

# Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



## Your Personal Convictions

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 4:1-20 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8 | Acts 3:5-10 | Ephesians 4:30

### SUMMARY

**As Christians we should have some godly convictions that define who we are and determine our lifestyle and choices.**

We may claim that our convictions are a private matter; but in reality, they are constantly on display for all to see because we live them out each day with our words and actions. God has given us standards and principles from His Word to protect us and to guide us, motivate, and help us to lead godly lives. Since our convictions have such a powerful influence, we must examine them to see whether they contribute to a righteous life in accordance with God's will or are leading us into a life dominated by our old fleshly nature.

### SERMON POINTS

When Peter and John were thrown in jail for healing a lame man and warned not to speak or teach at all in Jesus' name, they held firmly to their convictions and said, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

#### Clarification of the Meaning of Conviction

The word *conviction* can be defined in three different ways, as we see here:

- A guilty verdict handed down in court—as in a conviction for a crime.
- A firmly held belief—as in the certainty that Jesus Christ is the resurrected Son of God and the only way to heaven.

- A feeling of guilt given by the Holy Spirit—He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

The convictions we are considering are those that arise from our beliefs as Christians. They should have a limiting effect on our behavior and may cause us discomfort when we have to take a stand in the midst of a crowd that doesn't share our beliefs.

#### The Difference Between Convictions and Preferences

As we examine our lives, we must determine whether we live by convictions or preferences.

- Preferences are changeable and may vary throughout our lifetimes. They are beliefs we hold at present, but we could be convinced to believe something else if it seems more beneficial. Preferences don't provide a foundation for life because they depend on circumstances, can be altered if something better is offered, and are easily abandoned in the face of temptation.
- A conviction is a solid, immovable belief based on confidence in God's Word, being so thoroughly convinced of its absolute truth that we are willing to take a stand regardless of the consequences. Convictions shape not only what we believe but also how we live and even how we die. They define who we are and provide direction with solid straight lines that don't veer off track to accommodate circumstances or temptations.

#### Characteristics of a Person With Convictions

Our goal as believers is to become like Peter and John who held securely to their faith in Christ and to their responsibility to proclaim salvation in His

name, even in the face of imprisonment and threats. When we follow in their footsteps, we will display the following characteristics:

- **A Sense of Purpose.** We know where we're headed and walk a definite path to get there by pursuing those things that fit our identity in Christ and rejecting those that do not. Instead of going with the crowd or seeking profit or pleasure, we follow basic biblical principles, seeking to walk in God's will and abstain from the sins that surround us in our culture.
- **Faith in God.** The strength that enables us to live out our convictions without compromise comes from faith in Christ as our Savior and in the truth of God's Word.
- **Courage.** It's easy to stand for our convictions when we're among like-minded people in church, but if we are surrounded by those who think Christians are narrow-minded and foolish, we need courage to stand alone as followers of Jesus Christ and proclaim the truth of God's Word.
- **Big Picture Thinking.** Before surrendering our convictions or denying what we truly believe, we must look ahead to see the long-term effects of compromise in our lives and in those who watch or listen to us.
- **Unusual Strength.** When we were saved, the Holy Spirit came to seal us as children of God and live within us (Eph. 4:30). He is our Helper who enables us to understand truth and gives us the physical, spiritual, mental, and moral strength to do what's right when we are tested and tried (John 14:26). We are never alone when we stand for our convictions because God's Spirit is always present with us.
- **Foresight.** With the Holy Spirit living within us, we also have the foresight and discernment to recognize deception. Things are not always as they appear to be, and the world's promises of happiness, prosperity, and pleasure for those who compromise their convictions are a lie. God has given us His Word to teach us how to live, and the safest way is to abide under its authority. If we base our convictions on our own ideas, desires, pleasures, comfort, or satisfaction, we are headed for disaster. Living under God-given, righteous convictions is

the only way to avoid the sin and heartache that comes from adopting our culture's ways and values.

### Causes of Compromise of Our Convictions

What motivates us to do wrong even when we know what's right?

- **Fear of Criticism.** Since we live in a society in which people claim their right to do as they please, standing for our Christian convictions or telling them what God thinks or says about their conduct will undoubtedly draw criticism.
- **Fear of Rejection.** If we share what we believe or live according to godly convictions, we may not be accepted by those who follow their own desires. However, sacrificing righteous standards to please others will only result in the loss of all that God has planned for us. It's much better to live for Christ and follow His commandments so we can receive God's best.
- **Fear of Loss.** Sometimes we are reluctant to stand for our convictions because we could lose our friends. However, any friend who draws us away from obedience to the Lord is not a true friend.

As God's people, it's time for us to take a firm stand for our faith and convictions no matter what the consequences may be. Our priority is to be pleasing to Christ so we can stand in the judgment having been faithful to Him and His Word.

### RESPONSE

- What unwavering convictions do you have that govern your life? What conditions or situations might tempt you to compromise your standards?
- How would a long-term perspective help you courageously stand firm in your convictions? What negative consequences might result from your compromise? What are the long-term benefits of staying true to Christ and His Word?

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