

Cut to the Heart!

By Dr. Steven J. Lawson

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Nehemiah 8
Preached on: Monday, March 12, 2018

Grace Gems!
15455 Glenoaks Blvd. #534
Sylmar, CA 91342

Website: www.gracegems.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gracegems

Turn to the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah 8, and the theme of this conference is "Awakening," and I want us to look at an awakening that takes place in Scripture, one that is not conceived by man or conjured up by a committee but an awakening that has come down out of heaven and has impacted the people of God. It is the awakening that took place under the preaching of Ezra in the days of Nehemiah as they gathered at the Water Gate.

The title of this message is "Cut to the Core," or "Cut to the Heart." It was up there a second ago. I want to begin by reading the text. Nehemiah 8,

1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning [that would be about 6 AM] until midday [that would be noon], in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose.

I remember one time Dr. Sproul telling me, "Tell the people it was not a plexiglass pulpit." And verse 5,

5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 [At the end of verse 7] the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

Now give special note beginning in verse 9,

9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved."

Throughout redemptive history, every great awakening has always been accompanied by deep conviction of sin. In these mighty movements of God, the word of God is proclaimed and hearts are cut to the core and souls are laid bare before God. Sin that has long been suppressed is now suddenly exposed and consciences are smitten and guilt escalates and deep sorrow over sin comes. Conviction of sin becomes intolerable and laughter is turned into weeping and joy is turned into gloom and heaviness of heart settles upon the people like a thick fog, and in that heart-rending experience in the day of God's visitation, sin is confessed and repentance runs deep and Jesus is embraced and the soul is cleansed and forgiveness is received. In every awakening, it is a painful experience. There is no soft or easy awakening because an awakening brings with it an awakening to the holiness of God and an awakening to the unholiness of the individual. Sin that has long been tolerated, sin that has long been excused and ignored, sin that has long been minimized and suppressed, sin that has long been hidden and denied, is now suddenly brought to the surface and there is weeping and there is grief under the realization that, "My sin has been a violation of the holiness of God." This is precisely what transpired in this revival, this awakening at the Water Gate, and those who heard the word of the Lord were pierced to the depths of their soul and they were cut to the core as there was a new awareness of their own sin and they cry out to God for relief. What we see in this passage is a prototype of every awakening and every genuine heaven-sent revival, and the weeping will turn into joy but it begins with deep conviction of sin.

As we look at this text, I'm going to set before you three headings and the first is found in verse 1. I want you to note the cry for God's word. In verse 1 we read, "And all the people gathered as one man." Commentators tell us that there were as few as 30,000 people, as many as 50,000 people, probably somewhere in the neighborhood of north of 40,000 people gathered here. It was an enormous assembly of people and they gathered as one man, meaning they were there for one purpose, they were there in one place with one mind as they gathered in the square which was in front of the Water Gate on the east side of Jerusalem and the time was the first day of the seventh month which was the equivalent of the beginning of the new year in the Jewish calendar. It was like, "We want to start the new year right with God. We want the word of God brought to us." And this was a time in which they were to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was a time for the public ministry of the word of God.

So these multiplied thousands of people making this group look like a small group Bible study, they were all gathered there and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book, "to

bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to [them]." The people understood the one man in this nation who knows the word of God better than anyone else is Ezra, and 14 years earlier Ezra had returned to the Promised Land from Babylonian captivity in the second return. In Ezra 7:10 it says Ezra devoted himself to the law of the Lord, he "set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."

So for 14 years Ezra has been digging, digging into the word of God and so now on this occasion, they call for Ezra and they cry out with one voice, "Bring the book! Bring the book!" And this is what is so desperately needed in churches today, a spiritual hunger in the pew, to cry out to the pastor, "Bring us the Bible! Bring us the word of God!" People need to begin to cry out, "Pastor, could we have fewer announcements? Could we have more Bible? Pastor, could you tell us less about the culture? Can you tell us more about the Bible? Pastor, could we have fewer stories about your children? Give us Bible. Pastor, would you fire the drama team? Give us the Bible. Talk to us like an adult. Pastor, could we hear less about the building program? Could we hear less about the budget? Could we have more Bible? Pastor, could you shorten your introduction to your sermon and just get into the Bible? Your front porch is bigger than the house." Ha, that's funny. That was the only thing not in my notes. I'm getting to know you. But this is what is needed and as you go back to your churches, if we're to have a revival like what we see in Nehemiah 8, it is going to be incumbent upon each and every one of you to cry out to your pastor, "Bring us the book! Bring us the Bible!" That's where this begins. This is a preacher's dream. He'll be pinching himself at night.

Now, second, the confrontation, the confrontation with God's word beginning in verse 2 and in response to their demand, Ezra now steps forward to meet their request and he did not disappoint them in the least, but delivered to them a masterful presentation of the word of God. So in verse 2, "Then Ezra the priest brought the law." Ezra has prepared his whole life for this one moment. God has prepared the man for the moment and he's prepared the moment for the man and for 14 years Ezra has been with scrolls of Scripture unraveled before him, studying the word, digging into the text, grasping its meaning, capturing its thunder, incorporating it into his soul, applying it into his own life, practicing it in his own walk, teaching it faithfully all of these years.

Now is the time as he steps in front of the entire nation as they have gathered together on this moment as they're crying out for the word of God, and in verse 3, "He read from it." And as he read from it, please do not think that this was some monotone, boring reading of Scripture like goes on in most churches where the Scripture is read, where it's the bland leading the bland. This word "read" in the Hebrew is the word "qara" which means "to cry out." It means "to call aloud." It means "to roar." It means "to roar like a lion." It means "to proclaim." It's the very word that is used in Jonah 3:2 when Jonah cried out, "Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed!"

And so as Ezra is reading the word of God, he is very impassioned as he reads the word from early morning until midday. It was an adult portion of Scripture. I'll never forget the day in class when Dr. Sproul took an entire morning with us on how to read the Bible

publicly from the pulpit. I remember how he took Genesis 22, Abraham offering up Isaac and how he told us, "Find the drama in the story," and certain words just have an effect upon the ear, and with that gravely voice saying, "Moriah," as Abraham went to Moriah." What Ezra is doing here is he is putting his heart and his soul into the reading of the word of God. He is literally preaching the word as he is reading the word. He is emphatic.

And note the response in verse 3, "and all the people were attentive to the book of the law." The word "attentive" here in the Hebrew means "the turning of the ear." They all leaned forward and turned their ear towards Ezra so that they could drink in the word of God, and when the preacher takes the word of God seriously, it escalates in the people to take the word of God seriously. No entertainment was needed on this day to hold the attention of the people. Some people say to me, "Well, today people have such a short attention span, you can only preach tiny little sermons." I go, "They didn't have an attention problem on Saturday night. They went to the football game, they went early for the tailgating, they stayed late for sudden death. They stormed the field when it was over. Then they went to the concert. And now you want me to believe that suddenly they have an attention problem? No, they have a heart problem."

Well, the people here, their hearts were hungry and they're attentive to take in the word of God and in verse 4, "Ezra the scribe stood at," it could really be on, "a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose." That was so that he could be seen and so he could be heard and to project his voice. He is surrounded by these 13 spiritual leaders, 7 on the right, 6 on the left. It is a statement of solidarity. "We are standing with the preacher." And please note these elders are not seated on the back pew of the church. They're all together in front of the people, "We stand with the message that is being brought," as they're like bookends around him.

Verse 5, "Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people," and when he opened it, "and when he opened it, all the people stood up." They instinctively rose to their feet in order to express reverence and awe for the word of God because they realized that when the Bible speaks, God speaks, and that this is coming down from God above as the word of God is being read to us.

And in verse 6, "Ezra blessed the LORD the great God." His reading of the word of God was in reality a coronation service as he is blessing the name of God, magnifying the God of the word as he is reading it and as he is explaining it. I like what John Piper says, we are to be exaltational expositors, always exalting the greatness of our God.

"And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!'" The Presbyterians said ah-men, ah-men. "While lifting up their hands," and that was symbolic. They realized this message is not coming from Ezra, this message is coming from God. Moses is only the secondary author, the primary author is the God of heaven and earth. "Man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." And so their hands are lifted up as they are receiving this message down from God.

"Then they bowed low." How low? Their faces were in the dirt. "Then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD." It was this high theology that was driving this high doxology and the deeper they went down into the word, the higher they were rising up to worship God. It's what James Montgomery Boice called the teeter-totter effect, like little children playing on a playground on a seesaw and when one end is up, the other end is down. Both ends can never be up at the same time. It's one or the other. And Boice said as God is exalted, man is humbled, but when man is exalted, it is as though God is dethroned.

So here he is blessing the great God and lifting up the name of God. It was a magnification of God and as the higher he lifted God, the lower the people were brought down in humility and submission and humility to the point that their faces were on the ground. God is doing something here in their midst. No one is tapping their watch. No one is looking around. People are spellbound. It is a moment in time and they are responding to the word of God.

And at the end of verse 7 it says, "the Levites," who are scattered among the people in order to relay what Ezra is saying to this vast contingency of people, "the Levites explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place." So along with the reading of the word of God is the explanation or the interpretation of the word of God and surely with application. But how important it is to explain the text. John MacArthur has said the meaning of the text is the text, and until you have the meaning of the text, all you have is black print on white paper.

So the word has to be rightly divided. The word has to be explained and expounded and that is what is taking place here. In fact, if we had time, we could go through all these verses and I could draw your attention to the mind. Their minds are being renewed by the truth of the word of God. The mind of Christ is being shaped within them as the Scripture is being read and explained to them.

So in verse 8, "They read from the book, from the law of God, translating," and that word "translating" may be a poor translation into English. What this word, "parash," means literally is "to separate." In other words to make distinctions in the text of Scripture like 2 Timothy 2:15, "to rightly divide the word of truth," rightly handle the word of truth. How Paul as a tent-maker would take a pattern and lay it over animal skin and carefully cut around that pattern so that he had now a piece of leather that he could sew perfectly to another piece of leather as a tent-maker to know how to rightly handle the word of God, to cut it straight with Scripture. That's the idea here.

"Parash" means "to make clear." Clarity can never be overrated in preaching. Now the word means "to make plain," and the Puritans used to be accused by the high church, Church of England preachers who were orators and who would soar above the clouds with their words, and when the Puritans would step into the pulpit, they were straight talking men out of the Bible, and they were looked down upon by many of these nose-in-the-air Anglican preachers and William Perkins responded, who wrote the first book on preaching, "The Art of Propheysing," "Yes, we are plain preachers and the plainer the

better." In other words, if there's a problem, it's not because you misunderstood, the problem is you did understand what I said.

This word means "to make distinct; to explain; to interpret." So they're not just hydroplaning over the text, they're not just skimming over the surface, they're not just reading a text and moving on and reading a text and moving on and reading another text, as they come to texts they are giving the authorial intent and the proper interpretation of this text of Scripture, what God means by what God says. That's at the heart. That's the engine that drives true expository preaching.

So every awakening has always been ushered in by this kind of bold biblical preaching. Look at what happened in the Reformation, Luther and Calvin and the rest, they were preachers. And that's what happened in the golden Puritan age, they were preachers. That's what happened in the Great Awakening, Edwards and Whitefield, they were lit up, on fire preachers. That's what happened in the Victorian age with Spurgeon and Ryle. These men were heart-penetrating preachers and that's what must happen again today. Every awakening is ushered in by a new generation of men who will proclaim the Scripture, who will bring the book.

So I want you to note now, third, the conviction from God's word, and this is now more to the point of what has been assigned to me. Cut to the heart, cut to the core. That's what happened. Verse 9, "Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or grieve.'" Why would he say that? Because they were grieving uncontrollably, they were mourning and weeping, and at the end of verse 9, he explains it, "For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law." You know what was happening here, the word of God which is like a mirror that allows you to see yourself for who you are and what you are, people are now looking into the mirror of the word of God and they are seeing their blemishes and they are seeing their flaws and they are seeing actually what God sees in them and it is appalling and they are awakened. It's like they've been asleep. It's like they've been unconscious to their own spiritual state of soul and now suddenly it says, though, they've been aroused from a deep sleep and they're now awakened and they look into the mirror and they come under deep conviction of sin. Romans 3:20 says, "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." That's a good thing. If you have a broken ankle, you want pain because it tells you something's wrong and you need to go have it set. The lack of pain is really a lack of mercy. You would never know something is wrong. In Romans 7:7 Paul writes, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law."

And so these people's hearts have been pierced by the word of God and they are weeping uncontrollably and in most churches today, the goal is to keep anyone and everyone from ever getting to this state. "We just want you to have a good time." The pastor is more like the captain of the Love Boat. "I'm okay, you're okay, let's just all have a great time today." But here the law of God is revealing their sin and it is shocking, it is startling, it is disturbing to them and the Levites have to tell the people, "You're weeping too much." And in verse 10 he says it again, at the end of verse 10, "Do not be grieved." He says it

again in verse 11, this is the third time, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." Wouldn't you love to be in a service where the pastor had to say, "Please stop repenting so much of your sin"?

It was mentioned earlier by Dr. Ferguson, Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost and it was tour de force of the word of God, "This is that that was spoken of the prophet Joel," and he preaches, he reads Joel 2:28-32, and then, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," verse 21 of Acts 2. He then interprets Scripture with Scripture and tells them who the Lord is, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." He quotes Psalm 16:8-11, he then goes to Psalm 132:11, he then comes back to Psalm 16:10, and then he goes to Psalm 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" Scripture. Scripture. Scripture. Scripture. The Bible says. The Bible says. The Bible says. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." And you know what happened in verse 37, the people interrupted the sermon; Peter wasn't even finished preaching. In verse 40 he goes back to finish the sermon, "solemnly testifying with many and exhorting with many more words." The people could not bear up any longer with the searchlight of the word of God shining into their souls, into the darkness of their unbelief, and so they cry out, "What must we do?"

And it says that their hearts were pierced. It's a Greek word, "katanyssō," and it is a word that was used to describe the priest taking a butcher knife and slaying the sacrificial animal before it would be placed on the altar. It was the taking of the sharp butcher's knife and slitting the throat and inflicting the death blow to the sacrificial animal. That's the very word, they were pierced to the heart; they were cut to the very depth of their being. This was not a superficial flesh wound that they would get over by the time they got to the parking lot. No, they were devastated because the word of God had been brought to bear upon them.

And in Hebrews 4:12, in fact, turn to Hebrews 4:12 just for a moment. I'm looking down at the clock and I've got enough time to do this, something I've never said before. So Hebrews 4:12. We just need to pull over and park here for a moment. I'm going to wait for you to turn to it. This is how sharp and how penetrating the word of God is and how it cuts into the depth of our soul, and it reveals our soul and our heart to ourselves and it allows us to see ourselves as God sees us.

So in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God," the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is theopneustos, is God-breathed." "The word of God is living," and this is really where the author puts his emphasis. In the original language, in the Greek when the writer of Hebrews wrote this, the word order is this: "living" is moved to the very beginning of the sentence and literally this verse reads, "living for the word of God is," and when you want to emphasize a word in the Greek language, you front-load that word at the beginning of the sentence to draw your attention. It's like taking a yellow highlighter and just highlighting that word.

"For the word of God is living." Every other book is a dead book. This book alone has life. This book alone is living. Luther said, "The Bible is alive. It speaks to me. It has feet, it runs after me. It has hands, it lays hold of me." Spurgeon said, "This book has wrestled with me. This book has smiled at me. This book has frowned at me." This is a living book and only a living book can give life. Like produces like. It is the word of life.

"For the word of God is living and active," and this word "active" means it's energetic, it's dynamic, it's always at work, it never takes a day off, it's never on sabbatical. This book is always working around the world. It's very very active.

And note, "sharper than any two-edged sword." It is razor sharp. It is sharper than any surgeon's scalpel. And that it is a two-edged sword means there's no blunt side to it. It's all edge. It's able to cut deeply. There's not a blunt chapter in the entire Bible. There's not a dull verse in the entire Scripture.

It's all razor sharp and it is so razor sharp, he goes on to say in verse 12, "and piercing." This book penetrates all of our outward facade, all of the excuses that we would put up. It cuts right through the external features of our soul, the calluses, and it pierces, it says, "as far as the division of soul and spirit." That's figurative language, metaphorical language which is to say it cuts to the depths of your being. It cuts to the core. It cuts to the bone. It goes all the way to the depths of your soul, to the very epicenter of your life. Every other book just simply is massaging the externals of your life unless it is a book that is full of the word of God.

Now this book inflicts no mere flesh wound. This book does not administer a mere scratch on the surface of your life. This book cuts all the way to "the division of soul and spirit," and that's just a metaphorical way of saying it gets all the way down to the depth of your being. Then he says, "of both joints and marrow," and that's another way of saying the same, it's another figurative expression, and what it means is it exposes what has long been covered up. It exposes secret thoughts. It exposes selfish ambitions. It exposes egotistical motives. It gets behind the action to the attitude and the motivation that is driving that action. It doesn't deal with just mere behavioral modification, but it gets to what is driving the action. There's only one book that can do this and it is the word of God.

Now notice what he says, "of both joints and marrow, and able." Let me just pause there for a moment. Able, that's the sufficiency of Scripture. This book is able to get the job done. This book is entirely capable of cutting to the depth and revealing to you what needs to be restored, what needs to be repaired. This book alone brings revival. This book alone replenishes the soul. But please note it says, "and able to judge." This book is able to hold court and to preside over our soul. This book is the authoritative. This book is the measuring rod. This book renders the divine verdict upon our lives. This book has the final say. It really doesn't matter what man has to say, what matters is what does the book have to say?

"And is able to judge the thoughts," to get into your thought life, your thoughts and intentions, what no one else can see, what remains concealed on the inside, those thoughts that are in your private life, inner desires, personal ambitions, driving motives. It is only the word of God that can cut so deep as to reveal yourself to yourself. There has been many a time I've preached, after the service I'll notice a businessman over in the corner of the lobby and he'll make his way to me after people have passed through and he'll say this to me, "Have you been talking to my wife?" "No, sir." "You've been talking to my wife." "I have not." "No one knows about me what you just said in the sermon." That's happened more than a few times because the word of God rips the mask off the hypocrite and reveals themselves to themselves.

Now look at verse 13, "And there is no creature," that would include you and me, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight," and the idea here is not only does God see us but when the sword of the Lord pierces our soul and fillets us and opens this up, now we can see into our heart and see what God sees when he looks inside of us. There is no creature hidden from his sight, and by implication, nor from our sight now as we're under the knife, under the sword of the Lord.

And he says, "but all things," every thought, every intention, every motive, "all things are open," everything is brought out into the open, skeletons come dancing out of closets. This word "open" is a Greek word, "gymnos," from which we derive the English word "gymnasium" or "gym," and in the first century a gymnasium was a place that a male athlete would go to and he would just strip down in order to go through training and to work out. There could be no restrictions to the movement of his limbs. And applied here, this is saying it is the word of God that strips us naked and there are no fig leaves from which we can hide behind.

As we stand naked before God under the searchlight of the word of God, all things are open "and laid bare." Do you see that? This word "laid bare, trachelizo," comes from or that is the Greek word into the English language, a tracheotomy. It deals with the throat and this verb means "to seize an animal or an opponent or an enemy by the throat; to expose the throat of a victim for a killing." It was to bend back the neck of a sacrificial animal, to administer the death blow, to slit the throat. That's the word here, "laid bare," just as if I would take off my tie and open up my collar and lay bare my throat to the knife of the word of God but it is so sharp and it is so powerful that it cuts through my tie, it cuts through the collar of my shirt, it cuts through to the depth of my being. This is what happens in an awakening.

And at the end of verse 13 it says, "to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Or better translated, "to whom we must give an account," or literally translated, "to whom is our word," or "to whom we must give an answer." It is the Scripture that heightens our sense of divine accountability and our human responsibility to our divine accountability that we would pursue holiness but that we would confess our sin and repent of our sin. Spurgeon said, "There will be no dry-eyed revivals."

So in days of awakening, the sword of the Lord is unsheathed and the listener is stripped naked and completely exposed before God and he sees himself as he truly is. His head is pushed up, his neck is laid bare, his throat is slit, his heart is stabbed, his conscience is smitten, and his sin is uncovered. And there is weeping over sin. That is why Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted," and the only one who is truly genuinely comforted is the one who has truly genuinely mourned over their spiritual bankruptcy.

James 4:9, "Be miserable and mourn." That's a verse to put on your refrigerator. Be miserable and mourn. It's in the Bible. It's in your Bible. It's in my Bible. "Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into [weeping] and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord." What did Isaiah say when he was in the presence of the holiness of God? "Woe is me for I am ruined, I am undone! I live among a people of unclean lips and I'm a man of unclean lips!"

For every awakening, there is the heavy deep conviction of sin. It's not a silly time, it's a time to do business with God, and there is no Novocaine administered, there is no anesthesia, there is no pain-killer that is given to the heart that has been stabbed by the word of God, and this alone is enough to repudiate the Antinomian lies that all we do is just look back to our justification and there's no call to pursue holiness in my sanctification. What happened in the Great Awakening under Jonah's preaching, "Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed!" The text says that the people of Nineveh believed in God and they called a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least, and the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes and he issued a proclamation and said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the King and his nobles, do not let man, beast, herd or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water for both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth." A profound and painful awareness that we have offended a holy God.

On February 17, 1739, George Whitefield preached for the first time outdoors, outside of Bristol in a little tiny community, Kingswood, out in a field, and there coal-miners and their families gathered. Foul, foul living, foul speaking coal-miners, unconverted, rough, they gathered to hear Whitefield out in a field. They would never go in a church. And Whitefield writes, "Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend of publicans and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Now listen to this, "The first discovery of their being effected," Whitefield writes, "was to see the white gutters made by their tears which plentifully fell down their black cheeks." Their faces were covered with black soot from the coal-mining and as they came to hear Whitefield as he stood to preach, he noticed two white lines that suddenly appeared on the faces of these rough and tumble men as they were under the conviction of their sin that Jesus had died, buried sin and suffering under the wrath of God for their sin, but that a door of mercy has been thrown open and sinners may run to a Christ who is a friend of sinners and who will receive them if they will repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And they ran to Christ and they found a glad reception, but not a one of them giggled through the narrow gate. Not a one of them

skipped through the narrow gate. They all came weeping under the conviction of their sin.

If God is to send us a great awakening, among the many different features there will be the conviction of sin for it is the Holy Spirit who has come into the world to convict men of sin and righteousness and judgment. Sin because they believed not, righteousness because, "I've gone to My Father," and judgment because the prince of this world has been cast down. May God bring such a revival to us.

Father, give us ears to hear what Your word say. Our hands are lifted up to receive it as from You and it is as though our faces are in the dirt, lowering ourselves in Your presence. Woe is me for I am a sinful man. In Jesus' name. Amen.