

Convictions or preference message 2020

2cor 5:14-21 text

–what will you defend-be compelled to be, implored to do

One thing to know- your convictions determine your actions and beliefs as a Christian

One thing to do-make your convictions God honoring to achieve being a honorable and effective Christian

Why a conviction is so much more important than a preference in life
Is it what a convict likes? ha ha!





“If you’re planning to run for public office, ‘a man of conviction’ sounds better than ‘prison parolee.’”

Definition

What is a conviction?

Fixed or strong beliefs

What is a preference?

a greater liking for one alternative over another or others

It is not about eliminating one but a choice of liking one less

It considers both options to be right but one better over the other

Conviction versus Preference

Difference between a conviction and a preference, according to the U.S. Supreme Court. A preference is a very strong belief, held with great strength. You can give

your entire life in a full-time way to the service of the preference and can also give your entire material wealth in the name of the belief. You can also energetically proselytize others to your preference. You can also want to teach this belief to your children, and the Supreme court may still rule that it is a preference. A preference is a strong belief, but a belief that you will change under the right circumstances. Circumstances such as: 1) peer pressure; if your beliefs are such that other people stand with you before you will stand, your beliefs are preferences, not convictions, 2) family pressure, 3) lawsuits, 4) jail, 5) threat of death; would you die for your beliefs? A conviction is a belief that you will not change. Why? A man believes that his God requires it of him. Preferences aren't protected by the constitution. Convictions are. A conviction is not something that you discover, it is something that you purpose in your heart (cf. Daniel 1, 2-3). Convictions on the inside will always show up on the outside, in a person's lifestyle. To violate a conviction would be a sin.

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Have you asked yourself these questions?

- Who you would die for?
- What would you die for?
- What should we be prepared to die for?

What do convictions do for us?

- They define us in our character
- They define what we will live for
- They define our final destination-follow Jesus or not
- They reveal our values, motivations and commitments

Having a conviction on something doesn't mean it is God Honoring though

- Personal views we may have
- Family is important
- Addictions aren't bad, I just need that fix
- Having enough money
- Not letting others dictate how we decide things
- Want to purge the concept of God out of our lives
- My home is my refuge

Not all convictions are God centered but God really does want us to make Him and what He wants, **the** group of convictions in our life so we can stand in the face of trials, and be all He wants us to be.

Illustration

Courage of their Convictions

I am tired of hearing about men with the “courage of their convictions.” Nero and Caligula and Attila and Hitler had the courage of their convictions—but not one had the courage to examine his convictions, or to change them, which is the true test of character.

Sydney Harris in Bits and Pieces, Oct. 1991

Howard Hendricks once said it this way

“A belief is something you will argue about. A conviction is something you will die for!”

What would you die for?

What is worth dying for? What was Jesus willing to die for that we should consider for ourselves?

Elijah Lovejoy (clergyman)

That great American hero, editor, school teacher, and Presbyterian clergyman Elijah Lovejoy left the pulpit and returned to the press in order to be sure his words reached more people. The Civil War might have been averted and a peaceful emancipation of slaves achieved had there been more like him. After observing one lynching, Lovejoy was committed forever to fighting uncompromisingly the awful sin of slavery. Mob action was brought against him time after time; neither this, nor many threats and attempts on his life deterred him. Repeated destruction of his presses did not stop him. “If by compromise is meant that I should cease from my duty, I cannot make it. I fear God more than I fear man. Crush me if you will, but I shall die at my post...” And he did, four days later, at the hands of another mob. No one of the ruffians was prosecuted or indicted or punished in any way for this murder. (Some of Lovejoy’s defenders were prosecuted! One of the mob assassins was later elected mayor of Alton!) However, note this: One young man was around who was deeply moved by the Lovejoy martyrdom. He had just been elected to the Illinois legislature. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

Paul Simon, "Elijah Lovejoy," *Presbyterian Life*, 18:13 (November 1, 1965), quoted in K. Mennenger, *Whatever Became of Sin*, p. 210

2 Corinthians 5:19

that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

He has committed himself to us, have we committed ourselves to Him?

What happens when we don't have convictions in life as a Christian?

- We develop preferences
- Goals seem unimportant
- Right and wrong become blurred in our view of things
- Standing up for good and fighting against evil aren't acted on

As soon as a conviction is bent or inconsistent it is weakened and becomes a preference

St patrick's day

[David Kithcart](#) - 700 Club Features Director

The story

Before all the festivities focused on shamrocks and leprechauns and good luck wishes, there was truly something to celebrate: a man willing to stand in the gap for Jesus Christ. Reporter David Kithcart reveals the inspiring true story behind this courageous and fervent Irishman we all know as Saint Patrick.

It was an act of defiance that changed the course of a nation. Patrick lit a fire in pagan 5th century Ireland, ushering Christianity into the country. Who was this man who became the patron saint of Ireland?

Ireland was a beautiful island shrouded in terrible darkness. Warlords and druids ruled the land. But across the sea in Britain, a teenager was poised to bring this nation to God.

"Patrick was born into a Christian family," says Philip Freeman, author of *St.*

Patrick of Ireland. "His father was a deacon; his grandfather a priest. But Patrick says that from an early age, he didn't have any serious interest in religion and that he was practically an atheist when he was a teenager."

Around 400 A.D., Patrick was abducted from his village and thrown onto a slave ship headed for Ireland.

"He saw that as God chastising him, first of all," says Rev. Sean Brady. "That was the first view. He says we deserved what we got. We're carried at 16 years of age over to this foreign land."

Patrick was sold to a chieftain named Milchu. He spent six years tending his master's flocks on the slopes of the Slemish Mountain. Patrick recounts his time as a slave in his memoir entitled *The Confession*.

"He says, 'I prayed a hundred times in the day and almost as many at night,' " says Rev. Brady, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All of Ireland. "Through that experience of prayer and trial, he came to know another God -- God the Father, who was his protector. He came to know Jesus Christ in those sufferings, and he came to be united with Christ and he came to identify with Christ, and then of course, also the Holy Spirit."

One night during a time of prayer and fasting, Patrick wrote: "I heard in my sleep a voice saying to me: 'It is well that you fast. Soon you will go to your own country.' And again, after a short while, I heard a voice saying to me: 'See, your ship is ready.' "

Patrick escaped and traveled 200 miles cross country to the west coast. He found a ship ready to sail, but was refused passage. After a desperate prayer, he was allowed aboard.

Patrick eventually returned to his home and family. His experience of God's grace and provision solidified his faith. He began to study for the ministry.

Freeman says, "One night, he had a dream. There was a man who came from Ireland with a whole bunch of letters. And he opened up one of the letters and it said 'The Voice of the Irish.' And then he heard a voice coming out of this letter that said, 'Holy boy, please return to us. We need you.'"

Patrick struggled in his soul. Could he return to Ireland and minister to the same people who had enslaved him? Once again, he turned to God in prayer. He received the answer in a dream.

"He talks about how he, in this dream, is trying to pray and yet he can't," says Freeman. "So he hears a voice coming from inside of him which he realizes is the voice of God praying for him."

Patrick knew he had to go and convince his church that he was called to be a missionary to Ireland. He set sail in a small ship.

Patrick landed at the mouth of the Slaney River. When Patrick set foot on this shore, a new era dawned on this island.

"The Ireland of his day really wasn't much different from the Ireland of a few years ago here where we are sitting here at this moment," notes Most Reverend

Dr. Robert Eames, Church of England Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. "It was an Ireland of tribalism, an Ireland of war, an Ireland of suspicion, an Ireland of violence and death. Here he came as a virtual stranger to this country of warring factions."

"They worshipped multiple gods of the sky and the earth and the water," says Freeman. "And so that was his first challenge: to convince the Irish that there was only one God and that his God really did love them."

Patrick came face to face with the chieftains and their druid priests. The showdown came on the morning of his first Easter in Ireland.

Monsignor Raymond Murray, parish priest of Cookstown in Northern Ireland explains further: "Part of the pagan worship of fall to spring, from the beginning of the summer, was that a fire was lit, and first of all, the fire on the hill of Tara and no other lights at all in Ireland."

This monastery on the hill of Slane is where Patrick -- in direct defiance of the high king of Tara -- lit a forbidden fire.

Notes Rev. Brady, "He was summoned before the king, and he explained that he wasn't a threat, because he was bringing the new light, the light of Christ, the Savior of the world, the Light of the world."

"The first light of Easter day was dawning. Patrick brought the hope of Easter day to Ireland," says Rev. Eames.

The weather can be absolutely brutal here in Ireland. But just imagine how it must've been for Patrick in the 5th century as he trekked across the countryside bringing the Gospel to the pagan Celts.

"People sometimes made fun of him because he said that God often gave him a message there was danger ahead," says Freeman. "But, he said, 'Laugh at me if you will. This is something that has protected me in Ireland.'"

Listen to Patrick's poem of faith and trust in God, "The Breastplate":

"Christ be within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ inquired, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."

Myths and legends have grown up around this hero of Ireland.

As Monsignor Murray explains, it is sometimes difficult to describe the triune aspect of God. So, according to the story, to better illustrate the central teaching of the trinity, Patrick took a shamrock and pointed out the three leaves on it. Interestingly, it is only in Ireland that you find this shamrock. Therefore, the people believed.

"One of the famous legends, of course, is that Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland," says Irish historian Harold Calvert.

In fact, any snakes in Ireland had disappeared during the Ice Age.

"The legend about the driving of the snakes may, in fact, really symbolize the driving out of evil," says Calvert.

In 432 A.D., Patrick built a church on the site of the present day St. Patrick's Memorial Church in Saul -- the first ever Christian church in all of Ireland. It's considered the cradle of Irish Christianity.

"Preaching the Gospel, of course, baptizing converts, confirming them, appointing clergy," continues Calvert.

Patrick's ministry lasted 29 years. He baptized over 120,000 Irishmen and planted 300 churches.

"What Patrick did was really lay the groundwork for Christianity," says Freeman.

To this day, no one knows where Patrick is buried, but many believe that it is somewhere beneath the church on the hill at Down Cathedral.

Rev. Sean Brady concludes, "He was a man who came to face and help his former enemies who had enslaved him. He came back to help them and to do them a great favor -- the greatest favor he possibly could."

Rev. Earnes concurs, "I honestly feel that what Patrick taught Ireland was that there is a cost to discipleship, but it's a cost worth paying. And I believe, to bring this right up to date, the church of St. Patrick must be constantly saying to people, 'Discipleship demands of you, but it's a cost that Christ will help you to pay.'"

In North America we don't really have this in a conversation a whole lot. We are not challenged in our life for our faith to this point of death. People have a harder time seeing the value we have because of this and our lives and voice need to be clear.

Against All the World

Athanasius, early bishop of Alexandria, stoutly opposed the teachings of Arius, who declared that Christ was not the eternal Son of God, but a subordinate being.

Hounded through five exiles, he was finally summoned before emperor

Theodosius, who demanded he cease his opposition to Arius. The emperor

reproved him and asked, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?"

Athanasius quickly answered, "Then I am against all the world."

Source Unknown

Galatians 2:20 New International Version (NIV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Things we should have a conviction about as Christians

- God's love must be shown by us believers if others will see it
- There will be accountability for all mankind when we die for what we did with Jesus (saviour or not)
- There are only 2 destinations for humans when we die (Heaven or Hell)
- Death is a doorway not an end
- Jesus wants his sacrifice to mean the most and wants the gospel to get to everyone we know
- Holiness is to be a goal of a christian
- Death comes unexpectedly
- Eternity is forever not for just a short time and destination is not reversible
- We have no power to share without the Holy Spirit's help
- A lack of wanting to share the gospel shows we don't value the gift given as much as God does

These can make the Christian cringe when we think about these, but it should make us get on fire to be the best testimony of Christ to the world and to reach the lost because time is short and wrong choices can be disastrous. It doesn't take the end of the world for people to face their Creator.

God never wanted us to share our faith based on a duty to do so, but by a driven passion in our soul that we must because Jesus said so and that others are in great need of knowing about him. We were given this gift and were not a favored group but responded to the gift being offered to us the same as God wants us to do for others.

2 Timothy 1:12

That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and **am convinced** that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

Having the right convictions automatically means we will act as the Lord wishes regardless of consequence or convenience. They must be held even when others won't. It focuses on what God thinks is important. It causes us to develop standards that God desires. It gives us a drive to accomplish His wishes. It brings stability to our lives in what we seek for. It helps us to not miss opportunities to share His love and our testimony anywhere and anytime. It will produce a boldness in us because the conviction is founded on what God passionately desires and will be backed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the book of Esther, when Esther knew she had to go to the king about her people being plotted against by Haman to kill them, WE READ

Esther 4:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

She was convinced and had such a conviction that what was right must be done and she must stand up and be counted.

Things Jesus does tell us to be and do

- Go into all the world and preach the gospel Matt28: 16-20, Mark 16:9-20
- Show God's unconditional love to everyone all the time
- Reading the bible like it is food and water to us to survive
- Seek to worship God like He is the most important focus of our life
- To grow in the knowledge of God and seek to be righteous in all we do and say as we build up the body of Christ
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Romans 8:35-39 New International Version (NIV)

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."^[a]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor

demons,^[b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A question to ask ourselves is:

Are the things Jesus asks of us and wants us to do really a conviction in our life?

Conclusion

What are your convictions? Are they what God wants them to be? Have you experienced what it means to stand your ground for God even when others won't?

When it is difficult. When others might be against you. When how you show your Christian life may be frowned upon.

People know when you believe what you say you believe. Are we convinced about the immense powerful love of God? Are we convinced about the directive Jesus gave us all personally before He left this earth? Are we convinced that the Holy Spirit's power is the vehicle to get it out? Are we convinced of the consequences of the wrong eternal choice? Are we convinced that accountability is coming for all?

Let's stand. Let us now dedicate ourselves to what God wants us to be and to make them convictions that can not be moved.

The Great Commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Amen.