



LESSON 36

Foundations Curriculum

Conviction of Sin

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Introduction

Conviction of Sin

In this thirty-sixth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we are beginning the fourth cycle of studies, with the theme “Jesus Is the Door of the Kingdom.” It is necessary to speak about the importance of a repentant heart, grieved before the conviction of its sin. This theme needs to be addressed and reviewed by us. It is not a conceptual matter, but rather requires an attitude of repentance, of daily experience of God, throughout our lives. Let us understand what this conviction produces in those who hear the message of the cross.

We will also address the topic of “the fear of God,” clarifying with texts that it is not merely reverence or respect, but in fact fear of God. And how we should examine ourselves.

1) What the Gospel Preached by the Apostles Produced in Those Who Heard It

The first time the Gospel was preached, it produced a dramatic effect on the crowd that heard it: the people were, or became, cut to the heart (contrite, repentant). They stopped to listen and to reflect on their lives in light of what was being proclaimed.

Cut to the heart: grieved, contrite, deeply sorrowful at knowing oneself guilty.

This definition, “knowing oneself guilty,” clarifies the reason for the sorrow and grief they experienced. This is the state of one who is under CONVICTION OF SIN!

It is important to note that it was that crowd of contrite and brokenhearted people who produced the first Church that has come down to us — that glorious church of the Acts of the Apostles, which became the reference for all time for how the disciples of Jesus should live.

Just as the brothers preached Jesus, at that moment, to a great crowd that listened, we must pray and strive so that our preaching produces the same fruit in those who hear us.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 2:37 (NKJV)

It is important to pay attention to the message. What did they hear in Acts 2 that was able to produce such an effect in their hearts? What left them so convicted that they needed to take some action?

They heard the proclamation of the person of Christ — His life and His work — including His return, along with the powerful action of the Holy Spirit.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Acts 2:22–24 (NKJV)

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Acts 2:34–36 (NKJV)

It is very difficult to convince someone of their own sin! Our human nature resists this and wishes to hide its faults and failures. To convince someone of their sin requires the action of the Holy Spirit! By human effort alone, it would not be possible for any man to recognize his sin and look upon it with such grief.

And it was for this purpose, for this supernatural work, that He also came. Look at the text of *John 16:8*: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

The pride that satan "injected" into Adam has passed on to all of us. And this pride blinds our understanding. Even children, unconsciously, try to hide their mistakes or shift the blame to others when they are found out or caught by surprise.

How sad and ugly it is to see proud brothers and sisters in the church! When this grows in our hearts, it is harmful, troubling. After all, every expression of pride in our lives reflects satan. He is the first proud being in history.

May the Lord make us see that pride is one of the greatest characteristics of the Devil!

When we read the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, we should reflect and examine our hearts. There Jesus taught something very important and serious.

Also, He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a

Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:9–14 (NKJV)

When we see our sin, we feel like Adam and Eve in Eden: NAKED before God. And as a result, ashamed, trying to hide it.

We feel exposed, our secrets revealed, our wickedness laid bare and out in the open. And truth be told, we do not like to feel this way! We do not like to see ourselves as we are! We do not like to know that we are wicked! That is why our pride resists!

For this reason, it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. Only He can change this reality within us.

Brokenheartedness (true repentance) is one of the greatest miracles that can exist.

For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV)

Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Isaiah 66:1–2 (NKJV)

When someone sees their own sin, the immediate reaction is humiliation!

Do not think that God is impressed by miracles — the blind seeing, the disabled walking, the bedridden being healed. That is not what impresses Him. The greatest miracle that can exist is a heart hardened by sin truly repenting. This process is difficult; it requires a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, because man, in his sinful and proud condition, resists.

2) A Shared Experience About Vanjo's Conversion

When Vanjo was seventeen years old, his eighteen-year-old brother became very ill. He lost hearing in one ear, felt great pain, and gradually grew worse. Vanjo knelt down and prayed to God, saying that he could donate one of his ears to his brother.

Hearing this, his brother said to him, "Dear brother, pray with me!"

He tells how difficult it was to describe what happened in his conscience in that moment. He found himself facing a revelation: he could not repeat the memorized prayers he had learned from his parents. He understood that he needed to enter the presence of God and pray for the person he loved most on earth in that moment.

He discovered that God did not receive him, that he was not accepted. It was something like the feeling Adam had when he was cast out of Eden. As if God were saying: "There is no room for the two of us here."

He says he wept greatly. A few days later his brother passed away. For a year, he was troubled and restless in his conscience, and when he spoke with God, he said he knew he would not go to heaven — that his destiny was hell.

And finally, he prayed to God, asking what he should do to be freed from the condemnation that was swallowing him up. That day he saw his sins; they were laid before him. He could have tried to justify himself before God, using the argument of having strict parents, of being a believing boy who attended church, of not doing anything so terrible in life (as so many others think).

But there he discovered that he was an enemy of God. He wounded and offended God with his sins, with his deliberate life. This happened from vain thoughts to small expressions of impurity. He had this understanding, this revelation.

God looks with the perfect eyes of holiness. For this reason, it is necessary to recognize oneself as a sinner before God.

Conclusion:

Vanjo's experience with his brother produced in him the feeling of:

"I am nothing but garbage!"

"I am a wretch!"

"I am lost!"

Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. "Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation: for law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples."

Isaiah 51:1–4 (NKJV)

The one who sees their sins, who is reached and convicted by the Holy Spirit, ceases to be touchy, demanding; they stop justifying themselves. They see their condemnation as a sinner, as an enemy of God; their condition before God is laid bare. Whoever truly sees their sins does not justify themselves, does not explain themselves away.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

Psalm 51:1–4 (NKJV)

When we see our wickedness, we also see the HOLINESS, JUSTICE, and AUTHORITY of GOD!

These attributes become clear to us:

God's holiness: it convicts us;

Justice: it removes from us any need to explain ourselves;

Authority: it signals the judgment He has reserved for those who offend Him.

3) What the Perception of God's Attributes Produces in Us

After repentance, a second reaction is the FEAR OF GOD! FEAR of God!

That is what Isaiah experienced.

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Isaiah 6:3–5 (NKJV)

Isaiah said: "I am undone!"

It is worth clarifying a confusion, or lack of understanding, about the word "fear." Fear is not reverence or respect. Fear is fear!

My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments.

Psalm 119:120 (NKJV)

And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."

Hebrews 12:21 (NKJV)

No one becomes terrified and trembling, no one's skin crawls, out of respect or reverence. It is fear that does this. That is what he felt. That was the fear Vanjo felt for his sins. Those who see this should have fear.

3.1 Why Have Fear of God?

Two texts help us understand this:

Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

Matthew 10:26 (NKJV)

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

When we see this, our condemnation shows itself harsh and cruel. This fear strips from us pride, arrogance, and personal convictions.

Our sins (acts/deeds, our behaviors) produce the WRATH of GOD! And that is not what we want to keep producing, in fear and repentance.

Consider a few more texts:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 5:3–6 (NKJV)

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 3:5–6 (NKJV)

Examine your life carefully. Are these words part of your conversations?

The absence of this mark causes some to become tolerant and indulgent toward their own sins and failures.

4) The Fruit of Brokenheartedness

01 Brokenheartedness Produces in Us a Humble Heart

Brokenheartedness produces in us a humble heart, one that recognizes its own insignificance throughout life.

Consider the examples below:

Job 42:5–6 — Job was the most righteous man of his generation, in all the earth!

1 Timothy 1:15 — Paul was a contemporary of Judas, Barabbas, Pilate, Herod, Nero!

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:5–6 (NKJV)

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)

02 Gratitude and Surrender

The one who recognizes their sins does not show resistance to letting them go. Quite the opposite.

Consider the story told by Jesus:

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Luke 7:36–47 (NKJV)

The one who has experienced the love of God will hold nothing back. They will have no difficulty renouncing whatever hinders their walk, whatever draws them away from God.

May the Lord make us a humble people, full of gratitude and the fear of Him!

Questions from the Brothers:

1) How do we identify a heart hardened by sin, and how do we change this reality in us?

The answer is “seeking to be simple.” Before conversion, it is natural to be this way — arrogant, presumptuous, proud — but the problem is after coming to know Jesus. One mark of a hardened heart: you can examine yourself, asking whether, as the years passed, your opinion of yourself changed, whether you received much praise, whether you were used by God and your heart became proud because of it. See how the apostle Paul described himself even after years of laboring in the work and being “recognized” by the church.

This is a faithful word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)

Year after year of being used by Jesus, Paul did not change his mind about his own wickedness, his sinful condition. The opposite of this is a symptom of a hardened heart within the church.

For many years we have aimed at what came after the response of those men who heard the message of the Lord — what happened in their hearts. They did what was wrong. The contrite heart is the answer to the problem now identified. We speak often about repentance, but it is necessary for us to confront our offenses against God. Upon hearing about the person of Christ, we must confront what we used to do.

It is easy to see the glaring problems (evil deeds) and wrong attitudes, but Paul says of himself, “concerning the law, blameless.” “I counted all things as rubbish that I might gain Christ.” Our own righteousness is built on what we do right, but that is not enough for God. It is necessary to recognize our sinful practices, our offenses against God, to count them as rubbish, and to repent of them.

Both at the point of entry and along the way, we need this same frequent attitude and pursuit.

Another example toward the same answer:

There is an expression John the Baptist uses in Matthew, chapter 3, when John is baptizing and the people were confessing their sins.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts a person of their condition; that is not up to us. Yet John the Baptist turns to the Pharisees and Sadducees and tells them to “repent.” He gives them a clear verdict. This shows that John observed the life they were leading, and for that reason did not consider that they were there truly repentant.

When we are preaching to someone, it is possible to discern who is seeking a pleasant environment, a nice group to gather with, but whose heart is absent of the conviction of sin.

It is necessary to bear fruits worthy of repentance. This was seen in Acts 19:17–20. Those who repented made it publicly known. The message brought great fear.

This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.

*And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.
So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

Acts 19:17–20 (NKJV)

Just as it is possible to perceive a heart convicted of sin, we can also perceive this absence of fruits worthy of repentance.

Another important clarification:

The fear of the Lord is fear indeed.

We need a correct view of God and of ourselves. God does not ease the burden of the guilty (and we are guilty). In our relationship with God, people have difficulty holding together intimacy and respect (it seems that because of the first, the second is lost). And the opposite can happen as well.

When parents exercise discipline, their children go through both of these moments. When they do wrong, they know there will be consequences; they have fear of the consequence. On the other hand, if the father does everything correctly, the child will have fear, but will also come to have respect in a second moment. This is proven when he plays with his father, is affectionate, and forgets what happened before, and so on. Being intimate with God and harmonizing this with fear is the fear of the Lord.

The God we serve and love is terribly holy and just.

2) What should we do when a brother sins, does not acknowledge the fault, and even shifts the blame for the sin onto you, making you appear unclean and himself justified?

It is no great outrage when people speak ill of you — after all, we are sinners. Now, if what they say is a lie, all the better. Jesus told us to rejoice over reproach suffered because of His name.

What are worthy fruits?

In the texts cited, we saw that they were already denouncing their own evil deeds. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not come in that manner; they were simply following protocol. They sought baptism for the sake of appearance.

Acts says that they confessed and publicly denounced their deeds. The practical fruit: they had books of magic and used them for their practices. At that moment, they threw them out to be burned.

Now, what should we do when we do not perceive this conviction of sin in the person who has heard the message of the cross?

If I sense that this conviction of sin is not clear, I encourage that person to think and evaluate their life. They need to weigh and count the cost. They need to be truly repentant.

Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth.

Jeremiah 31:19 (NKJV)

CONCLUSION

In this thirty-sixth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we learned about conviction of sin and what this conviction produces in those who hear and believe the message of the cross. This conviction places a person before a decision: to abandon evil deeds, to recognize themselves as an enemy of God in need of His mercy, so as not to be condemned. We also clarified the fear of God (which is not merely reverence or respect, but truly fear — fear of being condemned for deserving it). When we are set before God, we recognize His holiness, justice, and authority. The Holy Spirit convicts us of this, and it causes us to recognize our real need for repentance, and for seeking and surrendering to God.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

- 01 Why is it so necessary for each person to acknowledge their guilt before God?
- 02 What makes it difficult for people to recognize their sins?
- 03 What resources has God given to convict people of their sins or guilt?
- 04 What are the fruits in the life of someone who has had conviction of sin?
- 05 When you preach the Gospel, do you proclaim the person of Christ with faith, praying for the working of the Holy Spirit, or do you rush ahead to speak of the cost and of repentance?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)

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