

Conviction- Do you have it?

Praise the Lord Saints of God! Praise the Lord Everybody! I offer my greetings to everyone in the mighty, wonderful, and awesome name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I thank God and this congregation for the opportunity to minister to the people of this church. It's always an honor and a privilege to stand behind the anointed desk and bring forth the word of God.

If we could all stand for the reading of the word:

Matthew 10:37-39 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **38** And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. **39** He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

You may be seated:

Webster defines a conviction as: **a strong belief, being convinced.**

A Judge once defined a conviction in his courtroom. To him a conviction was: Something you believe in to the point you would rather die than change.

How do you feel about the gospel of Jesus Christ?

- Are you ready to die for it?
- Are you ready to die to yourself for it?
- Are you ready to live it?
- Are you ready to teach it?
- Are you ready to preach it?
- Are you ready to give it to others?

Tell me how do you really feel about the gospel of Jesus Christ?

- Is it the controlling factor in your life?
- Does it influence what you do?

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- Does it influence what you say?
- Does it influence what you don't say?
- Does it influence where you go?
- Does it influence where you don't go?
- Does it play the leading role in your life?
- Is it the final authority and determining factor in all that you do in life?

If the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't have the utmost influence over every part of everything you do in life, I have to wonder just how much conviction you have. I have to wonder how willing you are to die for Christ. How willing you would be to sell out your brother or sister in Christ just to save your own hide.

There's a time that's coming and it's closer than many of you may think. That time of great tribulation when people will be killed for their faith. It's happening all over the world, just not here yet!.... Unless you count 9-11.... And I think I would!

- Are you willing to lay down your life for the gospel's sake and for the sake of your brother or sister in Christ?
- Would you take the mark of the beast if you were starving to death?
- Are you willing to die, rather than worship the devil just so your kids can have food to eat?
- Just how dedicated are you to living for God?
- Do you really think that trial and tribulation will never hit here in America just because we're Christians?

If you think that, here's a few things to think about:

Luke 21:12-19 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. **13** And it shall turn to you for a testimony. **14** Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: **15** For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. **16** And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and *some* of you shall

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they cause to be put to death. **17** And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake. **18** But there shall not an hair of your head perish. **19** In your patience possess ye your souls.

- Are you willing to be hated by all men for the sake of claiming the Lord's name in salvation?
- Are you willing to be tortured for the name of Christ?
- Are you willing to die rather than deny His name?

Furthermore, we're not only to be willing to die for his name's sake, we're to be so in tune with God that when they accuse us of evil things that God will give us the words that He wants us to speak. We need to be spiritual enough to hear those words and brave enough to speak them. We need to have conviction, and yet many of us have so little that we can't even spend time *reading* the word of God much less *obeying* it!

Revelation 6:9-11 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: **10** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? **11** And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Here are examples of people who had conviction, they died for their faith! Today in America, while the Government, Hollywood, and the Media are constantly bashing Christians. While they are trying to prevent us from freely worshipping our God. While they violate our Constitutional rights to free speech and freedom of worship. We're not yet having to resist to the point of shedding blood for the cause of Christ.

We still have it easy compared to a large part of the world! In many parts of the world, being a Christian is a death sentence. In Muslim controlled areas, people are regularly killed just because they're Christians. In Communist

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controlled areas, Christians are killed, imprisoned, or turned into slaves. In Hindu areas, they're beaten, burned, or killed. In Buddhist areas they're persecuted, beaten, banished, imprisoned, or even killed..... And they try to say that these are peaceful religions?

In this country we still have the right to go to church any day of the week that we please. For the most part, we have freedom to witness wherever we go. We can still pray over our meals in public places. We can have Christian bumper stickers on our cars, and we can listen to Christian radio stations. It's not even illegal to own a bible yet!

Mark 12:29-34 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: **30** And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.**31** And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. **32** And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: **33** And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. **34** And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

We're commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Do you love God that much this morning? Do you have a love relationship with God this morning? Are you *IN* love with God this morning? Do you have a personal, intimate, eternal, relationship with God this morning?

If you don't have that kind of relationship with God today, you need to start down that road just as soon as possible! It's not just "*knowing*" about God that counts in the end, it's knowing Jesus and Jesus knowing you! You can be doing the will of God in the works that you do, but without that saving relationship you're still lost! Without that personal, intimate, eternal relationship that I'm always talking about, you won't enter into the kingdom of heaven. **Let's look at:**

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Matthew 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **23** And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

How do we know Jesus? By studying the word of God! How do we have a personal relationship with Jesus? Through fellowship with him by prayer and fasting. How do we have an eternal relationship with Him? By repenting of our sins, by washing them away through water baptism, by confessing Him as our Lord and God, by baptism in the Holy Ghost as evidenced by speaking in an unknown tongue as the Spirit gives the utterance.

I can show you all these things scripturally. Pretty soon we're going to start through our "Basic Christianity" series of bible studies. If you want to know more now, we can give one on one bible studies if need be.

- We want everyone to be saved!
- We want everyone to go to heaven!
- We want everyone to hear "Well done thou good and faithful servant"!

We all live forever, the only question is: Where will you live? Smoking or Non-smoking?

- We want everyone to live forever on the correct side of the lake of fire!
- We want everyone to escape the fires of Hell!
- We want everyone to escape the worms that eat those who are damned for eternity!

But what do we need to have in order to live for God in this present world? We need to have conviction, but do you have it? How do we get convicted? By praying, by fasting, by studying God's word, by being obedient to God's word.
Let's look at:

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1 Samuel 15:22-23 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams. **23** For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

It's not enough to know God's word; we have to be obedient to God's word! But to know God's word we have to read it, we have to study it! We have to hide it in our heart, we have to live it! That's where the rubber meets the road! That's where the price tag hits the pocketbook! That's where the flesh rebels but the spirit fights for that which is right! That's where the decision is made and the battle is fought.

How willing are you to die to the flesh that you might have eternal life with Jesus Christ? How willing are you to give up those things which you might enjoy if the word of God says that they're wrong? How much of your life are you willing to sacrifice in order to have eternal life? **Let's look at:**

Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Apostle Paul knew what he believed in. He was ready to die if necessary in order to fulfill what God had called him to do. What is God calling you to do today? What do you hear Him telling you to do? Can you even hear God yet? What are you going to do in order to hear Him? Is God convicting your heart today that you need to do more in order to have a personal, intimate, eternal, relationship with God? Are you willing to die to your flesh for the Gospel of Jesus Christ? **Let's look at:**

Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:.....

No matter what the world threw at Job, he was going to live for God! The Devil threw a lot of things at Job. But Job had a made up mind! Job wasn't about

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to quit no matter what it cost him! Job was willing to die for God, even if God himself was the killer! Job knew that even though God slew him, he would live again in that last day! Job knew that he would live forever with God! Job knew that nothing was worth living for in this world if it meant losing out with God! Job had conviction! Do you have it?

What about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? The King said bow down to the golden image or die a horrible death. They would be burned alive in a fiery furnace! But they had convictions! **Let's look at what they said in:**

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. **17** If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. **18** But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

We who have been in church for any length of time know what happened. They threw them into the fiery furnace that was heated seven times hotter than it had ever been heated. They lived and yet those who threw them in died! God saved them; in fact they didn't even smell like smoke. Anyone who has ever been around a wood fire knows that you will smell like smoke when you get away from it. God saved them even from the smoke of that fire!

What are we really giving up if we live for God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? We're only giving up the smell of smoke! **Let's look at what it says in:**

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

In truth, we're only giving up torment and the smell of smoke in order to live for God. I don't know about you, but I don't like being tortured or tormented! I prefer being loved! I prefer being comfortable! I prefer being filled

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rather than starved! I prefer to be saved and to go to heaven and live forever with the Lord than to live forever in the torment of hell! Do you have what it takes to live forever with Jesus Christ? Do you have conviction today that you're going to live for Him? Are you willing to die to yourself in order to live with God forever? **It says in:**

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

I'm closing at this time:

We can live for God if we just have conviction! Jesus had conviction. He had so much conviction that He died for us upon a cruel and rugged cross. He died to himself, He died to His flesh. Not because He had to, but because He wanted to. He died for us because He loved us more than live itself. He died for us because He had conviction. It says in:

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

With every head bowed and every eye closed... I need to ask you a few questions today. I don't want anyone to raise their hand outwardly, but if you can raise your hand in your heart to any of these questions, please do so.

We've heard today about having conviction. I want to ask you today...

- Do you have need of conviction in your heart?
- Do you have need of more conviction than you already have?
- Is God convicting you right now that you need to serve Him better than you have in the past?

Here's some questions I hope you can raise your hand to:

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- If it were a crime to be a Christian, and you were put on trial. Would there be enough evidence to convict you?
- Remember what the Judge said at the start of this message. A conviction is something you would die for rather than change your mind.
- Are you willing to die to the flesh today because of your conviction that living in heaven with God, is better than living in hell with the devil?
- Are you so sold out for Jesus, that nothing will ever change your convictions concerning Him?
- Are you willing to come to this altar right now and seek Him for more strength and more conviction? If so, then come on down. **(Pause)**
- Are you willing to come to this altar right now and start a personal, intimate, eternal relationship with God? If so, then come on down. **(Pause)**

I pray that everyone in this church right now, who is physically able, would come down to this altar and seek a greater relationship with God. I pray that all who claim to know Christ would have enough humbleness of spirit to come down and pray for those who are already here.