



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 16:7-11

“The Spirit, Convincing the World and Regenerating the Saints”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee again that we are able to study the Scriptures together. We thank Thee for the privilege, and we pray that the ministry of the word may have its free course in our lives. We ask, Lord, that it may be used by the Holy Spirit to continue the work of sanctification in which Thou art engaged. We thank Thee that we have the assurance that that work shall be completed. We know that the goal of our great, sovereign God is to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that we have the assurance that this work is constantly going on, and we praise Thee for it. We know there are many obstacles which we throw in the path of the ministry of the Spirit, but we are confident, Lord, that Thy wilt complete the work. We remember the Scriptures which say, “That he that hath begun a good work in you shall complete it to the day of Jesus Christ.” So we look forward to that and we look forward to the study of the Scriptures in the meantime and pray that they may truly be the words of God to which we respond. Be with us tonight.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

“The Spirit: Convincing the World and Regenerating the Saints” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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[Message] We are studying Johannine theology, and we have just a little mini-series in the midst of the Johannine theology in the sense that we are looking at the Holy Spirit in Johannine thought. And the subject tonight is the Holy Spirit convincing the world and regenerating the saints. Again, my outline is very simple, and I will just give it to you as I go along, but let me begin with a few words of introduction.

If one, in order to make a study such as this, were to begin by taking up a concordance of the New Testament and looking at every reference to the Holy Spirit in the Gospels, he would notice several things. In the first place, he would notice that there are remarkably few references to the Holy Spirit during this time of ministry in the New Testament with two exceptions. There are many references to the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ. That's expected because our Lord carried out his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. And then there are a number of texts in which prophecies are given by our Lord of his coming and his ministry. And John, the apostle, has a great number of these, of course.

The second thing that he would notice from the occurrences of the references to the Holy Spirit and the gospels is that Mark's gospel is unusually devoid of references to the subject of the Holy Spirit. From this, the claim that during the time of our Lord's incarnation, we have not yet come to the age of the Spirit, maybe it seems to me, fairly substantiated.

So when we think about the time of the gospels, it's not surprising that we do not have so many references to the Spirit. Those references gather around the ministry of our Lord and prophecies of his ministry in the age that follows Pentecost; therefore, Bible teachers and students have often thought of the Old Testament and the Old Testament in the New Testament in the sense that the New Covenant has its inauguration in the death of Christ, that the Old Testament is the age of the Father; when our Lord comes in his incarnation and carries out his ministry it has been called the age of the Son; and the present age, from the day of Pentecost on, has been called the age of the Holy Spirit.

Now we don't want to overemphasize the Holy Spirit because it's the work of the Spirit, remember, to glorify Christ. So any kind of ministry of the Holy Spirit which glorifies the Holy Spirit instead of the Lord Jesus Christ is contrary to the theme of the Holy Spirit, which is to glorify Christ. So these are some rather interesting things that enable us to get an overall picture of why, when we read the gospels, we don't have many references to the work of the Spirit outside of the references to Christ's ministry and prophecies of the age in which we are at the present time.

There's another rather striking fact that emerges, too. There is only one place where the Holy Spirit is said to perform a work on the world. And that one place is John 16:7-11. Now that's the passage that we want to spend most of our time on tonight. So will you take your New Testaments and turn to John chapter 16, verse 7 through 11? And here we come to, in our outline, Roman I, The Holy Spirit Convincing the World, and capital A, if you are writing down an outline, Concerning Sin. Let's read the verses beginning at verse 7 through verse 11. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus says in the Upper Room Discourse to the eleven,

“I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he has come he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. I'll send 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.”

The context of this passage, which is true of course of almost all the passages of the Bible, is a great help in understanding this section. The Lord has just told his disciples that they are to expect the world's hatred. Look back at verse 18 of the preceding chapter; chapter 15. Jesus says,

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“If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you.”

So he has told the disciples that they may expect the world to hate them and, furthermore, he has told them that they are to witness to him in spite of the world's hatred. This witness is to be in the midst of a world that hates the Lord and will hate them. Look at the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses of chapter 15 where we read:

“But when the comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth who proceeded from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

How can the apostles hope to meet the world's hatred and make an impression upon it? If the world hates them and they are nevertheless to testify to the Lord Jesus Christ, what hope shall they have in making an impression upon the world? Well, the answer is that the Holy Spirit will not only be with them, but he will enable them to take the offensive. And that's comfort for the despair to which he refers in the sixth verse of chapter 16;

“But because I have sent these things unto you sorrow hath filled your heart.”

So the Lord then says then, I'm going to leave you. I'm going to leave you in the midst of a hostile world. You are going to testify to me. And the reason that you will be successful in it is because you will be given the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now, there are two exegetical problems that we have to mention before we look at the Spirit's work. One of them concerns the expression in verse 8,

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

Now, this word “reprove” and is literally “reprove concerning,” translated in the Authorized Version “reprove of,” is a word that can mean several things. It can mean reprove as the Authorized Version has it. It sometimes means to convict as the American Standard Version has it. The Revised Standard Version has “convince.”

Now, to rebuke is also a sense of this word, but that's more suitable it seems for another word. I think it's better to give it the sense of to convince. And then the word “of” is a word that, I believe, is given a little clearer sense if we just translate it convince, concerning or perhaps to render it convince of the facts about. Now, let me read verse 8 with that in mind.

“And when he is come he will convince the world of the facts about sin and of the facts about righteousness and of the facts about judgment.”

There's another problem here that concerns the meaning of the connection between the preposition concerning the facts about and the word “because.” Now we read in verse 7,

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

We read verse 8 and now verse 9 of sin, “because they believe not on me.” Now, it is possible to render this in a different way, this word “because” but I think that because

is correct. And if you have a version that translates verse 9 differently than because I really think that the because is correct. There's no need to change the text because the other is possible. It is a decision that interpreters make, but I think that what our Lord means is that when the Spirit comes, he's going to convince the world of the facts about sin because they believe not on me.

Now, one final word concerning the word, “world.” He says, “And when he has come he will reprove the world of sin or convince the world of the facts about sin.” Does the word “world” here refer to all men without exception? Well, hardly, as history would indicate. Not everybody has been convinced of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, of the facts about judgment. Probably we are to give it the force that we gave the word “world” in John 1:11 in the exposition of the Gospel of John. That is, everyone who is convinced about the facts about sin, of the facts about judgment and righteousness, is convinced of that by the Holy Spirit. Not everyone is but all who are are convinced by the Holy Spirit. This term, by the way, “to convince” is a term that was used of a legal cross-examination with a view to refuting an opponent and therefore it's very suitable for a person, the Holy Spirit, who is referred to in the Bible as an advocate. So we're going to read it then as the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing the world of the facts about sin, the facts about righteousness, and the facts about judgment, but we're going also to take the interpretation that he does not refer by the term “world” to every single individual in the world. It's just another one of the many cases in the New Testament where the meaning of the term “world” must be determined by the meaning of the individual context. Now, we have been laboring that point a bit on Sunday morning and so I'm going to drop it here. It's just another piece of evidence however for the view that I have tried to expound in the Sunday morning messages. The Spirit is going to convince the world of the facts about sin.

Now, notice the word is “sin” not “sins;” not the facts about sins, but the facts about sin. It would seem from this that the Holy Spirit is attempting to deal with the

malady, not simply the symptoms, but the malady itself. And the “because” clause that follows, because they believe not on me, gives the reason for the convincing, concerning the facts about sins. The root and rationale of sin is unbelief. He will convince the world of the facts about sin because they believe not on me. So it would seem clear then that this conviction of the nature of sin is related to unbelief.

I think that's the root rationale of sin. Many people think of immorality as the root rationale of all sin. Immorality is the product of unbelief. Many people feel that selfishness is the root of sin. In my opinion, selfishness is the product of unbelief. Others think of rebellion against the word of God as the root and rationale of sin. Well, if we defined unbelief as that, that would be all right, but if we think of rebellion as it's usually given, then again it is the product of unbelief. So unbelief is the root and rationale of sin.

Now, we have some indications in the New Testament, incidentally, of the truthfulness of this. We read in passages -- is it not like Romans 14:23, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” So this is not an unusual kind of interpretation. The reason that Adam and Eve sinned in the garden was not simply that they took of the fruit. They had already sinned before they took the fruit. Eve had sinned before she actually participated. Of course, the sin ran its course, and that was a necessary issue and evidence, but the sin took place when her views concerning the fruit on the tree in the midst of the garden had taken place. So, unbelief then is the root and rationale of sin. It issues in rebellion and finally is evidenced by immorality. You can see that in the Book of Genesis; Genesis 3 and 4 in the sense that in Genesis 3 we have the acts of unbelief that lead to the rebellion of taking the fruit of the tree and then in the next chapter we have Cain slaying Abel in an immoral act. So the product, so the issue, the whole program is unbelief, rebellion, immorality. And when we read in the New Testament that sin is lawlessness, that almost sounds like a definition of what sin is. It's a definition of the product of sin. Sin is lawlessness. So we can expand our definition and say sin is unbelief which leads to

rebellion and it issues in the lawlessness of immorality. Now then, the Holy Spirit is coming and he will convict the world of sin “because they believe not on me.”

Now, one might ask the questions at this point, “Well now, what about the Old Testament?” The Son was not there in the Old Testament. How then can we explain, “Because they believe not on me”? Men sinned in the Old Testament, but Jesus Christ had not come into existence insofar as his human nature was concerned then. Well, formerly it was unbelief in God, now it is unbelief in God's man. So the same principle was in operation in the Old Testament. It was belief in the word of God. Now, that word of God is concentrated in its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we read in the New Testament that he will convict the world of the facts about sin because they believe not on me.

One of the reasons that people today have so shallow views of sin is because they have not been taught to think rightly about sin. If you ask a man whether he is a sinner, he understands you to mean that he's a great, flagrant, out-breaking transgressor against the principles of morality that are found in the Bible. If you tell him that he's a great sinner in the sight of God. He thinks that maybe you are accusing him of being a blasphemer or a perjurer or a thief or an adulterer or a murderer. But without any of these out-breaking forms of sin, there may be a deep and damning hatred of the word of God in that man's heart.

There are many diseases that have no corresponding outward symptom. It's said that in the plague that devastated the city of London a long time ago that if there appeared in the cheek just one little round, red spot, that that was the sign of soon and certain death. But so far as the physical signs were concerned at that point, things didn't look all that bad. Sin may not break out in a violent trampling on the Ten Commandments. If you look at the New Testament and think of Judas, Judas was an apostle. He accompanied with the Lord Jesus Christ. He heard sermons all the time. He was there with those who were seeking to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you

looked at him, he would have looked like the rest of the apostles. In fact, he would actually have looked a little better because so far as I can tell, he's the only one from Judah. And Judah was the place where individuals were much more likely to be educated and refined and cultured. It's likely that that's the reason that Judas was chosen to be treasurer instead of Matthew, who had the experience. So he was a man who had great influence, but nevertheless in his heart, was unbelief. And such unbelief that Jesus said, "Woe to that man through whom the son of man is betrayed."

There are a large bulk of sins that some of us never even think of but which may be called sins of omission; in other words, things that we have left undone. Some time ago I ran across a statement which impressed me quite a bit. It was made by Arthur T. Pierson. He said, "Did you ever notice this fact that three of the greatest arraignments in the whole world of God -- whole word of God, on the subject of sin have to do with what is not done?" And he cited the passage in Matthew in the case where the Lord Jesus said, "In as much as ye did it not, you have not done it unto me. In as much as you've done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me." And then if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." And in this text here, he will convict the world of sin "because they believe not on me." Believe not, did it not, love not, all these are negative statements, but those are three of the greatest arraignments of sin. So let us purify our thinking about sin. It's not simply immorality, which is sin. It is unbelief; failure to respond to the word of God. I am sure that anyone who has ever had someone else whom you love treat your word as if it is not reliable can appreciate what is meant by the Scriptures when we are called upon to believe the testimony of the eternal God. And to fail to believe it is an insult, a slap in the face, at the character of God.

Now, concerning righteousness: we read of the facts of about righteousness "Because I go to my father and ye see me no more." Well, if verse 9 was manward in its emphasis, this verse is Christward. The convincing pertains to his righteousness. That's surprising, too. We might have expected he will convict the world of righteousness

because, not so much I go to the Father as convict the world of the world's unrighteousness, but instead we read of righteousness because I go to my Father and ye see me no more. You might think that he would say that the conviction concerning righteousness pertains to his righteousness not the world's unrighteousness, but the Lord's departure and exaltation to the right hand of the Father is a proof of his righteousness. It's a proof of our Lord's righteousness in this sense, that when he went to the cross and was crucified there and was buried, the world might have thought, “Well, that's the end of Jesus of Nazareth. And if God is a sovereign God, and if he's really the Son of God as he claims to be, how can it be that men take him and throw him into that tomb and shut the door and he cannot come out?” Well, now we know that later on Peter says it was not possible that he should beholden of death. We know that when he was raised by the Father from the grave, that was the evidence of the fact that his atoning work had been accepted, that he truly was the Son of God and furthermore that men were going to have to deal with him in the future.

The apostles thought so much about that that when they preached, according to the book of Acts, they laid great stress on the resurrection. One might wonder why they did, because atonement is not accomplished by the resurrection. Atonement is accomplished by the death of Christ. Why did they so stress the resurrection? Well, the reason for it is likely because they were preaching to people who had crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was God's way of saying, “You have sinned against heaven.” And the resurrection of our Lord from the dead was the evidence that what the Lord Jesus had said was really truth. And so every time the resurrection was proclaimed, from its standpoint, was a slap in the face of those who had crucified him and put him to death. It said in effect, you are wrong. You have crucified the Messiah. God has raised him from the dead, in evidence of his righteousness. So the Lord tells the disciples that when they preach they are going to have the Holy Spirit working for them, and the Holy Spirit is going to convict the world of the facts about righteousness because “I go to my Father

and ye see me no more.” The going to the Father is evidence then that what our Lord had claimed was true. It was the sign that everything that he had done and said he would do had been done. It was the Father saying “Yes, I stand behind the work of the Son of God.” It was in evidence of his finished work.

The Apostle Paul writes concerning this in Romans chapter 4 verse 25 in a text that all students of Romans remember. In verse 25 of Romans 4, we read concerning the Lord Jesus Christ who was delivered on account of our offenses and was raised again on account of our justification. So Paul says it was our offenses that brought him to death. It was for that reason, but it was also for the reason of our justification that he was raised. So that's Paul's way of saying, “Jesus Christ bore the penalty of death. He bore it to the full. And on account of the justification of those for whom he died, he was raised from the dead.” The Father saying, “I accept the work that he has performed for the people of God.”

Now, he goes on to say in the eleventh verse of chapter 16,

“Ye will convict the world about the facts about judgment because the prince of this world is judged.”

Well, the facts about judgment are Satanward in their expression. In one verse we have a text that refers to sinners. In the other text that refers to God, here is one that refers to Satan. And it has to do with Satan's judgment, not the sinner's judgment. Now, the facts about judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. The prince of this world is a reference to Satan. And so, rather startling also, it's Satan's judgment that is singled out here for special mention.

A question may arise at this point. How does the Spirit convict? If he is going to convict the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, and the facts about judgment, how is he going to do it? I think if I had been in the presence of the

apostles and if I had had a chance to think about this, this would be one of the things I would be interested in. I would say, “Lord, you have said that we are going to be hated by the world. You've said also that we are going to witness in the midst of this hatred. And you've given us the encouragement of the Holy Spirit's coming. In fact, you've said it's expedient that you go away otherwise the Spirit will not come. But how is he going to do this?”

And isn't it interesting, he doesn't really speak to that point. He does not say how he is going to do that. Well, he said in verse 7, “nevertheless I tell you the truth, it's expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you.” So that would let us know that it has something to do with the fact that the comforter is going to come to us. And he has already said in chapter 14 that, “I'm going to pray the Father and he's going to give you another comforter who will abide with you forever.” So we might put these things together and say, “Well, he's going to come to us, he's going to be with us, and be with us forever.” So evidentially the conviction is going to take place through us; through the testimony of us as we give it to the world.

Well, when we look at the rest of the New Testament, I think we can better see now how that happened. Not many days after this, one of these apostles who heard this message given by the Lord in the Upper Room Discourse was preaching on the day of Pentecost and one of the great sermons of the whole Christian era was given in the first that was given. As you know, it was given by the Apostle Peter. In Acts chapter 2 in verses 14 through 23, the apostle speaks about the sin of the nation. And the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin because of their response to the Lord Jesus Christ. Just for a moment, let me just read one or two passages from that particular sermon. We don't have to read it all, we'll just read the climax of that section, verse 22 and verse 23.

“Ye men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of

you as ye yourselves all know, him being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

And I know from what followed that the Holy Spirit gave conviction of the facts about sin because of their unbelief as expressed in their actions. In verse 24 through verse 32 he speaks of the righteousness of the Son of God as manifested in his resurrection. And finally in the conclusion you get the distinct impression that Peter is talking about judgment. He says,

“Therefore,” verse 33, “being by the right hand of God, exalted, and having received from God from the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear, for David is not ascended unto the heavens but he saith himself the Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.”

Now, the evidence of the Holy Spirit's working follows. Now, when they heard this they were pricked in their heart. The Greek text at this point uses a word that really means “to pierce.” They were pierced in their hearts and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?” In other words, the congregation gave the invitation. That's what happens when the word is preached by the power of the Holy Spirit. When it's preached by men, we appeal to people to come forward. And so we urge them to come forward. But when the work of the Holy Spirit really takes place, then we'll see people falling under conviction of sin. They may not express it in precisely the same way, but they fall under the conviction of sin and they respond.

Sunday night I was unable to be here because I was speaking to the Daughters of the American Colonists meeting, and I had a chance to speak to them on the spiritual life

of the early colonists. One of the striking things about the spiritual life of the early colonists is that it flowed out of their acquaintance with those early Calvinists who came to this country or whose books came to this country. William Ames was one. He never came, but he wrote *The Marrow of Sacred Theology*. Most of you know it by its Latin title I'm sure, *Medulla Sacrae Theologiae*. Now, that particular book had such great influence that men like Cotton Mather said it was the standard textbook of theology in early New England. Others have expressed that view later on. It was the standard textbook of theology. William Ames was a pupil of the outstanding English Calvinist preacher, William Perkins. He then went over to Holland because he was chased there. And while he was there, he was the counselor of some of the men at the council of -- at the Senate of Delft. And then he taught at Franeker in Holland and wrote the book “The Marrow of Sacred Theology.” It's a magnificent compendium of good, solid, biblical Calvinistic theology. Men like John Cotton, Cotton Mather, and the other outstanding men in the early days in the United States. They were trained on these things; the very things that you hear here in Believer's Chapel; that kind of theology.

Now, Jonathan Edwards, in the earlier part of the eighteenth century preached while men fell under great conviction. And that great conviction was expressed by the solemnity with which they listened. Incidentally, in the meetings when they got really excited, they would stand up. One time when Mr. Edwards substituted for George Whitefield, they didn't know Mr. Edwards. He got up and read his text from a manuscript, and then he preached from the manuscript. He had a high squeaky voice. And pretty soon everybody was silent and solemn. And then as he continued in his message, some would stand up on the outskirts, soon the whole audience was standing on its feet, soon they were crowding forward and the message ended with some loud sobs on the part of many of the people who came under such great conviction for their sin that they were so impressed that there was visible response, an audible response to Mr. Edward's ministry; the same thing with George Whitefield. It was the testimony of the

Holy Spirit in fulfilling what our Lord said he would do. He would convince the world of sin of righteousness and judgment.

Now of course, that same thing happens today. It may not happen in precisely the same way. God moves sovereignly as he continues his work. We don't have to have it exactly the same way. We simply look to him. We expect him to work sovereignly, and he does do his work sovereignly. Someone came to Mr. Spurgeon one time and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, I notice you don't give any invitation like some are giving invitations now, inviting people down to the front." He said, "No, he was trusting in the Holy Spirit to do that." And they said, "But people when they hear the message they are ready to come." And he said, "If you pass by, then you lose the opportunity for them to come forward and receive Christ." Mr. Spurgeon said, "If it is the conviction of the Holy Spirit, it will last until Monday." [laughter] Well, that's what the Bible teaches.

So the Holy Spirit is going to bring conviction. I would imagine that we would not be far wrong if we may make this deduction. In the ultimate analysis, it's the Spirit alone who can convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment; therefore, what should be our emphasis in our preaching of the Gospel. Well, our emphasis, it seems to me, should be on the spiritual side of the ministry. Prayer, regarding the place of ministry; prayer, regarding the message that is given; prayer, regarding the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. And, therefore, emphasis on the human side of things, so-called human methods, human arts of persuasion, all of those things, it seems to me, are things that must be subordinated to the primary thrust of the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit. After all, the Bible, the word of God, as used by the Spirit of God is sufficient for salvation, sanctification, glorification for all that God does.

I'm inclined to think, too, if I may add this, that the Spirit's ministry of convincing of sin belongs to the doctrine of common grace. All men, when they hear the word of God, as a general rule, come under some form of conviction until they reach the place where having rejected the word of God they are absolutely hardened to it and don't hear.

Like a man who has his alarm clock by the side of his bed and the first morning it's there he almost jumps out of the sheets entirely when it goes off, and he learns of course if you reach over and shut it off, why he can lounge around in the bed a little longer. And it's not long before, as you well know, you won't even hear it because the message is that the instrument gives a rejected by our own brains. And we just say, "No! No! Don't bother me."

I remember the story, I've told it here in the chapel, of an individual who was in a boarding house, and he had his alarm. And the first morning it went off, everybody in the boarding house heard it. And so he got up and the next morning it rang a little longer, and the next morning it rang a little longer, and it wasn't long he finally arrived down at breakfast late. And he said, "My alarm didn't go off this morning." And they said, "Oh yes it did. You just didn't hear it." Well, that's an illustration of spiritual things. For the word of God comes to an individual. It comes. It comes, but if we keep saying, "No. No. No." Soon we learn to say no to it and finally we don't hear it. That's what the Bible means when it speaks about divine retribution; so that seeing, they don't see, hearing, they don't hear, the Lord says. It's very important to respond to the word of God.

So I think that what we have here is a reference to common grace. Now common grace is called common not simply because it effects, touches all men but because it produces ordinary effects which may fall short of saving effect. There are three categories, I think, of common grace. His general blessing to all creatures, even animals; food, drink, clothing, shelter, according to his good pleasure. Acts 14:17 speaks about the goodness of God to men. In that sense he has a loving benevolence toward all men. He's given us life. He's given us the blessings of life.

And then second there are the general operations of the Spirit by which he, without renewing the heart, exercises a moral influence upon men, through the revelation which he gives to men both general and special. He curbs sin. He promotes order and

civil righteousness. He gives us government. He stands behind things that are responsible for some order in this world. If you think things are bad now, what would they be if there were no exercise of common grace on the part of God? The things that happen with a Dwayne Williams would happen everywhere. We would live in total chaos and in total disorder if it were not for the common grace of God.

And then the operations of the Holy Spirit by which he influences men toward redemption but does not secure it. You know, there are some things that God does for all children of believing Christians which do not necessarily mean their salvation. I speak to you fathers and mothers, for example. Every one of your children is said by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, to be sanctified. Did you know that? That's what it says, 1 Corinthians 7 in verse 14, “The children of believing parents are sanctified.” They are set apart. They have the special blessing of living in the home of believing parents. Even if only one of the parents is a believing parent, the children are set apart. That's common grace. That doesn't mean they are saved. They are set apart. They have special advantages, special privileges.

There is a conviction also that is short of saving conviction. For example, there is conviction of sin that is resistible. I give you one illustration, Stephen in his preaching. They gnashed on him with their teeth. They were under great conviction from what he said, but they stoned him to death. Now, irresistible grace or effectual grace is the grace that, in the midst of resistance, overcomes our resistance. That special grace is the wonderful privilege of believers in Christ; the elect of God. Many of us resist before we receive effectual grace, too. So it is entirely possible for men to be convicted and not converted. All of us who are converted, have been at one time or another convicted. So what a great blessing it is for the Holy Spirit to be given to every one of us. And it seems to me from these words that the apostles heard from the Lord Jesus Christ that we may count on the work of the Holy Spirit through us, and we may witness in the midst of a world that does not respond to what we say with the assurance that the authority and the

power of the third person of the Trinity stands behind our words. What a challenge to preach and teach and represent him. May God help us to do it boldly for the glory of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit. What boldness we may truly have. And when we think of the great men of the past, men like Whitfield and Edwards, who was hounded out of his church by men who were brought under the conviction of sin but who now enjoy the presence of God and the rewards of eternal glory, O God, help us to be faithful. Give us spiritual courage to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in reliance upon the Holy Spirit. May he truly, through us, if it please Thee, convince the world of the facts about sin, of righteousness, and judgment. We know that the prince of this world has been judged in the death of Christ. And that's the assurance that judgment is to come.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.