

Categorical Convictions

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

“Of sin, because they believe not on me;

“Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

“All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

“A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:8-16).

One of the things that is so crucial to the stability, steadfastness, durability, and longevity of a Christian, of a leader, or of a ministry is a life lived by divinely inspired convictions. Convictions imparted to us by God come to us based upon His righteousness and His integrity. In those convictions there is no iniquity.

Divine convictions rest upon the Lord’s justice, His immutability, and His omniscience. Convictions such as these are based upon the quality of His essence, the perfection of His character, and the nature of His divine provisions to us.

So many believers become statistics—just numbers on a church roll—because they never develop categorical convictions. They may have some ideals. They may even have decent lifestyles and what some would call convictions, but they are not solid, definitive convictions. Rather, they are inclinations that are based upon routine and preference.

As this booklet will show, categorical convictions come from the Holy Spirit’s promptings and His guidance through the Word of God.

Convictions such as these become immovable foundations for a believer's life. These convictions become literal food for thought, resources for thinking with God in any situation—resources that stand strong in storms and trials and tests.

Chapter One

THE POWER OF PRECISE LIGHT

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:13-14).

Someone recently wrote me a tragic letter. I call it tragic because of the heart that it reveals. Also, the writer used Bible passages to justify his attitude. “Would God bless me if I divorced and got remarried?” said the letter. “Unconditional love would forgive me, right? Wouldn’t God, in His permissive will, allow me to be happy? He wants me to be happy, doesn’t He? I am not happy in my present situation.”

The writer of the letter then went on to quote several Scriptures and described other situations

where people have divorced and remarried, and who now seem so much happier.

There are, of course, situations where God brings in resurrection and restoration when the reality unfolds; however, there is a reason that presumption is called the great transgression. In this situation, the writer of the letter was allowing himself to become a victim of depravity. He thought he had a conviction, but he was living in the instability of his opinions because he lacked categorical convictions concerning marriage. God's inspired Word was not governing his thoughts in this area.

God's people need to have strong convictions concerning the sanctity of marriage. I am not timid about discussing sex. I am here because my mother and my father had sex, and so are you. Sexual relations outside of wedlock are spiritually dangerous. Our bodies were created to glorify God, and when the sex act is used in the wrong context, it is a violation of God's design.

Illuminated by the Truth

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

“How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:6-9).

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130).

Our hearts were designed to be God’s habitation. My physical body is not for fornication. My body is God’s temple—it is for the Lord, and the Lord is for my body. So when there is a physical exchange outside of the boundaries defined in Scripture, it is like an invasion of the Holy of Holies.

This attitude should also prevail in a marriage. The husband should approach his wife with great sensitivity in his initiations. When the wife properly responds, there is a most intimate form of communion designed by God. This communion should be engaged in without fantasy, without mental pornography, and without suggestiveness. Such a rich physical expression of a spiritual union reveals a godly communion

that affects the spirit, the soul, and the body. It is the blessing of God to bring pleasure into two lives who are one soul and one flesh.

Any person would have a much better self-image if he saw himself as God's Holy of Holies. That needs to be my conviction. I need to see myself as who I am in Christ. A conviction goes beyond mere opinion. It is something established, a fact that is revealed and imparted to my soul. When I have godly convictions, God's thinking then becomes my thinking. His immutable righteousness, His divine integrity, and His perfect provision govern my life as one who has been raised from the dead.

We should grow in convictions as we receive precise light from God's Word. The entrance of God's Word brings light. "Light" in the Hebrew speaks of accurate, precise information that cannot be invaded by any shadow. The life of God is light, and no darkness can overtake Him.

Chapter Two

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

Self-preservation and ignorance can cause a person to fall into self-deception. He has areas of blindness—places where God’s light and life are not permitted to shine. Convictions must create a room of truth in the details of my life. The purpose of God’s plan reveals His provisions for my life.

Convictions, convictions, convictions! They must grow in my life—always through mercy, always by grace, always with love, and always with forgiveness. A believer who does not grow in his convictions is bound to become indifferent to the plan of God. Particular things that happen in the realm of ministering will become distasteful to him.

It is imperative that we have godly convictions. We need convictions of loyalty to God—

convictions to love, to edify, and to build people up. Negative talk and discrediting people behind their backs reveals great ignorance of the Word of God.

Convictions that are ordered, that are categorized and cataloged for the Spirit to recall and reinforce—these convictions are what Christians need to live by. It is beautiful to possess convictions that spring from a Finished Work premise. That premise forms the basis of divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. With this categorical understanding, a believer can practically apply the reality of His union with Christ in resurrection life.

Just as a lamp is designed to release invisible electric power, our bodies are designed to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ. Our mind is designed to reveal divine thinking. We were created with a capacity for a proper conscience, positive volition, right mental attitude, and godly emotional response. The only reason I am on earth is to reveal the very essence and nature of God.

When I enter into depression, oppression, negative volition, or negative capacity toward the details of life, I am defiling my soul by interacting with Adam in the human experience of the Fall. I must choose a consciousness of grace

and a mental attitude of the Word of God. Then my emotions will respond to God's presence in me. This is what it means to live by convictions.

Hearts at Home

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

The light of God's Word enters into my human spirit and then it falls into categories. Isaiah 28 speaks of learning truth line upon line, here a little and there a little. When I concentrate upon the Word, either by hearing a message, by reading the Bible, or by reading an edifying book about the Scriptures, some of the information goes “here” in my memory center and some of it goes “there.” Our minds are very adept at dividing and sorting the bits of information we receive. This categorization is an amazing function. A small thing—a sound, a smell, a sight, a taste—can prompt us to reconnect with information stored in our memories. Some of this information may have been stored there long, long ago.

When light is reigning in our hearts and our memory centers, then we are living in mercy and truth, and righteousness and peace. We are

living in the design of God's initiation. He is the communicator of His own life. He manifests His own means. He reveals through us His own work of sanctification. Yes, we are human and we do fail. But when that happens, we rebound, and we refuse to live in any form of condemnation.

Men and women who live in godly convictions know how to live purely, through the power of God's love. There is mercy for every day and a practical holiness that presents itself because of the unity of spirit, soul, and body that comes with our communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit. We now manifest one heart, one mind, and one spirit of love.

In the home, this brings right order to the sexual relationship between husband and wife. The promotion of God's power produces great consequences; it produces godly families with godly children. These are families for God, families who participate in the great family of eternity—the Body of Christ. These are families who really enjoy the sacredness of communion based upon the work of Jesus that was finished at the Cross.

Chapter Three

CONVERSIONS AND CAPACITY

“Rejoice evermore.

“Pray without ceasing.

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

“Quench not the Spirit.

“Despise not prophesyings.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

“Abstain from all appearance of evil.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24).

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed

adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

We need convictions, not preferences or opinions. If I attempt to imitate Christ without living in Christ’s life, then I will manifest knowledge without the resurrection power of the indwelling Trinity. I will try to be a Christian without knowing Christ. I will try to be spiritual apart from the Holy Spirit. I will try to be godly without God’s resources.

Our minds can become so easily defiled. This is what Jesus is speaking about in Matthew 5:28. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he, according to Proverbs 23:7. For this very reason, we need convictions that are based on categorical reception of Bible preaching and teaching.

If a husband for a moment considers committing an act of adultery, he has sinned. It is a vain imagination, and he needs to cast it down. How does he do it? Vain imaginations are cast down by allowing the Holy Spirit to bring to our recollection the truth we have heard on the subject. That man can simply confess his failure to God and allow the Spirit and the Word to cleanse his thought process.

Brain activity is constant. Most people are so dangerously unaware of all of the things that are

going into our heads. The barrage of information and the images that the world throws at people today bombard the conscious and subconscious parts of our minds. Without the leading the Holy Spirit, it is so easy for us to fall into patterns of wrong thinking. This is what is happening when we see someone express anger in an almost violent outburst. The mind in such a case is not thinking in redemption, therefore no redemptive words come out. There is only frustration.

Proverbs 10:20 speaks of believers as having a silver tongue. Silver speaks of redemption, and everything we say should have a redeeming quality. We should speak from a category of truth, a collection of scriptures that the Spirit has gathered in our minds for our edification and for the edification of those we encounter every day. Our hearts should be filled with a love that thinks no evil. There should be grace that prevails in us through the invisible imagination of our communion with Christ.

Accountability to the Cross

I have a conviction to think purely, to love purely, to forgive, and to extend mercy. My convictions have taught me to hate sin and to love

righteousness. My conviction is to finish my course and to fight the good fight of faith.

I have a conviction to get into the Word of God daily. I have convictions to pray, to win souls, to be faithful to church. I have a conviction to edify with my tongue and to communicate the entire counsel of God.

Many people today want to have a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no obligation to live at the Cross. For this reason, they easily become condemned. They are relying upon their own power instead of resting in the love of God. Convictions bring conversions. That is, there is an outgrowth of what is happening in my inner man. God is doing something in the Holy of Holies of my heart. This is the place only He occupies. As I fellowship there with Him, a transformation is manifested and revealed through me.

At the Cross, I can recognize my positional death with Christ every day. In personal identification, I reckon myself dead indeed unto sin. I understand that this is absolutely true, and I now see my burial with Christ, my resurrection with Him, and my ascended life that is wrapped in His ascended life. It is so rich and so free. I live in the privileges, provisions, and posses-

sions that Truth gives me to live by. I walk a straight way, led by the realities and recollections that are formed in categorical convictions.

Let me finish by quoting Matthew 7:13-14:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

CONCLUSION

It is so crucial that our spirits remain alive in Christ. In light, we gain more light. The light that I receive from God today will make me available to receive more light. This means more precise convictions will be formed in my heart and mind today. There will be more divine thoughts based upon divine integrity today. My life will manifest itself in divine righteousness, which springs from divine resources that are rooted in the immutability of the Finished Work. I express things that redeem and restore people through the resurrection life that imparts God's Word and God's Spirit.

There are many areas of my life where I have left myself no options. I have made decisions and established categorical convictions. Any challenge that comes my way in those areas I meet with Truth. I have made right decisions so many times in these areas that I do not sense any temptation.

Temptations are real trouble for people who are without total, categorical convictions. General convictions can only get a person so far. The devil is extremely and supernaturally deceptive. He has a way of finding the soft spots in our lives. He tempts us and tempts us, and he watches our responses. Satan becomes very skillful at pushing our buttons if we let him.

It is a beautiful place, however, to be a believer whose convictions are so firm and so sure that Satan's attacks do not bend us. We stand and face the winds of the world. We have a power and a position in Christ that does not move. We understand this conviction: our enemy has been defeated and his plans will be destroyed.

This is not a legalistic message, This is very realistic. It is God's declaration of truth to protect us, provide for us, and keep us from the consequences of sin. Categorical convictions are the things that keep us healthy and prospering in the riches of God's grace.