

The Ordinary and Extraordinary Witness of the Spirit sermonaudio.com
(Rom. 8:16)

PRTS Conference 2011

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Dr. Joel Beeke: Version, which, by the way, later this afternoon there are going to be four breakout sessions and one of them by Dr. Michael Barrett will be on the KJV in commemoration of this event. And I might mention to you at this time that there's a committee of people around the world, interdenominational, that are putting together a KJV Study Bible from a Reformed perspective. You probably know that there is not such a thing. It's unbelievable there's not such a thing. And this KJV Study Bible will be focused on family worship so it's really going to be called "KJV Study Bible," and the subtitle, "with helps for family worship." Malcolm is contributing to that as a number of other men who are present here today are, and actually it's going to be printed by Reformation Heritage Books, God willing, in 2015, and all 66 books have been assigned to about 15 different writers and Dr. Bilkes will serve as the general New Testament editor, Dr. Barrett as Old Testament editor, and I'll be the general editor. So we're hoping four years from now you'll finally have a really good Study Bible from a Reformed perspective in the Authorized Version. Every antiquated word will be shown the contemporary meaning, and so on, so it will be hopefully a handy guide for you.

So the third thing I want to say to you about Malcolm is that he has a wonderful library collection of antiquarian books in his library, and actually has the best collection I've ever seen in my life on covenant theology, and that's one reason why we invite him over to our seminary to teach on that subject. He's got two rows of books in his library about two feet, I can see them, I even know the titles, in two rows, four feet worth of antiquarian volumes all beautifully rebound, 1600s, and all these different authors. So there's no one I know of in the world that knows the Reformation, post-Reformation covenant theology as well as Malcolm.

That leads me to the fourth thing. This morning, I was going through the conference brochure and it just dawned on me, I looked at all eight men who are all very dear to me, and I said to myself, "Do you know what? All of these men have absolutely wonderful wives." They really do. I've been in all their homes and all of their wives are just right with them in their ministry. It's just a happy happy, every one of them has a very happy marriage. That's beautiful, and Malcolm has that too. He's got a great wife named Jill and I need to tell you this. He's such a book lover that someone actually said to him one time, "Malcolm, if your house went up in flames, what would you take out first, your wife or

your books?" And Malcolm without skipping a beat said, "I'd take my wife out first and I'd say, 'Honey, let's go back in and get the books.'"

So, brother, we look forward to you bringing us God's message on Romans 8:16.

Rev. Malcolm Watts: We are to sing God's praise and it is on page 12 of the booklet before you, first psalter version, based upon Psalm 90. Page 12 in your booklets.

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their lives and cares,
Are carried downwards by the flood,
And lost in following years.

Time, like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day."

We turn this afternoon to the epistle of Paul to the Romans in chapter 8. We shall read from verse 14. Romans 8:14.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye
have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16
The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of
God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with

Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

My friends, let me say before I begin to speak on this great theme of "The Ordinary and Extraordinary Witness of the Spirit," that it's a great honor for me to be here and to renew fellowship with Dr. Beeke, whom I esteem very highly indeed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's much loved in England and our people appreciate more than I can say this afternoon, his ministry which has been amongst us.

The second thing I want to say is I feel very inadequate for the subject that is assigned to me. It's complex. It's difficult. It's mysterious. But I only hope that God will bless what I've prepared and help both in the preaching and in the hearing.

The ordinary and extraordinary witness of the Spirit. The earlier part of this epistle begins with the doctrine of universal sin and misery, and having described the malady in very graphic terms, the apostle goes on to introduce the remedy to us and that remedy concerns Christ's work for us in the first place, and secondly, Christ's work in us.

Chapter 8 in every way is a climax and Dr. Charles Hodge is undoubtedly right when he states his theme here is the security of believers. The whole chapter is a series of arguments most beautifully arranged in support of this one point. It's not for me to demonstrate that at any length this afternoon, but you will notice from the very first verse that Paul declares that he is dealing with security. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Their safety or security is one thing, but knowing that we are safe or secure is another thing, therefore, the apostle takes up in this chapter not only the doctrine of our security in Christ but also the doctrine of our assurance which is also in Christ.

Samuel Gilfillan, one of the ministers of Scotland in a bygone age, writes this, "The salvation of a saint is certain but his knowledge of this is not always the same." Let me set down here a truth and the truth is that it is possible to know that we are in a state of grace, it is possible to know that we have been saved from sin and all that pertains to that, it is possible to know that we are on a path which leads to life, even life eternal.

God's children at the very first may be in some uncertainty, uncertainty about their present state, uncertain also about their future prospect. Thomas Doolittle takes this up and he says, "As an infant may be born to a great estate and have a certain title to it, but yet he might not know it or make it out to himself or to others." At the beginning of Christian experience, we are in a state of infancy and early childhood and it's not always clear to us at that time that we are what we are, and that we will be what we will be. However, as time passes, there is an increasing sense of conviction about our state, and often in those early years of grace, assurance develops and it is more and more revealed to us. I think of the words of Proverbs 4:18, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So is the experience of the Christian, there is an increasing understanding of Scripture and its doctrine, there's increasing

understanding of grace and its effect, there is an increasing understanding of what we are in Christ.

I remember someone telling me when very young in the faith, a Christian is not someone, he said, so much striving to be what he isn't, a Christian is someone who is realizing what he is, and there's truth in that. It can be pushed too far, of course, but there's truth in that and the early Christian realizes increasingly what he is and he makes this discovery in particular, and I quote here Arthur Hindelshem(ph) in his great work on John 4, "Every true believer may be certain of his salvation, yet do we grant that there are degrees of faith and of knowledge." That brings me to touch on another thing just briefly here, there are degrees. There are times when we feel wonderfully assured and it is as the light of day round about us but there are times and experience when it is the reverse of that and shadows come over us and the light seems to dim, and the darkness of unbelief and uncertainty increase. The Psalmist in Psalm 30 speaks of these experiences. He speaks of being at one time very sure and his mountains stood firm, and then he says, "thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

We've probably known both experiences because in our hearts there is a strange mixture of faith and of unbelief but our subject this afternoon is assurance and I want to present it as something to be secured, something to be possessed, something to be enjoyed. The promise of prophecy, Isaiah 60:16, "thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour." What it is to know that. It is evidently possible to know that and this has been the experience of saints. So we read in Psalm 63, the Psalmist saying, "O God, thou art my God." Of course, that is all through the Scripture. In the Song of Solomon, "My Beloved is mine and I am his." In the epistle to the Galatians, "The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me." This is a state of great blessedness, to be sure, to have the knowledge of grace and the hope of glory. This is heaven on earth.

There is a prayer recorded in Psalm 35:3 where we read, "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." That is the prayer of the believer, the God would somehow communicate to us the sureness of our salvation in Jesus Christ, and to be sure of that is really the summit of happiness here. If heaven in the flower is absolute blessedness, then hope in the heart of heaven must be the bud. "Canst there prove," says Arthur Hindelshem(ph), "by the word of God that thou art in a state of salvation, then thou art an happy man."

Now opening this wonderful subject up and before proceeding any further, we must assert what has been questioned by some, that there is in the very nature of faith a certain assurance, an assurance which comes from the word of God; that word which Romans 10:8 is called "the word of faith," the word which we believe and the word which brings assurance to our hearts.

Now since the word proceeds from the God of truth and the God of faithfulness, there could be nothing more sure than the word of the everlasting God. Faith is grounded in the infallible and certain testimony of the word of God. So we read the Psalmist in Psalm 119:42, "I trust in thy word." What is it that is trusted? Well, in the light of New Testament revelation, it is clear that that which is trusted is Christ as presented in the

Gospel, and the word of God says to us that if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Now there is an assurance, an assurance that comes from without and it comes within, an assurance based upon God's word, and it is fundamental to all other assurances spoken of in Scripture or other distinctions which are made because in the final analysis, our faith rests in Scripture and it holds like an anchor and a rock, that rock being the impregnable rock of holy Scripture. I believe and the Bible says I am saved.

However, after believing, how shall we be sure that we have Christ in possession? What I've spoken of thus far is Christ in the Gospel, Christ in the offer, but how shall I be sure that I have Christ in possession, that I've believed truly that I have Christ truly in my life as my own personal Savior and Lord? Well, you will notice here that the Scripture speaks of a two-fold witness or testimony, what Thomas Manton calls the double testimony. Paul writes in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." Let me pause here to just say a word or two about that word "witness." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." What exactly is signified or suggested to us by this word "witness"? Well, we associate witness as something that is declared before a judge. The witness of which we speak here is before God and what I mean by that is it is a spiritual thing, it has reference to God. And what happens when a witness or testimony is given even amongst men, is that it's a most solemn matter, it's usually made upon oath, and it's a declaration of something. So is the witness here.

Now it's required of a witness that he be true and faithful and the purpose of a witness is to establish a truth, to distinguish it from an error. Particularly, a witness is made concerning something that has happened, something that has taken place concerning which testimony can be given or a report can be given. Now these are the things to bear in mind when we turn to the two witnesses mentioned in this verse.

The first witness which is not directly our concern this afternoon but it's necessary to the understanding of the verse, is the witness of our own spirit. Now please notice that the verse does not say the Spirit itself beareth witness to our spirit, but the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit. So our spirit, or our soul, is the first witness, and this word "spirit" refers to the soul as renewed and as sanctified, which is able to testify and confirm the truth of our conversion. Let me refer you to 1 Corinthians 2:11, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in man?" Proverbs 20:27 says that our spirit is the candle of the Lord and it searches and it examines and it brings things to light.

Let me quote here the words of Dr. Isaac Watts, "God has given to each of our spirits the power of reflecting upon our own hearts and lives whereby we become witnesses and judges for or against ourselves. When we compare the habitual frame and temper of our spirits as well as the transactions and conduct of our lives with the plain description and characters of the children of God that are given to us in his word, hereby we judge our own state whether we be in a state of sin or in a state of grace."

Now our spirit should be active in this regard because there are exhortations to this effect. Paul says to us, "Examine yourselves whether ye be of the faith." That means let your

spirit turn in on itself. Let it with the candle of the Lord, or as the candle of the Lord, search out the recesses of your hearts and let it throw light upon every aspect of your life and let it come to a conclusion as to whether you're still a natural man or whether you are a spiritual man. Now just a word on this. It is the assurance born of reflection. It is as the spirit itself within us gathers evidence and if the evidence is there and it's abundant, our spirit concludes that it is well, it is well with our souls.

So without taking much time on this, just let me illustrate what I mean before I pass on. Our soul or spirit becomes conscious of the fact that a renewal has taken place, that we may be in a very low state and a very sad state, but when we think about ourselves and the way we are and the way we live, it may well be that our spirit says, "Well, you're not what you ought to be, that's for sure, and you're not what you will be, that's also for sure, but you are not what you were." When we think of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," so some change has taken place. This is in our favor as far as assurance is concerned. It's not merely an outward change of reformation, it's an inward change of spiritual renovation, and the soul can't deny that.

Secondly, the soul might become aware of the fact that self-dependence that characterized our life before no longer exists, but instead there is Christ-dependence, a soul ascertains that we are trusting not in ourselves, not in our own efforts, not in our own achievements, there's been a change of mindset here, and a change of response. We are trusting undoubtedly in Jesus Christ who is mighty to save and in his righteousness alone. That wasn't true before. It is true now. And what is responsible for such a change? Grace, because faith is the gift of God, and Paul says to believers, "To you it is given not only to suffer for his sake but to believe on his name." This is evidence of grace.

A third factor would be this, that there is within our hearts the disposition and the character of children. What do I mean by that? Well, in contrast to the way things were, we have a genuine, tender and respectful love for God. You say, "That's no big thing." I tell you, it is a big thing. It's a big thing considering we were once enemies of God and alienated from him by wicked works, and our whole nature was enmity with God. I tell you, it's a big thing that our spirits can testify to the fact that we who formerly had no regard for God, no desire for God, and no delight in God, now regard this God as our chiefest joy.

Our spirit confronted with that evidence cannot deny it, cannot gainsay it. Moreover, there is within us, our spirit knows full well a desire to cultivate knowledge and communion with God and that is why the spirit knows it, we resort to prayer, and our prayer is not simply for the things of this life, it is chiefly to know God, to know him better and a fuller way; it is to have fellowship with God, it is to experience him. That had no place in our life before. It has a major place in our life now.

I'll mention one other thing, that's the desire to pursue holiness. Oh, we lament the fact that we fail, that we come short, that we often disgrace ourselves, but there is something indestructible in us that even when we have succumbed to temptation and fallen into sin,

still there is a desire in us to follow after God and to follow after purity of life, and it can't be destroyed and it cannot be erased because it has been placed there by the grace of God.

Our spirit finds out all these things and when we have allowed the spirit to search and the process of examination to take place, our spirit returns with this verdict. These things are peculiar to a state of grace. You are saved by everlasting love. However, there is a second witness. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Now here I need in dealing with the witness of the Spirit to distinguish between what theologians have called the ordinary witness of the Spirit and the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, and I'll explain that distinction in just a little while.

The ordinary witness of the Spirit, something which is common, commonly taking place, and something which is commonly experienced. The ordinary witness of the Spirit. What is it? Now the former witness was within us, our spirit, this witness is without us, it is the Holy Spirit of God, although he brings it within us. What is the ordinary witness? Well, the Spirit blesses the word of God to the believer whether that word is read or whether it is preached, and the Spirit particularly blesses to us the promises of God, that they belong to us, and when the Spirit brings home the word of promise to our hearts like that, we are confirmed in our assurance.

Reference has already been made today to 1 Thessalonians 1 where Paul says, "Our Gospel," verse 5, "came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." It is possible to hear the word of God as the word only, but when the word is accompanied by the Spirit of God and makes a tremendous impression upon our hearts, particularly the promises of grace, that is the Spirit testifying that these things are true and they are true to us.

Secondly, the ordinary witness of the Spirit will be known in the fact that Jesus Christ, our gracious Redeemer, through the ministry of the Spirit with the word, is revealed to us in a wonderful and heartwarming way. Remember the Spirit's office is to glorify Christ, to take of the things that are Christ's and show them unto us, and sometimes the Spirit so blesses the word and the Gospel in the word, that we become assured that this blessed Redeemer is not only mighty to save but such blessing has come to our heart that we can say, "And he is mine. I know it."

This is what Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 3, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. That's the ordinary witness of the Spirit to show us Christ, to show us his ability to save, his willingness to save, his readiness to save, and that he saves all that come to him and denies no one, and turns from no one. And when this is brought home to our hearts, we can say, "Well, we came to him. We came as beggars. We came as supplicants. And now this word has been blessed to my heart. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast away." The Spirit has sealed Jesus Christ to our souls.

A third way the ordinary witness of the Spirit comes is that we are touched and we are affected by the word in general, and by Jesus Christ in the word in particular. Remember the words of Wesley when he heard the preface of Luther being read and he says to his

brother later, "My heart was strangely warmed." Do you know anything of that, my friends? You've listened to heartfelt preaching and you've done a bit of heartfelt hearing, and you've been affected, there's no doubt about that? You don't want to talk to anybody after the service. You want to go home. You want to keep that blessing because it's such a treasure, and that is a witness of the Spirit. It doesn't happen to everyone, does it? Another may come into the church, sit at the end of the same pew that you're in, their hearts aren't warmed. They can't wait for the end of the service. They're thinking about their Lord's Day lunch, what they'll be doing on Monday morning. They're not interested. The Spirit hasn't testified to them, but sure it is that he's testified to us. Our hearts have been affected. Our hearts have been stirred, stirred by what we have heard in the Gospel.

A further point to make here is that our graces are quickened. Faith, hope, and love. The Spirit so blesses the truth to us whether read in private or heard in public, so blesses us that though our hearts before the service were fairly lifeless and dead, we go out in a very different state. That moving of the heart has raised all the graces. Do you know, in our garden, I shouldn't say our garden because my wife does most of the gardening to my shame, but I put it down to lack of time. But she loves gardening, you see, that's the difference between us. We have tulips halfway down the garden. They're lovely red and white striped tulips. They're very full and sometimes when the sun comes out, those tulips which are tightly closed in the morning, they open up. It's almost as if some hand has pulled them apart, those petals, and the full beauty of the tulip is seen, and I believe when the Spirit of God comes upon the hearers even in an ordinary way, the flower opens and all of the graces are in evidence.

I notice something else. You see, I have great appreciation for what my wife does down there, but we had a honeysuckle tree and in the evening when there was a gentle breeze, the stream was just outside. I say, I don't know what to call it because I'm no gardener but it was just outside the study window and when the breeze came, a full fragrance of that honeysuckle bush just came into the study. It was the wind that did it, and when the wind of God's Spirit comes upon us in the preaching of the word of God, the sweet fragrances of our graces, all that God has wrought in us, these things are manifested and they become obvious to us.

One last thing and I must move on to the last or the second witness of the Spirit, but the ordinary witness of the Spirit develops in us a deep appreciation, an admiration of the love of God and some sense of that. You don't need me to tell you that there's a world of difference to hear a sermon on the love of God and to have that sermon so applied that you begin to sense it. That's what we're talking about here. It's not the teaching of the Spirit as if he just informs and instructs, but it's the witness of the Spirit whereby we come to know in a heartfelt way the love of God.

Do you want a Scripture for that? The love of God was poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, and the believer transported with the experience says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." Now I've spoken to believers who've actually broken down when

they've spoken of the blessing they've received through preaching or through some sermon. They knew what the preacher was speaking about. They felt the love of God.

I could go on and speak of the ordinary witness of the Spirit which we become aware of when he sanctifies us, stamping his image upon us, when he creates in us desires for purity and godliness, when he allows us to enjoy God for the Bible says we have access by Jesus Christ through one Spirit and it's the Spirit who grants us that access whereby we draw near to God and we become conscious of God and we become blessed in God. The ordinary witness of the Spirit.

Now, secondly, the extraordinary witness of the Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." I was looking through the library the other day and I saw a book of sermons and just looked at the contents on the opening page, and to my delight there was one sermon, "The Extraordinary Witness of the Spirit." It was by Jonathan Dickinson, one time President of Princeton College. I thought, "This is the answer. I'll just read old Dickinson and I shall be well on my way for Grand Rapids." Then I read this, "The Spirit doth sometimes bear witness in a more immediate and extraordinary way to the adoption of his children, but here I must confess I am at once nonplussed." And there he ended it, nonplussed. So was I, I can tell you.

Before we think of it, just one or two little introductory comments to this. We call it sometimes the immediate and the extraordinary witness of the Spirit. I think we have to be very careful with these terms. When we say immediate witness of the Spirit, the word means sudden or unexpected witness. It does not mean an experience apart from or divorced from the ordinances of God's house. This was observed by Thomas Goodwin who had a great place in his heart and in his theology for the witness, the extraordinary witness of the Spirit and he says this, "It is always in an with the word and according to it and therefore believers are said to be sealed with the Spirit of promise."

Now the second introductory thing I want to say is this: when you say it's sudden, why is it extraordinary? Well, this word suggest that it is not common and I venture to say it is not the experience of every believer, and although I say this carefully, it is not essential that every believer has it. It is rare but to those who know it, it is exceedingly precious.

Now the third thing is this: we doubt not that God is able through his Spirit to communicate his mind to us. After the manner of Psalm 35:3 already quoted, "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Or in Psalm 25, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him." That would include the secret of whom you are, of what has happened in your life, of what your eternal prospects are, and that secret God can make known. No doubt about that at all.

I was talking to someone once about that and he said, "Well, really the extraordinary witness is only the ordinary witness intensified, isn't it?" Yes and no. It is, in a sense, because it's much the same way that the Holy Spirit bears witness as he does in the ordinary way of things, and yet it's distinct. We would say that every Sabbath we know something of the blessing of the Holy Spirit but we don't say, "Well, that's basically, then,

the same as revival." Well, it is and it isn't. It is in the sense that we have the presence of God on the Sabbath and in revival we have a remarkable impression of God amongst us so that we know he is vitally in our midst, but we distinguish that latter by saying that's revival. We use a different word for it because although it is an intensifying of the ordinary witness, it is so intensified that it deserves a category on its own.

Well then, what is this extraordinary witness of the Spirit? Let me say at once that the person addressing you is no expert on these things. By God's great grace, I believe I have known something of it but I would be a fool if I said I was totally conversant and familiar with this subject because a mystery covers it like a cloud or like a mist on the moorland. At the end of the day, my friends, like the old lady said, it is better felt than told.

However, the extraordinary witness of the Spirit takes place when the Spirit comes to us in a very powerful way and we sense his presence and his grace and his strength as never before. Do you think that's the reason why Paul says here, "The Spirit itself"? The mighty coming of the Holy Spirit to us in a time of need, that mighty coming is itself the witness. Jesus said in John 16, "When he is come." Now that has an historic connection, of course, and reference, but it has an experimental reference too, surely, there are times when he comes and we become profoundly aware of God with us.

Secondly, it takes place when there is a remarkable illumination of the Spirit. He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Christ, and there are times when we are reading the Scriptures or hearing the Scriptures and suddenly there's such a flood of light upon the word of God. Why didn't we see that before? We needed to see that before. Why didn't we see that before? In the sovereignty of God, the Spirit did not make that known before. He makes it known now because you're in dire need of that particular truth, that particular doctrine, and it comes home to you with the force of an earthquake perhaps, or like a heavy shower of rain off the ground.

Thirdly, the extraordinary witness of the Spirit comes when God impresses upon our hearts some particular truth, some particular verse, and that Scripture is just not helpful and we say, "Ah, what a blessing." More than a blessing, it comes upon our hearts with such energy and efficacy that it is as if God spake that Scripture to me.

You'll pardon a personal reference here but 30, 40 years ago nearly, we had problems in the church and I was facing a particularly difficult church meeting, as I foresaw it, and that morning I was reading in the way of reading, the book of Jeremiah, and there were people that were hostile toward me and hostile to the truth that I was preaching. That morning I sat in the study and I read from Jeremiah 15, "They shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee. I will make thee unto this people as a brazen bull. If thou shalt take the precious from the vile, I will be with thy mouth and it shall be well with thy remainder the rest of your life and ministry." When I read those words that morning, I don't want to be dramatic and I don't want to exaggerate in any way, but it hit me so mightily that I tell you, that it was as if I heard an audible voice. I was struck. I didn't want to turn around in the study lest I saw God.

Extraordinary witness. It may be the Spirit will give us such a precious sight of Jesus. Oh, you've seen him before, of course you have, but on the day of witness, you see him as you've never seen him before. You see him in his humiliation, in his sufferings, and in his death, in his love dying for you, and you're overwhelmed by it. Before your wondering eyes, Jesus Christ is set forth as crucified and the thorns and the nails and the spear were on account of me and he loved me more than he loved himself. Can you fathom that? Can you grasp that? He loved me more than he loved himself. Being confronted with the man of Calvary in all his wondrous mercy and exquisite affection for sinners, becomes so real and so vital to us that we conclude it is an extraordinary witness of the Holy Spirit.

Let me make this lastly because our time is gone, but the Spirit can so visit us that we know that Christ is ours and we are Christ's. By some peculiar token or affection which comes to our hearts, we know it. We know that he loves us. We know that he loves us dearly. We know that he loves us with everlasting love and, oh, the effect of that. Peace. He loves me. Peace. What if the world gives me tribulation? He loves me. What if I am misunderstood and misrepresented? He loves me. What if I am going through a severe trial and great suffering? He loves me. That is unshaken and unshakable in my heart, in my experience. That is the effect of the extraordinary witness of the Holy Ghost. That is not of man. That is of God and such is the enjoyment of that state of things, that I suggest as I close that you are nearer heaven in that moment than you will ever be on earth.

The earnest of the Spirit, to know these things is the essence of glory and I'm knowing them now and you're knowing them now. Surely, it is heaven begun. To be so blessed that you think you're there, is the result of the extraordinary witness of the Spirit. Remember what it was said, heaven was in him before he was in heaven. That's it.

John Flavel says, "Is this not something felt here, something felt of the ravishing sweetness of God's presence in ordinances and duties which is a faint shadow, at least, of the joys of his glorious presence in heaven."

I do believe, my friends, that even in a conference like this we might know and we should know the ordinary witness of the Spirit, we go away blessed, but who knows, God only knows it may be a time for some, same sermon, same speakers, but the time of extraordinary witness. You go away not simply saying, "I've been blessed," you go away saying, "I have been raised from a pit. My feet have been set upon a rock. He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to my God. I'm different. I shall never be the same again." The Spirit itself has borne witness to my spirit that I am a child of God.

My counsel to you, my dear friends, must be as the counsel I give to my own heart: doctrine is wonderful but doctrine is not everything. Seek the witness of the Holy Spirit and you will be more blessed than you have ever been, will be more blessed than you will ever be this side of glory. May you know it. May I know it. And in the assurance we have, may we live every day of every week of every year of our lives to him who has saved us by matchless grace. Amen.

Almighty and eternal God, we humble ourselves before thee. Who has the right or ability to speak of these things which are so mysterious, so wonderful, so sublime? All that we can pray is, Lord, give us the Holy Spirit and give us such certainty that we shall live more worthy of God. Holy Spirit, bless thy word to us. Bless all of thy people here in different and various conditions. O may the Holy Spirit come. May we be able to say at least in some measure today, he is come. He is come. Grant us that and take to thyself all honor and all praise through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Speaker: Just a couple quick announcements. We will take a break and at 3:30 we'll begin the breakout sessions and I'll just give you a quick rundown of who's going to be where. Dr. Michael Barrett will be in the boardroom and that's just down the hallway here on the left. And Rev. Thackway will be in the great hall right here. Dr. VanDoodewaard will be in the room beside the boardroom called "Willow East." And Rev. Watts will be in "Willow West," which is just going to be to the right of me. So please be there before 3:30 and, Lord willing, we can all get started at the time. Thank you.