



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 16:7-11

“The Convincing Work of the Holy Spirit, or

The Work of the Holy Spirit with Respect to the World”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the privilege of studying together again in the Gospel of John and especially in the upper room discourse of our Lord Jesus Christ given to the apostles on the eve of his departure from them. And we thank Thee for the wonderful teaching that he gave them and which has now been given to us. We thank Thee for the apostle who has faithfully recorded the things that the Holy Spirit gave to him, and we give Thee thanks, Lord, that we are able to meditate upon and consider the very words that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke while he was here in the flesh. May these words minister to us in a spiritual way. May our own spiritual lives be challenged by the things that we hear and read from the Scriptures, and may the result be that our lives conform more and more as the days go by to the will of God for us individual. We commit this hour to Thee. We ask Thy blessing upon each one of us present. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We're turning tonight to John chapter 16 in our study of the upper room discourse, and the passage that we want to consider in some detail is John chapter

16 and verse 7 through verse 11. But in order to give you the general context since we’ve missed a little bit of time together over the past couple of weeks, let me begin reading in the Scripture reading with John chapter 16 and verse 1. The apostle writes,

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Where goest Thou?”

Incidentally, that should raise a little bit of a question in your own mind if you’ve been following along and reading the Gospel of John with us as we’ve been studying because if you’ll turn back just a page or so, you’ll see that that’s exactly what Peter did say. John chapter 13 and verse 36 reads, “Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, where goest Thou?” By the way in the original text that is the precise expression that is found here in chapter 16 and verse 5, “Where goest Thou?”

Now the commentators have been a little puzzled by this naturally. If they were separated by a great deal of distance in the gospel you might wonder about it because you might think that actually the writer of the gospel forgot that he had said that or even that the Lord had forgotten that Peter had said, “Where goest Thou?” But since the two occurrences are so close together it’s obvious that there is a slightly different force in each of them and generally speaking the students have felt that in John chapter 13 and verse 36 when Peter asks, “Where goest Thou?” he asks it from his own standpoint. And he’s not interested in actually where our Lord is going, but he’s interested more in the fact that he’s going to be without the Lord when he goes. Whereas in chapter 16 when the Lord says,

"None of you asketh me, Where goest Thou?" he simply means that you have not ask me the destination of my departure from you. And if that is so that would harmonize these two incidental expressions. But it is a rather interesting thing that he writes, or that he says, and John writes, "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Where goest Thou?" And if I could imagine that I were there, it might have been that one of the apostles said, "But Lord, Peter just a little while ago said, Where goest Thou?" And then he gave the explanation that I've just given you. [Laughter]

Now verse 6,

"But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. 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. 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."

We're looking in our study tonight at the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to the world. There are two great theological terms that we need to have before us constantly as we think about biblical truth. One of these terms is the term common grace. Now common grace is a reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the restraint of sin and in the revelation of the plan of salvation. When the Holy Spirit works in common grace, as he does in the lives of all men, some of the effects are: men are given a spiritual interest, or a religious instinct we might call it, there is a restraint of sin in society and a restraint of sin in the lives of individuals, there is a fear of God that comes to men.

Now these things are all prior to the act of salvation. That is it is a fear of God that is insufficient to bring salvation. It is a restraint of sin in the life, but it is not the restraint of sin that the Holy Spirit brings through his work of sanctification in the life of

the believer. It is an interest in spiritual things which is short of the kind of interest that true believers have in the salvation provided through the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the kind of thing that is seen so often in the members of our Christian churches who do not have any personal faith in the Lord Jesus but do have a sense of the fear of God, do have a certain religious interest. They attend the meetings. They even take part in church. They even read the Bible occasionally. They listen to sermons and hear Sunday school lessons. And, of course, there are other things that go along with common grace.

Now it is called common grace because it is grace that is given to men by God in gracious activity toward men generally. That is, all men are the recipients of a measure of common grace. The very fact that we're alive and there is a period of time in which men may turn to the gospel of the Lord Jesus and receive Christ as savior is an evidence of the common grace of God.

Now the other religious term, or spiritual term related to it is the term efficacious grace. Now efficacious grace is the grace of God that brings us to salvation. Every Christian is a person who has experienced efficacious grace. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to an understanding of the gospel message and then the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. So, efficacious grace is efficacious. It is effectual to the salvation of souls. It is often called irresistible because it is a work of the Holy Spirit which will eventually be successful in the lives of Christians. When we say it is irresistible we do not mean, of course, that a Christian to be does not for a time resist the grace of God. Most of us who have come to faith in Christ remember when we did resist the grace of God. We resisted the messages that we heard. We resisted the attempts of our friends to bring us to faith in Christ. But the grace that is irresistible is the work of the Holy Spirit by which he makes our unwilling wills willing to respond to the gospel of Christ so that the action of will by which we believe in Jesus Christ is the product of the previous work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace.

Now we did not feel it. It is non-experiential. We do not feel that we are compelled to accept Christ after we have made our decision, as we so frequently say, we learn from Scripture, that the decision was a decision which God himself had brought to pass in our lives and our human will in its activity was the product or effect of the working of the divine will beforehand. Common grace, efficacious grace, all men are recipients of a measure of common grace. Only believers are recipients of efficacious grace.

When the Bible speaks of believers being called in the epistles, the reference is always to efficacious grace. When the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8 and verse 28 speaks about those who are called, he's speaking about efficacious grace. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.” And he explains what that means in the verses that follow. The word call is a word for efficacious grace. It is an effectual calling, always, in the epistles.

Now in the gospels the word call is a word that has to do with an invitation. Matthew giving one of the parables of the Lord Jesus says, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Now that calling is a general call. It is addressed to all men. Now that sense of call is a call that refers to common grace, the invitation to accept Christ. Efficacious grace is the grace that brings us to salvation. It's rather interesting that these words, the same word is used in the two different senses, but always in the epistles called is an effectual calling. In the gospels it may be an ineffectual call, an invitation given to all.

What we have in John chapter 16 verse 7 through verse 11 is a reference to common grace. Now of course the fact that common grace is given to men does not mean that men are not responsible because they have not received efficacious grace. There are some people who say well since God is only given us common grace and not efficacious grace then we're not responsible because after all if we are unable to respond than we are not responsible. That was the doctrine of Pelagius. That was the doctrine of

the Arminians. That was the doctrine of those who have opposed the teaching of the word of God. That ability limits obligation. If that were true we would have immorality. People don't realize that, but it's nevertheless true.

Let me just explain to you what I mean. If it's true that a man is responsible only in so far as he has ability then, let's just imagine a person who is sitting in an audience like this tonight and he hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus but he refuses to receive the message. Well the Bible tells us and human experience tells us that the person who does not respond becomes hardened. That is the more the gospel is preached and heard and the more it is refused, the more hardened a person becomes. But if he is therefore more hardened he is therefore less able. And if he is less able, then according to that doctrine, he is less responsible. And so the harder and harder he becomes the less and less responsibility he has. So the thing to do is to be as hard as you possibly can, as hard as a stone, and then you have no responsibility whatsoever. That's the doctrine that Erasmus and the Pelagians and the Arminians have sought to foist upon us and which we have often accepted as ability limits obligation. The Scriptures however tell us that we are responsible but at the same time we are unable of ourselves to respond. We respond when God in his wonderful grace works in our hearts and enables us by his grace to respond to the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we do not respond, the fact that we are unable does not mean that we not responsible. All men are responsible before God. He's the creator, and we are his creatures. We are responsible. God is not unfair.

Just a couple of days ago I was in Cambridge, England. Now Cambridge, England is a very wonderful little place for many different reasons. It's a beautiful little town. It's a very historic town. But for me it has always had a special appeal because of the evangelical emphasis in that town. Oxford and Cambridge are the two great intellectual centers of Great Britain. Oxford has always been the liberal town. Cambridge has been the evangelical town. The evangelical emphasis has largely been at Cambridge and not at Oxford. One of the greatest of the preachers at Cambridge was William Perkins. He lived

four centuries ago. He was born in 1558 before Calvin died. He died in 1602. He was the preacher of reformed doctrine at Great Saint Andrew's Church in Cambridge. And when someone said to him once that God was unjust in calling men responsible when they were unable. He said, “God doth wrong none. Although, he chose not all because he is tied to none and because he has absolute sovereignty and authority over all creatures.” Mr. Perkins was right. And it's no wonder that there was a great evangelical revival in Cambridge and for one hundred years afterwards as a result of the preaching of William Perkins because he was a man who was faithful to the word of God and to the reformed doctrine which he had himself come to understand.

The Apostle Paul's preaching created all kinds of questions. And the questions that the apostle's preaching created were the very questions that people today like to use in order to refute the doctrines of the reformers because they always say, “Well if what you say is really true, then God is unjust.” Do you think the apostle preached straight doctrine? Why yes. I would imagine everyone in this auditorium with rare exception would say, “Yes, the Apostle Paul preached straight doctrine.” Do you agree with Paul's doctrine? Well some of you are shaking your heads like this. The rest of you I wonder about. [Laughter] But anyway, some of you are going like this, “Yes, we agree with Paul's doctrine.” This is what people said when Paul preached his doctrine. Is there unrighteousness with God? God's unrighteous. That's one thing they said. The kind of doctrine Paul preached resulted in that kind of objection. The apostle knew it so he anticipated it. He said I know you're going to say when I say, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau have I hated,” you're going to say, “Is there unrighteousness with God?” Paul answered, “God forbid.” Now he didn't stop with that because he knew that they would put it in another way. Then they would say, “You will say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”

Now I understand why William Perkins said what he said. “God doth wrong none. Although, he chose not all because he is tied to none.” He doesn't have to do anything for any of us. He's the creator, and we are creatures. That's all, worms. I know people talk about worm theology as being bad. It's not all that bad. It's not all that bad because the Bible does teach that we are sinners, and we do not have any claim on God.

Common grace, efficacious grace, let's not stumble over these things. Let's go to the word of God and just say does the Bible really teach that? I have no doubt whatsoever. I have perfect confidence that if you will go with the Holy Spirit as your teacher to the Bible and say let's see what the Bible teaches, you will come to that kind of teaching. And when you begin to propagate it, as every Christian ought to propagate every doctrine to which he holds, you'll find that the people with whom you speak will be saying that kind of God is unjust. Well don't be upset. You're standing in the succession of the apostles.

And furthermore that may be the very thing that will begin to wake them up about spiritual things. They might be so disturbed that they'll open the Bible and take a glance at a page of it. So don't let it disturb you. One of the blessings of being a Christian is persecution, trials, troubles, arguments, and so on. Those are some of the blessings of being a Christian. Incidentally, Mr. Perkins said that too. He said that was one of the effects of being a Christian, one of the blessings of the grace of God is to be put through trials and troubles and tribulations. That's designed to fit us for eternity. All of life is not in this little span that we have down here on this earth you know. That's some illustration for what I'm talking about tonight, but it's important as we turn now to the spirits convicting work to realize that what I'm speaking about is not the convicting work that brings salvation, but the convicting work that precedes salvation.

Now the Lord Jesus has been talking to the apostles, and he's been saying you're going to experience the hatred of the world. If they hated me, they will hate you. And then he said that the Holy Spirit was going to come and they were going to witness,

chapter 15 verse 26 and 27 said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” So he said the world is going to hate you. The Holy Spirit is going to come and he’s going to witness. He’s going to fight for you, and you too are going to witness. And now he’s going to give them some comfort because in the midst of the grace of trials and tribulations and difficulties and all of the other things that go with being a follower of the Lord Jesus, he’s going to point out to them that they’re going to have the blessed experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit. And consequently they will have the comfort of the Lord for the dread, despair of the future that lies before them when the Lord Jesus will not be there. They are concerned with themselves only, but he is turning them away from themselves in order that they may face the future in the power that God is going to give them.

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.” Now we have read previously in chapter 14 and chapter 15 of the coming of the Holy Spirit. This is not the first time that he has said that the comforter is to come. But he has been presented up to this point as a helper and an advocate. Now he tells us that when the Holy Spirit comes he’s going to be the prosecutor. He’s going to help you. He’s going to be your advocate. He’s one, the Greek word *parakletos* which is used here of the comforter, means literally called along side, and it has the idea of help, encourage, comfort, but it’s obvious now that the Holy Spirit’s going to do more than simply help and encourage and comfort. He’s going to prosecute the world. He’s going to convict or convince the world of some things. He’s not simply going to help you, but he is going to help you and also perform a work of significance as the word of God is proclaimed through you. He’s going to be prosecutor, convictor, convincer.

Now he said that, “It’s expedient for you that I go away.” Now that I think is rather interesting because there are some who have taught us, or tried to teach us, I must confess I was a little hardened to this doctrine because of some other things, but they have tried to teach us that the Holy Spirit’s work in the Old Testament is precisely the same as the Holy Spirit’s work in the New Testament. Now in my opinion that is contrary to the teaching of our Lord and the apostles. And I think here is an instance that argues against that view. He says, “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.” Now if it’s true that in the Old Testament the work of the Holy Spirit is the same as it is in the New Testament period of time then what’s the meaning of “the Comforter will not come unto you?” because these are individuals who have been told already that they are clean on account of the word that was spoken to them. They are true believers. But the comforter has not come to them. So living under the old covenant until the time our Lord Jesus died and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, they did not have the fullness of the experience of the Holy Spirit that they have after the death of our Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Otherwise our Lord’s words mean nothing. Now I don’t want to argue this point in detail. We could go back to chapter 7 and point out further evidence, but he says, “If I go not away the comforter will not come unto you.” So it is important that our Lord “leave in order that the comforter come.”

Now he refers as the rest of the New Testament makes plain to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost when he comes to permanently indwell all believers. Now all believers have not been permanently indwelt in Old Testament times. It is not until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes that all believers are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That’s what he means. That’s one of the things that he means. One of the other things he means is simply this. As long as I am here in the flesh as I am now I can only be with one of you at a time or with a group of you, but when the time

comes that I have ascended to the right hand of the Father, I'm adding words which the New Testament fills in later on, this is what is involved in what he is saying, if I go to the right hand of the Father and am there and send forth the spirit who is the spirit of Christ, then I am able by the spirit to be present with each one of you wherever you are. Now that was an expedient thing. That was a profitable thing for them, a valuable thing for them. They might have said, Lord if you go we are going to be lost. No, it's not that at all. It's going to be better for you because now I can only be with you eleven as I am right now, but those other disciples who are not here at the present time, they are not with me and I am not with them, but the time is coming when I go to the right hand of the Father, through the spirit I am able to be with everyone of you. And it will be expedient for you that I go away, that the spirit may come, that my presence may be with you forever.

Charles Gore once said, “The coming of the Holy Ghost was not merely to supply the absence of the Son, but to complete his presence.” And so to complete his presence in the sense that he is present with every one of us and therefore it is expedient that he go, that the spirit may come and through the spirit, and in the spirit, Christ may be with every one of us. Tonight when we leave this auditorium we will scatter to different places in the city. We will go to our homes, but we do not leave the presence of the Lord Jesus. If we had been living in days previous to the coming of the spirit on the day of Pentecost, if the Lord Jesus had tarried with a few of us, the rest of you would not have had his presence, but as it is now when you go home, he goes with you. And consequently it is expedient that he go away, that the comforter may come and strengthen us, encourage us, build us up and prosecute the work of God through us.

Now then he speaks of the convincing work of the spirit in verse 8, 9, 10 and 11. “When he is come (the comforter), he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” Now the word “reprove” is very difficult to render in English. I'm not really sure, to be perfectly honest with you, I'm not really sure of the precise meaning of

this. Now it's not for lack of study because in this instance I don't know how many years I've studied this particular passage, but I confess I'm still a little puzzled. If any of you have some sure light, come give it to me. This word *elegcho*, the Greek word, may mean to reprove. It may mean to convict. It may mean to convince.

Now it's possible, for John does do this occasionally, it's possible that the word has two meanings. It's possible that it has the force of convict and convince. That is in certain circumstances it means convict and certain circumstances it means convince. That's not uncommon in John's writings, as almost all scholars of the Gospel of John have noted. He was very good at giving double meanings. He gave not only the historical literal meaning to phrases and clauses but often overlaid them with a symbolic significance. But let's say it means to convict. He will convict. That is he will cause the world to acknowledge the truth of. So he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And the little word “of,” we're going to take in the sense of the facts about. So we'll read this, “And when he has come he will convict the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, and of the facts about judgment.” Why is that necessary? Well because the world has wrong notions about sin. The world has wrong notions about righteousness, and the world has wrong notions about judgment.

Before we talk about that notice he says he will convict the world of sin, not sins, but sin. He is going to talk, the Holy Spirit, not simply about the symptoms, but he's going to talk about the malady itself. Now we all know what sins are. But sin is that which results in sins. So he's going to talk about the malady, not the symptoms. He will convince the world of sin.

Now isn't it interesting that we read of sin because they've believed not on me. What would we have expected to find. Well we might have expected he will convict the world of sin because men break the Ten Commandments. But he doesn't say that. He says of sin because they believe not on me. As a matter of fact he doesn't say anything about the Ten Commandments. He doesn't say anything about the Law of God here. He

will convict the world of the facts about sin because they believe not on me. Isn't that interesting? We've thought that sin was essentially sins, and we can name the sins, seven deadly sins, Ten Commandments when they are broken. These are the sins.

And then we also, of course have a number of taboos in evangelicalism which we add. Now these are sectional. In the south, well I can remember this. I know you realize I'm very young, but I was living when mixed bathing was regarded as a flagrant sin. If a male and a female got in the same swimming pool together that was sin. That was preached about. In fact preachers could get very eloquent about mixed bathing. Now I grew up a Presbyterian. I did not hear too much of that. But some of my Baptist brethren, they remember. [Laughter] They remember. And when they talked about mixed bathing, I thought that meant black and white. [Laughter] But, anyway, that was one of those little taboos which we had in Christian circles, and then there were so many others that you have. You think about those things of sin because there mixed bathing, or because there is cigarette smoking, or because there is going to the theatre, or because, and then, of course, more serious thing, the Ten Commandments. But he says, of sin, because they believe not on me.

It is an interesting thing I think that in the Bible three of the most serious statements in the Bible concerning sin are sins of omission. Do you remember them? Well here's one of them, of sin because they believe not on me. Do you remember the one in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 45 where the Lord Jesus speaking about the brethren, and he says, “In as much as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me.” “In as much as ye did it not,” in other words, they should have done something. And then do you remember, “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema?”

So we think of sin as being the out breaking form of sin, adultery, blasphemy, perjury thievery, murder but without any of these out breaking forms of sin or effects of sin, a man may be a deep sinner in his heart, if he believes not on Christ. If he does not

do it unto the least of these my brethren, a sin of omission, if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him come under the curse, let him be Anathema. So, when we think about sin, let's think about the malady, the thing that causes these effects and the thing that causes all of these effects is unbelief. That is the sin. That's the sin that took place in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve didn't murder. Murder followed unbelief. Unbelief is the sin. Because we do not believe, we perform all of these other acts, or we do not do the things that we should do. So this is a very important thing. It illustrates the fact that a person may look very good on the out ward, but be a very deep sinner, deep down in his heart. It's true in the Christian church too. Man may be an elder in the church but really a deep sinner. Man may be a deacon, may be active in the Christian church, and may be here tonight.

In the London plague I am told that the only way in which you could tell that a person had the plague was if there appeared in his cheek a tiny red mark, circular mark. But if that little tiny, red circular mark appeared, though the person appeared to be very healthy, he was destined to die. And that which has infected all of us is sin, unbelief, which results in rebellion, and finally issues in all of the out breaking forms of sin. And even those polite kinds of sins like coveting, gossiping, getting on the telephone and ripping the saints up and down as a friend of mine says, and calling it having Christian fellowship. [Laughter]

There are seven words for sin the Bible, and unbelief is at the root of all of them. All of the things that are sins result from unbelief, that is we do not take seriously the word of God. That was Adam's fault. That was Eve's trouble. They did not really take seriously the word of God. They did not believe it that the matter of the eating of the fruit was a matter of life or death. And so when Satan came, he said, "It's not a matter of life and death. You shall not surely die." And so they believed him, and the result was that they died of sin because they believed not on me.

Now the next two of these expressions of our Lord are most startling. He says, “That when he has come he will convict the world of righteousness because I go to my Father.” Now if the first of these reproofs or convictions of the Holy Spirit is directed toward man and his sin, this one is directed toward Jesus Christ. It’s Christ ward. And so he says he will convict the world of righteousness because I go to the Father. Why is that a conviction of the world of righteousness that Jesus Christ should go to the Father? Well it is a conviction of righteousness in this sense that when the Lord Jesus died under the judgment of God and under the judgment of men, the Bible tells us and history tells us, the history of the Bible, that they placed his body in the grave but on the third day, on Sunday morning before the sun was up he arose from the grave, and he came forth to life, resurrection life.

Now, that was evidence of the fact that the Father stood on the side of the Son and not on the side of the Jews and the Gentiles who had put him to death. They put him to death as an act of righteousness saying he has blasphemed. He’s worthy of death. But on the third day God raised him from the dead, and he ultimately ascended to the right hand of the Father in proof of his righteousness and their unrighteousness. So the Holy Spirit will convince the world of righteousness because Christ has gone to the right hand of the Father. The Jews are wrong. The Gentiles are wrong. They have crucified the Messiah. And God has demonstrated that they are wrong and guilty in that he has raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand. Of course it is also a proof of his finished work. It was evidence of the fact that the Father accepted the work that he did for atonement and raised him from the dead in token of that finished work. That’s involved in that as well. It was not possible that he should beholden of death, the Scriptures say. So the spirit convicts of righteousness, and it is related to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The final work of the Holy Spirit to convict of judgment is perhaps the strangest of all. Now look at that 11th verse, “He will convince the world of judgment because the

prince of this world is judged.” Now that does seem strange. You would expect that he would convince the world of judgment because sinners are judged. But it’s not that. It’s a reference, not to the sinner’s judgment, but to Satan’s judgment. Now, of course we know from what the Bible says that justice was done in the defeat of Satan. And notice too and I think this is always read this way if you’re not careful. He’s not talking about judgment to come, but he’s talking about a judgment that has already come. He will convince the world of judgment because the prince of this world is judged, not will be judged, is already judged.

So he will convince the world of judgment not because there’s going to be a great judgment to come at the Great White Throne Judgment when all of the unbelievers, maybe someone from this room has an appointment for that great event, I hope not. But it’s not because that event is going to take place that he says he will convince the world of judgment. It’s because Satan has already been judged. What’s the reference? Well it seems to me that what he’s referring to is something that the apostles know about. They realize that when the Lord Jesus Christ is crucified and then raised from the dead that the powers that held him in the grave were Satanic powers given Satan by God who, as the instrumentality, is part of the program by which the Lord Jesus Christ delivers men from sin. We are held by our sins, and we are held by Satan, for Satan uses our sin to bind us in guilt and defeat. And one of the purposes of the coming of the Lord Jesus is to release us from the power of Satan, given him by God, through which he, through sin, holds us in his servitude until the Lord Jesus comes and offers the atoning work and frees us from bondage to sin. So he will convince the world of judgment because the prince of this world has been judged. And because he has been judged, sin has been paid for and consequently we may go free.

Now there is a reference here to the earliest theory of the atonement taught in the Bible. Do you remember Genesis 3:15? Well that’s the ancient promise first given of the coming of the Messiah in which it is said that the seed of the woman will crush the head

of the serpent. That is probably the oldest theory of the atonement, that is that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ has to do with Satan. Now the apostles teach that, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches it. It's called by some the Classic Theory of the Atonement. And so, here it is alluded to, “Of judgment because the prince of this world has been judged.”

Now I want to ask you a question as we come to the conclusion of our study tonight. One might ask the question, and I think it would be a question that a thinking person would want to ask the apostles, if it is true that when the Holy Spirit comes he is going to perform this work with reference to the world, by the way, incidentally, I meant to say something about this, but this is the only place in the Bible so far as I know in which it is stated that the Holy Spirit has a ministry to the world. Now I'm not saying there are not references to his ministry in other places, but this is the only place where it is said that he has a ministry to the world.

Now if the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment, the natural question that we would ask would be, it seems to me, how is he going to do this? How is he going to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment? What is the form that this conviction takes, this work of convicting? Well, always in the study of the Bible, read the context. Now will you look at 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.” Now notice that the comforter is to come unto the believers. Then verse 8, “And when he is come,” and we should understand, it seems to me, to you because he's just made reference to it in verse 7, “And when he is come (to you), he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” I conclude from this then that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment through believers. It is through them that he does his work.

Now, of course, I do not want to suggest that it's impossible for the Holy Spirit to work directly in the salvation of a soul. We no doubt know of an illustration or two of

this, but I dare say that in almost every case in which you know the circumstances of a person's conversion it will be because some means have been used by the Holy Spirit, a word from an individual, a tract given to an individual, a Bible placed in the hands of an individual, a sermon heard, a Bible teaching message given, some means.

Coming home on the plane yesterday from London I was reading a doctrinal dissertation on William Perkins. And a stewardess, as she came by, I noticed she stopped once or twice and she looked down, saw what I was reading. She was a little hesitant about saying anything. But finally she did say something, and we engaged in conversation. She is a young Catholic girl, has been a stewardess for a number of years. And it seems to me from our conversation that she was interested in spiritual things. The Holy Spirit had begun to work in her. But she had some other stewardesses on the plane who were Christians evidently, and they had taken her to a Bible class. And they had also put in her hands a Bible, not a very good one, but a Bible. It was a part of the Living Bible and some other non-sense associated with it. [Laughter] And I'm kidding a little bit. I told her that it was. You could find the gospel in it. [Laughter] Fortunately I had the New International Version with me, and I said this is really something that you would find more useful than that. One of the other stewardesses said, “Yes I've got one of those.” But it was obvious that this girl who was not yet a Christian, afterwards she asked the location of Believers Chapel and the time of the services. I hope she does show up sometime, but it's obvious that if she is brought to the knowledge of the Lord it's through means, through her friends, through the Bible put in her hands, through other material, through conversation. Almost every instance of a person's salvation is through some means of another Christian.

So when he says, “When he has come,” we understand, “When he has come to you, he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment.” It is by the walk of the believers. It's by the witness of the believers. It's by the worship of the believers

that they are to be brought to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does his convicting work through the believing body.

Take the Ethiopian Eunuch. He was riding along in his chariot, reading the Septuagint of the Book of Isaiah. Now he didn't need Philip. What was the need of Philip if he had the word of God and he had the Holy Spirit, what was the use of having the evangelist? But God moved on the heart of the evangelist, and moved on the heart of the evangelist so that he left a place where he had been very fruitful in ministry and had brought a number of people to the knowledge of the Lord through his preaching, left, he went down into this desert place to speak to this one man, and when he came up alongside, he said, “What are you reading?” Well he gave out a text from Isaiah. He said, “How do you understand it?” He said, “How can I understand it except someone should guide me?” So Philip got on the running board, got in the chariot, and right at that point opened to him the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the means by which the Holy Spirit reproved him of sin, righteousness, judgment and then worked effectually in him to the salvation of his soul.

The same thing is true of Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius was a man who had already been the recipient of common grace. And why should not the Holy Spirit then just give him efficacious grace apart from the apostle? But no, he had to go all the way down to where Peter was a bring Peter up into the presence of Cornelius in his house and give him the message to preach in order that through the means of the apostle he might be brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Peter spoke to him words by which he was saved.

Now, then, that means that every Christian, according to this, indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be one of the instrumentalities in the completion of the spirits work of convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now there is another thing that I think we can say, and this is a deduction. But I think it's a valid deduction. If it is true that the Holy Spirit is the one who convinces of sin, righteousness and judgment, Oh

how much emphasis we must place in our preaching and teaching upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can really convict of sin, righteousness and judgment, how important it is then for believers to learn how to be an instrument of the Holy Spirit. One of the difficulties with the Christian church today is that they are so interested in methods that they have neglected the most important thing and that is making contact with the Holy Spirit and learning of him and his methods in bringing men to Christ. He is the only person who can truly bring conviction and conversion. Therefore he should be preeminent in all of the things that we do.

Now I wish it were possible for us to illustrate this in a more specific way in the New Testament. I suggest that it could be done. We could turn to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. And it's very interesting, I think, in the light of this to note that in the earlier part of the sermon Peter speaks about sin, and it was the sin of the crucifixion of Christ. It was the sin of the wicked men in unbelief who hung him on the cross. Then he speaks about righteousness, and finally he speaks about judgment. And the Holy Spirit was so active in the ministry of the Apostle Peter that when he got through he didn't have to say; now we're going to sing three verses of "Just As I Am" and have an invitation. [Laughter] There was no need to give the invitation because the crowd gave the invitation. They said, "Men, brethren, what shall we do?" That's the kind of preaching that is given by the Holy Spirit. When men are brought under conviction and then brought to conversion, regeneration and they cry out for the word that means life. May God help us to realize the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit individually and learn how to be an instrument of him in conviction and conversion. Evidently all of us are to be means for the expression of the common grace of God through us.

Now efficacious grace is the sovereign distinctive work of the Holy Spirit who here and there brings some under conviction to conversion. We leave that in the hands of the Lord, but he wants us all to be instruments. May God help us. In Believers Chapel I do believe, I earnestly believe that in the classes that are taught at Believers Chapel we have

the word of God taught purely. I don't know, now people are going to say, “Isn't he arrogant and proud?” Maybe so, but I'm trying to be honest. I don't know of many places where the word of God is taught as purely as it is taught here. I speak not simply of my teaching, but I think also that if that is true, I believe it's true, that there also should be a pure expression of the outreach of the Holy Spirit. May God help us to realize that to for his glory. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful words that the Lord Jesus left with the apostles. And we are grateful that we are able to ponder them. Oh God help us to be instruments in the expression of the grace of God, both common and effectual. Enable us Lord to be instruments that Thou canst use. By Thy grace, reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment through us. And oh Father, may we be pure vessels. How often we sin. How we displease Thee. May the Holy Spirit work mightily in sanctifying grace to bring us to the likeness of Christ and help us to be used for Thy glory. Deliver us from pride and arrogance. May there be a true humility that is attractive. And may the Holy Spirit work in distinguishing grace and gather in the whole of the body of Christ. We look forward to the day when the Lord Jesus shall return. And we express as our prayer...