about this and think also about marriage in the same light.

Conviction comes from exercise in our lives through our daily decisions. Those decisions can either show that we want to live by the spiritual intent of God's perfect Law or whether we do not.

Quite simple! Decisions can lead to stagnation or to growth. Two options on the negative side, which is not always easy for humans to clearly see, because we are so easily deceived into thinking sometimes that we are all okay and that we do not need to continually work at it.

Sometimes it takes us a while to realize that this is not possible. *We need to continually work at our weaknesses!*

On the positive side, though, ***IF*** we do continue continually work at it, ***THEN*** we start to grow and we can grow to the point of not necessarily needing intellectual reasons for the convictions that we have.

Of course, with that, it can be built upon faith. That is so important. ***It can be built upon faith!*** Remember that!

As I come to a close on this message, and it's a very broad topic, we can get into a lot more here, but we can be convinced that God is the Author and Finisher of our life. We know that, and that He knows what is best for each one of us. Then we do not necessarily even need a reason to obey. ***That is conviction that stands firm,*** because it's Source is from His Spirit and our mind that has let go and allowed the Spirit to work within us.

Stepping out in faith leads to the growth in the conviction that we have. God grants much understanding to us, especially in these end-times, regarding the reasons for our convictions. But reasons alone are not to be the basis. We as humans tend to look to human reasoning. It's just a natural thing that occurs. We look to the empirical method, looking for proof.

- Is that what faith is?
- Is that what faith is all about?

Faith is the opposite! ***It is being able to step out and walk on water, something that would normally be impossible to do.*** As I reiterated before, ***it needs to be a conviction of faith!***

- Are we there yet, brethren?
- Are we even close to that point?

I'll leave that question for you to assess and answer personally.

We know that God is intimately connected with our lives, each day, each hour, each minute. He is concerned about the state of our mind and our spiritual development.

- He has called us to be a special people. *What a blessing that is!*
- He has called us, as a special people, to have a part in His fantastic Plan for mankind

He will continue to work with us to enable us to respond to our convictions. So, let us be confident and truly understand what that conviction means and the end result of that conviction in our lives.

Philippians 1:6: "**Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ."

Let us remember the Source of the strength that we have spiritually. Enhancing our convictions by faith.

We can continue to walk in the path of conviction as necessary in our process of conversion. We must remain totally devoted to and continuing that straight and narrow path to conviction.

So, let us take these words today and first of all assess:

- Where are we spiritually?
- Where are we as far as being totally convicted in our beliefs?
- Are we staying straight on that path towards total conviction?
- Are we continually practicing and not drifting or straying off that most crucial critical path?

Let us take this to heart and let us continue to ask God to help us. For that's what we need. ***Ask God to***

- give us that strength as given to us by the Holy Spirit
- give us that conviction that He is seeking from us to fulfill the opportunity of the wonderful plan that He has for us and for mankind
- give us the opportunity to receive that ultimate reward we are all awaiting for.

That of eternal life!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Romans 3:20
- 2) Romans 7:7
- 3) John 16:7-8, 13
- 4) James 2:9
- 5) Matthew 18:15
- 6) 1-Timothy 5:20
- 7) Titus 1:13
- 8) Revelations 3:19
- 9) Jeremiah 17:9
- 10) Hebrews 11:1
- 11) James 2:18, 26
- 12) 1-Peter 4:17

- 13) Acts 4:7-20
- 14) Acts 5:27-32
- 15) Philippians 1:6

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