

## CONVICTION

Act 2:23 ... "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."

I grew up near the end of the fire-and-brimstone preaching era, when it was common for preachers to yell, pound the pulpit, and get red in the face about their concern for people going to hell. Preachers then were passionate about the need for salvation among their people. Evangelistic crusades were held in large tents or stadiums for the sole purpose of preaching that message. Sermons always included the necessity for salvation and they always ended with an altar call; the time when people who had not yet accepted Jesus as their Savior, could go to the front of the church and be prayed with by the pastor or an elder.

The urgency of that message has been largely replaced in many churches by the world's approach to selling products, namely, "Try it, you'll like it." Our verse today is from an early sermon by Peter and he is looking his listeners in the eye and telling them that they killed their Messiah. It does not get more direct or convicting than that, does it? His style of preaching was to speak the truth, deliver the message quickly and concisely, and get as many people saved before Christ returned, as possible. Unfortunately, I know of very few churches – here or abroad – who still operate on that principle. Sadly, many churches today are too busy raising funds for buildings, having potlucks and beach parties, involving themselves in politics, planning their foundation anniversaries, and being social activists to worry about little problems like sin and salvation, or heaven and hell.

Conviction about sin is, first and foremost, the role of the Holy Spirit, which is exactly why so many people ignore him. Few people want to be told that they are doing something wrong, so they ignore the Holy Spirit's warnings. Pastors must also use the power of conviction to reveal people's sins and lead them to the Savior. But, as ordinary believers with the assignment to deliver the gospel to the world, we also have a role in convicting people of their sins. We do that in two ways: 1) We demonstrate the life that a believer enjoys which can draw others to him, and 2) we tell people directly that they are in danger of going to hell but that God has a better plan for them.

Have you been ignoring the Holy Spirit's warnings so you can continue enjoying sin? Did you pick a church that seldom bugs you about sin and hell, just so you can avoid being convicted of your sins? If you have not yet accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Do not wait another minute. Your last breath and the expiration of your window of opportunity to make the right decision, could be just a ... breath away. The risks are too high, and the outcome too important to wait until tomorrow.

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