



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 16:5-11

“The Spirit and the World”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading this morning we are turning to John chapter 16, verse 5 through verse 11. In the 5th verse of John chapter 16 in the midst of the Upper Room Discourse our Lord says,

“But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 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 judgment: (Let me just say one thing with reference to the word “reprove” and the little word “of” before sin and righteousness and judgment. The word reprove most of us I think would say has something like the sense of to rebuke and the Greek word may bear that meaning at times it does. There is another word in the New Testament more frequently translated “rebuke”. But this may be very close to the sense, but it probably is not quite on the point. And it’s probably more accurate to say that it means to convince. Now not necessarily convince in the sense that a person responds positively to it, but convince of the truth about. And that I think is the sense of the “of”. Therefore this verse

the 8th verse, I think would be better rendered, at least better understood, if we rendered it “when he has come he will convince the world of the facts about sin. And of the facts about righteousness, and of the facts about judgment.” And now our Lord continues.) Of the facts about sin, because they believe not on me; Of the facts about righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of the facts about judgment, because the prince of this world is or has been judged.”

Now that verb is in a past tense, and so the point has reference not to the future, but to something that is to take place in the near future, and in fact our Lord writes as if it has taken place he refers essentially to the judgment that took place on the cross. So of the facts about judgment because the prince of this world has been judged. As often in these last statements that our Lord makes he writes as if the cross has taken place. Or he speaks as if the cross has taken place. In a moment, he will say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” But of course he still has to accomplish the saving work on Calvary’s cross. May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we approach Thee through the Holy Spirit whom the Lord Jesus has promised who has come and who ministers through us to the spiritual well being of the world about us. We know Lord we so often fail in the responsiveness to the Spirit’s ministry that we should have, but nevertheless Thou hast said that it is through the work of the Holy Spirit who ministers through believers that the work of God is accomplished, and we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity that is given to us to all believers to be instrumentalities in the progress of the program of our great triune God. We often are awed Lord as we think of the greatness of the responsibility and the greatness of the privilege and we pray that Thou wilt enable us to understand and respond to this solemn privilege that is ours.

Help us to appreciate the depth of the privilege that we do have and the depth of the responsibility that rests upon the believing church of Jesus Christ. Deliver us Lord from the superficialities and the shallowness that is so often characteristic of our lives, and help us to think deeply about the divine things. We know, Lord, that it is a sanctifying influence in our lives to reflect upon the ultimate truths. The truths of our great God and of the salvation that has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and of the work of the Holy Spirit who is in our midst and continuing to perform all of the spiritual ministries as the Lord Jesus Christ directs him. We thank Thee that he has come into our hearts and that we cry, “Abba Father,” through him. We are appreciative, Lord, and we pray that our understanding may grow, that we may be more appreciative of what Thou hast done for us.

We pray for the entire body of Jesus Christ today, the whole church with all of their different thoughts about various things, but yet with their unifying thought of trust in Christ we pray that Thy blessing, Thy hand of blessing may be upon the whole church of Jesus Christ. Father, we are grateful for each individual member and pray for those in Believer's Chapel particularly. Bless them richly. Sanctify them through the influences of the word of God and through the experiences of life.

And we pray particularly for those who are ill and sick. Especially, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt minister to them and accomplish Thy perfect will in their lives, and give healing. We thank Thee that Thou art the great God able to do anything that Thou doest desire, and we commit the sick, and the infirm into Thy hands, and for those who are passing through difficult experiences Lord we pray for them. Supply their needs too. We thank Thee for the privilege of ministry, and we pray for the Chapel. We ask Lord for its officers and its elders and its deacons, its Sunday school teachers, and others who teach the word of God and seek to strengthen the body of Christ. Lord, we need the ministry of the Holy Spirit we need the ministry of the triune God, and we pray that we may be the recipients of it drawn closer to Thee and to one another in the body of Christ.

We commit this hour to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon it as the word of God is opened. And Lord we also ask that Thou will be with us in the meeting this evening as we remember our Lord and the shedding of his blood and the given of his body. May our communion as we commune with Thee through him be pleasing to Thee and edifying for us? For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today is The Spirit and the World. The Lord Jesus in the Upper Room Discourse has been speaking of his departure from the eleven, and he has also been speaking of the resulting persecution that they may expect to have, and this persecution he relates to the fact that the world has persecuted him and since they are united to the Lord they may expect the same kind of persecution from the world. And so of course in the light of the fact that they face this persecution because of the hatred of the world of them and of the Lord he turns them now to the resources that they have against the hatred that the world will express to them and of course he desires to comfort them because he knows of the experiences that they are going to pass through. There are some experiences that are going to lead them to despair. They are going to dread the fact that the world in response to them responds as it did to the Lord Jesus in its crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, and so naturally in seeking to buy them up for the life that is before them, his thoughts turn to the ministry of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the vicar of Christ in the midst of the church.

We often think of the Old Testament as being the age of the Father for the simple reason that the Old Testament speaks very prominently of the Father, the first person of the Trinity. Then we speak of the age of our Lord's earthly ministry as the age of the Son because he is the prominent person. As we read the gospels of course the Lord Jesus is preeminent. The present day has been called the age of the Holy Spirit because on the day of Pentecost he came in the fullness of his ministries and during this age he carries them out. So today is the age of the Spirit, and it's not surprising the Lord Jesus should

therefore turn in the Upper Room Discourse preparing them for the coming of the Spirit and preparing them also for the support that he will give them.

Now that brings us face to face to the Spirit's ministry to the world, and this is the only place so far as I remember that the Bible speaks of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world. And its ministry is very important because he is to convince the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, and of the facts about judgment. One immediately senses that this ministry that the Lord has with reference to the world introduces us to some questions, spiritual questions, theological questions if you would like to call them that that are important for our understanding. First of all it introduces us to what has been know as common grace.

Common grace incidentally is not called common because it's common but rather because it is general. That is the grace of the Holy Spirit in his general blessing to all creatures, even animals. Every living thing is the object of the blessing of God. And consequently the fact that we have food, the fact that we have drink, the fact that we have clothing, the fact that we have the Son and the benefits of the Son and the fact that we have the rain which ministers to our ultimate physical benefit, all of this is part of the general grace of God exercised towards his creatures. Then the general operations to the Holy Spirit by which he without renewing our hearts and giving us the new birth exercises a moral influence in human society. Is it not an interesting thing that all over the world in almost every society there is a sense of right and wrong? Sometimes it is not quite the same sense that one would find in more enlightened societies more spiritually in lightened societies, but nevertheless there is a universal sense of a conscious, which men recognize that things are right and some things are wrong. This is part of God's common grace. He exercises moral influence. He curbs sin. He promotes order.

Universal human government is the gift of God. If we didn't have common grace we would have utter chaos all over the world. I know some of you think that we already have utter chaos, but you have no idea of what chaos would be if we did not have

human government. That is part of the common grace of God. And then also those general operations of the Holy Spirit by which he seeks to influence men toward redemption, although not securing redemption, may be called common grace. In other words the Lord Jesus says many are called, but few are chosen. The calling of men is common grace. When the gospel is preached that is the common grace of God it is a general seeking on the part of God to influence society for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that may be expressed more particularly in a situation like this. Let us just image that there is a man who is a believer and there is his wife who is a non-believer. And let us suppose that a child is born to them. The Bible says that child is sanctified. Now it does not say the child is saved. It says the child is sanctified. That is set apart for divine influences so that the child of a believing parent is a sanctified child because of the influence and privilege that may come from the one parent who has come to the knowledge of the truth. That is common grace. It's one of the greatest of the blessings that God bestows upon a family. When one is a believer and the children are set apart, have special influence from the believing parent.

This explains also how it is that the world calls certain individuals who are not Christians good men. Why are non-Christians religious? I remember a conversation that a friend of mine had with a friend of hers a few years back and they were discussing the fact that one of their mutual friends had died, and the friend of my Christian friend said, “Well he was a very good man.” And my friend who also knew them said, “But he was not a believer.” And the other friend expressed a bit of surprise, “But he was such a good man.” And my friend said, “But he was not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and not a Christian.” “Oh but he did attend church regularly.” And my Christian friend insisted, “But he was not a believer in Jesus Christ. He had rejected the gospel.” “But he was a very good member of the community a benevolent man. In fact, a very philanthropic man.” But the Christian friend continued to give a testimony and said, “But he was not a believer

in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Well finally the conversation ended on the statement. “But he was such a good man.”

Now of course from the standpoint of Scripture there is no such thing as a good work performed by an unbeliever because the Bible says that a good work is one that flows out of a faith in Jesus Christ for the glory of God. Now looking at it outwardly we in the world say, “He was a good man.” Many Christians say that, and they mean he was a good man by human standards. Human standards are different from different from divine standards. Human standards are, “He is a good man if he lived a generally morally upright life. That is he was good to the members of his family. He was an individual who paid his taxes, who lived as a good citizen, was a law abiding citizen and a kindly individual, and we would say, “He was a good man.” But those are human standards. That kind of goodness does not avail before God. A good work before God is a work that flows out of faith for the glory of God. Only Christians can do good works.

Now when the Bible says that a man is not saved by works, but by the grace of God, the Bible refers to the works of the Mosaic Law. “For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast.” So it is clear that so far as the Scriptures are concerned no good work can be done by a man who is not a Christian, except in so far as we modify the definition by giving it a human definition. That explains why we say, “But he was such a good man.” Why of course he was a good man by human standards, and furthermore any goodness that you might call legitimate goodness in the sense that he did subject himself to the authorities, which Christians ought to do. That was the product of the working of common grace. In other words God has ministered to all men in common grace.

Now then of course the Bible also speaks of efficacious grace. That is the grace of God that brings a man to salvation in Christ. That of course is the grace that saves. That’s the thing that the Lord Jesus speaks about when he says, “No man can come except the Father who hath sent me. Draw him.” That is the drawing work of the Father by which

a person is brought to faith in Christ. That is efficacious grace. It is effectual in the eternal salvation of an individual. The Lord Jesus speaks of it in that same 6th chapter of John in the 37th verse when he says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” Coming to him is the product of the divine efficacious grace. Then in verse 65 when he says, “Therefore said I unto you that no man can come to me except it were given unto him of my Father.” That too is efficacious grace that brings an individual to the Lord Jesus Christ. Other individuals who will say, “Oh but that seems so unfair that common grace should be given to all, and efficacious grace given only to some.” Incidentally now that you have heard that you have no excuse. But anyway there are individuals who think this of course is very unfair.

Now I only ask you for the sake of time to read Romans chapter 9. The Apostle Paul answers that objections that we raise, and incidentally if you are spreading the Gospel of the Apostle Paul you will be raising those same objections and the apostle answers them in Romans 9, verse 14 and following. William Perkins, one of the greatest of the reformed preachers in the 17th century, rather in the 16th century, near the end of the 16th, and he lived into the beginning of the 17th century. He was the preacher at great Saint Andrew Church in Cambridge, England, replied to the accusation that God was unjust by saying, “God doeth wrong none, although he choose not all because he is tied to none, and because he hath absolute sovereignty and authority over all preachers.” In other words we are all guilty. We are all undone. We are all sinners. We all justly deserve eternal lostness, and if God should reach down and save some, we praise him for his grace, but he is perfectly just in what he does. And we will discover when we get to heaven that he is absolutely just.

Occasionally you will find people so objecting to the doctrine of divine choice that they actually refuse the general grace of God. They fight against it. I can remember William G.T. Shedd writing a paragraph about this, and he says, “A sinner who has repulsed the mercy of God in common grace and demands that God grant a yet larger

degree virtually says to the infinite one, Thou hast tried once to convert me from sin. Now try again and try harder the next time.” It’s as if a person should give us five dollars, and we refuse five, demanding that he give us ten. And the same thing is true with reference to the common grace of God and the special efficacious grace of God.

When an individual reacts so negatively to the grace of God in common grace and in the influences that God expends in seeking to bring men to Christ, he has no excuse whatsoever and cannot say, “He should have given me ten dollars instead of five.”

Well the Lord Jesus has spoken of the coming Spirit and so now he turns to consider his office and his work. And first of all he speaks of the Spirit concerning himself, and so in verse 5 through verse 7 we read these words, “But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.”

One might if he were a careful student of the Upper Room Discourse have remember that the Lord Jesus did hear from the disciples a question like that. Chapter 13 in verse 36 reads this way, “Simon Peter said unto him, Lord whither goest Thou?” So how can the Lord Jesus say here in verse 5, “But I go my way to him that sent me and none of you asketh me whither goest Thou.”? Peter has just said just a few moments before, “Whither goest Thou?”

Well if you look at these verses carefully you will see that the sense in which Peter asked where are you going is quite different from the sense in which our Lord says, “None of you is saying where are you going.” Because in the case of Peter’s question he was only interested in himself. That’s evident because Jesus said, “Because I have said these things unto you sorrow hath filled your heart.” And so he said, “Where are you going?” because he felt he would miss the Lord so, and he didn’t know exactly what he would do. So his, “Whither goest Thou?” is not so much directed toward where our Lord is going, but if you go you are leaving us. So the sense of the two expressions, though they are the same in their specific statement is quite different. They are thinking

only of their loss, not of the gain that our Lord would obtain by going to heaven. There is of course a kind of interest in the historic Jesus today that characterizes New Testament scholarship. They are not so much interested in what our Lord is doing in heaven as they say, “We are interested in the historical Jesus.”

Now it's important to be interested in the historical Jesus. That is that he was really a historical figure and that he really did say the things that he is reported to have said, but its far more important to be interested in the Jesus who is in heaven today, and also in what he has accomplished by one time living out his life in our history here upon the earth. Well there are a couple of questions that might arise from his concern. He says, 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.”

Well two questions pose themselves from that statement. First of all why must the Lord go? Why didn't he just stay here? Why didn't he just accompany the apostles? Accompany them in their ministry and then bless their ministry and then stay with us? Why does he have to leave us? Well I am sure that most of you sitting in this audience could answer that question very easily. He must go because he must die upon the cross. He must be buried. He must be raised from the dead. He must to the right hand of the Father. He must there receive the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to him upon the successful of his mediatorial work, and then he must shed forth the gift of the Holy Spirit. Well if you said that you would be right. Further he must accomplish his saving work in order that there may be a faith union between the people of God and our risen head, and we are united to him because he has accomplished his work for us.

And then there are other things that we might say. He must of course go in order that he might be glorified because it's the work of the Spirit to glorify a glorified Christ, and he must be glorified so that the work of the Spirit in this age may be a work in which he glorifies Jesus Christ. And we might even say that he must go because it is only

by his going and his poring out the Holy Spirit that in this age all believers enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is unique to this age. That's why he said, “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 to you.” So the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a permanent way is dependant upon what he would accomplish on the cross.

That doesn't mean of course that the Holy Spirit does not regenerate in the Old Testament. Last night one of my friends called me as he frequently does at 12:30, and we had a theological discussion. And this came up in the discussion. He had been speaking with someone who has insisted that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit did not regenerate, and we discussed and we were in harmony that the Holy Spirit did regenerate in the Old Testament, but he did not permanently indwell. That's plain from John chapter 7 in verse 37 through verse 39, and the interpretation that John the apostle puts on the words of our Lord. The Lord stood up in the last day, the great day of the feast and said, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the Scripture has said, out his belly shall flow rivers of living water (And then John adds an interpretative word. He says,) This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” So the glorification of the Lord Jesus was necessary in order that the Spirit be given so that every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ might be indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit. That's a magnificent blessing that every believer has.

I got a letter from the radio ministry just about two weeks ago in which one of the listeners spoke about what a tremendous blessing it had been to hear that the Holy Spirit indwells permanently all believers. You know sometimes in Believer's Chapel when we hear the word of God over and over again we loose some of the sense of the freshness of the blessing of God because it's become so common to us.

Another question one might have is why must he go before the Spirit comes? Well as I said, the promise is given to the federal head, to the Lord Jesus, the promise of the Spirit. And it is he who will shed forth the Spirit as our federal or covenantal head. He accomplishes the saving work. The Spirit's gift is given to him, and he gives the Spirit to the people of God through the Holy Spirit. So in Acts chapter 2 in verse 33 in the midst of Peter's great sermon he says, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost he hath shed froth this which you now see and hear.” So what happened on the Day of Pentecost was our Lord had now ascended to the right hand of the Father. The Father on the appointed day gave him the promise of the Holy Spirit and he in turn shed forth the Holy Spirit. This day is the age of the Holy Spirit because of our Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit to the church of Jesus Christ. That's what he means when he says, “It's expedient for you that I go away.” It's to your benefit that I go away.

Now the apostles needed to have their minds stretch. Everybody's mind is stretched when they think about divine things. And their minds were stretched as the Lord Jesus expressed to them that it was for their good that he go. They had him with them but they did not have him always with them. If one was in Bethany and another was in Nazareth he was either in Bethany or he was in Nazareth. He was not with both. But now through the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus will be with all of his disciples and all of the day. So it's expedient that he go away. And the Holy Spirit come because all of us may share in the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at all times.

Now what a blessing that is, what a tremendous blessing it is to know that he is with us all of the moments of every day. Nothing could be more wonderful than that that was won by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross for the people of God. Now he goes on to say that when he is come, the Holy Spirit, he will carry on a specific work. He will convince the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, and of the facts about judgment. Now if he has spoken about the Spirit regarding Christ here he

speaks about the Spirit concerning the world. He’s already said the Spirit is our helper, and our advocate, but now he becomes the prosecutor of the world. He will convince the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness and of the facts about judgment.

Incidentally I ask you a question. Does world here mean everybody without exception? Will he convince everybody without exception of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, of the facts about judgment? Well of course not. In other words the term world as we have said over and over again, I apologize for those of you who understand this, but I have to keep saying it because there are always some who have never heard, and then there are some who though they hear five, ten, fifteen, twenty times don’t respond.

Now the sense here when our Lord uses the term world is not everybody without exception, but everybody without distinction. Jew and Gentile. So he will convince the world not simply minister to Jewish people, but he will convince the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness of the facts about judgment.

Now let us think about his convincing the world of the facts about sin. Notice he says, “He will convince the world of the facts about sin because they do not keep the Ten Commandments.” “Well no, my Bible does not read that way. You must have a variant reading, Dr. Johnson.” No I don’t of course I’m just trying to stress the fact that he says, he will convince the world of the facts about sin because they do not believe on me. In other words the essence of sin is not what we do. The essence of sin is what we believe. And when we do not believe in the Lord Jesus that is the root of all sin.

The reason for example that Eve conceived it in her mind to take of the fruit as Satan tempted her was ultimately the fact that she did not believe the word that God has spoken to Adam and to her. The fact that she finally said, “I will take of it.” That was the moment she sinned and then as she had originated this desire within herself for this particular piece of fruit and reached out and took it she was only following through from

the sin that had already taken place in her heart. She sinned before she took of the fruit, but took of the fruit to complete her sin and the same thing with Adam. When he responded he had sinned, and then he took of the fruit and ate it. It was the result of what he did. Later on when Cain rose up against Able and slew his brother he did it out of unbelief.

Now immorality is sin, but sin is the root of immorality. The reason men do the various acts of evil, adultery, murder, thievery, burglary, eternal cetera is ultimately because they do not believe. They do not believe that such an act will ultimately bring them into divine judgment. So the Lord Jesus said he will convince the world of the facts about sin because they believe not in me. We have such strange ideas about what is sin and what is not. The world needs to have right thinking about sin. We think of a person as a sinner as one who has been guilty of some great flagrant out breaking kind of sin. If you tell a man that he is a great sinner in the sight of God he thinks you are accusing him of being a blasphemer or of being an adulterer, or a murder or a perjurer, or some kind of sin like that, but without any of these things a man may be a deep and great sinner against God. There are many diseases that have no corresponding outward symptoms. It is said for example in the great London plague of many years ago that if there appeared in the cheek one little round sign, one little red spot. That was the sign of death and death inevitably came. The symptom was very innocuous looking. But it was the sign of approaching death.

Now in the case of individuals the symptoms may be expressed in adultery and thievery and burglary, but the cause of our eternal condemnation is unbelief. The Lord Jesus says, “He, the Holy Spirit will convince the world of the facts about sin because they believe not on me.” Do you know that even in our own specific sins there are sins that we commit. Well those are the symptoms, and there are sins that we are guilty of because we do not do something. In fact three of the most damning accusations against men are negative things, things that they did not do. Here is one of them of sin because

they believe not on me. The Lord Jesus in one of his statements in the Olivet Discourse says, “In as much they did it not unto them, they did it not unto me.” Did it not, and then Paul says, “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be an Athena.” Love not. Did it not. Believe not. They are all negative things, but nevertheless they are damning sins. Sins because individuals have not done what they should do.

When I grew up in a Presbyterian church we learned the Cataclysm. And we learned there were such things as sins of omission and there were sins of commission. We tend to think of the sins of commission and forget the things that are the sins of omission, but they are just as much sin, so the Lord speaks about the malady and he says incidentally sin, not sins sin, the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, the malady not the symptoms because they believe not in me. The person who is the sinner before God is the person who has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a difference that makes. That means if you should be a very religious man, if you should be a steward in your Methodist church or a deacon in your Baptist church or an elder in your Presbyterian church and if you should be a model citizen and that if you should be an individual who always pays your taxes and is good to your family and good to your friends a likeable wonderful kind of guy it's just as possible for you to be a great sinner in the sight of God if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say you must be born again. And that includes all of us, so the work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of the facts about sin. Many of the things that we do that the world considers good, we do for personal glory, for personal acceptance. And then they come under the judgment of God.

Now then he goes on to say that the Holy Spirit is going to convince the world of righteousness because I go to my Father and ye see me no more. If the first of our Lord's convincing is with reference to sin this one is worth reference to man. And notice it's not the worlds' unrighteousness that the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of here, but of

his righteousness. The Holy Spirit will convince the world of righteousness because I go to the Father and ye see me no more.

Now what is it about our Lord's going to the Father that convinces the world of righteousness? Why does that convince the world of righteousness of the facts about righteousness if the Lord Jesus goes to the Father? Well now remember the world is a body of people who cannot receive the Holy Spirit, who not only cannot receive the Holy Spirit but who hate the Lord Jesus Christ. The world likes to put on a lot of veneer today and so the world will speak with kindly little phrases about the Lord Jesus like he was a great teacher. He was good man. He really was a little step above the rest of us, but he was just a man. Not realizing that is a blasphemy, and furthermore how can a person who was just a good man but not the eternal God say that he was the Son of God and affirm that salvation is only through him? All of these statements then become the most arrogant of lies if Jesus is not what he claimed to be. But the world likes to say, “Yes, he was a good guy.”

Well the world hates the Lord Jesus Christ. The world hates the Lord Jesus because he condemns the world. And the world's righteousness is unrighteousness in the sight of the triune God so when the Lord Jesus came and ministered among them, what did the world do to him? They crucified him. That expresses the idea that God has concerning the goodness of the world. They have with wicked hands taken him and crucified him. But God when Jesus was placed in the grave on the third day God raised him from the dead. And furthermore he has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there he sits as William Perkins says, “Possessed of all sovereignty and authority over the whole of the creation.” Evidentially God has a different view of Jesus Christ from the view that the world has of him. The world says he's worthy to die, and to be crucified on a cross. God says, he is worthy to be raised from the dead. He is worthy to sit at the right hand of the throne on high. He is worthy to have put into his hands all authority in heaven and in earth and to give the Holy Spirit to his people.

In other words heaven stands on the side of Jesus Christ and the world stands in opposition to heaven. The Scriptures say the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because the world stands under the judgment of God and the fact that the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father is the divine affirmation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the unrighteousness of the world. That's why he says, “The Holy Spirit when he comes he will convince the world of righteousness because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” And what I have just said to you is part of the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing the world of righteousness. That's what I am here to do. That's what you as believers are here to do as well.

Now finally he says, “He will convince the world of judgment.” Now one might think he will convince the world of the judgment that is to come. There are hell fire and damnation preachers. The tendency of our modern age is to make fun of such. Well I would like for you to know that the apostles were hell, fire and damnation preachers. And further more the one person in the New Testament who speaks more about hell than anyone else is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. In fact I'm doing this in my memory, but in the New Testament in the expression of hell fire itself. I think every time that the expression, “Gahanna” is used, every time but one it is on the lips of the Lord Jesus. If any one is a hell, fire and damnation preacher it is Jesus of Nazareth. Let us be careful how we play with the words of Scripture.

Now the Holy Spirit will convince the world of judgment not of their future judgment although of course that is plain, but of judgment because the prince of this world has been judged. So our Lord looks at the fast approaching cross of Calvary where he will bear the sins of sinners and that by which Satan has a hold upon men will be destroyed because Jesus will bear the penalty. And Satan is judged in the cross. And men who believe in the Lord Jesus go free from bondage and penalty and condemnation of sin. He speaks not of judgment to come, but of the judgment that now has come when

he died on the cross at Calvary. So the death on the cross was a judgment of sin in the person of our substitute the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me close by just offering a question, a deduction, and a word concerning an illustration. How does the Spirit convince the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness and of the facts about judgment? Does he do this in some mysterious spiritual way? Does he do this as a kind of floating influence in our society? No. Our Lord is very plain. He says, in the 7th verse, “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 he will convince.” So the Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgment through us. The world cannot receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We receive the ministry of Holy Spirit, and we are the instrumentalities by which the world is to be brought to conviction and convincing of sin, righteousness and judgment. And that is to be done through the walk of the Christian, through the witness of the Christian, through the prayers of the Christian, through the worship of the Christian.

Take the Ethiopian eunuch. He was a man who was under the influence of common grace. He went up to Jerusalem to worship the Scriptures say. But he was outside of Christ. He went there and he returned later still a lost individual. Religion does not save. But while he was there, he evidently heard those debates between Stephen and Paul and others and he thought I better go get a scroll of one of the books of the Old Testament because Stephen whose witness they could not resist, either the Spirit or power of it had refuted his own synagogue, and so in his Hellenistic synagogue he had seen the word of God through Stephen’s preaching bring home great conviction of wrongness. And so he went out and he got himself a text of the Book of Isaiah, a little scroll. It may have been in the Septuagint Greek text because when you read Acts chapter 8 the specific kind of text there is the text that is found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. I can just imagine the fellow behind the counter saying, “I am sorry.

I don't have any Hebrew scroll.” And he would say, “Well to tell you the truth I don't read Hebrew very well, but I do have over here a copy of the Greek text of the Book of Isaiah and the Ethiopian eunuch was a rather wealthy fellow and had a chariot, he said, “That's what I want. Whatever it is I'll buy it.”

Now here is an individual who had been in the city. Had heard debates perhaps and above all he was reading the text of the Bible. And he's traveling along in the desert and the Holy Spirit speaks to Phillip over here in the midst of a revivals and he says, “Go out into the dessert.” And so he goes out into the dessert and they meet. He sees the man in his chariot and he runs up along side the chariot, and he says as he hears him reading out loud. They read out loud in those days, as he hears him reading out loud he said, “do you understand what you read?” and the Eunuch said, “How can in except some man should guide me?” The very word that the Lord will use in a moment about the Spirit guiding us into all truth. And so Phillip jumped on the running board of his chariot and at the place where he was reading in Isaiah chapter 53, now wasn't that a coincidence? That was a good Armenian coincidence. It just so happened that he was reading Isaiah chapter 53. Well no of course God had worked all of these things so that he appeared at the precise moment that he was reading Isaiah chapter 53 because the Eunuch was to be brought into the family of God, and so Phillip at the place at which he was reading preached unto him Jesus.

Now I ask you a question. Could he not have been brought to faith by the word of God? Why of course. He didn't need Phillip, but God has in this age generally speaking, determined that individuals come to faith in Christ through the church of Christ, the true church of Christ, through the witness, through the walk, through the worship, through the words of believers, so Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit I will send to you and the Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.” So right at this very moment he is using me as I hope he uses you constantly through this week to be an instrumentality in the communication of the message of God.

One could give illustration after illustration. Cornelius a good man, who had received common grace, a man in high regard, but an individual to whom it was said, “Go to Peter, and he will tell you words whereby you must be saved.” One could illustrate this very beautifully if there were time by looking at Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost because it is a magnificent unfolding of the Holy Spirit convincing those who were listening of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, and of the facts about judgment in proper order so that finally when Peter is finishing his message and says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord in Christ they were pricked in their heart, and they said, unto peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?” and Peter says, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins.” That’s the work of the Holy Spirit with reference to the world through the believers in convincing the world of the facts about sin, of the facts about righteousness, of the facts about judgment, and then in giving the gift of special grace by which some in the world are brought to faith in Christ. May God do that later work right now in this audience?

If there are some here who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who offered the atoning sacrifice on the cross at Calvary, if you have felt the Holy Spirit’s conviction, and that you are a sinner and that you are under the judgment of God flee to the forgiveness of sins found in the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. You become a Christian not by praying through, not by good works, not by joining the church, not by observing the ordinances, good things in themselves perhaps, some of them definitely good things. You become a Christian however by believing in Christ. May God help you? May God the Holy Spirit bring you to that faith and trust that means eternal salvation. Come to Christ. Believe in him.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent section of instruction, which the Lord Jesus gave the apostles because it has such meaning for us today in 1983.

We sense Lord that we are the instrumentalities in the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing the world of the facts about sin, righteousness and judgment. Oh God, help us in our Christian testimony, in our Christian activity, in our Christian lives in the contacts we have to be an instrument in the spreading of the gospel of Christ. Go with us now. For Jesus' sake. Amen.