

# **The Person and Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

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This is tape number SHS301. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Jesus is about ready to go to the cross to be crucified. He is in the final sessions with His disciples who are deeply disturbed by His words as He speaks about going away. But in John 14 He said,

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.  
(John 14:16-17)

The purpose of the series that we are beginning tonight is to bring you into the knowledge of the person of the Holy Spirit, in order that you might come into a full, rich relationship with Him. It is our desire to so present His glory and beauty that you will seek to yield your life fully to Him, that you might know His grace, His love, His power, and the gifts of the Spirit in your life. We desire that you might come to experience Him as did Finney—that great American evangelist and theologian, who wrote these words:

After dinner we [referring to Squire Wright and himself] were engaged in removing our books and furniture to another office. We were very busy in this, and had but little conversation all the afternoon. My mind, however, remained in that profoundly tranquil state. There was a great sweetness and tenderness in my thoughts and feelings. Everything appeared to be going right, and nothing seemed to ruffle or disturb me in the least.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again—that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray.

By evening we got the books and furniture adjusted; and I made up, in an open fireplace, a good fire, hoping to spend the evening alone. Just at dark Squire W, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, "I want to pour my

whole soul out to God." The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray.

There was no fire, and no light, in the room; nevertheless it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward, that it was wholly a mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw Him as I would see any other man. He said nothing, but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that He stood before me, and I fell down at his feet and poured out my soul to Him. I wept aloud like a child, and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed His feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched Him, that I recollect.

I must have continued in this state for a good while; but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to recollect anything that I said. But I know, as soon as my mind became calm enough to break off from the interview, I returned to the front office, and found that the fire that I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love, for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings.

No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to

pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more;" yet I had no fear of death. (Finney)

The experience in his own words, of Finney, that great American evangelist.

It is my prayer that you also shall come to a very vivid, glorious experience with the person of the Holy Spirit. It is important that we realize that the Holy Spirit is a person. If you think of the Holy Spirit only as an essence, only as a breeze, only as a power, it is very difficult to develop a meaningful relationship with an essence. If you think of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal force, an unintelligent power that permeates the universe, you really cannot love Him or call upon Him in your time of need.

He has been sent by the Father at the request of Jesus to come alongside of you to help you. Jesus said, "I will pray the Father. He shall give to you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16). And even in that you have—what we will take up in the next lesson—the Trinity, or the triunity of the Godhead. You have Jesus declaring,

I will pray the Father. He will give to you another Comforter [*paraclete*], even the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16)

The Son is praying to the Father that you might receive the Spirit.

Now there are certain necessary characteristics of personality. Three things are necessary for personality: 1) will, 2) intelligence, and 3) emotions. Personality has will, intelligence, and emotions. And if the Holy Scriptures ascribe these characteristics to the Holy Spirit, then it is safe to assume that He is indeed a person.

Personal pronouns are also used in reference to the Holy Spirit. In this promise that we read,

I will pray the Father. He [that is, the Holy Spirit] or the Father, He will give you another Comforter that He [the Holy Spirit] may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. But you know Him for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)

And then in John 16,

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on Me. Of righteousness because I go to My

Father and you see Me no more. Of judgment because the prince of the world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. (John 16:7-14)

And so all of these personal pronouns are in reference to the Holy Spirit.

Intelligence is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2,

But as it is written: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

He knows the things of God.

Which things also we speak [Paul said] not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but with the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)

Now notice the things that Paul says about the Holy Spirit in this passage. And that is that God reveals things to us by the Holy Spirit—that the Spirit searches all things, the deep things of God. The things of God that man does not know, the Spirit knows. We have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God, and the Holy Spirit then teaches us.

The Holy Spirit is spoken of as having a will—a second characteristic of personality. In the disbursement of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul said,

But these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

And then the Scripture speaks of the emotions of the Holy Spirit in Romans 15,

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. (Romans 15:30)

Again the three, “I beseech for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake...for the love of the Spirit...and that you would strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”—Father, Son, Spirit.

In Isaiah 63 it says,

But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy and fought against them.  
(Isaiah 63:10)

You can vex the Holy Spirit. Ephesians says,

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

So He can be grieved.

Now this would be impossible to say of just an essence or a non-person. A plant is a non-person. It would be ridiculous to say, “Oh, don’t grieve that plant,” or “You have vexed that plant—he is angry with you,” or “Oh, that plant loves me.” You see, you cannot say this of something other than a person. The Holy Spirit is a person who loves you and who can be grieved by you.

Not only are these characteristics of personality ascribed to the Holy Spirit—personal pronouns given to Him—but also there are personal acts that are attributed to the Holy Spirit. He speaks—again, it is hard for you to think of something other than a person speaking. In Acts, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said,

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (Acts 13:2)

In 1 Timothy,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith. (1 Timothy 4:1)

In Revelation,

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches. (Revelation 2:7)

Secondly, He intercedes,

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the *Spirit itself* maketh intercession for us with groanings

which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26 KJV emphasis added)

In the Revised Standard Version, “the Spirit Itself” is changed to “the Spirit Himself.”

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the *Spirit himself* intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. (Romans 8:26 RSV emphasis added)

He testifies in John,

But when the Comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of me. (John 15:26)

Note again the three—when the Comforter has come, whom I will send to you from the Father—I will send from the Father. You have the Father, the Son, the Spirit.

Even the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father. He shall testify of me. (John 15:26)

It is doubly bound up in that verse. The Spirit of God teaches,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

And in Nehemiah,

Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them and witheldest not the manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. (Nehemiah 9:20)

He guides us in Acts,

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go to Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. (Acts 16:6-7)

And then He communes with us. Paul said,

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.  
Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Again notice the three: grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; love of God; and  
communion of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit strives with men in Genesis,

And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not always strive with  
man.’ (Genesis 6:3)

And then He works miracles in Romans,

Through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the  
Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about unto  
Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.  
(Romans 15:19)

Mighty signs and wonders are worked by the power of the Spirit of God.

Personal treatments are accorded to the Holy Spirit—that is, He can be grieved.  
Paul said,

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are  
sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

He can be lied to. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira,

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to  
lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of  
the land? (Acts 5:3)

He can be resisted. Stephen, in his defense, in Acts said,

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do  
always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.  
(Acts 7:51)

He can be vexed. We have already looked at that in Isaiah,

But they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit. (Isaiah 63:10)

He can be blasphemed. In Mark, Jesus said,

Verily, I say unto you, All sin shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. (Mark 3:28-29)

Now from these passages we can safely conclude that the Holy Spirit is indeed a person, possessing all of the characteristics of personality. And as a person, He can be known. As a person, you may develop a relationship with Him. As a person, you can come into a close, intimate fellowship with Him. And as a person, you can commune with Him.

Jesus, in promising the Holy Spirit, referred to the Holy Spirit as the *paraclete*. And He promised His disciples that He would pray the Father to give to them another Comforter—*paraklēton*. The word *paraklēte* in Greek means one who comes alongside to help. Jesus has been alongside of the disciples for several years. And He is now saying to them, “I am going away. Where I am going you cannot come now.”

Surely you can imagine how they felt because they had come to so trust in the Lord. They had such confidence that He was the Master of every situation. Jesus was just a handy person to have around. They never had to worry when Jesus was there. If the Pharisees were trying to trip them up and stump them with some kind of a technical question, Jesus would handle them. And He could handle them quite handily. And so they would not have to worry—just talk to Him, you know. If there were taxes to pay and they did not have the money available—it was wonderful to have Jesus around—He would tell them just exactly how to get the money. “Go catch a fish, take the coin out of his mouth and pay the man.” If they were out on a stormy sea in danger of sinking, it was always great to have Jesus around because He had the power to still the storm and to bring them safely into the desired haven.

All the way along they had come to trust in Jesus. They had come to rely upon Him. When Jesus was there, there was nothing to worry about. There was nothing to fear—He was there helping them. Now He is saying, “I am going away,” and the disciples’ hearts are filled with fear and turmoil. And that is why Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Those words indicated that their hearts were troubled—they were afraid. They wondered, “What will we do without Jesus?” And Jesus is now telling them what they will do.

“I will not leave you comfortless.” The word there is *orphanos*. I will not leave you as orphans. I will pray the Father—He will give you another *paraklēton*, another Comforter—one who will come alongside of you to help you. And that is exactly what the purpose of the Holy Spirit is. He is the one to whom you may come into a personal relationship, who will come alongside of you and help you in and through every situation of life. And Jesus is saying, “Just as I was with you and took care of every situation, so the Holy Spirit will be with you and will take care of every situation for you.”

And that is why it is so very important that each of us come to know the person of the Holy Spirit. To know Him in His fullness, in order that we might experience that comfort, that help, the strength that we all need, especially in these days in which we are living.

Through the grace of God we are praying that during this series of studies, God will give to you such a knowledge of the Holy Spirit, such a hunger for the Holy Spirit, such a thirsting after the Spirit, that you will come to know Him as He has been revealed to us in the Scriptures. As you come into a deep, personal, intimate relationship with Him, your life will be absolutely transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.

So, it is my purpose during these studies to introduce you to the Holy Spirit. And it is my prayer that you come into a long and fruitful relationship with Him—that you will come to depend upon Him for your guidance, for your help, for your strength, for your comfort, and for power. And I pray that He will come and become closer to you than any person you know. May you be bathed in His glory and may you yield to His influence as you allow Him to conform your life into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now it is always dangerous to look at the experience of others and seek to have a duplication of their experience. Although Finney described his experience as waves of liquid love just flowing over and over and over until he cried out, “I will die if these waves continue to pass over me”—and though he described his experience as electricity, waves of electricity going through and through him—that could very well not be your experience. It is not necessary that you have the same reactions to the Holy Spirit or the same feelings that Finney had. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the gifts that He bestows upon the believers. He is sovereign in the way He relates to us. Some, as Finney, have described experiences like electrical shocks and others have described tingling sensations. Some have described just waves of glory, while still others have described just an incomprehensible peace and love filling and flooding their soul.

I cannot tell you what experience you may have or how you might relate and how it will feel to you. That is not the important issue. It is not the feelings that are important and the Lord did not give us the Holy Spirit that we might have sensational feelings, such as electricity or liquid love. Those are wonderful! I am not discounting them, but I am just saying, do not premise your experience on the feelings or reactions that you may have to the Holy Spirit. Yours may be entirely different and it may be that you will not feel anything. But that does not negate the relationship with the Holy Spirit and the power that you will experience in your life when you come into that full, complete relationship that God wants you to have—that the Holy Spirit desires to have with you.

The purpose is not that you might get more of the Holy Spirit; but the purpose is that the Holy Spirit might get more of you—that your life will become controlled by the Spirit. Your character will be controlled by the Spirit, so that you will be led by the Spirit, that you will walk in the Spirit, and that you will be filled with the Spirit.

We have some exciting days ahead. Now, you do not have to wait for the end of the lessons to gain the benefit. You can go home tonight and just yield yourself to the Holy

Spirit, giving yourself over to His control, to His filling—the yielding and the surrendering of your life to Him. And you can begin even this night—that glorious walk in the Spirit and experience that fullness that God desires for each of us.

When you look at the life of Finney and read of his revival meetings in which thousands of people came to Jesus Christ—eighty-five percent of them stuck with the Lord. When you read about cities where he was holding meetings and, after the meeting, every bar in town was closed due to the lack of customers, you begin to realize what the Holy Spirit can do when He comes upon a person's life. You will never know your full potential in Christ until you have yielded to the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Gordon, Finney, Moody, Torrey, Jonathan Edwards—down the line, these men of God who have done such a great work for God in their lifetime—each of them have their own testimonies of experiencing of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. And we hope, that as we go through this series that each evening, we will be able to give you a little personal testimony of these men as they relate, as did Finney, the experience they had of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And you will realize that the church is in desperate need today of a new, fresh work of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, we have sought to substitute programs and psychology and many other gimmicks for the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is suffering as a result and I am praying that God will give to us a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in each of our hearts and lives—a renewing of the life of the Spirit within the church. Surely we need it and surely our community needs it desperately.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You that You sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth; to teach us; to bear witness of Jesus Christ; to empower us. And we pray, Father, that You will bring us into a very rich, meaningful relationship with the Holy Spirit. As we learn about Him, as we learn about His work, as we learn about His gifts, and as we learn about His power, may we know more of His power in our own lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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This is tape number SHS302. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

It is the purpose of this series of studies to bring you into a close, intimate, personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. Our study last Thursday night dealt with the person of the Holy Spirit showing that, from the Scriptures, He has all the characteristics of personality and He is referred to with the personal pronouns. Thus He is not an it. He is not an essence. He is not just a force, but He is the person of the Holy Spirit. Tonight we purpose to show to you that He is the third person of the Godhead.

Before we get into those Scriptures, I would like to read to you the testimony of R. A. Torrey, who was the founder of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, commonly known today as Biola University. He was an associate of Dwight Moody and in his book, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, he recounts that he had been in the ministry for some years before he came to the place that he realized he had no right to preach until he was definitely baptized with the Holy Spirit. He told a friend that he was never going to enter the pulpit again until he knew that he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit, or until God, in some way, had told him to go. He then shut himself in his study alone and he spent the time continually on his knees, asking God to baptize him with the Holy Spirit. He said that he had mapped out in his mind what would happen—

But what Torrey had mapped out in his mind did not happen. He said he recalled the exact spot where he was kneeling in prayer in his study. It was a very quiet moment—one of the most quiet moments he had ever known. Indeed, he thought one reason he had to wait so long was because it took that long before his soul could get quiet before God. Then God simply said to him—not in an audible voice, but in his heart—“It is yours. Now, go preach.” And he went and preached. And he was a new minister from that day on. He was then the pastor of a very obscure church, though he had taken two degrees at Yale and had studied at two German universities. But from that time his field began to wonderfully enlarge until at last, he had preached the gospel around the world and had seen hundreds of thousands converted to Christ (Torrey 266-267).

He recalls that sometime after that experience, while sitting in his room one day—that very same room—he does not remember what he was thinking about, but suddenly he was struck from his chair unto the floor and he found himself shouting. He said that he was not brought up to shout and that it was not his temperament. But he shouted like the loudest shouting Methodist. He was shouting, “Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God!” He said that he could not stop. It was like some other power, other than his own, was moving his jaw. These are the experiences of R. A. Torrey as recorded in the book, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*.

As we look at the subject of the Trinity or the triunity of God, we first of all recognize from the Scripture, that it indeed is a mystery. In 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul said,

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:  
God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen

of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

So, God the Father was manifested in the flesh and Jesus Christ is justified in the Spirit.

I have no intention of trying to explain to you the Godhead. It is beyond the boundaries of the human mind to understand the nature of the infinite God. There is one God and yet He is manifested in three persons—that of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

G. Campbell Morgan declared,

The idea of one essence subsisting after a three-fold manner and in a trinity of relationships, finds nothing in the phenomena of nature upon which it can fasten as a sufficient symbol.

We are always trying to give some kind of a symbol by which we can then make an analogy to the Godhead, but as G. Campbell Morgan said, there just is not any symbol that can tie together what we understand about the Trinity (or the triunity of God.) Because it is a mystery, we cannot expect to reduce it to logical precepts. To our finite minds the doctrine is a contradiction.

How can you have one God and yet three persons? Some have tried to say that it is the three masks that the one God wears. The denial of the Trinity always brings with it the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. Some have suggested that the Trinity is a mathematical absurdity—one plus one plus one, they point out, equals three. However, one times one times one equals one—so that mathematically you cannot disprove the Godhead.

Paul, in speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20, beginning with verse 28, said,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Notice the three there—“the Holy Spirit has made you the overseers of the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.” Paul said,

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch. (Acts 20:29-31)

So, he is telling them that it is their duty to watch and to take heed over this charge that they were given by the Holy Spirit to feed the church of God.

Now the triunity (or the Trinity of God) is manifested in the Old Testament not nearly as clearly as it is in the New Testament. But in the Old Testament, we surely have indications, hints, and declarations of the three aspects of the Godhead.

In Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God...” the word translated “God” in Hebrew is *Elohim* and *Elohim* is a plural noun. The singular form in Hebrew is El, while the plural is *Elohim*. It is interesting that “in the beginning God,” the first mention of God, would be plural rather than singular. Some seek to explain the use of this plural, *Elohim*, as what they call the plural of majesty or the plural of emphasis. But that is only an excuse that has been offered to explain away the fact that *Elohim* is plural and it is the name for God in Genesis 1.

The other Hebrew word for Lord is *Adonai*, which also is a plural. In Genesis 1 is the first mention of the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

So the first mention of the Holy Spirit is right in Genesis 1:1-2.

And then when we get down to verse 26, “And God said, [that is, *Elohim* (the plural again) said] Let us [plural pronoun] make man after our own likeness and image.” And here, plural pronouns are used concerning God, which wipes out that concept of the plural of majesty.

The Scriptures teach us that all three persons of the Godhead were active in the creation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

So John declares that Jesus was in the beginning with God; that He was the Word, the Eternal Word, and that He was with God; that He was God and that all things were made by Him. “Without Him was not anything made that was made.”

Paul said, “For by Him were all things created [Him being Jesus.] And He is before all things and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).  
The Son is in creation.

Also in Psalm 33:6, we read about the part of the Holy Spirit in creation.

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all  
the hosts of them by the breath [or the *ruach*] of his mouth.

The word *ruach* in Hebrew is breath, wind, or spirit. So the translation of Psalm 33:6 could very well read: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made [and of course Jesus is the Word of the Lord] and all of the hosts of them by the Spirit [breath, *ruach*] of His mouth.”

In Deuteronomy 6:4 is that which is called the Shema of the Hebrews. It is that which was chanted over, and over, and over again during their worship time at the temple—especially during the feast days. They would cry out over and over the Shema, “*Yishrael Yahweh Elohim ekad Yahweh.*” Over and over they would chant that. And that was the whole basis of the monotheistic Hebrew religion—the oneness of God. But in looking at the Shema, it is interesting that the *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*) *Elohim*—again the plural for God—is combined with *ekad Yahweh*—one *Yahweh* (or one *Jehovah*.) This means: Israel, Jehovah Gods [plural]—one Jehovah. Not only is it interesting that the *Elohim* [plural] is used, but so is the use of the word *ekad*—for the word *ekad* in Hebrew is a compound unity. When God created Eve out of Adam, He said, “And the two shall be [*ekad*] one flesh”—compound unity.

There is another Hebrew word for “one” that is an absolute one, and that is *yakad*. And had, in the Shema, they declared, “*Yishrael Yahweh Elohim yakad Yahweh,*” then you would have no basis to try to make an argument for the Trinity. But the fact that the *Elohim* is plural and the *ekad* is a compound unity—even within the monotheistic chant of the Hebrews—is a suggestion of the triunity of God.

Moses commanded how Aaron and his sons were to put the blessings of God upon the people. According to Numbers 6:24-26, they were to say:

The LORD [*Yahweh*] bless thee and keep thee: The LORD  
[*Yahweh*] make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious  
unto thee: The LORD [*Yahweh*] lift up is countenance upon  
thee, and give thee peace.

Notice the threefold declaration of *Yahweh*—one *Yahweh*, yet why would it be repeated three times? “*Yahweh* bless thee and keep thee. *Yahweh* make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. And *Yahweh* lift up His countenance on thee and give thee peace.”

And thus, the Lord said, you will put My name, the name *Yahweh*, on the children of Israel, and I will bless them. This is the trinity of the blessing in unity.

We also find when Isaiah saw his vision of the Lord high and lifted up, sitting on the throne, he heard the seraphim as they were saying, “Holy, holy, holy.” Why three times? It is the Lord of hosts—the threefold holiness.

In the prophecy of the Messiah, in Isaiah 48:16, the Lord said,

Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

Notice, “the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me”—Jesus the Messiah. It is the Messiah speaking in verse 16.

Come ye near unto me. Hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there am I. (Isaiah 48:16)

“In the beginning was the Word” and now, “The Lord God and His Spirit sent Me.” The Revised Standard Version reads: “The Lord God hath sent Me and His Spirit” and that is more literal from the Hebrew. We find first of all, it is a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah and then the coming of the age of the Holy Spirit. So,

The Lord GOD hath sent me and his Spirit. (Isaiah 48:16 RSV)

Of course in the New Testament, we have the triunity of God all the way through. At the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16,

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water and lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.

Notice that Jesus was being baptized and there was then the Spirit of God descending like a dove. And then a voice from heaven was saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” We see Jesus baptized, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking from heaven declaring His pleasure in His Son.

Now there is a sect that is called the Jesus Only sect. They are quite strong in the southern part of the United States and they have spread as far west as Arizona. There are a smattering few of them here in California, but not many. This Jesus Only sect has taken up the error of the early heresy in the church that was known as Sabellianism, which denied the separateness of the three persons of the Godhead. The Jesus Only sect declares that Jesus is the only God, that He is the Father, that He is the Son, and that He is the Holy Spirit—that He is all three.

Well, this particular passage of Scripture in Matthew 3:16 would seem to me to provide sort of a problem for them. Jesus would have to be some kind of a magician bringing forth a dove to land upon Himself—the Holy Spirit. And then He would have to be a ventriloquist throwing His voice up to heaven as He declared, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him.”

In John 14:16-17 Jesus said,

And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth him: but you know him; for he dwelleth with you, and he shall be in you.

So the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, was sent at Jesus’ request to the Father.

Also in John 14:26, we have, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name”— so again, all three.

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go and to teach all nations, He said, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”—all three again.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians he said,

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

So, the Trinity being one Spirit, one Lord, one God—one times one times one. It is interesting that most generally the Spirit is mentioned third—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is why He is commonly said to be the third person of the Trinity, because usually He is the third one mentioned. It is in nowise a reflection of inferiority, because surely, the Scripture teaches the co-equal aspects of the Godhead. But here the typical formula is reversed—the Spirit is mentioned first, Jesus second, and God third.

In Romans 15:30 Paul said,

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

So notice the three again, but this time Jesus is first, the Holy Spirit is second, and the Father is third. When we refer to the Spirit, as I mentioned, as the third person of the Godhead, there is no thought of inferiority. The Westminster Confession, says

There is but one only, living, and true God. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. (The Westminster Confession, II:i,iii)

As Jesus was talking with His disciples in John 15, He said,

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. (John 15:26)

These personal pronouns are referring to the Holy Spirit. But the Comforter was sent to them from the Father at the request of Jesus.

In Paul's benediction in his second letter to the Corinthians, he said,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Paul notes the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit—the three in one.

In Peter's message in Acts chapter 10 to the group that had gathered at the house of Cornelius, he declared how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit—all three are mentioned.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:38 )

In 1 John 5:7, we have the strongest declaration of the Trinity in the New Testament.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Now there is an objection by some who say that this particular Scripture does not exist in the original manuscript. The interesting thing of course, is that we do not have any original manuscripts. We are not certain what is in the original manuscript. For a person to say that it is not in the original manuscripts cannot be spoken in certainty, because we do not have original manuscripts that we can examine and look at. The oldest manuscripts that we have—and in my opinion they are rather poor manuscripts to say the best—are the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the *Codex Alexandrinus*, and of course, the *Codex Vaticanus*. And these are all from the same school of manuscripts. And it is true that

this passage is not in these manuscripts. Nor is the latter portion of Mark's Gospel, from 16:7 on. They are not in those manuscripts. However, those manuscripts are dated about A.D. 412, which would be some 300 years after the original manuscripts. So, you have an intervening time of 300 years in which we have many, many other manuscripts and portions of manuscripts.

This particular verse in 1 John is not in the majority of the manuscripts. However, it is quoted by some of the early church fathers, who wrote in the second century, as is the latter part of the Gospel of Mark 16. So, the fact that it is quoted by early church fathers who lived in the second century some 150 to 200 years before the *Codex Sinaiticus*, they must have been quoting from some manuscript that was older than the *Codex Sinaiticus*. And so, the argument that it does not appear in the oldest, full manuscripts—and the *Codex Sinaiticus* is not really a full manuscript—it really does not bear that much weight. And I think that that is one of the major mistakes of the Westcott and Hort text. They relied almost completely, over ninety-five percent, on the codices *Sinaiticus*, *Alexandrinus*, and *Vaticanus*. But that is only for you who are interested in the textual criticism.

But even without 1 John 5:7, which of course is very strong—

There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the  
Word, and the Holy Spirit and these three are one.

—even without this particular text, surely there are enough other texts in the New Testament where the three are coupled together, as we have already demonstrated, that the evidence is conclusive that there are three persons and yet one God.

Now divine names are given to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:3,

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to  
lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of  
the land?”

You remember Ananias's wife, Sapphira, sold some land and they brought a portion of the money earned and laid it at the apostles' feet. Now this was a bit of hypocrisy because Ananias was acting like he was giving everything—giving all, you know. And Peter says,

Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit in  
that you have kept back part of the price of the land?

And then he said,

Look, you did not have to give anything. While it remained  
was it not your own? And after you sold it, it was in your  
own power. You could do with the money whatever you

wanted. But why have you conceived this thing in your heart?

This was deception. And then he said,

You have not lied unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:3-4  
KJV)

Now, in the previous verse he said you have lied to the Holy Spirit and now he said you have lied to God. And so there is a geometrical theorem that applies here. It has been too long since I have had my geometry to remember the theorem. But it is something about equal sides and equal angles. If you have lied to the Spirit and then you have lied to God, then it makes them equal. It means they are the same.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul speaks of our being transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Now the phrase, “the Spirit of the Lord,” has been translated in the newer versions more correctly and more literally from the Greek, “by the Lord, the Spirit.” And it is in the Greek, *hapo kurios numetous*—the Lord the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit possesses divine attributes. He is eternal. Hebrews 9:14 says,

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Again the Trinity—the blood of Christ, through the eternal Spirit, purges your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent. Psalm 139:7-10 says,

Wither shall I go from thy spirit? or wither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

The Spirit is omnipresent. In heaven, He is there; in hell, He is there; and in the uttermost parts of the sea, He is there. I cannot flee from the Spirit.

He is omniscient. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says,

But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

He knows all things—the deep things of God.

For what man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11 KJV)

He knows—as with God—all things. He is omniscient.

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent. When the angel was promising to Mary that God had chosen her as the vessel to bring the Messiah into the world, she questioned,

How can this be since I am really a virgin? I have not had relationships with a man.

The angel answered and said unto her in Luke 1:35,

The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. [The Holy Spirit is the power of the highest.] Therefore also that Holy One, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.

All three are there—the Holy Spirit, the power of the Highest, and the result is the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit is identified with Jehovah of the Old Testament. Verses in the Old Testament that are described to Jehovah are ascribed, in the New Testament, to the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 6:8 for instance:

Also, I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Then said I, “Here am I. Send me.” And he said, “Go and tell this people, Here ye indeed, but understand not. See ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and convert and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:8-10)

Another example is found in Acts 28:25 with Paul the Apostle:

When they had agreed not among themselves, he departed. And after that Paul had spoken one word, well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the Prophet unto our fathers saying, “Go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive.” (Acts 28:25-26)

So, that which the Lord spoke to Isaiah, Paul ascribes to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.

Jeremiah 31:31 says,

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. But this shall be the covenant that I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah, I will put my law in their inward parts. I will write in their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, Know Jehovah, for they shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah, for I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

Hebrews 10:15 says,

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is witness to us. For after that he had said before, “This is the covenant that I make with them after those days, saith Jehovah. I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:15-17)

So, the Holy Spirit is declared to be the one who inspired the prophet Jeremiah, though Jeremiah said it was Jehovah who spoke to him these things. The Holy Spirit is the one who inspired the writing of the Bible.

In Mark 12:36,

For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, “The Lord said to my lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

David said this by the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:16 Peter said,

Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was a guide to those that took Jesus.

This is acknowledging that David was speaking through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:21,

For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but  
holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy  
Spirit.

He was the one who inspired the writings of the holy men of old, which we call the Bible—the Scriptures.

But not only that—Jesus said He was the one who would inspire the apostles. And so, after telling them that they were going to be brought before the synagogues and to the magistrates and the powers, Christ says in Luke 12:12,

Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer or  
what ye shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the  
same hour what you ought to say.

Do not take any forethought. Do not worry about it, for in the same hour the Holy Spirit will give you what you need to say. Inspired, the Old Testament writers would be the inspiration to the apostles and to the servants of Jesus Christ when brought before the judges, the magistrates, and the councils.

Now, the fulfillment of this is clearly seen in Acts 7, when Stephen was arrested and brought before the council and he began to give his defense of his faith. And the latter part of Acts 6 says,

And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him,  
saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15)

And then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these things so?” And Stephen began to preach to them one of the most masterful sermons ever preached. He started out on the common ground, speaking of their favorite subject: their fathers, their illustrious fathers. They were a very proud people—proud of their national heritage. They were always saying, “Well, our fathers...” and boasting in the illustrious, glorious fathers of the Hebrew nation. So he pointed out to them how that their fathers sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver; deciding not to kill him, they sold him as a slave for twenty pieces of silver and he was carried away to Egypt. They were so hard-hearted they were not moved by his tears and all.

When Joseph was being taken away to Egypt, they did not realize that God had indeed ordained him to rule over them. They did not recognize that the first time around with Joseph. But the second time around, when they came to Egypt and they were all bowing before him when he was giving them a bad time, then they recognized that Joseph was

ordained by God to the position that he had. They rejected it the first time with Joseph, but the second time they saw, they acknowledged, they recognized.

Their illustrious fathers turned their backs on Moses and he had to flee. And Moses thought that surely they understood that God had chosen him to lead the children of Israel out of the bondage in the Egypt. He knew the call of God and when he first tried to fulfill it, they rejected him. They cast him out; He had to flee to the wilderness, but the second time around, they recognized that, yes, he is God's ordained leader.

Can you see what he is building to? The first time around, they rejected Jesus, just like their fathers rejected Joseph—just like their fathers rejected Moses. But the second time around they recognized what God was doing. And so he is saying basically, “Hey, next time around you will know that you were more stupid than your fathers.”

But then Stephen went on to say, “Which of the prophets did not your fathers kill? I mean, they were ignorant. But you have done the worst of all because you have killed the one whose coming the prophets all declared.” And that really burned them. I mean, the truth cuts and hurts.

And so, they would not listen and they stopped their ears. They began to gnash their teeth—screaming. They drug him out and stoned him to death because they could not stand the truth. But how masterful to show them that they were following the pattern that had long-existed in the nation: that of missing God's Anointed the first time around, but recognizing Him the second time around. Inspired by the Holy Spirit!

We read that Peter was standing before the council being asked a leading question that could lead to his being stoned. It says, “But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said, ‘Ye men and rulers of Israel...’” He was filled with the Holy Spirit and thus speaking to them. And when he was through, it says they wondered. They were marveling because of the wisdom—because they perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men. The Jewish council was thinking these guys do not have any college degrees, and yet, the wisdom with which they spoke! Why? Because it is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Godhead. He is the gift that God has given to you and to me—to His church. And He will come to be a Comforter, *Parakēltos*. He will come alongside of you to help you in your Christian walk. He will come alongside of you to guide you in the way of truth. He will come alongside of you to strengthen you. He will indwell you that you might be empowered to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

As we continue our study in this most important subject—the Holy Spirit and you—we are going to talk more about the indwelling and the out flowing of the Holy Spirit; the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; the work of the Holy Spirit in the church; the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church; and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. Shall we pray?

Father, how we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit that has been given through the request of Jesus—given to the church and that we have now this blessed privilege of our bodies becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. And so Lord, we wish to present our bodies to You as living sacrifices. And we invite the Holy Spirit to come and to take residence within us. We yield ourselves to be controlled by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit. Lord, work in our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, as He conforms us into the image of Jesus Christ and as He gives us the power to bear witness of Jesus Christ to a dark and dying world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**WORKS CITED:**

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This is tape number SHS303 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version

Regarding the subject of the Holy Spirit, C. H. Spurgeon said,

I believe, brethren, that whenever the church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the very breath of the church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power. If the Spirit be withdrawn, then the vitality of the godliness begins to decline and we are backsliding. Let us turn to the Spirit of God crying, 'Quicken Thou me in Thy way.' If we sorrowfully perceive that any church is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us return to the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before it an open door and if we enter not, we ourselves are to be blamed.  
(C. H. Spurgeon)

Note that last part: "Let us return to the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before us an open door. If we enter not, we ourselves are to blame." Tonight we would like to look at the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Jesus, in promising the Holy Spirit, the Blessed *Paraklēte*, to the disciples said,

Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and he shall be in you. (John 14:17)

The Holy Spirit has been dwelling here on the earth from the beginning of creation. In verse 2 of Genesis,

The earth was without form and void and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

Now in John 16:7, when Jesus was speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit, He declared,

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient [or necessary] 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 [The work of the Holy Spirit in the world] of sin,

and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (John 16:7-11)

In Genesis chapter 6, when God saw the wickedness of the earth was exceedingly great and He declared His intention of destroying man from off of the face of the earth because the imagination of his heart was only evil continually, God declared, “My Spirit will not always strive with man.” God’s Spirit had been striving with those people in Noah’s day. The Spirit had been convicting them of their sin. The Spirit was working in the world, reproving the world of their sin, but they were rejecting the Holy Spirit. Though He was striving with them, in their hearts they knew what they were doing was wrong. They closed their minds and their hearts to the Holy Spirit and thus, God warned, “It is not going to always be. My Spirit will not always strive with man.” There comes that day when the Spirit ceases to strive and the judgment of God comes, just as it did in the times of Noah.

Today we often call the striving of the Holy Spirit with man, the voice of conscience. Paul, in Romans 2, speaks of the law of God that is written in the hearts of man—the unregenerate man. Even in man’s heart, God has written His law. Paul said, “The conscience also bearing them witness, as their thoughts either accuse or excuse them.” So, God’s law is written on the hearts of man and their conscience is reproving them. Paul is talking about unregenerate men. In First Timothy 4:2, Paul speaks of those whose conscience had been seared as with a hot iron, who had rejected the voice of the Holy Spirit until they were able to do things without feeling guilt or without feeling any kind of remorse.

I was at a seminar at which some of the social scientists who follow the trends of society were sharing with us on how the church should prepare for the year 2000. And a man who has done a lot of research and written a book on the subject was saying that, for the most part, we adults are out of touch with what is happening in our world. We are out of touch with what is going on with the young people. He said we are living in a day and fast moving towards that time when the young people will have no consciousness of evil. They will not even know what evil is, and thus, they will be able to commit the most horrible crimes and not feel any sense of remorse. And since that conference, many times I have observed the remarks of the commentators after some of these serial killers are caught. When they are sitting there being tried, or even when sentence is passed, so often the remark is, “And they showed absolutely no remorse.” They have consciences that are seared as with a hot iron.

The Spirit of God does convict of sin. He reproves the world of sin. But people can and do resist this work of the Holy Spirit. When Stephen was standing before the Jewish council, he finally accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit, even as their fathers did.

When Jesus apprehended Paul on the road to Damascus, Jesus said to Paul, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” This is interesting because Paul testified that as far as the

righteousness of the law was concerned, he was blameless; that he had always sought to live with a clean conscience before God. And yet there was something inside that was goading him, so that when the Lord apprehended him, He said, “It has been hard for you to kick against the goads.” (Acts 9:5 NKJV)

In Zechariah 7:12,

Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts has said in his Spirit by the former prophets.

They hardened their hearts, made them as adamant stone, so that they would not hear the Spirit—hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit—by the former prophets. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. When a person hardens his heart and will not listen to the Spirit, then God has no alternative but judgment.

So we see a world today that has turned a deaf ear to the reproof of the Holy Spirit. We hear people mocking against a righteous life, mocking Jesus Christ, and mocking the witness of the Spirit. Now the witness of the Holy Spirit to the world is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the only Savior. Jesus said He is witnessing of sin because they believe not in Him.

The name “Jesus” bespeaks His mission. The angel said,

Thou shalt call His name JESUS [or Joshua]: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

His name, Jesus, derives from the Greek for the Hebrew, *Joshua*, which is the contraction of *Jehovah Shua*, or Jehovah is salvation. He said He came to seek and to save those that were lost. That was His mission. And the Holy Spirit testifies to the world, reproves the world, of sin because they do not believe in Jesus.

It is my belief that the continual rejecting of the witness of the Spirit to the heart of man constitutes the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is the sin that will ultimately consign a person to hell. And when the final day of judgment comes and the books are opened, you will be judged by your works. But the second book is the Book of Life and if your name is not found in the Book of Life, then you will be cast, according to the Scripture, into the lake that is burning with fire. The refusal to accept Jesus Christ, thus not having your name in the Book of Life, is an unpardonable sin.

Jesus said He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. And he that believeth is not condemned. Oh, that you would underline that in your mind and in your heart. He that believeth is not condemned. Those words should strike a chord of rejoicing in your soul. He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already.

Now the Holy Spirit is reproving the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus. “He that does believe is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already,” Jesus said, “seeing he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God.” This is the issue: your believing in God’s provision for your sin, your believing that God sent His only begotten Son who bore your sin, who died in your place. This is the witness of the Holy Spirit. This is the witness of the Spirit to the world.

They are suffering from the conscience. They know that they are not doing what is right, but they will not come to Jesus Christ to receive the cleansing and the forgiveness. So this is the condemnation—that light has come into the world, but they will not come to the light because men love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil.

When Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to preach the gospel, He said,

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:16)

The whole issue is believing in Jesus Christ. It is the difference between being forgiven and being condemned. That is the whole issue. “Of sin,” Jesus said, “because they do not believe in Me.” It is interesting He did not say, “Of sin because they are, you know, into pornography, and they are into fornication, and they are into this, and they are into that.” No: “Of sin, because they do not believe in Me” (John 16:9).

John testified,

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

And then John said if you believe not, actually you are making God a liar. You are making the Holy Spirit a liar. You are blaspheming the Holy Spirit by your rejecting, or your refusal to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who bore the sins of the world. If you believe not, you make God a liar, for you do not believe the record that God gave of His Son. You do not believe the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus Christ.

Concerning the day of final judgment, Revelation 20 says,

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell

delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

Your name is written in the Book of Life by virtue of your believing in Jesus Christ.

Now the Holy Spirit is not only reproofing the world of sin, but He is also reproofing the world of righteousness. Sin is doing the wrong thing. Righteousness is doing the right thing. Righteousness—the Holy Spirit shows to the world what is the right thing to do, the right actions to take, and the right reactions to take. Sin is missing the mark. Righteousness is hitting the mark. And the Holy Spirit bears witness, or reproofs the world of righteousness, by pointing to Jesus Christ as the prime example of righteousness. He is what God intended us to be.

Peter said, “He has set for us an example that we should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Do you want to know what God wants of you? Look at Jesus Christ. Do you want to know what God intended man to be? Look at Jesus Christ. And so the Holy Spirit in reproofing the world of righteousness does so by pointing to Jesus Christ. He is the example. He is what God would have you to be. As you yield—and we will get to this in a further lesson—as you yield to the Holy Spirit the work of the Holy Spirit within you is that of conforming you into the image of Christ.

But to the world, He reproofs them of righteousness—again, pointing to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Of righteousness because I ascend unto My Father” (John 16:10). Now the logical question would be, what does the ascension of Jesus Christ testify to us of righteousness? How does the Holy Spirit put the two together? Jesus said, “Of righteousness because I ascend to the Father.”

Paul the Apostle tells us that the unrighteous are not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven, in 1 Corinthians 6:9. In Galatians 5, when he lists for us the works of the flesh, Paul adds, “I told you before that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.” So read 1 Corinthians 6:10 in its context and read Galatians 5, the works of the flesh, in its context. And they that do these things—these things are unrighteous things. They are not right. And if you do these things, you are not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

In the Book of Revelation we are told that God will not allow anything to enter that defiles, because it would defile heaven. In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that “no whoremonger or unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” So the Holy Spirit is reproofing the world of their unrighteousness as He testifies to them of righteousness and as He points to the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven.

In Hebrews we are exhorted to “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). So the Holy Spirit is speaking to us about a holy life, about a righteous life—the denial of the flesh life. But what about the ascension of Jesus into heaven? What does that have to do with it?

Well, we have been talking about the things that will keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven. The works of the flesh will keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus ascended into heaven, God was bearing witness to the world that here is a man who lived such a righteous life that His righteousness grants Him an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In other words, God is saying, “This is the righteousness that will get you in. This is the righteousness that it takes to get you into the kingdom of heaven.”

Now one day Jesus said to His disciples, “Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). And what a shocker that must have been to the disciples, because the scribes and Pharisees were known for their righteousness! They were the fellows who were always straining at gnats and swallowing camels. They were men who were always so careful to demonstrate their righteousness before the people, trying to keep every little jot and tittle of the law, according to their interpretations of it. And they even went beyond the intention of the law in many places, as far as the physical keeping of it. But of course inwardly, they were breaking it all the time because of the attitude of their hearts. But the scribes and Pharisees were known for being righteous and yet Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Do not believe the lies of Satan, whereby he seeks to convince you that somehow God will be persuaded to let all kinds of people into heaven who are basically sincere, good people. Do not believe that God will tolerate evil or that God will allow evil within the kingdom of heaven—providing you are not too bad. Do not believe that God will give you some kind of special dispensation and allow you to live after the flesh, but still grant you entrance into the kingdom. Read again the list and read the warning. We know that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus lived the kind of life and exemplified the kind of righteousness that God will accept. And by His ascension into heaven God is saying, “This is it. This is the standard that will get you into heaven, a righteousness greater than that of the scribes and the Pharisees.” Nothing short of that righteousness can grant you entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

You might say, “Well Chuck, aren’t you closing the door to all of us?” Yes, as far as your own righteousness and efforts are concerned, I am. If you are thinking you can get there on the basis of your good works or your good intentions or your efforts—forget it! You will never make it. There is only one way that any of us will find entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and that is through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is imparted to us by our faith and trust in Him. You cannot perform any kind of service or duty to God that He will accept as admission into the kingdom of heaven. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can you ever find entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The third thing the Holy Spirit reproves the world of is judgment. And Jesus said, “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” We earlier read in Revelation concerning what is commonly called, “the great white throne judgment of God.” The Holy Spirit is not really reproving the world of that. “Of judgment,” He said, “because the prince of this world is judged.” Where and when was the prince of this world judged? On the cross of Jesus Christ, the power of Satan was broken. His hold over the earth was wrested. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:13,

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh, hath he made quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [or in the cross]. (Colossians 2:13-15)

So, on the cross Jesus Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers of darkness. And He made an open display of His victory in the resurrection. He defeated or spoiled those principalities and powers of darkness, which were against us. He triumphed over them on the cross; and thus, the prince of this world has been judged. His authority and his power that he once had has been overcome through the power of Jesus Christ.

Now, when you belong to Jesus and are walking in the Spirit, you have power over the principalities and powers of darkness. The world is still under the power of Satan, but the Holy Spirit bears witness to the world that they do not have to be chained by sin any longer. They do not have to be a captive and be held by the enemy in darkness any longer. You can be free! Jesus broke the chains. And He will break the chains by which Satan is holding you. The prince of this world has been judged. He has been thoroughly defeated and he only holds people by usurped authority and power. Jesus died for the sins of the world and you can be set free from the power of sin. You do not have to live in sin any longer. And this is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the world, as He is seeking to draw men unto Jesus Christ and unto the kingdom of God.

So we have the threefold witness of the Holy Spirit. 1) Of sin, because they do not believe in Jesus. 2) Of righteousness, because Jesus is the standard of righteousness that you must attain if you ever have any hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. And when you look at the righteousness of Christ, you will realize that you cannot attain it in yourself. You are bound up to God’s provisions through faith. That is the righteousness that God imputes to the believing sinner. And 3) He then testifies that you do not have to be ruled by sin any more because the prince of this world has been judged. Therefore sin is not to reign in your mortal body any longer.

Writing to the Romans, Paul said,

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts of thereof. (Romans 6:11-12)

That is a command. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey the lust. “Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness” (Romans 6:13). That is, your body; do not yield the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. But yield yourselves unto God and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Sin shall not have dominion over you. Satan has been judged. His power has been broken. And you can have, through Jesus Christ, that victory over the powers of darkness. That is the witness of the Holy Spirit to your heart and to the world.

Thank God! I am free. Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the work of the Holy Spirit in the world even tonight, a world that is darkened by sin and the powers of darkness. We thank You, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That His power still avails and prevails over the powers of darkness. Thank You, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit bore witness of the truth to our hearts and drew us to Jesus Christ. He planted faith in our hearts towards Him whereby our sins were forgiven. The Holy Spirit came in and is bringing to us that righteousness of Christ, as He conforms us into the image of Christ. We thank You, Lord, that through our faith it is imputed as though it was already done and accomplished. We thank You, Lord, the powers of Satan have been broken and we have been set free from the power of sin and the darkness of Satan. He has been judged and sin no longer reigns in our mortal bodies, but the Spirit of God reigns. Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Lord, draw us by Your Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ and to the fullness that You desire for each of us as we walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling any longer the desires of the flesh. Lord, we desire to be filled until we overflow with the fullness of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS304. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Last week we talked about the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and the convicting of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment in drawing men to Jesus Christ. Tonight we wish to continue the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, as we see Him as the restraining force against evil.

The Bible tells us that there is one final, great battle to be fought before Satan is forced to give over the control of the earth to the Lord. And at the present time, Satan is mustering his forces for this final conflict, in which I feel that Satan is deceived into thinking that he is going to win.

In Revelation 19:19, John said,

And I saw the beast [that is, the antichrist], and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him [that is, Jesus Christ] that sat on the horse, and against His army.

So there is this one final conflict before the Lord establishes God's kingdom upon the earth.

In Revelation 13:2, John said,

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon [or Satan] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

This is a reference to the antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, who will soon come on the scene to take over the governments of the world. Satan endows him with his power. He gives to him his throne. And he also gives to him great authority.

Originally the earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof. He created it. When God created man and placed him upon the earth, He said, "Let Us make man and give him dominion over the earth" (Genesis 1:26). And so, God gave to man that dominion, or rule, over the earth. But man surrendered that dominion unto Satan in his double action of disobedience to the command of God, and obedience to the suggestion of Satan to eat the forbidden fruit.

Paul said in Romans 6:16,

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

And when Adam yielded himself in obedience unto Satan, he became a servant of Satan. And, thus, Satan gained dominion over the earth. Adam rebelled against the authority of God and the commandment of God. And it was a double action of disobedience and rebellion to the commandment of God and, by the same token, it was obedience to the suggestion of Satan. Man became a servant of sin unto death and Satan gained the rule over the earth—the dominion of the earth.

Now, God sent His Son in order to redeem the world back to God. And when Satan took Jesus up to the high mountain, he showed Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And Satan offered them to Jesus if He would just bow and worship him, for Satan boasted, “They are mine and I can give them to whomever I will” (Luke 4:6).

Now this is manifested in Revelation 13:2, when we find that the dragon or Satan gives to the antichrist (the beast), his power, his throne, and great authority. Satan said, “It is mine. I can give it to whomever I will.” Jesus did not dispute that. He recognized that Satan was the prince of this world. He called him such. But Jesus had come to redeem the world back to God. And by His death upon the cross, Jesus paid the price for our redemption. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold from our vain manner of living, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who was slain as a lamb without spot or blemish.

So Jesus, through the virtue of His death upon the cross, paid the price for the redemption of this world. But in Hebrews 2:8 the writer said,

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his [that is, Jesus’] feet. For in that he put all things in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him.

We do not yet see it. He has not yet laid claim to that which He purchased. In the meantime—and we will deal with this more fully at a later discussion—in the meantime, He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise. This is the down payment, so to speak—the earnest of our inheritance until He redeems His purchased possession.

The Lord has redeemed me. I belong to Him. He has not yet claimed me and taken me home. But in the meantime, He has given to me the Holy Spirit to show that He is earnest in His intent to redeem me fully and completely, and to claim me as His own. So, God has put all things in subjection unto Jesus. We do not yet see all things in subjection. He has not yet taken the authority by which He is to reign.

Now in Revelation chapter 5, we find Jesus doing just that—taking authority. We find Him coming, taking the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne, as

His worthiness is declared. But that is a yet future event. We do not yet see the world in subjection unto Jesus Christ. In fact, the world lies in the control of the wicked one, even to the present time.

For His own reasons and purposes, God has left Satan in control over the present, evil world system. God intends that during this time in which Satan is still in control, those who desire to serve God, to live with God, can be redeemed from the power of sin through Jesus Christ. They can be sealed with the Holy Spirit, and they can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Christians are then waiting for that day.

We are living in an unredeemed world as yet. However, being redeemed and living in this unredeemed world that is still under the power of Satan, we find ourselves in the midst of a spiritual warfare. And it is becoming more pronounced every day. Satan is mustering his forces for this final battle and he is manifesting his power as never before. Satan is seeking to destroy all of the influence of Jesus Christ from this earth and that also entails the destruction of the Christians and their influence of righteousness.

We are in a battle! Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth. You are to be a purifying influence. You are to prevent the rotteness. But if the salt has lost its savor, it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under the foot of man” (cf. Matthew 5:13). We are in a heavy spiritual battle.

Modern technology has brought the darkness of the world right into our homes, by way of television and by way of radio. And the church of Jesus Christ has been extremely weakened by compromise with the world. When Jesus was writing to His faithful church of Philadelphia (and that is the true church in the last days), He said, “Thou hast a little strength” (Revelation 3:8). That is all. We are not a great, mighty force and power for righteousness. Would to God we were. But there has been too much leaven, even within the church. And the church’s position, as far as the world is concerned, has been extremely weakened as a result of so many compromises.

It is Satan’s strategy to bring all of the governments of the earth under the control of one man, who is referred to in the Bible as the man of sin. He is the son of perdition: the one man that Satan will vest with his powers, with his throne, and with his authority. And so, Satan’s instrument to rule the world—and through this man be worshipped by the world—is called by various names in the Bible. “The beast” is the name generally used in Daniel 7 and Revelation 11 and 13. 1 John 2 and 4 refer to him as the “antichrist.” Paul calls him, “the man of sin and the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Now as he has been vested with the powers of Satan, he will be able to work all kinds of supernatural signs and wonders by which he will astound the world. He will be able to do miraculous things. In Matthew 24:24 Jesus declared,

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Second Thessalonians 2:9 Paul said, “Even him [that is, the antichrist] whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders”—Satan gives him his power. And so he comes with all of these powers and signs and lying wonders.

Revelation 13:11 speaks of the false prophet who will work together with the antichrist.

I beheld another beast [that is, the false prophet] coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, but he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all of the power of the first beast before him, and he causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. (Rev 13:11-13)

Daniel tells us,

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify [himself] in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. (Dan 8:24-25 KJV)

He will be a violent enemy of God. He will speak blasphemous words against God. Daniel 7:25 says,

And he shall speak [great] words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [or three and a half years].

Daniel 11:36 says,

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

Second Thessalonians 2:4, speaks of this man of sin (or son of perdition),

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Revelation 13:5-6 says,

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [three and a half years]. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

And we then read that he will make war against the Jews, who will be known as the saints and God's elect in that day. The church will already have been raptured out of the world. We will deal with that in a moment.

It was given to him power to make war with the saints, Revelation 13:7, and to overcome them. Power was given to him over all the kindreds and tongues and nations.

Daniel 7:21 says,

I beheld and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them.

Now Jesus spoke of His church in Matthew 16, after Peter's confession that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The church of Jesus Christ, though weak, shall still prevail. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church will prevail.

However, when the antichrist comes on the scene and makes war with the saints, he will overcome them. He will prevail against them, thus showing that those saints cannot be the church; but they are often called the tribulation saints. And for the most part they are the Jews who will turn to Jesus Christ during this period of great tribulation.

The antichrist will rule over all the earth. Revelation 13:7-8 says,

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Daniel 7:24-25 says,

And the ten horns out of this kingdom [that is the final federation of nations, world governing empire, ten kings combining together] are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak [great] words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Revelation 17:16-17 again speaks of the ten horns, [the ten kings],

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, [the false church], shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and to give their kingdom unto the beast.

So, God will put in their (the kings) hearts to turn the world over to the rulership of this man—unto the beast, “...until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (Revelation 17:17).

Now the antichrist will inaugurate a new system of exchange, where money will be done away with and he will usher in a cashless society. Now a few years ago, I used to talk about a cashless society and everybody sort of scratched their heads. They said, “Oh, a cashless society. Whoever heard of that?” Well, who has not heard of that now? If you read the business section of the newspapers, surely you have come across this. If you have read *Forbes* magazine surely, you have come across this. We are hearing more and more of the cashless society. I noticed just this past week in the grocery store, that it has a sign, “We accept VISA, MasterCard, Discover cards.” I mean, it is all there. And more often I find people standing in the line, who are giving their cards at the registers now. They can take their cards and just sign a little receipt. So, more and more we are moving towards this cashless society.

Listen to what the Bible has to say about this,

And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:16-17)

At home in my drawer, I have a little plastic device that looks sort of like a squirt gun. But it has a little needle and it is a little device to inject these little transmitters, which are about a half of an inch long and a fraction of an inch wide. And some of them are even smaller. It is used to insert these little chips—microchips or transponders—right under the skin. Now with these and with the use of satellites, they can trace, triangulate, and find anybody anywhere in the world, who has one of these little transmitters. I have one of these devices at home, designed to inject these little transmitters under the skin. This microchip, of course, can have all kinds of information concerning you—your bank balance, or whatever. You say, “I am not worried about that. I do not have any money.”

People are becoming reluctant (and rightfully so!) to carry cash any more because of the fact that crime is really out of control. The ideal answer is to go to computerized transactions. We are already doing it. We are doing it now with cards, but it would be a very simple step to move it to identification that is affixed upon a person’s body, either the right hand or forehead. With this new health program that they are touting, in order to make certain that you have a right for the healthcare, they are talking about everyone receiving a national kind of an identity card or some kind of an identification. Children now, at birth are given social security numbers. I mean, the whole thing is coming down. Where are we?

Well, as we look at the world, it is rapidly moving toward this one-world government. We hear words such as “global community,” “global economy,” “global banks,” and “global action.” I mean, we are hearing it all the time. We are moving towards the global world, a one-world government. These terms are constantly being used in the media until they have become very common for us to hear.

We talk about the necessity of global cooperation. We talk about the necessity of united efforts to go in and stop the war in Bosnia, and how it is necessary to have a global army—a global peace force. And more and more the United States is surrendering its troops to control of the U.N. and the generals and so forth of the U.N.—not necessarily the United States—as we are moving towards this global effort to bring global peace.

With the weapons of destruction that have been developed by modern technology, they realize the only hope for survival of mankind is through global government. There are powerful forces here in the United States known as the Council for Foreign Relations and the Trilateralists, who have as their goal this global government and they are in a position to move our nation into cooperation and submission to the global authority. More and more powers are being given to the U.N. to make laws, world laws, which supercede the laws of the states or the independent governments.

With the crime rate rising, as it is out of control, the only way that can effectively stop all the robberies and the drug dealings, is to get rid of money. It is estimated that the government is losing billions of dollars every year in uncollected taxes. So, if all of the transactions to buy or sell were made by computerized identity numbers, then they will

be able to trace everything that you bought or sold and it will eliminate stealing money, because money will be worthless.

I have a five hundred billion dollar bill in my office. It is the largest bill ever printed—five hundred billion dollars! Of course it is Serbian. It is becoming a collector's item. I am going to keep it. It is worth about eight dollars to collectors now, because it is the largest bill ever printed. And so it is becoming sort of popular with some of the people who collect those kind of things. And so they say it is worth eight dollars now in Germany, as a collector's item.

The banks are calling for a cashless society. The businesses are moving towards a cashless society. In fact, I am still one of those rare individuals who pay cash and I usually shock them. They say, "Do you want to put this on your charge card?" I say, "No, I will pay in cash. Do you still take it?" "Well yeah, but..."

Things are really pretty much in place for the surrendering to the world system—world government. They are definitely in place to eliminate money as a means of exchange, and to go to the cashless society. That could happen any week. You could at any time pick up the morning paper and read that you have two weeks to turn in all of your cash. After two weeks, it will have no value. In fact, this is being proposed right now and if you turn in more than \$5,000 in cash, then you will have to fill out an IRS form and so forth, because they wonder why you have that much cash. And so, this has already been proposed and it could happen over night, and it will happen over night. You will not be given any warning of this. But just one day you will pick up the morning newspaper and it will say that cash is to be eliminated in two weeks. And you will have two weeks to turn in all of your money into the account—the numbered account. Things are in place for this to happen.

What is the delay? What is holding back these powers and forces of darkness that are wanting to take over the full control of the earth? Here we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, restraining these powers of darkness and hindering them from inaugurating their final man of power.

Second Thessalonians 2:7 says,

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. Only he who now hinders will hinder until he is taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

The Holy Spirit is hindering, standing in the way, restraining these powers of evil. Until He is taken out of the way, and immediately the wicked one then shall be revealed. Now it is actually the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers that is the hindering force. Some say, well, it is just the Holy Spirit. No, it is the Holy Spirit in the church—in the life of the believers. And as soon as the church is taken out of this world, there will be no more

restraining forces against evil—no more voices against evil. The restraining force of the church will be removed and immediately, once the church is removed, this man of sin will take over using his powers that will be given to him by Satan. And the world will be plunged into darkness such as the world has never seen before, or will ever see again, thank God!

It is only the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church that is keeping Satan from this final thrust to gain absolute control over all the earth and plunging the world into its darkest hour. The mystery of iniquity is already at work. We see it. We see the decaying effects of sin. We see it everywhere. The spirit of antichrist is all around us. Jesus Christ is being mocked, being scorned, being ridiculed and derided.

A cultist is now being defined in governmental circles, as one that believes that the Bible is the inerrant word of God and that Jesus is coming again. If you believe these things, you are now being classified as a cultist. And such belief gained you the title of a religious fanatic. And this is a term—watch for it—for they acknowledge the greatest hindrance to this move towards the absolute control over the world, the greatest hindrance is the religious fanatics. And you hear a lot of groups being termed as religious fanatics. And religious fanaticism has been branded as one of the greatest evils in the world today. One of the greatest threats to peace comes from the religious fanatics. The thing that is holding back the New Age is the religious fanatics. There is a movement towards the eradication of the religious fanatics, in order that there will be nothing to hinder.

Well, there is a master plan to remove a good portion of the religious fanatics and then will the powers of evil have their day. But unbridled evil cannot last long. A society with unbridled evil cannot exist for any length of time. So once the power of the Holy Spirit within the church is removed and no longer restraining, the powers of evil will take over. It will be a quick plunge into the darkest hour of the history of man. It will not last long at all. It will be straight down into the abyss, as far as the world is concerned.

There are powerful men who have been in the media spotlight for many years, who are waging a powerful war against the born again believers. Steve Allen, Carl Sagan, Ed Asner, and Norman Lear, have all been seeking to subvert the faith of many and to make Bible-believing Christians look like people who are bereft of their senses. Oh, how the powers of darkness long to take over the control of the world completely! But they cannot just yet. The Holy Spirit in the church is restraining it. He is that restraining force in the world today, holding back the tide of evil that is building up and ready to flood over the earth.

We are told in the Bible about two witnesses that God is going to send to the Jews in these last days after the church is gone. And they are, quite possibly, Moses and Elijah. We are told how they will be hated by the world. And if a person seeks to hurt either of these two witnesses, fire comes from their mouths and destroys their attacker. Thus, the Scripture says, those who try to hurt these witnesses of God are to be killed.

You remember when Elijah was on the earth before, the king sent out a captain with fifty men to bring him in as a prisoner. And he said, “Oh thou man of God, come down. The king has sent me to arrest you.” And Elijah said, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down and consumed him with his fifty men. The king sent out another captain with fifty and he said the same thing, “Oh thou man of God, come on down. You are under arrest.” Elijah said, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you with your fifty men.” The third fellow was a little smarter. He said, “I am a family man, sir. And I am under orders of the king. Please, would you mind? Have mercy on me.” But here again, anyone seeking to hurt them, fire comes out of their mouth and destroys them and thus are they killed.

However, the Scripture says, when they have completed their testimony, then the beast will make war against them and overcome them and put them to death. But he cannot do it until they have completed their testimony, until the church has completed its testimony. We are here to be a restraining force against the evil through the power of the Holy Spirit, not through the political processes. That will never work. This is a spiritual battle and it is only through spiritual weapons that we will ever have any hope of success.

Satan loves to draw the Christian into the physical arena because he can make mincemeat out of him. Jesus said, “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8). And if you try to go in and fight the political processes, look out—you are going to get just taken care of, but good! God has given us spiritual weapons. We need to use them. They are the only thing that we have of real force in this conflict. God will preserve us until we have finished our testimony. And when the church has finished its testimony, then the Lord will remove His church. The restraining forces will be gone and Satan will take over. Then the powers of darkness will be in full control.

In Revelation 5, John sees the church in heaven rejoicing over the victory of the Lamb. The church is declaring the worthiness of the Lamb to take the scroll and to loose the seals—the title deed of the earth. When Jesus takes the scroll, when He begins to loose the seals in chapter six—first notice the church is in heaven in chapter five. They are rejoicing in the Lamb and declaring His worthiness, because He has redeemed us by His blood out of every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. He hath made us kings and priests unto our God. We shall reign with Him on the earth. But then in chapter six, when He begins to break the seals of this title deed to the earth, the first seal brings forth the antichrist, coming forth to conquer and to destroy.

The power of the Holy Spirit in the world is to restrain the power of the antichrist from taking over. As soon as the Spirit of God within the church is removed, then the powers of darkness move in. So, the Holy Spirit in our lives today is a very important factor in this world that is ready and willing to be taken over by the powers of darkness. The forces of darkness are in control now.

I personally believe that they cannot quite understand why the whole program cannot be culminated. They have been attempting to, but I do not think that they even—well, I think

they are beginning to realize it because they are beginning to talk about the religious fanatics that are keeping back the progress of world peace. So they are beginning to realize what it is. But they are ready to move. Me too! I am ready to move. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Father, we thank You for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And Lord, we pray that we might be that purifying influence while we are here. Let us be, Lord, a strong witness for You. May we bear faithful testimony to the truth. Lord, we pray that You will hasten the day, that we might complete our testimony. Lord, that You might receive us out of this dark, black world, in order that those powers of sin might have their final day, in order that You might come and establish Your kingdom of righteousness, light, joy, and peace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS305. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

We are studying the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This will be part one of three parts that we will examine on the subject of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 3:16, we read concerning John the Baptist that,

John answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

In John 1:33, again John the Baptist is speaking his testimony concerning Jesus. He said,

And I knew Him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

So John was prophesying of the one who was coming after him, who was mightier than he was, and who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. And John now testifies of Jesus, declaring that he really did not know that Jesus was the one until he saw this Spirit of God descending and remaining upon Him. For the one who sent him to baptize, told him that the one upon whom he saw the Spirit descend and remain was the one that would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:4, Jesus was assembled together with His disciples and He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, of which, He said,

Ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:4-5)

What do we learn from these verses? First of all, that there is an experience that is properly called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. John said, “There is One coming after me, mightier than I am. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16) And he testified that Jesus was that one. It teaches us that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is separate and distinct from regeneration. It is one thing to be born of the Spirit, and yet another thing to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

In John 20:22, we read that Jesus breathed on His disciples and He said unto them, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” It was at this point that the disciples did receive that indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Now I know that there are those who would object and say that the action of Jesus in breathing on them and saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” was only symbolic. I would like to suggest that their declaration, that it is only symbolic, is their interpretation of the experience. But they are totally without scriptural warrant in making that interpretation. There is nothing in the Scripture that would indicate that they did not receive the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. In fact, it is sort of hard for me to believe that Jesus could breathe on you and say, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” and you not receive it. But the reason why they say it was only a symbolic action is because of their presupposition position, that regeneration and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are one and the selfsame experience.

But from the time that Jesus breathed on them, the Holy Spirit indwelt them. However, in Acts 1:4, Jesus told His disciples that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father. For He said, “John indeed baptized with water unto repentance, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.” And Jesus here speaks of and acknowledges two different baptisms. He acknowledges the baptism with John in water and the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit that they were to receive in just a few days.

Now in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul the Apostle declares that we were all baptized by the Spirit into one body. Note that it is baptism, by the one Spirit, into the body. In that case, it is the Spirit who is the one who is baptizing you into the body of Christ. But Jesus is the one who baptizes you with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ. Jesus baptizes you with the Holy Spirit.

Those who seek to deny that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is separate from regeneration, usually quote from Ephesians 4:3-5, where Paul is encouraging the church to keep the unity of the Spirit. “For,” he declares, “there is one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Now what they usually do is put these two passages together. One baptism— “And you were all baptized by the one Spirit into the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13). When Paul is telling the Ephesian church to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit and speaks about one Lord, one faith, one baptism, what he is referring to is that there is only one baptism into the body of Christ. There is only one body of Christ.

I believe that Paul was warning about the things that we see happening today, in that we have built up denominational barriers. And each denomination sort of claims its own exclusivity, as far as spiritual things are concerned. So, if you want to join the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and they ask you if you have been baptized and you say, “Oh yes. I was down at Corona del Mar and I was baptized.” They will say, “Well no, we cannot accept that. Unless you have been baptized as a Lutheran, you cannot really join the church and so you will have to go through your classes and then be baptized by the Lutherans.” They will not accept baptism from Baptist churches or other churches, only their own.

The same is true of the Church of Christ. You may have been baptized by the Lutherans, but the Church of Christ will not accept that, nor will they accept Presbyterians or Baptists. They will only accept baptism by the Church of Christ. But then, if you want to change and you want to be a member of a Jesus Only fellowship, they will not accept that either. They say that a baptism is not valid unless you were baptized into the name of Jesus Only.

So this is just the very thing that Paul was warning about and seeking to guard against, the fact that everyone establishes their own parameters and you have to be baptized by us and into our church. Paul is saying, “No, no. There is only one body—the body of Christ. There is only one baptism.” Do not go around to be baptized by all of the different groups who require baptism by their group in order to be accepted into their fellowships. That is dividing the body of Christ and that is what Paul was speaking against.

We know that there is baptism in water. And the one who baptizes you in water is usually the pastor of the church. He is the one who is baptizing and the water is the element in which you are being baptized.

There is the baptism with the Holy Spirit and Jesus is the baptizer. John said, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33). And the Holy Spirit is the element in which you are immersed, even as you have been immersed in water. So, to be immersed in the Holy Spirit is the thought and the idea behind the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Now in the Greek language, there are three prepositions that signify relationship with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was talking to His disciples the night on which He was betrayed, in John 14, He is encouraging them. Their hearts are discouraged. He is talking about going away and where He is going they cannot come and they are upset. He seeks to encourage them and comfort them, promising that He would pray the Father who would give to them another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, that He might abide with them forever. And speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said,

Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not,  
neither knoweth him: but ye knoweth him; [Jesus said], for  
He dwelleth *with* you and shall be *in* you. (John 14:17,  
emphasis added)

So the Holy Spirit, Christ said, is dwelling with you. He is there alongside of you. The Greek preposition is *para*, but He is also going to dwell in you. He is going to come in and He will indwell you. And I believe that is what transpired in the twentieth chapter of John, when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” I believe that the Holy Spirit began to indwell them at that time.

Now prior to your conversion, it was the Holy Spirit who convicted you of your sin. It was the Holy Spirit who revealed Jesus Christ to you as the One who could take care of your sins. It was the Holy Spirit that convinced you to accept Jesus as your Lord. And the

minute you accepted Jesus as the Lord of your life, the Holy Spirit came into your life and began to indwell you. But that is not the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

As the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you, He begins that marvelous work of conforming you into the image of Jesus Christ. And we will talk about this in a subsequent lesson, when we are dealing with the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer—conforming him into the image of Jesus Christ. But there is that working of God’s Spirit within me and within every child of God. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Paul said, “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is *in* you.” The Holy Spirit is in every child of God. You are not your own. You have been bought with a price. “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9). The Holy Spirit indwells every born again believer. You are born again by the Spirit into the body of Jesus Christ.

However, not every believer has the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And in our next lesson we will look at many instances of believers who were not baptized with the Holy Spirit upon their believing in Jesus Christ. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a subsequent experience to their believing, which occurred sometimes days later, sometimes weeks later, and sometimes even perhaps years later. We will be looking at these instances in our next lesson.

But we have two prepositions to look at now. He is *with* you. He shall be *in* you. And every one of you tonight, who have been born again, have had both experiences. You had the Holy Spirit *with* you to convict you and to bring you to Jesus Christ. And the moment He came, He began to *indwell* you. In Acts 1 again, where Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem—not to depart, but wait there for the promise of the Father—He then said to them, “For you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” And here He uses the third Greek preposition, which is *epi*. He comes *upon* you or He comes *over* you. And I personally prefer when He overflows you.

And this *epi* baptism of the Holy Spirit is the empowering of the believer for service. Dwelling within me, He empowers me to be like Jesus. It is an inward work. It is a subjective work of the Holy Spirit within the believer, but the baptism is an outward working of the Spirit. It is the flowing forth from my life in the *dynamis* (the dynamic)—the power of God’s Spirit working through my life in touching those around me. It is one thing to have the Holy Spirit *with* you—*para*. It is another thing to have the Holy Spirit *in* you, but even more to have the Holy Spirit *upon* you, or *over* you.

Now, if I should have an empty glass up here on the pulpit, and next to it a large pitcher of water, and the pitcher of water was setting here and the empty glass next to it here, this pitcher of water would be *para*—*with* the glass. If I start pouring the water from the pitcher into the glass, then the water is now *in* this glass—this vessel. Now, as the glass gets filled with water and I continue to pour water out of the pitcher, it now begins to overflow. It now is *upon*, or overflowing from, the glass and it is the *epi* at this point. So, you started out with the *para*, as it is setting beside it. Then it is *in* it. And now it is overflowing it. And so it is with the Holy Spirit. Our life is like a vessel. The Holy Spirit

is *with* us. He begins to dwell *in* us. But then the Lord continues to pour into us, until the Holy Spirit flows *from* us—the *epi*, or overflowing experience of the Holy Spirit.

Many Christians have the Holy Spirit in them, but the Holy Spirit is not flowing forth out of their lives. In John 7:37-38—and we will be covering this also in a subsequent lesson—Jesus, on the last day of the feast, stood and cried to the people saying,

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

And John tells us that this He was speaking of the Spirit. He is speaking of this third relationship, the overflow or gushing forth from their lives like torrents of living water—that overflowing of the Spirit manifesting the real dynamic of the Spirit through your life. Certainly, God wants us to be filled with the Spirit. In fact, that is a command of the Scripture. When Paul was writing to the Ephesians, he said, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye [and he uses the present perfect tense] being filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)—or be continually filled with the Spirit.

But God also wants us to be overflowing with the Spirit. So many people have the Spirit just all bottled up inside and there is no flowing forth of the Spirit from their life. They are content to just be nominal Christians, just participating but never to overflowing. But it is God’s desire, God’s purpose, and God’s will that your life be overflowing with the Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost, the people gathered because of the supernatural phenomena, and Peter stood up and preached that message of Jesus Christ to them. The Holy Spirit brought conviction to the hearts of the people who were listening to Peter’s message. And in Acts 2:37-39, they cried out and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do, seeing that we have crucified the Lord of glory?” They recognized their sin—what they had done wrong. “What shall we do?” And Peter said, “Repent first. Secondly, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.” You see, the Holy Spirit was *with* them. They were convicted under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and they were crying out, “What shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized.” That is when the Holy Spirit will come *into* your life and begin His *indwelling*.

And then thirdly, he went on to say, “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” That would be the *epi*, the overflowing, this glorious gift of God’s power for service. And then Peter said,

For this promise is unto you and to your children and to those who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:39)

So, there is no thought or indication that this gift of the Holy Spirit would cease at the close of the apostolic age, with the death of the last of the apostles. No thought of that at

all; in fact, the opposite is indicated. This promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is to you, to your children, and then to those that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. So in reality the promise is for us today, in this day.

I am convinced that the greatest need in the church today is a renewal of the teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit, in order that the church might come into the fullness of the Spirit. We need a renewal of teaching on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, where your life will be empowered to go into this world in which we live and be a witness for Jesus Christ. I believe that the only hope for our nation today is a spiritual awakening that will begin in the church with a fresh movement of the Holy Spirit upon the lives and the hearts of the church, who is seeking, who is thirsting, who is asking.

Jesus said,

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13)

Jesus said,

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

Now, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the end all of all experiences that God has for you. It is just the opening of the door into this vast new dimension of power. After the baptism of the Holy Spirit, there is then the necessity for the walk in the Spirit. There is the need to be led by the Spirit, and to be constantly being filled with the Spirit, being controlled by the Spirit, and being empowered by the Spirit. And we will see as we go through and look at the examples of the apostles in the Book of Acts, how they were directed, guided, led, and warned by the Spirit as they were walking in the Spirit and after the Spirit.

Oh, how desperately we need that today! We need it for survival. We are living in those perilous days that the Scripture said would come. We are living in those days when the love of many is waxing cold. We are living in a day when, you can hardly dare to watch TV because of the filth and the smut that is aired, that can be planted into your mind. How we so desperately need to just wait upon God, to be overflowing with the Spirit of God, that the church might be a powerful witness and turn back the tide of evil that is engulfing our society and our community.

I am praying that as we study the subject of the Holy Spirit, God will give you such a hunger and such a thirst, that this series will end with the whole church waiting on God and being empowered by the Spirit of God. I am praying that there would be a fresh, new outpouring of God's Spirit upon His church and upon His people. If this does not happen, it is only a matter of time until we will find ourselves crushed by the degraded world around us.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank You for the promise of the Holy Spirit, this wonderful gift of Your Holy Spirit, Lord. The promise that is to us, far off down the centuries from those first days, yet we are called of Thee. Lord, when we read of the power of the early church, we recognize, Lord, that we are very weak. But Lord, we also recognize how desperately we need that power of Your Holy Spirit tonight. Lord, how our hearts long to just be empowered by Your Spirit. And so, Lord, whatever it is that is holding back our lives from Your fullness, we pray that Your Spirit will reveal it. And Lord, we pray that we might see that sovereign work of Your Holy Spirit, dividing to each man severally at He wills, of the gifts of the Spirit, that Your church might be empowered, Lord, to be Your witness in these last days. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS306. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

I would like to continue tonight in our study on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we will look at the promises of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said,

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

And then Jesus gave the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:4.

Being assembled together with them [the disciples], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:4-5)

So that promise of John the Baptist and that promise of Jesus was fulfilled. And in Acts 2:1-4 we read:

And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

I have no doubt that this experience in Acts chapter 2 is the fulfillment of the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Here it is declared that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And the word “filled” with the Holy Ghost seems to be used interchangeably with the term “baptism” of the Holy Ghost.

Now the issue that arises is whether the disciples were converted before the experience in the second chapter of Acts? Were they born again prior to this experience? You see, whether or not the baptism, the gift, or the filling of the Holy Spirit—which are all interchangeable terms—whether or not that is subsequent to and separate from conversion is a matter of debate within the church. And it is my belief that this baptism with the Holy Spirit, this filling of the Holy Spirit, was an experience that was subsequent to conversion.

In John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” the question arises: did anything happen at that time? Now there are those who say that was only a symbolic action by Jesus. His breathing on them and saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” was just a symbolic action and that they did not receive the Holy Spirit at that time. That would be a very hard position to support or to prove with the Scriptures. It must be acknowledged that it is purely suppositional to say that nothing happened when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” It is hard for me to think that Jesus could breathe on me and say, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” and nothing would happen.

You see, the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus came after this event. It would perhaps mean, that when Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” that at that time they were born again by the Spirit. Jesus had said that we have to be born again. We have to have a spiritual birth. We have had the fleshly birth, but that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And it could be that at that time when He said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” that that was the time when they were actually born again of the Spirit, or converted.

Earlier Jesus had said to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”(Luke 22:32). After this event, we find Peter in the position of strengthening the brethren. As we look at the first chapter of the Book of Acts, when Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter began to take a leadership role in the church. Peter began to be more or less the spokesman within the church, strengthening the brethren.

Now according to biblical interpretation—the laws of biblical interpretation—they say that the obvious meaning is usually the correct meaning. And that makes sense to me. I believe that God meant what He said and said what He meant. And thus, as you go through the Scriptures, it is best not to try to read something into the Scriptures or to find some kind of subtle hidden meaning to the Scriptures. But the obvious meaning is usually the correct meaning.

Now if Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit,” then the obvious understanding would be that they received the Holy Spirit. That at that point the Holy Spirit began to indwell them. But they were not yet baptized with the Holy Spirit, which was a subsequent experience that took place on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, the baptism with the Holy Spirit was subsequent to conversion and their receiving the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence and power within their lives.

Now let us take a look at the Book of Acts to see if this interpretation is not born out by the subsequent events of believers and the filling, or the baptism, or the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, after Peter had preached to the multitudes, who had gathered because of the supernatural phenomena that took place with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the people were convicted of their sin. And they said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do, seeing we have crucified the Lord of glory?”

And Peter said,

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For this promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:38-39)

Thus, the threefold command: repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and then the third—“and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It seems that it would also be an experience that would be subsequent to their repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins. Then you shall receive—subsequent to that, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now of course, I admit that it is not an airtight kind of an argument. It is again, just looking at what seems to be obvious. However, as we go on to Acts 8, we find that Philip had gone to Samaria as the result of the persecution. And he was preaching Christ unto them, and many believed the preaching concerning the kingdom of God and they were baptized, both men and women. So, they believed the preaching of the gospel by Philip and they were baptized. But then we read that, when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. “For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).

So, here they are believing and had been baptized in the name of Jesus, but they had not yet received this gift of the Holy Spirit. So, the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John that they might receive this subsequent experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In believing and being baptized in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit would, of necessity, be residing in them, because no man can call Christ, “Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

And yet, there was a relationship with the Holy Spirit. He had not yet come *upon* them. And this is that preposition *epi*. We dealt with *epi* in our last lesson as we looked at the threefold relationship with the Holy Spirit demonstrated by the three Greek prepositions, *para*, *en*, and *epi*. He is *with* you (*para*). He shall be *in* you (*en*). And you will receive power when He comes *upon* you (*epi*). They had not yet had the *epi* experience. They had the *with*—they were convicted. They had the *in*—the Holy Spirit had come within them because they were baptized in the name of Jesus. But they had not yet had the *epi*, the overflowing (or baptism) with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had not yet fallen upon (*epi*) any of them.

And so we read that Peter and John prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. “And they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17).

Now there must have been some visible or audible evidence that they had received the Holy Spirit; why else would Simon the sorcerer ask to purchase the power that he saw manifested? Because he wanted to go around and lay hands on people that they might

receive the Holy Spirit also. He desired that power—offered to buy it. There must have been some kind of audible or visible evidence, though it is not recorded, by which they knew that they were receiving a special gift from God. I would assume that it was their speaking in unknown tongues, but that is only an assumption. The Bible does not tell us.

As we look next at Acts 9, we read that Paul, who was then known as Saul of Tarsus, was on his way to Damascus to imprison those who were calling on the name of the Lord. Suddenly, there was a bright light from heaven about noontime, but it was brighter than the noontime sun. And Paul fell on the ground and he heard a voice saying unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” And he responded, “Who are you, Lord, that I might serve You?” And the answer came, “I am Jesus of Nazareth.” And then he asked, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” (Acts 9:6).

Now, I do not believe that anyone can question that Paul was converted at that moment on the road to Damascus. I believe that when a man submits himself to the lordship of Jesus Christ, that is a definite sign of conversion. It is also a definite sign of the Holy Spirit. No man can call Christ, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. And here he is saying, “What would You have me to do, Lord?” (Acts 9:6). And so the Lord told him to go into a town and what he was to do would be shown to him. So, Paul came to Damascus blinded as a result of his experience. Being led into Damascus, he was taken to the house of a man whose name was Judas, who lived on the main street in town. It was called Straight street.

Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus whose name was Ananias and he had a vision. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and told him that he was to go to the street called Straight, to inquire at the house of Judas for a certain man, Saul of Tarsus. The Lord said, “Behold he prayeth.” Ananias was hesitant and argued with the Lord. He said, “Lord, I have heard about this fellow, how he has wrecked the church and has even come to Damascus to imprison those who call upon Your name.” But the Lord assured Ananias that He knew what He was doing and commanded him to go and pray for Paul that he might receive his sight and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, Ananias came to Paul and he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared to you on the way, has sent me to you that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And here again, Paul’s filling with the Holy Spirit was subsequent to and separate from his conversion on the road to Damascus.

In Acts 10, Peter had been called by the Lord to go to Caesarea, to the house of the Centurion whose name was Cornelius. And as Peter came to the house of Cornelius, Cornelius had assembled a lot of his friends. And Peter began to share with them the truth of Jesus Christ. And as he shared with them the truth of Jesus Christ, we read that the Holy Spirit fell upon (*epi*) all who were hearing the Word. And those who came with Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles. They realized that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them because they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.

Now in this instance, the gift of the Holy Spirit was associated with their believing in Jesus Christ and took place before their baptism in water. In fact, it was decided that it was alright now to baptize Gentiles, seeing that God had given them the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would appear in the case of the house of Cornelius, that the filling with the Spirit and their conversion was a simultaneous experience and that, indeed, with their conversion, they were filled with the Spirit.

Now Peter was explaining to the Jews in Jerusalem what had happened when he went to the house of a Gentile, since he was sort of called on the carpet because of this experience. As he was explaining to them what had happened, he was not wanting to accept any responsibility for it. Peter said,

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, “John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 11:15)

So Peter said, “I was just talking to them and while I was talking, the Holy Spirit just fell on them. I did not do anything. I mean, the Holy Spirit just did it. And when it happened, then I remembered the words of Jesus, ‘John indeed baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’—I remembered then those words of Jesus.” So what had happened to them was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter relates it to that. It talks about their being filled with the Spirit, and thus again, these terms—gift of the Holy Spirit, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and filled with the Holy Spirit—are all describing the same event and they seem to be used interchangeably.

Now in Acts 19, Paul had come to Ephesus. And just the other day, I visited Ephesus, and it is indeed an extremely remarkable city. The ruins of the city of Ephesus are probably the most extensive ruins of any of the ancient cities of the ancient world. It has awesome marble streets that go for blocks and blocks, many of them. The remains of the temples and the buildings and all are phenomenal. It was the major commercial city of Asia Minor. It was the gateway to Asia. All of the goods coming from Asia to Europe passed through Ephesus and vice versa. It was a bustling city when Paul came to it, but Paul was not the first one to come to Ephesus with the gospel.

When Paul had taken the gospel to Corinth, because he was a tentmaker, he got a job with a couple whose names were Priscilla and Aquilla. And when he left Corinth to go back to Jerusalem, they came with him on his journey as far as Ephesus. They remained in Ephesus, as Paul went back to Jerusalem for the Jewish holiday. While they were there, there was a certain Jew, a brilliant man and an eloquent man, whose name was Apollos. He was a man who was well-versed in the Scriptures and a man who was able to prove by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Messiah.

And Apollos was preaching to the Jews in Ephesus, showing by the Scriptures—proving by the Scriptures—that Jesus was the Messiah. However, there were certain parts of his theology that were not complete. So, Priscilla and Aquilla upon hearing him, took

Apollos aside and shared with him the truths that they had learned from Paul. As a result, he had an even more complete grasp of the life and the nature of Jesus. Many people believed in Jesus Christ in Ephesus as a result of this ministry by Apollos.

Now, there was something that was lacking. It is possible to meet believers in Jesus Christ, and as you begin to relate to them a bit and are around them a bit, you can discern that there is just something that is lacking in their experience. There is a lack of joy. They say they are Christians, but you would never know it by looking at their faces. They seem to be so sober and almost angry with the world. There is a lack of love. They are cutting and critical. They have a lack of fervency and are neither hot nor cold, but just sort of lukewarm. There is no fervency in their experience.

And so, as Paul met these believers in Ephesus, he noted there was something that was lacking in their experience and relationship with the Lord. And Paul was seeking to get hold of the problem: *What is wrong here?* And so he asked them the question,

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? (Acts 19:2)

“Have you had this subsequent relationship? You have believed, but did you receive the Holy Spirit?” Now the Greek scholars say that should be translated, “did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed,” rather than “*since* you believed.” It really does not matter how you translate it, if you use the word *since* or *when*, it still has the same implications. And that is, that the receiving of the Holy Spirit, this gift or baptism or filling, is subsequent to believing.

And one can believe without receiving this filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit. If one asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *since* you believed?” of course, the quite obvious implication is that the receiving occurs subsequent to belief. And if one asks, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you believed?” the question would indicate that you could believe yet not receive. So however it should properly be translated into English, it has the same effect, in that both cases show that this baptism or infilling of the Spirit is subsequent to believing.

Now they responded,

We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy  
Ghost. (Acts 19:2)

They were totally ignorant. “Holy Spirit? What is that?” And Paul said, “Well, how were you baptized?” In other words, when Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the world and to teach all nations, He said, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It was there in the baptismal formula. So, Paul’s question was: “You have not heard of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Well, how were you baptized? Were you not baptized in the baptismal formula that Jesus commanded—in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?” They answered, “No! We were baptized with John’s baptism.”

Now John's baptism was a baptism of repentance from sin. And so they were then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then we read that when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came "*epi*" upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. So again, it was an experience that was subsequent to their believing and their conversion. Paul laid his hands upon them, and they then received this gift of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

It is interesting that there is some confusion that has been generated over the baptismal formula. It is true that in the Book of Acts, we do not find any mention of baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. We do read, however, "And they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). Yet Paul's question would indicate that it was generally accepted practice to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now as we have looked at these cases in the Book of Acts, what we have observed is that there was a variety of experiences, methods, and ways by which the people received the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the filling of the Holy Spirit, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2, they were all sitting there, when suddenly there was a noise from heaven that sounded like a mighty rushing wind filling all the house. There were cloven tongues, like as of fire, sitting upon each of them. And they all began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them the ability.

In Acts 8, the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted by the laying on of hands by Paul and by John. It is interesting that this was not done by Philip, who was an evangelist and used mightily of God in working miracles. But Philip was not used of God in the imparting of the Holy Spirit. And we will talk about that in subsequent lessons.

In Acts 9, the Holy Spirit was imparted to Paul by an average believer. Ananias? Who is he? He was not an apostle. He was just a certain disciple in Damascus, but really not of any spiritual hierarchy. Ananias was just a common believer in Damascus.

Now the Holy Spirit was imparted to those in Samaria when Peter and John laid their hands on them. Yet there is no mention of any supernatural phenomena accompanying their being filled. However as we pointed out, there obviously was something that occurred, though the Scripture does not record it; or else Simon would not have sought that power.

When Paul received the Holy Spirit, there was the healing of the blindness that took place at the same time. But there was no mention of any other supernatural phenomena accompanying his receiving the Holy Spirit. However, it should be mentioned that later when Paul was writing to the Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit, he declared that he did speak in tongues more than all of them.

In Acts 10, Peter did not get a chance to lay hands on them. While he was speaking, suddenly his message was interrupted by the Holy Spirit, who just fell upon them and they began to speak in tongues. As Peter was speaking to them, there was just that sovereign move of God's Spirit, and this empowering, this filling of the Spirit.

In Acts 19, when Paul was there in Ephesus, again he laid his hands on them and they spoke in tongues, and they prophesied. So that in all of the illustrations that we have of the infilling of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, there are no two identical experiences. There was not a repeated experience recorded. In every scriptural passage that was identified, the closest thing was perhaps the experience of the house of Cornelius with the disciples. But there was no mighty rushing wind and no cloven tongues of fire. They were just speaking in tongues, which says to me, that God is not bound by a particular method or by a particular way.

God can do things as He wants to do them and we are wrong in trying to pattern our experience after somebody else. We are wrong to look for the same kind of an experience that someone else has had. And I think that there is a real danger of this in the church. God deals with us as individuals according to our own nature and according to our own temperaments. You cannot formulize God and say, "Well now, do this and lay your hand there, and touch this spot. I mean, there is no formula. God is sovereign.

There are people who have testified of their experiences and I accept their testimony as legitimate. I am not going to disclaim what they are saying. Finney described these waves of liquid love that just kept flowing over and over him, until he had to shout out to God crying, "God, stop! I cannot take any more." Now that is wonderful, and that is glorious, and that is how Finney experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But it does not mean that is the way you are going to experience it or that I am going to experience it. And you see, the danger is to hear someone else's experience or to read about someone else's experience and think that such an experience is what happens or that is how you are going to feel.

I have heard people talk about how they felt like there was electricity going through their body from the top of their head and out through their toes or something. Well, that is great. I have never experienced that. I was struck by lightning once and I felt like there was electricity going through me, but I would not attribute that to the Holy Spirit. It was a bolt of lightning and I was laid on the ground by it. But their experience is wonderful!

I am not discounting the experience of others, but I am saying that not everybody has that experience and it is wrong to look for a particular experience. Because when you are looking for a particular experience, then the tendency is to put your faith in the experience rather than in the promise of the Word of God. And so often, when you are looking for a particular experience that someone else had—because God does not follow a pattern—it may be that you will not have that kind of an experience. This does not mean that God is not working in your life. It does not mean that you are not filled with the Holy Spirit because you did not have the similar experience that someone else had.

And so God shows us in the Book of Acts that there is a wide variety of ways by which He operates in the lives of individuals. And it does not follow a consistent pattern all the way through; rather there seems to be a total inconsistency of the way God did it all the way through the Bible. Experiencing the gift of the Holy Spirit was never exactly the same; and thus, the testimony of scripture leaves room for you to experience God in your own personal way. God is not bound to a formula.

Thus, my suggestion to you is just to be totally open to whatever and however God wants to work in your life. You should not look for a particular sensation, not look for a particular gift, not look for a particular reaction or a response. But just be open to let God work and to do however He desires through the imparting of this glorious gift upon your life. It may be that it will be through the laying on of hands by someone—one of the pastors, or one of the laymen in the church, as it was with Paul. It may be that no one will lay their hands on you, as was the case in Acts 2, when the believers were just all sitting together—and notice they were sitting. And I have heard of people who were standing, and I have heard of people who were lying on the floor. It does not matter—even lying in bed. God is not bound to one particular way.

And just open your heart. As Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius, the hearts of the people were opened by the Spirit. The Spirit was bearing witness of the truth to their hearts. And as their hearts were opened by faith, they were receiving the Word of God. And as they were receiving the Word, the Holy Spirit just came upon them and it was beautiful!

So just be open. Do not try to pattern God. Do not look for a particular experience, but just receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Receive that power—that dynamic power in your life to be what God wants you to be. Receive the power to be a true witness for Jesus Christ in this world.

Shall we pray?

Father, we need, we desire, and we long for the power of Your Holy Spirit in our lives. And we thank You that You have promised that if we ask anything according to Your will, then we have received those things that we have asked of You. We know that it is Your will that we be filled with the Spirit, because it is Your command. And thus, Lord, we ask that we might receive. We seek that we might find that power—that dynamic. And as You work Lord, in Your own sovereign, special way, may we be open and may we receive, even in this moment. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS307. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

In our lessons on the subject of the Holy Spirit, we have currently been looking at the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Last time we saw that this experience is often referred to as the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the filling of the Holy Spirit, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We looked at how this was separate from, and subsequent to, the experience of salvation and being born again by the Spirit and baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. This was a subsequent experience that the disciples received sometime after believing and we saw it in the Book of Acts with the disciples themselves.

We saw this experience in the case of the Samaritans who had received the gospel. We saw it in the promise that Peter gave to those who were asking what they should do to compensate for their crucifixion of Jesus; Peter told them to, “Repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We saw it in the life of Paul the Apostle, who was converted on the road to Damascus, and yet was then filled with the Spirit when that disciple in Antioch named Ananias came and laid hands on him. Finally, we saw in the church of Ephesus in Acts 19.

Now I would like you to turn to the Gospel according to John 7:37, as we see what the experience is (that is, the experience of the baptism, or the filling, or the gift of the Holy Spirit). We are told here by John, that in the last day—that great day of the feast, and from the context, we know that this is the Feast of Tabernacles—Jesus had come to Jerusalem. And He had more or less remained in seclusion until the last day, the great day of the feast. They were actually wondering whether or not He was going to show up at the feast. And then as He did, He said, “You are going to seek Me and you will not find Me. Where I am, you cannot come.” And as they are wondering about this, the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood in the midst of the multitude and cried, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37).

The Feast of Tabernacles was also known as Succoth, or the Feast of Booths. The feast actually commemorated God’s preservation of the nation of Israel during the forty years that they wandered in the wilderness. God preserved them. It was a miracle that they could survive for forty years in the wilderness. It was an obvious miracle of God and this feast was to commemorate that wonderful miracle of preservation during the wilderness wanderings.

Now there were many things that they did to remind them of God’s miraculous preservation. Even to the present day with the Orthodox Jews, they build little lean-to type of thatched rooms outside of their houses—usually up against their house. And over in Israel during this time of the Feast of Tabernacles, you will see these little palm-thatched rooms that they have built outside of the house. The family moves outside for a week and lives in these little palm-thatched rooms. And they leave enough space between the palm thatches so that, as you lie there at night, you can see the stars. And the idea is that the children will say, “Oh, I see the stars up there!” And their parents then have the opportunity to say, “Our fathers lived out in the wilderness for forty years, out under the stars and our God preserved them during that forty-year time.” And so there were those things that would remind them.

In the worship at the temple, the priests would take these water jugs, bearing them on their shoulders. They would go down the many steps to the temple courtyard to the Pool of Siloam, down in the Kidron Valley below. And there they would fill these water jugs and make this solemn procession back up the steps and on into the temple courtyard, where the thousands of

people would be gathered worshipping God. As the priest would come into the courtyard area with these water jugs, the people would break forth singing the *hallel* psalms. And as they were singing and worshipping God, they would pour the water out on the pavement and let it splash there on the pavement. And they were reminded of how—when their fathers were dying of thirst in the wilderness—Moses took the rod and struck the rock according to the commandment of God. They were reminded how the water came flowing out of the rock and their fathers did drink and were preserved when they were dying of thirst. And so there were many things to remind them of God's divine preservation of their fathers, during the wilderness wanderings.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast (which was actually the eighth day of the feast), there was no procession by the priest to the Pool of Siloam and there was no pouring out of water on the pavement. This also was significant because it was the acknowledging of God's fulfilled promise. He had promised to bring them into a land that was well-watered—a land that flowed with milk and honey. They no longer needed the miraculous water out of the rock. They now were just enjoying the land of promise that was well-watered. And thus, there was no procession on the eighth day, the great day of the feast.

Now on this day, as the people were gathered there worshipping God—tradition has it that it was at that time of the day when they usually were pouring the water on the pavement—that Jesus stood and cried to the thousands upon thousands of people that were gathered there in the courtyard: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink” (John 7:37).

Now the fact that Jesus was standing was significant. According to their culture and practices, when a rabbi was teaching, he would also sit and the pupils would always stand. Somehow today we have things mixed up. But then it was customary for the teacher to sit and the pupils to stand. It kept them awake! However, when a person was going to herald or make a proclamation—herald a truth, they would stand. And the fact that Jesus is standing and crying indicates that He is now heralding a truth to the people. Jesus is giving an invitation to those who are thirsty. “If any man thirst,” He said, “let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37).

The land of Israel is basically a very arid land. And thus, the people were all familiar with thirst. In that dry and arid land you become very conscious of the need for water, in order to survive. But Jesus was not making reference to a physical thirst.

Now man is a threefold being. Man is spirit, possessing a consciousness and living in a body. And so, there are the three parts that make up you and me—body, mind, and spirit. Now according to the Scriptures, when a person is living in sin, the spirit is dead. The spirit of man does not come into life until he is born again by the Spirit of God. But man exists on the three levels of body, mind (or emotions), and spirit. And as such, man can experience physical thirst, he can experience emotional thirst, and he can experience spiritual thirst.

We all are very familiar with the physical thirst. Our body needs a certain amount of moisture in order to survive. And thus, one of the strongest physical drives that you have is your thirst drive—second only to the air drive. And when the body moisture content begins to get low, God has built into your body a little monitoring device that is constantly monitoring the moisture level. And in the monitoring of the moisture level, when it starts getting too low it sends out signals to your brain and signals to your throat. Your throat gets dry and it feels like you have cotton in your mouth. And about the only thing you can think of is, *I need a drink!* You get desperate—“I have got to get a drink of water! Is there a fountain around? I have got to get something to drink.” And you can get really worked up and desperate over this need that the body has for moisture. It is a part of what is known as the homeostasis, or the body balance. And it is just something that God

has created, this thirst drive. And it can become extremely strong when the body moisture level gets dangerously low.

We have what are called the sociological drives. We have discovered that we need love and there is that drive for love. I need to be loved. Tests have been done with babies, studying various ways of caring for them. Some babies went without physical touch, without caressing, without holding, but were mechanically fed with bottle holders, thus depriving the child of physical touch.

In institutionalized care, they have done this kind of experimentation and they have discovered that a child who does not experience the cuddling, the holding, the touching in six months, who goes without being held and loved, and touched—the child suffers irreversible, irreparable mental retardation. There is that need for love and usually the child will die by two years old under institutionalized, mechanical type of care. They quit the experiments when they discovered how desperately children, even little infants, need touching and need loving.

There is also the need for security, which is another emotional need. There is the need to be needed. We have all observed how couples who have lived together for years, after one dies, often the partner dies within a year or so. This is because the need to be needed is no longer met. As long as the husband was still alive and not feeling well, he needed his wife to be there to cook the meals and to take care of him. But when he finally died, she died within a year because she no longer felt needed. And that need to be needed is so strong, that when you do not feel needed any more, there is that sort of giving up. There is the need to be needed—one of the sociological or emotional drives.

There is also, deep down in the spirit of every man, a need for God. Romans 8 tells us that the creature was made subject unto emptiness—and that was by the design of Him who created him. Down deep inside, the spirit is crying out and yearning for a meaningful relationship with God. That need is built in. Man is incomplete without God. And without God there is, down deep inside, that yearning—that desire to know God and to experience God. It is universal. And when Jesus cried, “If any man thirst,” that is the thirst that He was referring to. He was referring to that deep down thirst, in the spirit of every man, for a meaningful relationship with God.

Although we are made up of the three parts—body, soul, and spirit—they are integrated to the extent that it is often difficult for us to even discern what is soulish and what is spiritual. We are so integrated as body, soul, and spirit, that whatever affects you physically will affect you emotionally. And whatever affects you emotionally will affect you physically. More and more we are finding the tie between the emotions of a person and their physical well-being. It was hinted at in the Scriptures in Proverbs 17:22, which says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” And it was recognized that a happy attitude, a merry heart, is valuable like a medicine. There is a healing power to it.

On the other hand, bitterness, sorrow, grief, can have effects upon you in a physical way. It can be physically detrimental because these emotions create certain chemicals in your body that become a poison to you. And so, we are learning how closely allied are the emotions to the physical well-being of a person.

But also, whatever affects you spiritually will affect you emotionally, and will affect you physically. Whatever affects you emotionally will also affect you spiritually. They are so integrated and so tied together that it is difficult, many times, to even know whether I am under an emotional attack or a spiritual attack. And it is hard to discern sometimes. Sometimes we think

it is just emotional. Oh, I am just an emotional basket case, you know. And in reality it is a spiritual attack of the enemy—and you are under a strong spiritual attack.

The Bible says,

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

God's Word can make that keen division. Many times people think that they are having deep spiritual experiences, when they are only having emotional experiences. The Word of God is that which makes the difference between the feeding of the emotions and the feeding of the spirit. Many services feed the emotions of people. The Word of God feeds the spirit of man—it is the spiritual food.

Now, although I am integrated body, soul, and spirit—so integrated that what affects one part of me affects all of me—yet there is the distinction and separation, so that you cannot fill an emotional need with a physical experience. Nor can you satisfy a physical need with an emotional experience.

My body needs moisture to survive. If I am out in Death Valley where the humidity is down to three percent, the body moistures are sucked right out of your body in that kind of aridity and you cannot survive very long without moisture. Let us say that I am driving through Death Valley and I have car problems. I have an off-road vehicle and my motor conks out on me and I realize that I cannot survive here long. I have got to get help. And there is no one who is going to be driving by this place. And so, I make the mistake.

Now, let me just say if you are in that kind of situation, stay with your vehicle. Many times the authorities find the vehicle before they find the dead body. And you are better off staying with the vehicle, because it is easier to spot than to spot you going through the desert area. And many people have made the mistake of hiking out. It is better to get some shade and just stay in the shade and keep yourself from physical exertion, because you can sweat and lose your moisture in a hurry and die in a few hours.

But let us say I am foolish and I take off. And as I perspire, the body moistures are being sucked out of me and I finally become so weak, as a result of the lack of moisture, I fall on that hot sand and I am lying there and just say, "Water, water." And instinctively I try and dig into the hot sand because there is something in your mind that says there must be water underneath here some place. And the last thing you do is dig into the hot sand trying to find the water. And as I am digging in the hot sand saying, "Water, water," someone comes over the sand dune and says, "Hi, aren't you Chuck Smith?" I respond, "Yeah. Water." He says, "I have seen you on television. I have listened to you teach the Word. I want you to know, I think you are the greatest teacher that ever came along!" And he might be fulfilling my emotional need for love and to be needed, but I am dying right there in his arms saying, "Water, water, water." And I am a goner because you cannot fulfill a physical need with an emotional experience.

Conversely, many, many children are suffering today from a lack of real love. Physically they have been given everything. And so many times we have heard parents say, "I cannot understand what is wrong with my child. We gave him everything." And true there are TVs, there are VCRs, there are video games, and there are bicycles. There is everything you can think of physically

speaking. But there is no real closeness, no real love. The child feels like he is alone. Rather than having companionship with his parents, he is always being told, “Now, do not come into the kitchen. You make me nervous. Just go in and—we bought you the TV. Go in and play your games or get out of here! You know—I am trying to listen to Oprah.” And you are pushing the kids away and they are dying for love, even though they have every kind of physical device to entertain them.

In a very real sense—and one of the real problems in the world today, is that there are those who are trying to satisfy the spiritual thirst that is in every man’s heart. They are trying to satisfy it with physical or emotional experiences. And this is so common today. And people get caught up in religions where they have all kinds of emotional experiences, but they are trying to satisfy a spiritual thirst. Or we see people go from one fad to another, from one thing to another, trying to satisfy a spiritual thirst. They have every toy that has been devised. And when you see them on the weekends, they are heading out in their campers. They are pulling a boat. They have hang gliders tied on top. They have the motorcycles tied on the boat and they are going out to find it this weekend, you know.

But there is this deep thirst for God inside and they are trying to fill that thirst with physical or emotional experiences. And it just does not work. You find out, as Jesus said to the woman of Samaria when He was talking to her about the water of life—the water that only He could give—He said, “If you drink of this water,” referring to Jacob’s well, “you will thirst again.” And those words ought to be inscribed above every ambition in your life. Drink of the water. Achieve it, but it will not satisfy. You are going to thirst again. Over every physical thing that you want to purchase—that new car, that new boat, that new house—“Drink of that water, but you are going to thirst again.” It is not going to satisfy because the thirst is a spiritual thirst. It is a thirst for God and it cannot be satisfied by any physical or emotional experience.

And that is the big mistake being made by the people in the world today. They are trying to satisfy that spiritual thirst and searching the world around, and they are searching into all kinds of religious experiences. I have often said it is amazing the stupid things people will do and people will believe, once they have rejected the truth of Jesus Christ. You become a prey and a sucker for every charlatan that comes down the pike. They know basic nature and the emptiness that is there, and so they promise, “Just sit and meditate on your navel and chant, ‘Om’ and you are going to have it, man. You are going to find it.” And you see these are brilliant people. They are college professors and the like, and they are sitting there cross-legged going, “Om. Om.” But it is because they have rejected the truth and there is that search. There is that emptiness. There is that thirst.

And that is the thirst that Jesus was addressing when He said, “If any man thirst.” What is the answer to the thirst, the spiritual thirst? Jesus said, “Let him come unto Me and drink.” Here again, in an indirect way, Jesus is claiming to be God. Knowing that the deep thirst in the spirit of man is for God, Jesus declares, “If any thirst,” (that is, has that deep spiritual thirst for God), “come unto Me. I am the answer to your thirst for God.”

Many times Jesus proclaimed that He was God, but then He also acclaimed it indirectly. Here is one of the indirect places. Another such instance is when the rich young ruler came and knelt before Jesus and said, “Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said, “Why do you call Me good? There is only one good and that is God.” Now Jesus was not saying, “I am not good.” He was affirming, “I am God. Why did you call Me good? Because I am God.” The ruler had come to a consciousness, an awareness, and Jesus is trying to wake up this consciousness that somehow gripped him when he said, “Good Master.”

And so Jesus is saying, “Let him come unto Me and drink.” There you have the gospel in just a very simple, beautiful form. Thirsty? Is your heart craving after an experience with God? “Come unto Me and drink.” Now the result, Jesus said, is that, “he that drinketh of the water that I give, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.” Now Jesus is probably, as the Scripture said, making a reference to Isaiah 44:3. For in Isaiah 44:3, we find God promising,

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon  
the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my  
blessing upon thine offspring.

So the promise of God: “I will pour water on him that is thirsty, floods upon dry ground, my spirit upon those, thy seed, thy offspring.” The King James translation here of the Greek text, does not really give the intensity of the Greek text. Where we read in our King James translation, “Out of his belly there shall flow rivers of living water,” the Greek text, being more intense, would better be translated, “Out of his belly [or innermost being], there will gush torrents of living water.” From the King James text, you might be picturing a gentle little stream trickling through the woods. But the Greek text would rather picture a mighty deluge, cascading down a mountain gorge. There will gush torrents of living water.

At this point I can see Peter turning to John and saying, “John, what is He talking about now? He is speaking in riddles. What do you suppose?” John probably said, “Beats me, man. I don’t know.”

But notice the prophecy of Isaiah. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, floods upon the dry ground. I will pour My Spirit upon your descendants” (Isaiah 44:3).

Now John wrote his Gospel many years later when he was in Ephesus, near the end of his life. Probably some sixty years later is when he penned his Gospel. And now he has a lot more understanding of what Jesus said. He now is looking at these words of Jesus with that great advantage of hindsight. He was thinking back now on that day when Jesus stood and cried to the multitudes, “If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink!” And now looking back, John explains what Jesus was talking about. And so you will notice in the Bible it is generally put in brackets indicating that John is now giving us a commentary on what Jesus was talking about when He said, “If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink.” And John’s commentary on this is:

But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him  
should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because  
that Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:39)

“But *this*”—Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit, which those who believed on Him were to receive.

What is he saying of the Holy Spirit? That it would be like a torrent of living water flowing out of your life. Now, we know what it is to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We know what it is to have our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in us. We know the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as He conforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. But this is something different. This is something that is flowing out of your life—out of your innermost being will gush torrents of living water. This is speaking, John said, of the Holy Spirit.

Putting aside all of the debate over terminology, I really do not care what you call it. Call it the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit—it really does not matter what terminology you might give to the experience. But this experience that Jesus is talking about, where the Spirit will be flowing, gushing forth out of your life is like a torrent of living water. My question to you is: Does this describe what is going on in your life? Does this describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit? Can you say, “Yes! Praise God! There is flowing forth from my life a torrent of dynamic love, and power, as a result of the Spirit overflowing my life.”

The question is not whether you are baptized, or filled, or if you have the gift of the Spirit. The question is, is there this overflowing—gushing forth—torrents of living water from your life? If it does not describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit, then may I suggest to you that God has something more for you than what you have yet experienced. And should you not desire that which God has? And should we not seek that which God has promised of a life that is overflowing with the dynamic power and love of the Holy Spirit? I, for one, need and desire all the help I can get and all that God has for me. As Paul prayed for the Corinthians that they would not come short of any spiritual gift, that is my prayer for you. I pray that you will not come short of that which God is wanting to do in your life through this mighty dynamic of the Spirit, being released to where it flows forth out of your life like a torrent of living water.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the promise that those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness would be filled. And Lord, as You cried to the multitude, “If you thirst, come unto Me and drink,” and as You promised that You would pour forth water upon the thirsty, so Lord, fill until we overflow with Your Holy Spirit. So that what You have done in and through our lives might be poured out for others, that they might experience Your love, Your life, as it flows forth from us to a thirsty world in which we live. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS308. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Now let us turn in our Bibles to John 14:16, where Jesus, talking to His disciples said,

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but you know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)

In this lesson we would like to begin sort of a mini-series within the series, as we look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We have been talking about the baptism, or the filling, or whatever you want to title it—this relationship that a believer can have with the Holy Spirit. It is the releasing of the Spirit and the out-flowing of the Spirit from my life. It is one thing to be filled and another thing to be overflowing. It is one thing to have the Spirit indwelling me and coming into my life and another thing to have the Holy Spirit flowing forth out of my life. It is that work of the Holy Spirit in my life that we would like to take a look at. And then we will look at the gifts of the Spirit and how the Holy Spirit flows forth from my life and the various gifts of the Spirit. We will be looking at that inward work of the Holy Spirit.

In this phrase, “another Comforter,” the word “another” there in the Greek is *allos*, which means “of the same kind, or equal quality.” It means another of the same order, the same kind, or equal quality. There is an additional Greek word that is translated “another,” and that word means of “a different quality.” You can have another. You know, you might be going to pick up a Hertz rental car and the employee says, “Well, you have ordered a little compact Geo, but we happen to be out of that right now. But we can give you another car, a Lincoln Town Car, for the same price.” That kind of “another” would be the word *heteros*. It is not the same quality or the same kind. If you had ordered a Town Car and they said, “Well, we cannot give you that, but we will give you a Cadillac or something.” Then that is sort of the same quality (*allos*).

So, when Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit being of the same quality, He is actually here ascribing to the Holy Spirit, the quality of divinity. He is declaring that the Holy Spirit is God. “I have been with you. I am going away. I will pray the Father, He will give you another [*allos*, of the same quality, the same kind] Comforter.”

The word “Comforter” in Greek is *paraklēte*, which means, “one who would come alongside of you to take up your case, or to plead your case,” or, as it is used here, “to aid you in any way.” Now I am going to pray the Father. He is going to give you another Comforter, one with the same quality, who will aid you in any way.

Now Jesus has been talking to His disciples about His being betrayed, being put to death. He has been telling them that He is going away and where He is going they cannot come right now. And they do not understand Him. They cannot comprehend the delay of the establishing of the kingdom. In their minds, Jesus is still going to set up the kingdom almost immediately. When He talks about going away and says you cannot come now, it troubles them. When He talks about death, it troubles them. And so, at the beginning of this chapter, He said, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” For they were indeed troubled. He said He was going away to prepare a place for them.

That He would come again and receive them unto Himself. But these are mysterious sayings. These are troubling sayings for the disciples.

You see, Jesus had been a real defense for the disciples. The scribes and the Pharisees liked to pick on them. We read in Mark 9, where Jesus saw a great multitude of people gathered around the disciples and the scribes were there questioning them. It had created sort of a big crowd. And you know when you get people arguing, often a crowd will gather. And Jesus came up and He said, “What are you talking to them about? —they are My little lambs, you do not pick on them!”

And the religious leaders would say to Jesus, “Now why do Your disciples eat with unwashed hands?” Well, Jesus always had such a good defense. He could just lay it out and silence them. The scribes and Pharisees asked, “Why do Your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day?” And Jesus talks about David eating showbread, which was not lawful, and so forth. He was such a powerful defender.

Now how are they going to defend themselves against these scholars when they have not had the same advantage of an education within the religious schools—within the Scriptures? And if He is talking about going away then, what are they going to do when the Pharisees come and challenge them or the scribes challenge them? They are troubled about this and rightfully so.

But Jesus is saying, “I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter; one who is alongside to plead your case; one who will be here to help you and to aid you.” Jesus went on to say,

But the Comforter, [this one who comes alongside to aid you, to plead your case. And here He identifies Him.] which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you. (John 14:26)

So, the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer is comforting; just the name “Comforter” itself implies-one who will be there to plead your case and to aid you in any way.

But now He is going to also teach you all things. Now Jesus, even at this late date said, “I have many other things to say unto you, but you are not able to take them now. You are not able to receive them. But the Holy Spirit is going to come. He is going to teach the disciples and He will aid them in the understanding of the Scriptures. They will not have to really worry about their lack of understanding. Jesus said, “For as I have taught you, so shall He teach you.”

To study the Bible is a tremendous privilege. It is a marvelous book. The more I study it, the more I am amazed at this book. It is a blessing indeed. To aid and to assist in the study of the Bible, it is handy to study the original languages in order that you might be able to milk from the original languages some of the little nuances that do not translate well into English. And there are those little nuggets that you discover every once in a while. I know that there have been times when I have felt that it is wonderful I had studied Greek, so I can find these blessed little nuggets of truth. I *studied* Greek. I did not say I learned Greek, but I studied it. I am not a natural linguist. Languages are extremely difficult for me. My brain is not constructed properly to learn foreign languages. There are other areas in which I find a natural aptitude, but not in linguistics. Yet I have had enough Greek that I can dig into it, but it is tough. However, in digging through the Greek you find a nugget and it is worth digging to find these nuggets every once in a while

When I was pastoring years and years ago in Huntington Beach, we had a blessed saint of God there in the church who only made it through sixth grade. She was from Oklahoma and after she had gone through sixth grade, she quit school. And she loved the Lord. She was a real saint of God. And I would be studying in Galatians and digging through the Greek and trying to find some of these little nuggets of truth that show up in the Greek language. And I would get hold of one of those and I would think, *my, this is wonderful!* It is great to know a little Greek. And she would say, “Brother Smith, I was reading the other day in Galatians and I read this and I thought, you know, this must mean...”—and she would come out with the same truth. And I thought, *it is not fair! All of the midnight oil and trying to maintain a grade in Greek, and here she just gets it without any Greek.*

But this is what Jesus is saying. The Holy Spirit will teach you. And so He is saying to the disciples, “You do not have to worry about your lack of understanding of the Scriptures. As I have taught you, He is now going to teach you.” In First John 2:27 John said,

But the anointing which ye have received of him [that is, the Holy Spirit] abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

So you really do not need any man to teach you. You know, this is interesting because practically every cult insists that you do need man to teach you. They are heavy on selling you their books, getting you to read their books. Why is it so necessary to read their books? It is necessary because you would never come to the same screwy interpretations that they have unless you were led to them by their books. I am not at all afraid of what you will come to believe if you just read the Bible. I have no qualms in just saying, “Well, read the Bible!” I believe that as you read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct your heart, that He will lead you into all truth.

Now this idea that you have no need, that no man should teach you, in reality God has established in the church teachers. Pastor-teachers were appointed for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry. But it is an interesting thing, that though we may be teaching the Word of God and the truth of God’s Word, unless the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth in your own heart, you are not going to really learn. It is the Holy Spirit that actually teaches us the Scriptures. And how great it is to have the author of the Scriptures to help us understand what He wrote!

You know, sometimes when I read a book I would like to talk to the author and ask, “Just what kind of a point were you trying to make? What are you trying to say?” How wonderful it is that we have the author of the Bible, the Holy Spirit, to teach us!

In Mark 12:36, Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David. In Acts 1:16, Peter declared that the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David. And going back to Second Samuel 23:1-2, as you deal with the last words that David spoke, David declared that the Spirit of *Yahweh* spoke by him. So, David declared that he was speaking by the Holy Spirit, Peter confirms it, and Jesus settles it, declaring that he spoke by the Holy Spirit. On the one end of the line, the Holy Spirit provided the inspiration. On our end of the line, He provides the illumination. He inspired it, but He illumines it to my heart. And that is what Jesus is saying,

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all

things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.  
(John 14:26)

Have you ever had the experience of talking with someone and suddenly you begin to quote a Scripture you did not know you knew? That happens to me so often. I will start to quote a passage of Scripture and it just keeps rolling out. And I did not really realize that I had memorized that Scripture. Yet, in that time the Holy Spirit just gives you that recall and the remembrance of those passages of Scripture.

Now Paul writes about the Holy Spirit enabling us to understand the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:9, he said,

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, the ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)

The Holy Spirit, which we have received, is to help us so that we might know the things that God has freely given unto us. Paul said,

Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing the spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)

Now one of the problems that we have today is that there are men who have spent years in the study of the Scripture in seminaries. They teach in seminaries. They are known as scholars and they have studied the original languages. And they have written many books about the Bible, about particular texts in the Bible. But there is one big problem: they are not born again. And so, they are looking at the Bible purely from a humanistic standpoint. And it causes them to be so brazen as to assert that they can tell you which of the statements Jesus really said and which ones were just written by the apostles and ascribed to Jesus. And they can tell you how many different authors the Book of Isaiah had. And they can tell you all of these things about the Bible, as though they are the final authority.

There is one problem—major problem—with telling a person what part of the Bible is genuine and what is not. And the major problem with that arrives the moment I set myself up as a scholarly authority. These scholars have studied the styles in the Hebrew and so forth; and so, with the change of style, they say the difference in writers becomes obvious. They can show you the different changes of style in the writing of the Hebrew; and thus, it is obvious that the one writer of Isaiah only wrote so much and that others took care of the rest. So, they say, you cannot really trust this and you cannot trust that, but their opinion you can accept.

Or with the words of Jesus for instance, it is the same as these fellows have just done. When anybody sets himself up as an authority to tell you what part of the Bible is genuine and what is spurious—the minute they set themselves up as that kind of an authority, the Bible no longer becomes the authority. They become the authority. But the problem with that is that these authorities are arguing with each other. So, which authority do I believe? The whole ultimate end of the matter is total confusion.

Now I believe that if I cannot trust the whole thing, I cannot trust anything. But I believe I can trust the whole thing (that is, the Bible). I have no problem at all trusting the entire Bible as being inspired by God, the inerrant Word of God. I do not have any difficulty with that at all. And I am glad that I do not.

Now, in reality, a Spirit-filled child of God, like this woman I mentioned in Huntington Beach who was filled with the Spirit, in love with the Lord and in love with His Word—she is a truer guide into the truth of God than some fellow with a PhD, who is not born again but knows the original languages. Because the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned. If you try to understand the Bible, apart from the help of the Holy Spirit, you are going to get into all kinds of weird things. All of the weird twists come from people who have not the Holy Spirit, but with the natural intellect and the natural mind are trying to comprehend spiritual things. And so that is why Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us. We did not have need that man should teach us. God has revealed His truth unto us by His Spirit, because He searches the deep things of God.

We certainly see this manifested in the Book of Acts. We see how the Holy Spirit brought to their remembrances remote and obscure passages of Scripture, but gave real sense to them. When Peter spoke, every time he spoke he was quoting Scriptures. He had a tremendous working knowledge of the Scriptures. He was enabled by the Holy Spirit to just quote large passages of Scriptures, as well as making sense and application out of remote, obscure passages. When he gathered with the disciples and the Holy Spirit was poured upon the church, the crowd was sort of mocking him. They were saying, “Well they have some new wine.” Peter began to explain to them, quoting quite extensively from the prophecy of Joel, showing to them exactly what was going on. They were saying, “What meaneth this?” And he said, “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” And then he quotes the prophecy.

But then as Peter goes on to preach to them about Jesus. He begins to quote from the Psalms, how that David, by the Holy Spirit spake saying, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to see corruption.” And he is quoting passages of Scripture all the time, as the Holy Spirit brings to his remembrance, as the Holy Spirit gives him understanding, and application of the Scriptures.

When Stephen was facing the Jewish council, as he was challenged by those of the synagogue, it says they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Here were all of these leaders of these various sects, Libertines and so forth. And Stephen, though just a deacon in the church, has such an anointing of the Holy Spirit, such wisdom, that they were not able to resist. They could not hold up to this fellow.

And then when they brought Stephen before the whole council, he went right from Genesis through the Prophets. He just really laid out the Scripture in a masterpiece, as he showed to them how their illustrious fathers were as blind as they were. “You keep talking about, well our fathers this and our fathers that, but your fathers sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to be a slave in Egypt, not realizing that God had ordained him to preserve the family.” And it was not until the

second time around that they recognized the position of Joseph. He was ordained of God for the purpose of leading the family. They had rejected that. When he told them of his dreams they rejected Joseph as the leader. However, the second time around they saw how God had anointed Joseph, but they were blind to it the first time.

Moses-thought that the Israelites would understand that God had chosen him to lead them, but they did not. He fled for his life and was gone for forty years. It was not until the second time around that they recognized that Moses was indeed God's chosen leader.

The first time around, they rejected Jesus. The second time around, they will recognize Him. Stephen said, "You are following a pattern of your fathers." And so he said, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers stone or imprison?" And he said, "But you are worse than them because you killed the One they were all prophesying of." That did not go well with them. But it was masterful. It was absolutely masterful.

And we read in Acts 7:55-56,

But he [Stephen] being full of the Holy Ghost, [this was at the end of the message]—looked up steadfastly unto heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold I see the heavens open and, the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had inspired and put together that whole message and the Scriptures in such a masterful way.

The Holy Spirit would inspire their responses to charges that would be leveled against them. Jesus said,

And when they bring you into the synagogues, and unto the magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what things ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. (Luke 12:11-12)

Jesus was telling them "The Holy Spirit will be there to defend you, to give you the words. You do not have to think up fancy little speeches. The anointing of God's Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will have the answers and the responses."

We have already seen how the Holy Spirit aided in the case of Stephen. But then we also read concerning Peter, when he was brought before the Jewish council because of the healing of the lame man:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said, "Ye rules of Israel, if we are called this day in question because of the good deed done to this lame man." (Acts 4:8-9)

Then Peter went on to preach to them such a convincing, masterful defense, that they marveled at his responses because they perceived that he was ignorant and unlearned.

In John 16:13-15 Jesus said,

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

So the Holy Spirit is guiding them into all truth.

And then the Holy Spirit is bringing Jesus' words to their remembrance. In John 2:22 we read,

When therefore He was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

You see He said He would bring to their remembrance the things. And when Jesus rose, then they remembered. Oh yeah, I remember He said that. But it was the Holy Spirit quickening their memory.

In John 12:16 we read,

These things understood not His disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

At first they did not understand when Jesus was talking about these things. But later on, after Jesus was glorified, the Holy Spirit then brought it back to their remembrance and put the whole thing together for them.

So the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is first to illuminate the Word of God to his heart. It is to aid in the understanding of the Scriptures and to help in the defense of the Scriptures, bringing to remembrance the Scriptures, the Word of God. And thus, this glorious work of the Holy Spirit in our lives regarding our study and our understanding of the Bible.

Father, we thank You for the help of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, we look to You and we rely upon You for that help. And we thank You that You have given to us the Spirit to teach us all things, to guide us into all truth, to help us in seeing the proper application of the church. Lord, we pray for the mind of the Spirit and the understanding of the Spirit, so that we would not make the mistake that so many do, going to the Scriptures with the natural mind and wisdom. But Lord, going and understanding our need of the Holy Spirit to illuminate that which He inspired in the hearts of the writers. In Jesus' name, Lord, we thank You and we bless You for the Holy Spirit and the help that He gives to us and the understanding of all truth. Guide us, Lord, into Your truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS309. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Let us turn in our Bibles to Acts 1, as we continue on the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Last week we saw the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as teaching and instructing us in the things of God and in the Word of God. Tonight we would like to look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as He empowers us to be witnesses.

In Acts 1:4, Jesus was with His disciples and He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem until they had received this baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now the disciples asked Jesus a question that was irrelevant to what He was talking about. It was an important question—one that Jesus was very concerned about. But their question was not relevant to what He was talking about—their receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They said, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Now this is what they were expecting the Lord to do. They did not expect Him to be crucified. They were expecting Him to restore the kingdom to Israel, so that Israel might rule over the world with their righteous King according to the promises concerning their Messiah. And Jesus had been talking with them for forty days, concerning the kingdom. But now He is talking to them about another subject, and that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting how often we can get diverted from the main topic by an interesting question on a subject that we really love. And so, often we get so far afield of the original issue, that we forget what the actual issue was. Jesus dismisses their question without really any explanation and He comes back to the subject at hand: their receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And in verse 8 He declares,

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

So the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to give them power to be witnesses unto Jesus throughout the entire world. It is interesting as we follow the story in the Book of Acts that, first of all, they did bring witness of Jesus to Jerusalem—so much so, that they were accused of “filling the city with this Man’s doctrine.” When persecution arose in Jerusalem, the church was scattered abroad throughout all of Judea. And they went everywhere preaching the Word. And so they began to spread the message into Judea. And we find in the record in Acts that Peter went down to Lydda and met with certain disciples there. While he was there the disciples in Joppa called him over to minister to one who had died in Joppa. And so, there were these pockets of believers throughout Judea.

Then we read that Philip went unto Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And then as we get into Acts 13, we find the Holy Spirit saying, “Separate unto Me, Paul and Barnabas for the ministry where I have called them.” And they fasted and prayed and then laid hands on them and the Spirit sent them forth. And they began the task of carrying the gospel unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And for the most part, the rest of the Book of Acts has to do with Paul’s missionary journeys, as he is carrying the gospel to the world. Now this was all done through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that they were enabled to take the gospel to all the world.

So, many people associate witnessing with just the verbalizing of your faith, or your testimony, to someone else—talking to them about the Bible, about Jesus Christ, about salvation, about God's gift of eternal life. And we think of witnessing only as verbalizing to others concerning their need of Jesus Christ. But witnessing is far more than just giving a person an invitation or telling someone about Jesus Christ. A more powerful witness than simply telling someone about Jesus Christ is a believer living the life of Jesus Christ before them.

I was up at the high school camp yesterday, enjoying a wonderful day with those beautiful young people. It was a thrill to see the work of God's Spirit in their lives as we ministered to them yesterday. A young girl came up to me just as I was leaving last night and she said, "Pastor Chuck, I want to witness to my brother and I do not know how to witness to my brother." I told her, just live the Christian life before him. Let him see what Jesus has done in your life. And that is the strongest witness that you can possibly give to him.

When we talk about being a witness for Jesus Christ, we are talking about the life that bears witness for Jesus Christ. Often times, what we say is thoroughly discredited by what we are and by what we do. You see, you can be witnessing to someone verbally and you can be telling them how wonderful the work of Jesus Christ is in your life. "He gives you such glorious peace and you need to know this peace of Jesus Christ." But that witness can be discredited if, while you are working beside them, any time any little irritant comes along and you blow up, and you get mad, and yell at everything and everybody, and then you say, "but Jesus gives you such glorious peace." Or if you are talking about the joy of the Lord and you are always going around grouchy and grumpy and snapping at everybody—what you say will be meaningless to them because of what you are. So, it is extremely important that our life bear witness of the peace of Jesus Christ and the love of Jesus Christ. And then they will see, as it is worked out in our lives.

It is interesting that people get a lot of weird ideas concerning the Scripture and think that they have received some revelation from God. And many times they feel that they need to share this revelation with the church. We get requests quite often from people who want to come and share some revelation of scriptural truth to the body of Christ here. They want to share some twist on an interpretation that they got in some kind of a dream. I think it was more inspired by the In-n-Out burger with onions than it was by the Spirit. Often I will say to them, give us the opportunity to observe how this truth has affected your walk and your life. Let us see how it has brought you closer to Jesus. Let us see the peace and the joy that it has brought into your life. And when we see the fruit of this truth in your life, then we will be coming to you and asking you to share with us just what is it that makes you different.

It is important that our lives agree with our testimony. And that is what a real witness is. It is when your life is in agreement with your testimony and they can see it worked out in your life. They can see the example of it in your life. That is why Paul said to Timothy, "Be thou an example unto the believer." And when Paul talked to the elders of Ephesus, he said, "I was with you teaching you and showing you. My life was the demonstration of the truth that I was sharing with you."

In the Book of Revelation, it speaks of Jesus as the faithful and true witness. He was a faithful and true witness of the Father. So that if you want to know what God is all about, and if you want to know what God is like, you can look at Jesus and discover exactly how God thinks—how God feels and what God is like. He was a faithful and true witness of God. So much so that when Philip said to Him,

Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Show us the Father?' (John 14:8-9)

Jesus could declare that because He was a faithful and true witness. You can know what God is like by looking at Jesus.

The name Christian was coined in Antioch by the world. As they observed the lives of the believers in Jesus Christ, they called them Christians, which meant Christ-like. It is wonderful when the world gives you that title. It is not something that you have to go out and declare. Well, I am a Christian, are you? Are you Christ-like? It is glorious when that title is given to you by others after having observed your life. They say, "Oh, he is a real Christian. He is really like Christ."

If a person would say to you, "Oh, but I would love to see Jesus Christ," You should be able to say, "Well, if you have seen me..." You see, that would be a faithful and true witness. Jesus was able to say that of the Father. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." He was a faithful and true witness of the Father.

Now He wants you to be a witness of Him. He wants your life to be so like His, that it is a witness of Him. And people will know what He is like as they observe you. And if you want to take a test of self-examination, just read 1 Corinthians 13, removing the word charity and inserting your own name, and you will find out how true a witness you are. You see, you can take out the word charity and insert the name Jesus and you do no violence to the text at all. It flows. It fits. But unfortunately, when we insert our name it does a lot of violence to the text. But that is an indictment against us. It means that we have not yet yielded fully to the work of the Holy Spirit, who God has sent to help us, to give us the power to be witnesses.

Several years ago someone wrote a book on the imitation of Jesus. And the book suggested that before you responded or reacted to the various circumstances, adverse and others, that you first ask the question: What would Jesus do? And then seek to do what Jesus would do in those circumstances. Well, I can assure you that if you want to become totally frustrated, just try it. Just try in your own ability to imitate Jesus Christ. Try to respond and to react as He did and as He has commanded us to do. Jesus: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; who said to us in Matthew 5, "Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who despitefully use you, and so shall you be the children of the Father." And if you just try to live like Jesus, try to act like Jesus, you will find that it is an impossible task in your own ability or self control.

Paul the Apostle tried to imitate Christ. And he writes in Romans 7 about his experience. He said in verse 15,

For that which I do, I allow not: [In other words, I am doing things that I really don't want to do.] For what I would, that do I not. [I am doing the things I do not want to do. I am not doing the things I do want to do.] But what I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good

thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:15-18)

This was Paul's struggle. The will is there—"that which I want to do, I do not do. That which I do not want to do I am doing. It is because of the sin that dwells in me, this sinful nature."

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. (Romans 7:20-22)

I listen to the law of God. I hear what Jesus says and I say, "Yes! That is right. Yes, I want to do that. Yes, that is the way I want to respond." That is the way I want to react. That is the kind of a person I desire to be—kind and loving and forgiving and generous and compassionate, merciful. That is the kind of person I want to be. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law that is working in me, that wars against the law of my mind and brings me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my body. Paul cried,

Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24)

I am living in an unredeemed body that is still in rebellion against God—a body that does not want to serve or be subservient to the Spirit. I am living in a body that wants to usurp authority and control over my mind and over my life with body appetites that are demanding fulfillment. And my spirit yearns after God, to be like Jesus. But when I try, I find that this other nature, the nature of my flesh, is there battling against the desires of my spirit.

In Matthew 26:41, Jesus said to Peter, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And all of us have experienced that. It is not my mind that really is in rebellion against God. In my heart I desire to please God. I want to serve God, but there is the battle that goes on between the flesh and the spirit. And these two are contrary, so that Paul, in writing to the Galatians says, "We do not always do what we would." In fact Paul says even stronger, "so that you cannot do the things that you would." It is because of this battle between the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh.

Thus it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that I can have and experience victory over my flesh and over the desires of my flesh. The writer of that hymn, "Have Thine Own Way Lord," really struck the right chord. I think it is the third stanza where he wrote,

Have Thine own way, Lord. Have Thine own way. Hold o'er  
my being absolute sway. Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me. (Adelaide Pollard)

It is only as I am filled with the Spirit and as I am yielding to the Holy Spirit that I can then, through the power of the Spirit, be a true witness.

Jesus said,

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me. (Acts 1:8)

But I cannot be a witness apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. The word *power* in the Greek is *dynamis*, from which we receive our English word, *dynamic*. And so, you will receive the dynamics—and how we need the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in order that we might be true and faithful witnesses of Jesus.

Now in the life of Peter, we see a classic example of a man who has the right desires, but lacks the power of the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot do that which he wanted and desired so desperately to do. Jesus, the night He was betrayed, as He was eating supper with the disciples, He said to them, “All of you are going to be offended tonight because of Me.” And Peter said, “Lord, though they all are offended, I would never be offended.” And Jesus said, “Peter, before the rooster crows you will have denied Me three times.” Peter said, “I would never deny You! If they would kill me I would not deny You. If they were torturing me, I would never deny You!” And Peter was expressing the desire of his heart: to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ. That was the heart of Peter, not to deny Jesus, but to be a faithful witness.

And yet, we find Peter standing outside of the house of the high priest where Jesus has been brought before the religious tribunal, this august body of religious leaders, and they are trying Him in this mock trial. And as Peter is standing outside with the soldiers, warming himself by their fire, a young maiden comes up to Peter and says, “Aren’t you also one of His disciples?” Peter says, “No. I do not know Him.” A little later she comes back and she says, “I am sure I have seen you with Him.” He says, “No, no. You do not know what you are talking about. I do not know Him.” And finally the soldiers say to Him, “You must be one of His disciples. You have a Galilean accent.” And Peter begins to swear, denying that he ever knew Jesus. And the rooster begins to crow.

Peter was sincere. When he said, “Lord, if they would kill me I would never deny You,” he was talking from his heart. He was expressing the desires of his spirit and his heart, of being faithful to Jesus. His spirit indeed was willing, but his flesh was weak.

Now it is a few weeks later. The scene is the same. The religious council of Jerusalem has gathered together. But this time Peter is not outside, he is a defendant standing before them. And the prosecuting attorney asks him a very leading question. “Tell us, by what power or by what name did you make this lame man walk?” And then we read,

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, ‘Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all of the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ (Acts 4:8-12)

And Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter...” What a changed man! What is the difference? He has received what Jesus promised. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses unto Me.” And here we see Peter giving a very

powerful and dynamic witness of Jesus Christ to these men who, only a few weeks earlier, were standing outside of that august body where he was cowed into a denial of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is given to you as a gift of God to empower you to live as a witness for Jesus Christ and to share that witness verbally with others. But as we said, what you say can never be greater than what you are. What you are oftentimes speaks much louder than what you say.

A little bit further in Acts 4, we again see the boldness it takes to witness. Peter was threatened not to speak any more of this man in the name of Jesus. They commanded him not to speak or teach, but Peter and John answered and said,

Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. (Acts 4:19-23)

They reported their whole experience before the chief priests and the elders. And when the people heard what was going on, the persecution that was beginning, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord. And they prayed,

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31)

They were filled with the Holy Spirit, which gave them power to speak the word and to witness with boldness. Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be witnesses unto Me.” We need that power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the weakness of our flesh.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the promise. And Lord, we are aware of the warfare that goes on within us. We are aware of the weakness of our flesh. But Lord, we are also aware of the yearning of our heart and of our spirit to be, Lord, a witness for You. Lord, we recognize that we cannot do it in ourselves. We have tried, Lord, and like Peter we have ended up frustrated. We find this other law at work that when we would do good, evil is present. The law of the flesh is warring against the spirit. Lord, we need the dynamic of Your Holy Spirit. And so we come tonight, Lord, and we ask You to have mercy upon us and our weaknesses. And we ask, Lord, that You would fill us with Your Holy Spirit, that we might have that power to be the kind of witness that will bring glory and honor unto Your name. We

desire to be faithful witnesses of what You are and bearing that witness before others. Help us, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.

This is tape number SHS310. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

We will continue our study on the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In this lesson we would like to look at the work of the Spirit in conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

God has placed certain ministries in the church. Paul declares first of all, that there were the apostles, and then some prophets, some evangelists and some pastor/teachers. These are various gifted individuals within the church that God has placed within the body for the purpose of the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. Paul declared that he was an apostle not by the will of man, but by the will of God. He also asked the rhetorical question: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Do all heal? Are all pastor/teachers? And the answer is obviously, No. There are these many different ministries within the church, but the purpose is the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, which is the building up of the body of Christ.

And so, that is really why we are here tonight. To study the Word in order that there might be a perfecting of the saints and that you might be edified—built up in Jesus Christ. The Lord wants to bring all of us into a full maturity in our Christian walk. There are too many Christians who have really never developed spiritually. They have what could be classified as an arrested state of spiritual development that began when they were about two months old in the Lord. Paul speaks to them as babes in Christ. He said that he had fed them with the milk of the Word and not with meat, for they were not able to bear the meat and were still not able to take it. The writer to the Hebrews said,

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Hebrews 5:12)

Now milk is a good and proper diet for babies, but there should be a development. There should be a growth in our Christian experience. Peter wrote and said, “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word” (1 Peter 2:2). There is nothing wrong with that for babies. But the time comes when a child needs to be weaned from the bottle and begin to eat meat. And this is true in a spiritual sense. There needs to be a development—a growth in our walk in the Spirit.

Paul tells us here in Ephesians 4, that “till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man.” The word *perfect* there is fully matured. Until we come into a fully matured state. And what is the mark of that fully matured state? “...unto the stature, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Infancy is a natural state after birth. There is nothing wrong with being a babe in Christ for a while. But when you have been around for twenty-five years and you are still in diapers and holding on to your bottle, it does not take the gift of discernment to understand that something is radically wrong. You should have developed. You should have grown during that time.

Now Paul tells us God has predestined that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. In the beginning, we read that God created man and Scripture declares that He created him in His likeness and after His image. When God said, “Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness,” God is a spirit and thus He was referring to that spiritual aspect of man’s being. So man

is created in the image of God. God's chief moral characteristic is righteousness and thus He created us with a desire for righteousness. God's chief governmental characteristic is self-determination, so God created you as self-determinate being. He gave to you the capacity of choice. God's chief emotional characteristic is love. And He created us with the capacity of giving and receiving love. So we are created in the image of God. We have a desire for righteousness, the capacity to choose, and the ability to love and to receive love.

Now man fell from the image of God. He became selfish, cold, indifferent, and vengeful. And thus to understand the real purpose of God in the creation of man, you cannot really look around at mankind today and understand God's divine intent in the creation of man. This is a mistake that many people make. They look at fallen man in his fallen state, and then they question the goodness and the love of God that would create such a man. Look at him, how horrible he is! He has the capacities to do so much evil and how could a God of love create such a horrible creature as man? You do not see God's intent by looking around at man today, because you see man in his fallen state. You do not see what God intended man to be.

Now the Bible describes man in the fallen state. Romans 1:29, Paul said,

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:29-32)

This is a pretty sad state. When you look at it, it is pretty sad to see the condition of man when he turns his back on God. And it is amazing when a man turns his back on God and the love of God and the things of God, how deep he can go into moral depravity.

In writing the second letter to Timothy, Paul gives him a list too saying,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. (2 Timothy 3:2)

Now, when you read that list, I can assure you, that was not God's intention for man. That is not the way God intended us to live. To know and to understand God's intention for man, you have to look at Jesus Christ. And in Jesus Christ you see the intention of God for man. He lived as God would have us to live. You see the Bible tells us concerning Jesus that He was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. So that Jesus came and lived in the image of God and in the likeness of God. In His life He demonstrated to us what God is like and thus, how God created man in His image and how God intended and desires men to live. We read:

And the Word was made flesh and He dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

And then in 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul said,

In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God...

So you see how God created man when you look at Jesus Christ. He is the image of God. God created man in His image. And so, you also see how far man has fallen from the original divine intent of creation. God did not intend that we live as we are living today. God did not intend that man be living after the flesh—soulish and sensual. That is not God's intention. Jesus said to Philip,

He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Christ was and did live in the express image of God. In Colossians 1:15 Paul said,

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Now is it God's desire and purpose to take us fallen creatures and to restore us back into His image. God wants to nullify the effect of sin and the fall of man and to restore us once more into the image of God. And so Paul said in Romans,

Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:12-13)

You will live as God intended you to live. Romans 13:14 says,

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof.

God does not want us living sensual, fleshly lives. He wants us to live a life in the Spirit and after the Spirit. And in Galatians 5:16-17 Paul said,

This I say then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that ye would.

Galatians 5:24 says,

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and the lusts.

Colossians 3:5-10 says,

Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them. But now also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

So, God wants you to put off the old man, the old nature, the corrupt nature, which is corrupted by sin. And He wants you to put on the new man.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus said to Nicodemus,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

There has to be a new birth, a new man. You put off the old man. By the power of the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh. You are no longer living after the flesh, but you are now living after the Spirit and the things of the Spirit.

Now we see the new man in Christ contrasted with the old man after the flesh. And when I see the ideal—I look at Jesus and I read of the characteristics and I observe His characteristics. He was kind. He was sensitive. He was compassionate. He was merciful. He was forgiving. And when I see these characteristics, I say, “Oh, yes! That is how I want to live.” I hate it when I get in the flesh and do ugly things. The flesh is so ugly and distasteful. And I desire the ideal. When I read the contrasting list, I say, “Oh God, deliver me from the flesh, from all of the anger and malice and strife and envy and bitterness and all of those horrible things that are destructive. God, deliver me from that!” I desire to be very compassionate, loving, giving, kind. I long to be like Jesus.

But as Paul said,

I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. (Romans 7:18)

And that is the problem—how to perform that which is good. We see the ideal, desire the ideal, but our inability to attain the ideal is frustrating. That is one of the problems with the religions of the world. Buddha pointed to an ideal. Buddha, in a sense, was on track in many ways. Buddha maintained that man's problems came from his desire for material things. And as long as you were mastered by the desire for material things you were always going to be upset, angry,

warring, and filled with strife. This desire to grasp material things is sort of the idea that the Scripture says,

For the love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Timothy 6:10)

And that lust and desire for money brings striving. It brings this envying and it brings jealousies and all of these negative things. And Buddha said the answer is to lose all desire for things material and if you can ever achieve and attain that state, where you have no desire for material things, even food, that you will then be in nirvana. It will be peaceful bliss: “I am happy. I am satisfied. I do not want a thing.” And so that, to Buddha, was nirvana.

Now in a sense, Jesus said the problem that we have with anger and all of these things does stem from the material life, the life of the flesh. And so, we need to live after the Spirit, for the life of the Spirit is superior to the life of the flesh. Jesus taught the superiority of the life of the Spirit over the life of the flesh, much as did Buddha. One vast difference is that Buddha pointed to the path that would bring you to nirvana, but he had no capacity to help you walk that path. So that just gets frustrating.

A few years ago we had the king of Laos visiting here at Calvary Chapel. He was here with his cabinet and we had a large group of Laotian people, who had come to meet the king of Laos, who had come to Orange County to talk to the Laotian population here. I was asked to explain to the king and to his cabinet and to the Laotian people that were here, what Christianity was all about. And it was a beautiful opportunity to share. Now the Laotian people were basically Buddhist. And so, like Paul the Apostle, I started on their turf.

When Paul was in Athens he said, “I perceive that you are very religious people. I have been going through your city and I found idols, you know, to everything. And I even passed one altar and it was inscribed, ‘to the unknown god.’ I would like to tell you about this God. He is the one that created the heavens and the earth.” And so Paul started on their turf, but he led them into his own turf.

So, I started talking to the Laotian people about a lot of the things of Buddha—his teaching, the basic philosophies and all of Buddha’s teaching. And then I brought out how he taught about a good way of life. It would be wonderful if people actually could follow the teaching of Buddha. It would be wonderful if people would be kind, and would be considerate, and would be giving, and did not have any desires for themselves. But the problem is that I have never met a Buddhist who could say, “Well, I am satisfied,” because none of them had attained nirvana. Because there is something within us (that fleshly nature), that though I may desire, see, or recognize that, *yes, this peaceful life would be good*—that it would be wonderful to be able to live like this, to never get angry, to never be upset, to always be in a happy, good frame of mind—try as I may, I am still living in this body of flesh and there is this warfare that is going on. And I do not always do the things that I would. And thus I get upset and frustrated.

Now Jesus said, this is how you are to live: after the Spirit, denying self, the self-life, taking up the cross, and following Him. But then He said, *Now I am going away, but I am not going to leave you without any help. I am going to pray to the Father and He is going to give to you another Helper, even the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you forever* (cf. John 14:16).

And Jesus promised that when we receive the Spirit we would, with the Spirit, receive the power of that Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

So, the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to indwell your life and to give you the power to live as God would have you to live. As He, dwelling in you, working in you, does His works of conforming you into the image of God. He is restoring that which man lost as the result of sin. He is restoring man back into the image of God. Now this cannot be done by human resolve. It cannot be done by self-effort. Job said, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” No one. David said, “Oh that my ways were directed to keep Thy commandments.” Oh God, how I wished that this were so. That my ways were directed to keep Your commandments. And then he said, “Behold I have longed after Thy precepts.” I see them. I long after them. I admit and confess that they are right. I desire them.

So my dilemma: I love Jesus; I desire to be like Jesus; I want to be conformed into the image of God; I have a strong desire for these things. But my flesh is weak. And thus, Christians often find themselves in the state of great frustration, having the longing, seeing the ideal, desiring the ideal, but yet, defeated so often by the flesh. Must I always live in this condition of spiritual defeat? Thank God, the answer is no. There is true victory for every child of God.

When the children of Israel were led by Moses out of Egypt and journeyed through the wilderness to the Promised Land, their whole experience was an allegory and has parallels in the Christian life. They were saved by the blood of the lamb that was put on the doorpost of the house. They came out of Egypt, which is a type of the bondage in a life of sin. They came to the Red Sea, which is a symbol of baptism. And they began their journey through the wilderness towards the Promised Land. Unfortunately, when they came close to the border and close to entering in of the Promised Land, Moses made the mistake of sending in the spies to spy out the land. And ten came back with an evil report. Two spies came back with an encouraging report. But the people listened to the discouraging report and sought to get a leader to take them back to Egypt.

They said, “Our children will be killed. We will be destroyed. We cannot do it.” And God said, “Because you have failed to enter in you will wander for forty years in this wilderness until you have all died and the children whom you said would be as prey, they will go into the land.” And so, there began a long funeral procession for forty years, as they were waiting for everyone to die off of the old generation.

Finally after forty years, they came again to the border of the Promised Land, but this time having gone around, they came to the river Jordan. And coming through the river Jordan, God actually stopped the river and they came across the Jordan. This is a type of that place in your Christian experience where you are tired of wandering in the wilderness, which was marked by complaining, and murmuring, and just challenging God constantly. They came to Jordan, which is a type of the death of the old nature, the old man. That is the reckoning of my old nature to be dead, or the mortifying of the deeds of the flesh by the power of the Spirit. And they began to possess what God had promised, a new land—a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

They had a lot of battles in the wilderness, but they never gained anything from them. They never really gained any territory. Now there were still battles, but they were gaining territory all the while. When you come into this life in Christ, the life of the Spirit, there are still battles. There are still struggles, but our lives are now being directed by the Spirit of God. We are gaining territory all the time, as we are laying hold of the promises of God and possessing our possessions—those things that God has promised to us.

So, the Holy Spirit has been given to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I find in my own life a very interesting pattern. And though I can observe it, I do not know why I just cannot seem to break it. God continues to show me areas of

my life that are not yet surrendered to the Spirit, where the next battle is going to be. You know, when we have taken Jericho, and Ai, and Bethel, but there is still a lot of territory that is not yet conquered. And the tragic story of the children of Israel is that they never did conquer all that God gave them. And I see those areas in my life. And thank God He did not show them all to me the first week or I would have been discouraged.

But just about the time you think you have arrived, just after a great victory, it is then the Lord shows you the next place. He shows you that area where the flesh still is dominant. And invariably, as the Lord will reveal to me—this area where He wants to work, I will say, “Oh Lord, that is horrible. Get out of the way and I will take care of that right now. I will not do that again.” And the Lord lets me flounder in trying to exercise my will-power, and my resolve, and my strength, and I keep stumbling. And after a period of time, I really begin to be almost defeated spiritually because of my inability to conquer this area of the flesh. Until I finally come in utter desperation and hopelessness and say, “God, I do not know what is wrong with me. I just cannot do it. God, You are going to have to help me.” And then the Spirit takes care of it and I have great victory. And the Lord shows me the next area and I say, “Oh Lord, get out of the way. I will take care of this right now. This is horrible. I did not realize this.” I mean, when am I going to learn? But it seems to be a pattern that fails. I have to get to the place of helplessness and confess, “Lord, I cannot do it.”

Now the net result of this is that as He does it, I have no place to boast in and of myself. I cannot go around bragging about how I conquered over this, or I used to do that, but I have determined that that was wrong, and I—See, I cannot boast. All I can tell you is that God can do a wonderful work where I was so weak, and He has done a beautiful work! And you know when God does it, so many times it is so beautiful that it is almost unconscious to you. You are not even aware of it until after a period of time and then you realize—*wow, I have not done that for a long time! I do not even want to do it. Isn't that glorious!* You know, and then you realize, oh Lord, You have given me the victory. Oh, bless Your name! That is wonderful!

We had a fellow here in the church who was a retired naval officer. And through the years in the navy he had learned navy talk and had a real foul tongue. But he came and accepted Jesus Christ here at Calvary Chapel. About six months after having accepted the Lord here, he was out in his backyard mowing the lawn—whistling, “Love, love, love, love. Christian this is your call.” And he was not paying close attention and he went under the tree, but he did not duck low enough and the thing caught him right in the forehead. It laid him on his back and his automatic lawnmower just kept going and hit the fence. And as he was lying there on the ground, pain throbbing on his forehead, he jumped up, ran over, turned off the lawnmower and went running into the house and said, “Honey, honey, guess what happened?” She looked at the big welt rising on his forehead and she said, “What did happen, sweetheart?” He said, “Oh no, no, not that.” He said, “I hit a tree, but,” he said, “I did not cuss.” And she said, “You know, I have not heard you use a swear word in six months.” He said, “I haven't?” I mean it was just one of those things. The Spirit does that you are not even aware of, but then what rejoicing there is in what God has done!

And I think that is why God so often lets us try. He lets us struggle. He lets us see our weakness, so that we will not go around boasting or bragging when he does it. He lets us get to the place of hopelessness and that recognition of total inability, so that when He then does work, we are careful to give Him praise and glory. This is victory through Jesus.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, “But we all with open face”—or unveiled face—he was talking about how, when Moses came down the mountain with the law, he had to veil his face, so the people did not see the shining or the fading of the glory that was on his face. But

Paul said that when the Jews read the law today there is still a veil over their faces. “But we with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord”—now you remember that is what caused Moses’ face to glow. He got a glimpse of God and it caused his face to glow. So, “we with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory into the same image, by the power,” he said, “of His Spirit working in us.”

So here is the key: as we, with unveiled faces, begin to see the glory of the Lord—as we begin to worship the Lord, the Spirit of God reveals to us the glory of the eternal God. As we behold that glory, we are being changed—brought from glory to glory to glory—as we are being molded and changed into His image by His Spirit that is working in us. And so, the work of the Holy Spirit in your life is that of changing you from glory to glory, as He brings you into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now God says, basically, these are the laws by which you should live. These are the rules. This is the kind of a person you ought to be. These are the things you should be doing and these are the things you should not be doing. And if you do these things you will have a rich, full life in fellowship with Me. And I say, “good! I love it. I want it. I agree that is a good life and I will live that way.” And then I immediately discover that there is another law that is working in me that is fighting against the law of my spirit. Now God’s law is good. I consent to the law of God, that it is good. But how do I perform the law? How do I do what is right? How do I keep the ideal? I do not know. And that is the problem. I need the power of the Holy Spirit because I just cannot do it myself.

So, Paul then concludes in Romans 8:3 (“For what the law could not do”) that there was no fault with the law. The law is good. It is right. It is holy. I mean, it is the right way to live. But “what the law could not do...” What could the law not do? It could not give me the power to keep it. You see, I was still weak. I am still me. So though the law is good and I consent the law is good, the law cannot give me the power to keep it. It can only point an accusing finger at me when I am not keeping it.

So, the law could not make me righteous. It could only condemn me. “So what the law could not do, in that it was weak through my flesh”—that was the weak part of the chain, my flesh. That is where the whole thing broke down. The law is good. My flesh is rotten. My flesh is weak. “So what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” And then His Son sent me the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit, He gave the power to live a life of victory over the baser desires of my flesh. I have received power through the Holy Spirit to be what God wants me to be and to do what God wants me to do. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, I am being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now I would be less than honest if I told you His job was finished. There is still a long way to go. But as the fellow said, I am not yet what I am going to be, but thank God I am not what I was. I am on the way. And I am experiencing in one area of my life after another, the power of the Holy Spirit, empowering me, changing me, transforming me into the image of Jesus Christ. I am growing.

Beware when you get to a place of becoming stagnant, when you cannot see any growth. And be doubly aware and concerned when you can look back and see a time when you were closer to the ideal than you are today. That is bad. See, I have not arrived, but I am closer today than I have ever been. And I have this confidence that He who has begun a good work in me is going to complete it. He does not start anything He does not finish.

And so, it is important for me to remain yielded to the Holy Spirit. It is important that I receive the power of the Holy Spirit—that power of the Spirit whereby I mortify the deeds of the flesh—that power of the Holy Spirit whereby I am transformed into the image of Jesus.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for that work of Your Holy Spirit in us. Oh Lord, how grateful we are for all that You have done. Lord, when we see what we are today and we remember what we were— Oh Lord, we have come so far! We are so thankful. Lord, as David asked, we ask that You would continue Your work and search us, Oh God, and know our hearts. Try us and know our thoughts. See if there is some place of wickedness that is there still. And Lord, continue to lead us in Your path of righteousness. Continue, Lord, to conform us into the image of God through the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS311. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

In this lesson we will look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, as He helps us in our prayer life and enhances our prayer life. Romans 8:26-27 says,

Likewise also the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

“He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” It is important that we realize that the purpose of prayer is not to change the mind of God. It is not to convince God to see things your way. Many people make a great mistake in thinking that by prayer, they will be able to change the mind of God. That is not the purpose of prayer at all. You would not want to change the mind of God. God said,

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.  
(Jeremiah 29:11)

God’s plan for you is much better than anything you could ever devise for yourself. And for you to think that you can improve upon the plan of God is sheer folly.

The purpose of prayer is not to change the mind of God. You say, “Well if it is not to change the mind of God, then why should we pray? What is the purpose of prayer?” The purpose of prayer is to open your heart and your life to allow God to do the things that He wants to do—those things that He knows are best for you.

You see God has given to man this gift of free will. We have the power and capacity of choice. And God will not violate that free will, for to violate it would be to invalidate it. Now God will do things to influence our choices—like the old song in the South says, “He will not compel you to go against your will, but He will sure make you willing to go.” And God will allow circumstances, pressures, or difficulties to come into your life in order to help influence the choices that you make. But He will not violate that choice that He has given to you. God will allow you to resist His will. He is the awesome, sovereign Creator, and so many times, here is man, puny little man, resisting the will of God. And He allows him to do so. He will not violate your free choice.

So the purpose of prayer is not to change the mind of God. I am convinced that every good and right thing you have ever prayed for, God intended to give to you before you ever prayed. Jesus said, “Your Father knows what you have need of before you even ask Him.” But prayer opens the door of our will, whereby we allow God then to do those things He desires to do for our benefit and for our good.

Jesus said to the disciples in John 15:16,

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

It does not say He *shall* give it to you. It does not say He *might* give it to you. But it says He *may* give it to you. In other words, God wants to give it to you. Through prayer you are opening the door to allow God to do the things that He desires to do. You are giving Him permission to do in your life that which is His purpose.

True prayer moves in a cycle. True prayer begins in the heart of God, in the purposes of God, and in the desires of God. And God places those desires upon our heart—“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do” (Philippians 2:13). And so, He writes His law on the fleshly tablets of our heart. As the psalmist said, “Delight thyself also in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psalm 37:4). He puts His desires in our heart. And as He places His desire in my heart, I then express it to Him in prayer. And as I express it to Him in prayer—you see, it began with God. It moves down, touches my heart, and then it goes back to God. And thus the cycle is complete, and the door is now open, and God has the opportunity now to do those things He wants to do for you because of His intense love for you.

The prophet said to King Asa in 2 Chronicles 16:9,

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

In other words, God is just looking for people whose hearts are in harmony with His. He wants your heart to be in harmony with His. He is looking throughout the entire world. The eyes of the Lord go and to and fro throughout the entire earth to show Himself strong, to manifest Himself, His power, and His love to those whose hearts are perfectly in harmony with His heart. God is just looking for instruments through which He might accomplish His work, and through which He might pour His resources unto the needy world. And so, He seeks to bring our hearts and our minds into alignment and harmony with His. And He then channels His love and His blessings through us.

So, the most important thing is to just discover the will of God. Get your heart in harmony with God’s heart. Get your heart beating with God’s heart. John said,

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. (1 John 5:14)

Now, remember the Holy Spirit makes intercession with us according to His will. And this is the confidence that we have: “if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us, and if He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of Him” (1 John 5:15). If we are praying according to the will of God, we can pray in confidence that we have the answers to those petitions, because we have now opened the door for God to do what He desires to do. The key, of course, is asking according to His will.

Now that brings us back to the basic issue that we started out with and that is the difficulty of knowing the will of God. “The Spirit also,” Paul said, “helps our weaknesses, our infirmities.”

And one of the infirmities that we have is that we do not know how to pray as we ought because we do not always know just what God's will is in every particular matter.

For example, people who are careless with their finances are, as a result of their carelessness, in a real financial bind. They have spent money foolishly. Although they did not have the money, they were on the phone long distance and now they have a \$127 phone bill. They do not have the money to pay for it and the phone is going to be shut off. How shall I pray for them? God send them the money so they can pay the phone bill? Well, maybe God wants to teach them how to be wise and prudent in the expenditure of their money. And maybe if I go in and pay their phone bill for them I would be defeating what God is trying to teach them.

You see, we do not always know how to pray as we ought to pray. We do not always know what God is working out in a person's life or working out in our lives. And that is one of our weaknesses. God said, "My ways are not your ways. My ways are beyond your finding out" (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9). And I have discovered through the years by experience, and as time has gone on, that I am able to see the picture more completely. I have discovered that many of my prayers were completely out of the will of God. Things that I asked God to do and things that I asked God for were completely out of His will. At one time, I was almost insisting that God do certain things; but in His love and goodness to me, He did not do them. And so, as the years have gone by and I have gained understanding by my experiences, I am as thankful for the prayers that God did not answer as I am for the prayers that God did answer.

But you see I did not always know what the will of God was for my life. And so many times, not knowing the will of God, I prayed amiss. I have prayed for the wrong things. And that is where it is dangerous—to get insistent with God and to start demanding of God. And there are people who are so foolish that say, "God if you do not answer this prayer, then I just cannot trust You and I am not going to serve You or believe in You any more. If You do not succumb to my will and to my desire in this issue, Lord, I am through. I am walking away." How ridiculous! How utterly foolish! And so, one of our human weaknesses is not knowing the will of God.

Now, how does the Holy Spirit help us with this problem? The Spirit Himself will make intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be uttered. I think of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the wife of Elkanah, and how she shared her husband with another wife by the name of Peninah. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24) and I do not think any man can love two women equally in a marriage situation. There would be conflicts and there were conflicts for Elkanah. Peninah was able to have children. She would get pregnant every time he turned around. But Hannah could not have a child. And in that culture it was considered a curse not to be able to bear a child, or not to be able to give your husband a son. That was considered a curse.

And so, because Elkanah sort of favored Hannah, Peninah was constantly just getting on her. "Ya, ya! You cannot have any children. Look at all I have. You have not given Elkanah any children." And she was just vexing Hannah sorely. Well, Peninah did not realize there were advantages to not having children. When her husband went up to the tabernacle for the feast, Peninah had to stay home and take care of all of her kids. But Hannah was free to travel with him and so as they were travelling together, she was in such great distress. Peninah had just given her a bad time again about her barrenness. And Elkanah said, "What's wrong? You are so sad. We are taking a vacation and you ought to be happy." She said, "Give me a child or I am going to die!" He said, "What, am I God, that I can do that?" And he said, "Look, I love you. Am I not worth many children to you?" Husbands do not always understand a lot of things. So they got to

the place of worship, the tabernacle—and let me just read what the Scripture says concerning that:

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.  
(1 Samuel 1:10-17 KJV)

Now first of all, we see how God, through circumstances, brought Hannah into harmony with His desires. You see at this particular period in the history of the nation of Israel, things were bad, very bad. Eli was the high priest—a fairly good man. But his sons were totally wicked and evil. And they were turning people against God because of their wickedness and their evil ways. And they were to take over the position of religious leaders of the nation at the death of their father, Eli. The nation was in a desperate condition. Spiritually, it was at the bottom.

God needed a man who would be a spiritual leader, who would lead the nation out of this spiritual morass and into a real relationship with Him again. God had to get a woman before He could get a man. And so, He closed up Hannah's womb so that she could not bear any children. And it finally became such an irritant to her—she was so desperate that she said, "Lord, if You will just give me a child, a man child, I will give him back to You. He will be consecrated, dedicated to You. I will give him back to You, Lord, all the days of his life." Now Hannah is in harmony with the purposes of God. God has brought her into harmony with His will. And now God can do for her what He wants to do because He needs a man, a spiritual man, one that would be dedicated from youth unto Him. He needed that kind of a man to lead the nation spiritually.

Now notice though, secondly in the story, how the burden of Hannah's heart was so great that no words were coming out. It was just a groaning—a groaning in the spirit. Hannah's lips were moving without sounds. No utterance was heard because the grief and the pain was so deep. This was the groaning of the spirit. She was just lying there in deep agony, groaning in the spirit. To the extent that the priest thought she was drunk and rebuked her for drunkenness. But that was an example of groaning in the spirit, as God brought her into harmony with His desires.

Another example that we find in the Old Testament of groaning in the spirit is the case of Hezekiah, the king of Judah. When the prophet Isaiah came to the king and said, "Set your house in order. You are going to die and not live" (Isaiah 38:1), the king turned his face to the wall and

began to pray unto God. And he speaks about how he was praying all night long. And he describes it in Isaiah 38:14,

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: ‘Oh LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

Hezekiah was groaning and mourning like a dove. He was chattering like a sparrow or a crane. Unintelligible sounds were being uttered unto God from the desperation of the spirit—the groaning of the spirit.

And even so, in our hours of great grief, sorrow, and pain, there are times when we cannot even articulate our requests to God. We are hurting so deeply that all we can do is just, more or less, groan. But it is so beautiful to know that God interprets those groans as intercessory prayer, according to His will? Even though they may not be our articulated words, God understands the sorrow and grief of your heart and responds.

Now we are commanded in the Scriptures to pray in the Holy Spirit. In Jude 21, as he is giving these exhortations, he tells us that we are to pray in the Holy Ghost and to keep ourselves in the love of God. When Paul was writing to the church in Ephesians 6, he talked about the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged and how important it is that we have the whole armor of God. He instructed us, that we might stand against the wiles of the devil. And having done all to stand, having placed the armor upon us, having girded us with the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation and the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel—finally, having then gotten us all outfitted, Paul said,

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.  
(Ephesians 6:18)

Praying in the Spirit—How do we pray in the Spirit? Well, one way we pray in the Spirit, which we have already mentioned, is that groaning in the Spirit. The second is found in 1 Corinthians 14,-as Paul said:

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: (1Corinthians 14:14-18)

So Paul is saying, when I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit is praying though my understanding is unfruitful. I do not know what I am saying. What shall I say then? Well, I will pray in tongues and I will pray with understanding. I will sing in tongues and I will sing with understanding, but not in church. I would rather speak five words in a known language than ten thousand in an unknown language, that the whole church might be benefited. And if you are in church and there is no interpreter present, then keep silent and do not exercise the gift of tongues. Because if you do speak in tongues, those who are sitting there in the seat of the unlearned—will not understand the language. How can they say, “Yea, amen!” at your giving of thanks, if they do

not understand what you are saying? Indeed, this is a good way to give thanks and it is a good way to praise the Lord, but not in church. It is appropriate in your own private devotional life.

If you have the gift of tongues, you can pray in tongues and thus be praying in the Spirit. And I think the basic difference between groaning in the Spirit and praying in tongues is just that the groans are not articulated. And yet in both, you are being assisted, aided, guided, and directed by the Holy Spirit. And you know that the Holy Spirit is thus guiding your prayer. It is according to the will of God.

So what are the advantages of praying in the Spirit when you do not understand what you are praying? Well, the first advantage is that you can be assured that your prayers are according to the will of God. If the Spirit, knowing the mind of the Father, makes intercession, you know that it is according to the will of God.

Secondly, it eliminates selfishness as the primary motive behind our prayers. Have you ever noticed how many of your prayers are prompted by selfish motivation? James said,

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may  
consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:3)

In other words, this kind of prayer is selfish. It is something for you. It is something that you desire for yourself—a selfish motivation. “God, I want this! I want this, Lord!” And it is for you—a selfish motivation. And you ask and receive not because you ask amiss, that you might consume it upon your own lust. But if you are praying in the Spirit in an unknown language, you are not understanding. It eliminates selfishness as a motive of your prayer.

Thirdly, it enables you to pray for things that you have forgotten to pray for. Many times a person has said, “Oh my, I am really in desperate need. I do not know what I am going to do.” And you say, “Well we will remember you in prayer.” And how many times you have forgotten to remember. You promised you would pray. There was definitely a desperate need for prayer and you intended to pray for them, but somehow you forgot. Or maybe you do not do that. Maybe that is just me. I have some clothes in the backseat of my car that I have been planning to take to the cleaners for two days. I keep forgetting. They are in the backseat and I am going to throw them into the front seat tomorrow, so I cannot forget. There are just things that I forget.

But the wonderful thing about allowing the Holy Spirit to guide my prayer and intercede through me is that He is able to pray for those issues that I have forgotten—those needs that I have forgotten to pray for. And so it gives me a great opportunity to just cover all the bases and to pray for all of those who have asked for prayer, because He knows their needs and He knows my promises to pray for them.

Fourthly, praying in the Spirit allows the opportunity to give unto God the full expression of the praise and the thanks that you feel in your spirit but have difficulty expressing to God because of the limitations of the human language. I feel in my spirit much deeper than what I am capable of expressing verbally. In fact, many times in just the endeavor to express it, I feel that I am lessening that which I am feeling. Just the very attempt to express it in words seems to diminish that sense of gratitude, of love, of appreciation, of just being so totally overwhelmed by God’s grace, God’s mercy, and God’s goodness to me. I feel it in my heart and in my spirit—it is just a pressure, just oh! But words, words, words! They are not there. “Oh, thank You, God.” No, that is not enough, it is more than that! And so, the words that I use of thanks and appreciation seem trite

in comparison to that which I am feeling in my spirit of rejoicing, praising, thanksgiving, and loving.

Now when Paul said, “when you bless with the spirit,” and he speaks about giving thanks, and indeed, you do give thanks. When I pray in the Spirit and I do not understand, really it gives a far vaster expression unto God because it does not have to be channeled through the narrow funnel of my intellect. It can just go directly from my spirit to Him. And it does not have to be all pressed through this little narrow channel called *my brain*. Rather, it is just an open, full expression of the Spirit.

Now, if you do not have the gift of tongues, at least groan. Give the Spirit an opportunity of interceding in your prayer time. But do not spend it all groaning; Paul said, “I will pray with the Spirit and I will pray with understanding.” So there is the value of praying with understanding. There is the value of seeking to articulate our needs and our requests. And there is real value in that. But even before seeking to express them in English, ask the Holy Spirit to guide and to direct your thoughts concerning the things that you are praying for. Our desire is that we might pray according to the will of God in order that we might have that kind of confidence in our prayer time. Then we know that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and if He hears us, then we have received those petitions that we have asked of Him.

Now there are a lot of things we know are the will of God because God has expressed them as His will in His Word. So we can have confidence when we pray over these things that God has already expressed as His will. You can pray with confidence that the Lord will draw you closer to Him. You can pray with confidence that the Lord will fill you with His Holy Spirit. You can pray with confidence that the Lord will help you to be bold in your witness for Jesus Christ. These things are all the expressed will of God for us; and so, in these things we can pray with confidence. There are other areas, in which we cannot know the will of God. That is where the Spirit comes in and helps us with weaknesses that we have. And He will intercede through groanings, or through unknown tongues, if you have that gift. And you can be thrilled as you see God working and moving in a greater way in response to your prayers than you have ever known before.

Shall we pray?

Father, thank You for the help that You give us. And oh, we need it! Thank You, Father, for the Holy Spirit and for the assistance that He gives to us in so many ways, and especially in our prayer time. Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit until, Lord, our lives just overflow. Fill us until there springs forth from us that glorious flowing of Your Spirit like a river of living water, springing up from within, flowing out from our lives—flowing unto the needy world around us. In Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen.

This is tape number SHS312. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

So Paul, in talking to the Ephesians about the many wonderful blessings that they have, begins the chapter by saying,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

And he is talking now about these wonderful spiritual blessings. He has called us, adopted us, and forgiven our sins. And now he says,

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

In Paul's writing to the Ephesians, he talks about their being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. In the days when Paul was writing to the church in Ephesus, it so happened that at that particular time in history, the city of Ephesus was one of the major seaports of Asia Minor. Most of the goods coming from the East to be sold in the western empire of Rome came through the port of Ephesus. It was the merchandising center of the world. Great caravans would come from the East bringing their wares. Merchants from Rome would gather in Ephesus to purchase these articles that were brought, in order that they might be sent to Rome and distributed through the Roman Empire.

The great port city of Rome was Petiole and the merchants would purchase the goods there in Ephesus and then pack them for shipping to Petiole. And having packed their goods, they would then seal them. They would put this wax seal on the merchandise and then they would put the imprint of their signet ring, which was their mark of ownership. And then the goods would be placed on the ship and sent to Rome. When they would arrive at the port of Petiole, the servants of these merchant men would go down, as the ships were being unloaded, and they could identify their masters' goods because of this seal that was upon them. It was the stamp or the mark of ownership.

Paul is saying to the Ephesians that God has put His stamp of ownership on them. And that stamp of God's ownership is His Holy Spirit. How glorious it is to receive and to have the Holy Spirit because I have that assurance that I belong to God. That is His seal on my life to prove His ownership of me. Jesus, you see, purchased you from the slave market. You were once a slave to sin. You were in the bondage of corruption, but now you belong to Him.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

In other words, do you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? You are not your own. “You have been bought,” he said, “with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

I am really not my own to direct; I am not to live as I please. It is not mine to order my own life—to choose the way I would go. I belong to God. He purchased me. He put His mark of ownership on me. And now I live according to His will for He purchased me. I belong to Him.

Peter wrote,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

You have been redeemed. You have been purchased, not with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus. God purchased you and now He claims you as His own. You are His purchased possession. He has placed His seal of ownership on your life. Actually, we are like merchandise on the ship headed for the home port of heaven. And when we arrive Jesus is going to say, “Yes, that is Mine. I have My stamp on it. There is My seal. They are Mine.” And Jesus will acknowledge you as His possession.

Now as a child of God—think of that one for a moment—as a child of God, He has promised you a rich inheritance. Paul, in writing to the Romans said,

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 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. (Romans 8:16-17)

Peter said,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

This is a glorious inheritance. Thank God! We have this inheritance that is incorruptible. It is undefiled and it fades not away. It is reserved in heaven for you who are being kept by the power of God. The psalmist said,

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Psalm 31:19)

Oh how great is the goodness that God has laid up for you and for me. How marvelous! How great is that goodness. Paul speaks of the riches of God's goodness, the riches of His glory, and the riches of His grace.

Now, Paul tells us here that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of that inheritance. The earnest was a down payment or a deposit. We have the phrase earnest money, and that is the money that you put down to show that you are earnest in your intent to purchase certain merchandise. If I want to prove to you the earnestness of my intention, but I do not have all the money with me right now, I am going to give you a deposit of earnest money. This money indicates to you that I am intending to complete the transaction.

Should you advertise a car for sale and someone comes over to look at the car, they might take it for a ride. They might say to you, "I like it. I want it. I am going to buy it. Save it for me. I do not have the money, but I am going to go to the bank and see if I can negotiate a loan. But I do not want you to sell this car to anybody else. Save it for me because I really want this car."

Now if you are wise you will say to them, "Well, give me a deposit. Show me that you really intend to buy the car—that you are earnest about this." Because you see, if you just say, "Okay, it is yours," and they go off, you may never see them again. And it might be that many people will come by and say, "Oh that is just what I am looking for. I want to buy that." "Oh no, no, I have already sold it." However, that first person may never return and you may pass up a lot of potential buyers because you are holding it for someone who is never going to come back, simply because you did not get a deposit. Maybe while they are on the way to the bank they went by a used car lot and saw another one that was a little better than yours at a cheaper price and so they bought it. You know, they do not have any obligation to you except their word because they did not give you any earnest money.

So, God wants you to know that He is really sincere about redeeming you. He intends to go through with this transaction. He does not plan to back down. And so, to show His intent, He has given you the deposit of the future glory that He has promised to give to you. And that deposit is the Holy Spirit. And when a person is filled with the Spirit, the fruit is love, joy, peace, and longsuffering. When you are filled with the fruit of the Spirit and you are so blessed and so overjoyed, you might think, "Oh, this is such a rich and glorious life, filled with the Spirit!" Hey, that is just the deposit. That is just the beginning. And so, God is just showing you that He is earnest and sincere in His intention of that full redemption. And so, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

In Ephesians 4, Paul said,

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed  
unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

So, God has His mark of ownership, the Holy Spirit, upon your life. It is the seal. It is God's mark of ownership. It is the deposit, which God has given to you as sort of a down payment to show to you that He is earnest in His intention of redeeming you. But now Paul tells them, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God that has sealed you unto the day of redemption."

One day God is going to come and He is going to claim you as His. He has agreed to redeem you. He has made the deposit and He has given to you the Holy Spirit to prove His earnest intent. In 2 Corinthians 1:22, Paul said,

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

This is much the same idea as in Ephesians. God has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. And then Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 5:5,

Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of His Spirit.

Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit gives me great comfort and great consolation. I know that God is going to complete that which He has begun of my redemption. He is going to claim me as His own.

Now in Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, “whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption,” and in the context of that verse, Paul shows to us things that do grieve the Holy Spirit. Beginning with verse 25, Paul said,

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

One of the first things on the list that Paul gives us of things that grieve the Holy Spirit is lying. Under the law, God said you are not to bear false witness. You are not to lie. God desires truth in the inward parts. And lying grieves the Holy Spirit. He said,

Let not the sun go down on your wrath. (Ephesians 4:26)

And being wrathful is another characteristic that grieves the Holy Spirit. Actually it sort of grieves us at times too, when we have lost it and we lose our temper and we do some dumb thing or say some dumb thing. We are often grieved ourselves over our display of wrath and anger. And we often feel very badly after such an experience, but it also grieves the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 28 he said,

Let him that stole steal no more. (Ephesians 4:28)

Taking something that does not belong to you grieves the Holy Spirit. And then Paul said,

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. (Ephesians 4:29)

Corrupt communications, filthy stories, stories with unclean innuendoes, these things grieve the Holy Spirit. Corrupt communication grieves the Holy Spirit. And that is where he says,

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. (Ephesians 4:30)

It comes there just as he is listing these things, because these are the things that grieve the Holy Spirit of God. And then he goes on with the list, which includes bitterness. “Let all bitterness...” What a horrible thing bitterness is. We are warned that bitterness can actually hinder our prayer lives. It can take hold in your life and defile you. The Bible tells us to put away all bitterness.

There was a classic example in the Old Testament of a man who became bitter. And his bitterness led to his ultimate suicide. He was bitter. The man was Ahithophel and you may recognize that name as a name that is associated with King David. Ahithophel was one of David's chief counselors—a close friend and confidant. In speaking of the breach that came in their relationship, David said, "If it were an enemy that had reproached me, then I could have born it. But it was you, my close friend. We went into the house of God together. We enjoyed the companionship. But to have you turn against me..."

Ahithophel had become bitter with David and he left David. He left the court of the king and lived in bitterness until the time that Absalom, the son of David, decided to rebel against his father and by force take the kingdom from his father. And Ahithophel came to Absalom and volunteered his services. He volunteered to help Absalom drive David from the kingdom and bring the kingdom into the hands of Absalom. As Absalom came with the army that had gathered to him in Jerusalem, and David had fled the city, this man Ahithophel, so bitter against David, said, "Take and put the tent on the roof of the palace and go in publicly in the eyes of all of the people to your father's concubines." He was just wanting to totally disgrace David, to show total disdain for this once great king. And then Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me take some of the army and let me pursue after your dad and I will kill him and the kingdom will be established in your hands." He was wanting to kill David himself.

How is it that bitterness can get such a hold on a person that he turns against someone who was once a close friend—someone who used to go into the house of God with? Such was the case with Ahithophel and this bitterness was eating him up. David had put a spy in the camp of Absalom. David left his son another wise counselor. He was an older man and he said, "David, I am going with you." David said, "Oh no, you can do me more good by just staying back here and trying to thwart the counsel of Ahithophel." And so he stayed back. And when Ahithophel said, "Let me take the men, we will pursue after David. He is tired and all. We will catch him. I will kill him. And the kingdom will be yours."

This friend of David said, "That is not good counsel. You know, when you get a bear cornered, I mean, that is when he is really dangerous. And David is cornered and his mighty men that are with him. When you get those fellows cornered, you have a wild—it is like cornering a wild animal. You have gotten into a dangerous situation. Better to wait and get the whole army, so that when you go after David you will be insured of victory."

And Absalom listened to the counsel of this other fellow and Ahithophel realized that it was poor counsel. And thus, he was so angry and so bitter, because his counsel was rejected and he realized that this other counsel could be disastrous. Ahithophel went out, knowing that he had cut the bridges with David, and he killed himself.

Bitterness. You say, "Well, what could make him so bitter? If you will check the biblical record closely, you will discover that Bathsheba was his granddaughter. And when David had gone in to Ahithophel's granddaughter and then had his grandson by marriage (Uriah) put to death, -he became bitter. And this bitterness was there and festered until it finally destroyed him.

If you allow bitterness to fester in your heart, ultimately it will destroy you. But in the meantime, that bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit. If you have bitterness in your heart today towards someone, you may have every right in the world to be bitter as far as rights go. It could be that they have genuinely, deliberately injured you. And you say, "I have a right to be bitter over this!" And you can maintain your right to be bitter. But let me tell you something: your

bitterness is hurting you more than it is hurting them. And the bitterness will ultimately destroy you, because it grieves the Holy Spirit. None of us can afford to hold on to bitterness.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

These things—this is a list of things that grieve the Holy Spirit. Put them away from you. Do not keep company with them. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by which you have been sealed unto the day of redemption.” But Paul goes on with the list in Ephesians 5:3 where he said,

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.

These kinds of attitudes: (bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and malice) grieve the Holy Spirit. But these kinds of actions also grieve the Holy Spirit: fornication, sexual impurity, and covetousness. And he goes on: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient (that is are not proper). There is an undertone of suggestion and evil. “For this know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolator, hath any inheritance” (Ephesians 5:5).

Now we have talked about the glorious inheritance. God has sealed us till the day of redemption. But you can grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and if you get involved in these things, you will grieve the Holy Spirit of God. And if you become a fornicator, or whoremonger, coveter, or idolator, know that you will have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Paul said,

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:6)

Do not let someone deceive you into thinking that you can go ahead and do these things and still inherit the kingdom of God. Do not think that you can allow these attitudes or you can participate in these kinds of activities as a child of God and still maintain a relationship with God. He is a holy Spirit and He is grieved by these things. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit, who has sealed us until the day of redemption. So Paul said do not be a partaker with them. But then he goes on to show the things that enhance the Holy Spirit’s relationship with us, and us with Him. He said,

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Do not hold on to bitterness. Do not hold on to anger, to malice, or to covetousness. But be kind, be tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you. You say, “Chuck, that is all well and good, but you do not know the evil that they did to me—how it has scarred me, how it has almost destroyed my life, and how I just am tormented in my mind over those things that were done. And I cannot forgive them.” And I do understand that

there have been things that people do that are so vicious, so vile in the natural, that you cannot forgive. I understand that. But we are not talking about the natural. We are talking about the supernatural. We are talking about what God wants to do in your heart and in your mind if you will but let Him. We are talking about the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's indwelling you, sealing you with God's mark of ownership, until the day that God claims that which is His own—that which He has purchased.

We have been dealing with the subject of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, to give us power to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Peter said to consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, who when He was reviled, reviled not again. Instead, He prayed for those who were so abusing Him saying, "Father forgive them." And He can give you the capacity—the Holy Spirit can give to you the power to forgive. And you will not start being healed in your own mind until you do forgive.

The reason why this thing still troubles you, and the reason why you still have so many problems as the result of it, is because you have not forgiven. You are holding on to it. It is festering. That bitterness is just festering and it destroys. It is really not an option but a necessity that you forgive. It is vitally important because bitterness defiles. It is vitally important that you bring this thing to the Lord and say, "Lord, help me! Give to me the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive those wrongs, those evils that were done against me by those evil persons. God, help me to forgive them that I might be freed, and that I might be cleansed from this which will only defile."

As long as I am hanging on to it, it is going to keep me defiled and less than what God would have me to be. Unforgiveness will hold back the blessings of God as I hold on to these things. It grieves the Spirit of God. Ask for God's help. He will give it. He can do it. He can wash this out of your mind. He can wash this out of your life. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. The old things are passed away." Let them pass away. Let them go. "All things become new." Go on from there. But grieve not the Holy Spirit of God who has sealed you to that day of redemption.

Father, we thank You for the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in sealing us. Thank You, Father, for this gift of the Spirit whereby we know that we are Yours. Your mark and stamp of ownership is on our lives as the down payment. Thank You, Lord for the joy, the glory, and the blessedness of walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. Thank you for that overflowing cup and that rich overflowing life. Father, how we thank You for it. Lord, help us that we would not allow any attitude to master our hearts that would grieve the Holy Spirit of God. And may we not get involved in any activity that would grieve the Holy Spirit of God. But may we be holy for You are holy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS313. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul speaks concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Tonight will be, more or less, an introduction to the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Paul begins the twelfth chapter by saying,

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

You will notice, if you have a King James Bible, that the word *gifts* is in italics. As we have mentioned in the past, whenever you see a word written in italics, it means that word is not in the original Greek, but has been inserted by the translators to help give a flow of understanding. Now in the fourth verse, Paul does mention the diversities of gifts, but it was inserted here in chapter one to help sort of complete the thought—“Now concerning spirituals”—you see without the additional word it does not really give us the full sense.

It is difficult to translate from one language into another. There are some languages that have different tenses. They might have a word which is very descriptive that takes two or three words to describe in English. We often do not have an exact English equivalent for such a word. And thus, you try to more or less interpret many times when you translate; and it is always difficult to translate from one language to another, giving the full meaning that is indicated in the original language.

The word “things” could have been added by the translators, “Now concerning the things of the Spirit” (because Paul is going to be talking about the things of the Spirit), or “now concerning spiritual things.” But the word *gift* is proper also. As I said, it appears in verse 4 and it is obvious that this is the subject that Paul is introducing to us in chapter 12—the subject of the gifts of the Spirit. And here in the twelfth chapter, he gives to us quite a listing of the gifts and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Paul said,

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

Paul’s desire for the church is that they might be knowledgeable, and that they not be ignorant of certain important spiritual truths. In Romans 11:25, he did not want them to be ignorant of the blindness that has happened to Israel, in part until the fullness of the Gentiles was come. He did not want them, in 1 Corinthians 10:1, to be ignorant of the fact that the history of the nation of Israel and their deliverance out of Egypt was typical history. That it was and it is a type of the church, and of our deliverance from the power of sin, and of our coming into the full rich life of the Spirit.

Here in 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul says, “I would not have you to be ignorant of the spirituals.” And then in Thessalonians he did not want them to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep in Christ, or those who have died—as far as their place in the future and in the resurrection. And thus, Paul has introduced many subjects with the declaration, “I do not want you to be ignorant.”

Interestingly enough, in practically every place where Paul said, “I do not want you to be ignorant,” it follows that there is a rather gross ignorance in the church on those subjects. And no doubt it is because of this ignorance and, many times, the difficulty of understanding these subjects, that there remains a lot of misunderstanding. I do not know of any subject of which there is more ignorance in the church today, than the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I believe that there is ignorance on both sides of the issue. I believe that a lot of people are just ignorant of the fact that there are gifts of the Holy Spirit available for Christians today. And concerning their proper, scriptural use, I believe that there is a great ignorance among those who are exercising the gifts.

Now Paul is really writing to the Corinthians who had not come behind in any of the gifts. There were many of the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, I suppose, all of the gifts of the Spirit were being demonstrated and manifested there in Corinth. And yet, with the manifestation there were a lot of abuses in the use of the gifts of the Spirit. And basically Paul is writing to correct many of these abuses. And for that we can be very thankful. Because of Paul’s writing to the Corinthians to correct the abuses of the use of the gifts of the Spirit, Scripture gives us a guideline for the proper use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So there is a lot of ignorance today on the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And hopefully as we get into the series on this subject, we will be able to clarify a lot of the ignorance that does exist on this subject.

“I do not want you to be ignorant of these things, but these things you know.” Paul begins to affirm, first of all, basic foundational truths that they know. “You were once Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols” (1 Corinthians 12:2). As Gentiles they were outside of the covenant of God. The word *Gentile* in the New Testament is a synonym for heathen or pagan. You were once pagans. You were once heathens.

In the letter to the Ephesians 2:11-12, Paul said,

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles [or heathens] in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.

And thus, he is describing now what he means by a Gentile.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

So that is a definition of the term *Gentile*. And when the term *Gentile* is used in Scripture, that is what it is referring to—one who is without Christ. A Gentile is one who is alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of God. They are without hope and they are without God in this world.

So Paul says, “Remember-that you were once Gentiles.” In Ephesians 4:17-18, he said,

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk. [Do not walk as these heathen walk], in the emptiness of their minds, having the understanding

darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart.

So a further definition of the word *Gentile*, as it is used in the Scripture, is one who is walking in the emptiness of his mind. His understanding of spiritual things is darkened. He is alienated from the life of God through his ignorance, and he has a blindness in his heart concerning the things of God and the things of the Holy Spirit. And the result: “As you were Gentiles, you were carried unto the dumb idols.” Now the word *dumb* there is in the sense of idols that cannot speak. It is not like, oh you dumbbell. But it is idols that cannot speak. They worshipped idols in Corinth. These were idols that could neither speak, nor hear, nor feel, think, walk or see. David described the idols of the heathen when he said,

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?  
(Psalm 115:2)

And a lot of times people will say that to you when things have gone wrong—when things have sort of caved in on you—they say, “Well, where is your God now?” They say, “Where is your God?” David responded, “Our God is in the heavens and He has done what He has pleased.” In other words, God is in control. God is ruling. And though it may look like a tragedy and it may look very severe and hard, yet God is in control. Our God is in the heavens. He rules. He has done as He has pleased. But your gods—their gods, the gods of the heathen,” he declared, “are made of wood or stone.” And David said,

They have eyes; but they cannot see. Ears, but they cannot hear.  
Noses, but they cannot smell. They have hands but they cannot  
handle. They have feet, but they cannot walk and neither can  
they speak through their throats. They have mouths, but they  
speak not. Eyes they have, but they see not. (Psalm 135:15-17  
paraphrased)

And so Paul describes the gods of the heathen as not being able to see or speak or hear. And here he calls them dumb or mute idols—idols that cannot talk.

There is an interesting thing about the psalmist’s declaration of the idols of the heathen as he describes them. We see that when a man makes a god, when a man carves out an idol, when he takes a stick and begins to carve a shape or an image, he makes it like himself. He carves a nose on it. He carves eyes on it. He carves ears on it. He carves a mouth on it. He is making it like himself. Yet, as he has made his god like himself, he has made his god—or the god that he has made, is really less than himself. Although he has carved eyes on his god, the eyes cannot see. Though he has carved ears on it, the ears cannot hear. Though he has carved a mouth on it, it cannot speak. So, he has made his god less than himself. So a man, when he makes a god, he makes it like himself. However, he makes it less than himself. And the psalmist, in the same place, made the observation,

They that make them are like unto them. (Psalm 135:18)

Thus, a man becomes like his god. Now if you have made your own god, but you have made him less than yourself and you are now becoming like your god, you see—that is, a deterioration. You are going down. And so those who worship false gods are actually going down. It is degrading. You are being degraded as you worship the gods that you have made (because they are less than

yourself), so that in the worship of idols—dumb idols—a person becomes like the god that he has made. Your god cannot see; and so you become blind to the truths of God and to the things of God. Your god cannot hear; and so you become deaf to the things of the Spirit and to the voice of God. Your god cannot feel; and so you become unfeeling, cold, and hard. A person becomes like his god.

So many times people do things and the horrible atrocities that they have done are reported in the news. And we wonder, *How could a person do such things?* Surely they can have no feeling and do those kinds of things. They have to be without feeling, without normal feelings. And that is very true. They have been worshipping gods that cannot feel. They have become like their gods. They no longer can feel. They have no feelings. They can do the most horrible things and be cold and sneering about it. And we see that manifested so much today. A person who has been arrested for some of these horrible crimes can sit there in court just with a sneer, defiant, showing no repentance whatsoever. No sign of remorse. And so many times you read: “And they showed no signs of remorse.” It is because they have been worshipping gods that have no feelings and they have become unfeeling themselves.

Isaiah 44 shows how foolish it is for a man to take a piece of wood and to carve an idol out of that piece of wood and to worship it. Isaiah said,

The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with a compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. (Isaiah 44:13)

So he takes the piece of wood and he takes out his ruler. He takes out his compass. He makes his line. He carves the thing out to look like a man, so that it might be set on a pedestal in the house.

He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn. (Isaiah 44:14-15)

That is, you take and you cut down the wood and you burn part of it. You put it in your fireplace.

For he will take thereof, and warm himself. (Isaiah 44:15)

You have built the fire out of a part of that limb that you cut off the tree to warm yourself.

Yea he kindleth it, and he bakes bread. (Isaiah 44:15)

So you put it in the oven in order that you might bake your bread.

Yea, and he maketh a god and worshippeth it.

Out the same stick then, part of the branch he puts in his fireplace to get warm. Part of it he puts in the oven to bake his bread. And then a part of it, he takes and he begins to carve it out to make a god. And then he worships it. He makes a graven image and he bows down to it. And so then he points out the folly. He burns part with the fire and with it he eats. That is, he has roasted the meat and is satisfied. Yea, he warms himself and he says, “Ah-ha, I am warm. I have seen the fire.”

And the rest of it he uses to make a god, even his graven image. And then he falls down to it and worships it and prays unto it. And he says,

Deliver me; for you art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. (Isaiah 44:17-18)

I mean, it does not make sense. It is totally irrational that with part of the limb out of the tree you build your fire, you roast your meat, you bake your bread. And the rest of it you carve into a god. You bow down to it. You worship it. You pray to it. And you say, "This is my god."

And none considereth in his heart, neither [is there] knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten [it]: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? (Isaiah 44: 19-20)

Habakkuk said,

What profit hath the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it and the molten image and the teacher of lies that the maker of his work trusts therein to make dumb idols or mute idols. Woe unto him that saith to the wood, "Awake!" and to the dumb stone, "Arise" and it shall teach. Behold it is laid over with gold and silver and there is no breath in the midst of it. (Habakkuk 2:18-19)

This demonstrates the folly of man making idols out of metal—molten metal of iron, or gold, or silver—or carving them out of wood, or carving them out of stone. So Paul is saying, "This was what you were, you Corinthians. You were alienated from God. You were separated from the life of God and you were bound up in the worship of idols—things that are insensate." They are things that cannot feel or see or talk.

Now Paul says, "This is what I want you to understand. This is what you know. This is what you were, but this is what I want you to understand."

Wherefore I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Every once in a while I hear what must be one of the oldest rumors in the world. I hear someone tell the story of a friend of a friend, who happened to be in a church service and someone spoke in tongues. And there was someone in the congregation or in the audience that understood the language that was being spoken, and that the person was saying horrible, blasphemous things about Jesus Christ. Now you have probably all heard that rumor in one form or another, because it is repeated over and over again. Trying to trace down the rumor is as difficult as finding the person who took the picture in the clouds and saw the form of Jesus when it was developed. It is just as difficult to find the person who picked up the hitchhiker, who spoke to them of the coming

of the Lord and then disappeared. It always happened to a friend of my cousin's, or to an aunt's friend. You know it is always once or twice removed.

And those stories go around and around and around. And this story of someone speaking in tongues, in an unknown tongue, but yet speaking blasphemies against Jesus is a rumor that is so old that it dates back to the time of Corinth and Paul's writing to the Corinthians. No doubt there was a rumor happening then that caused them to say, "Well someone understood their language and they were blaspheming Jesus."

Paul said, "I want you to understand, it does not happen. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed." I believe that it is very irresponsible, especially for pastors and Bible teachers, to pass on rumors or stories of which they do not have actual firsthand knowledge of the facts of the event. It is wrong especially with stories that would put God in such an unfavorable light just to prove the position that they have taken against the validity of the gifts of the Spirit and their use in the church today. Before I would pass on any such story, I would want to be able to give the name of the person, where it happened, when it happened, and even have a couple of witnesses. Because, although the stories are told with great intensity and credibility, I have never been able to search down and actually find a first-person account of such a thing. It is only a rumor. It has been going around for a couple thousand years.

"The fact is, and I want you to understand," Paul said, "is that no man by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed. And contrariwise, no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit." That is— Lord, in a genuine sense. No one can really confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

Paul, writing to the Galatians in 4:6 said,

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his  
Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father.

The Spirit of God in my heart gives me that awareness of my relationship. And it is just very natural to say, "Oh, Father." *Abba* is the Aramaic word for father. So saying *Abba*, or Father, is just something that is natural when the Spirit of God is dwelling in you.

To the Romans Paul said,

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. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we  
are the children of God. (Romans 8:15-16)

This is just that glorious work of God's Holy Spirit. So, this I want you to understand: No man by the Spirit can call Jesus accursed. And no man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Then I want you to know, or I want you to understand that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Lord. Now here in the twelfth chapter of Corinthians, Paul is going to speak of some of the different gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the first listing that he will give us, he will give us nine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Towards the end of the chapter he will add some more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And there are differences in these gifts. And not all possess the same gifts. There are diversities of these gifts; and yet, though the gifts are diverse from each other, yet it is the same

Spirit. Since it is the same Spirit, the gifts should not be competing with each other or be contrary to each other.

Oh, that we could see the oneness of the body of Christ and not seek to be in competition with or in an adversarial position to others in the body of Christ, just because we do not agree with their particular doctrinal slant. One of the great tragedies in the church is the failure to properly identify who the real enemy is. And so many times the church is dividing against itself. Even within a given congregation there come these divisions. And battle lines are drawn and divisions are created, and that is tragic. How Satan loves to bring discord and division among the brethren. But then it goes beyond that, and churches then find themselves in an adversarial position with another church. And they begin to speak against another church because they are different.

Well, there are diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit; and thus, they should not be pitted against one another. We should be united in our effort to bring people into the kingdom of God and out of the kingdom of darkness. The real enemy is Satan and it is our task to bring them out of his kingdom into the glorious kingdom of God. It really does not matter if they affiliate with us or join with us or become a part of our group. It should never be our purpose to try to get people to come to our church. Our purpose is to bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to a surrendering of their life to Him.

Our church cannot really minister to everyone's needs. Some people may say, "Well that old bald-headed man, what does he know? I want someone who is really hip, you know, and can talk about, you know, my marriage and help me. And someone who is more humorous and clever." And thus, we may not be able to minister to them. And that does not matter to me. The main issue is that we bring them out of their darkness in sin and bring them to the glorious light of Jesus Christ and then let them go wherever they can be ministered to and be helped.

So there are differences of gifts or diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit. And because it is the same Spirit, He would not be interrupting Himself—because it is the same Spirit. So there would not be confusion when I am teaching the Word of God and exercising my gift of teaching; the Spirit would not interrupt Himself with someone standing up and giving an utterance in tongues. He would interrupt Himself and that does not make sense. The gifts are exercised by the same Spirit.

There are differences of administrations. Now Paul speaks of some of the various administrations within the church. There are those who have the gift of apostleship, some have the gift of prophets, some have the gift of pastor-teachers, and some have the gift of governments or the gift of helps. These are differences of administrations or offices within the church. But it is the same Lord. Thus again, these various gifts complement each other rather than compete with each other.

There are those who have the gift of exhortation, and that is an important and valuable gift. You ladies who attend Friday morning fellowships recognize that my wife has the gift of exhortation. I mean when she gets up and exhorts you gals, you are ready to go out and challenge the world. I mean, she gets you all fired up. She has the gift of exhortation. And that is good. It is important. And thus, there are the differences of administrations within the church— gifts of administration. But it is the same Lord—one Lord.

And we are all serving the same Lord. Though we may serve Him in different ways, we are still serving the same Lord. It used to be that I would speak out against the ritualism within certain churches and how they had their formal rites and rituals. And I would also speak out against the overly demonstrative Pentecostals. In fact, I could find something wrong with just about everyone

but me. I found fault with that liturgical kind of a service, with the incense and the robes and the whole thing. And then I found fault with these wild things where people were screaming and running up and down the aisles.

Through the years I have noticed one nice thing about aging—it does mellow a person. And through the years I have mellowed significantly. I can now respect and accept those who want to worship God in a liturgical setting. And I can understand that there are people with certain temperaments who can worship God best in a liturgical setting. And I also realize that there are some people who can worship God best in a highly emotional setting. They want to be stirred up. They want to get up and shout and scream. They want to have a lot of excitement and exuberance in their worship of God. I can accept that there are people who worship God best in that kind of an environment.

I realize that we are all serving the same Lord, though we may be doing it differently. Yet He is the same Lord and He loves us all. He loves those who love the formal ritualism and the smell of incense. He loves them and has provided an environment for them where they are comfortable and can sense and feel His presence within that kind of a formal environment. He loves those wild, extreme people who have to do a lot of shouting and running around and get rid of a lot of energy. He loves them too and has provided an environment for them. And thank God, He loves us! And He has provided an environment for us.

I am not saying that one way is wrong, another way is right. I am saying there are differences, but it is the same Lord. That is what we seem to forget. Because of the differences we seem to think we are serving a different Lord—or that we are almost against each other—rather than just recognizing that there are differences. And God has accommodated our differences by granting us different forms of worship. Now rather than judge them because of the way they worship, it is better that we just accept the fact that they are different from us.

Paul said,

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:4)

So you see when you are judging someone because they are so wild in their worship of God, you are judging another man's servant. They do not serve you, they are serving the Lord. And God is able to hold them up. Though they may be wanting to throw themselves down—God can hold them up. “He is able to make them to stand,” Paul said.

So the true function of the gifts of the Spirit will never be conflicting, but they will be complementing each other because it is the same Lord. Then there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that works all in all. Now the gifts of the Spirit can operate differently in our lives. There are differences of operations and that is why it is often confusing to listen to a person describe how a particular gift operates in his life. You might think, *Well that is the way it operates in his life and that is the way the gift always operates*. No, you may have the same gift, but it may operate differently in your life than it does in another's life.

There are differences of operations even of the same gift. You may have the gift of prophecy and someone else may also have a gift of prophecy. But before you exercise your gift of prophecy, it may be that you hyperventilate and you feel a tingling sensation and then you get up and exercise

your gift of prophecy. And it may be that the other person does not feel any tinglings and does not hyperventilate but just, in a very calm way, exercises the gift. There are differences of operations.

You see, our Lord is a very diverse Lord and He deals with each of us as individuals, never as with a mob. God loves you individually. God deals with you individually, according to your own particular temperament and characteristics. And to me, it is glorious that God can and does deal with each of us personally and individually.

And thus, in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, there are differences by which the Holy Spirit, or the gifts of the Spirit are operated in different lives. And yet, it is the same God. It is important that you do not try to duplicate another person's ministry. That you do not try to have the same method of operation as you see others have, thinking, *Well that is the only way the gift can operate*. There are the diversities of the operations of the gifts. Many times when we hear a person give a testimony of how the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested through their lives, we think, *Oh, that is the way it happens then*. And we then try to pattern our ministry after that. It is wrong. And we get the idea that if others do not do it like I do it, then it becomes suspect whether or not their gift is genuine. Well, there are differences. Let us accept the differences. And let us not try to confine God to a pattern. Let us not put God in a box. Let God be God. And let Him be sovereign.

Now some people see the Trinity here because of the fact that there are the differences, or diversities in the gifts, but it is the same Spirit—the Holy Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, who is Jesus Christ; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God—that is, God the Father.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit  
withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

That is, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not given as sort of toys for you to just sit and enjoy this wonderful gift that God has given to you. And you just enjoy that it brings you satisfaction and pleasure as you are sitting there in the solitude of your own home. The gifts are given to the profit of the whole church, in order that the whole church might profit through the proper exercise of them. They are given for the profit of all. They are given to every man for the profit of all.

So, God has given to each of us a gift. But it is to be used to profit the whole church. There is only one gift that is mentioned that is for the individual's profit or edification. All of the gifts are intended to edify the church with the exception of the gift of tongues. "And he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (1 Corinthians 14:4). And the gift of interpretation is given that that same gift might then edify the church. But basically, the exercise of the gift of tongues in one's own personal devotion is a gift that edifies that person in their devotional life. But that is the only gift given for the edification of the individual who is exercising that particular gift. The rest are given for the edification of the church to profit, that all may profit through their exercise.

We will talk more fully concerning the gift of tongues when we get about four lessons or five lessons down the line, as we are dealing with the gifts of the Spirit. Hopefully we will be able to clarify a lot of misunderstanding concerning this particular gift. There is a lot of ignorance that does exist concerning that particular gift.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom" (1 Corinthians 12:8). And so, we now begin to get into the gifts of the Spirit. And we will take up the gift of the word of wisdom in our next lesson, as we move along in these gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank You for the Holy Spirit and for the power of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, we thank You for the gifts of the Spirit. And as we have been told to covet earnestly the best gifts, Lord, we realize that You know what is best for us. And so, we defer to You and to the Holy Spirit that He might give to us those gifts that we can exercise for the benefit of the whole church. We desire those gifts that are best for us and through which we might best edify the body of Christ. Thank You, Lord, that You divide to each man severally as You will. Help us though, that we might be open. Help us, Lord, that there would be nothing that would stand in the way of Your imparting to us those gifts whereby we might be benefited and whereby the church might be benefited. And so, we commit, Lord, ourselves and the exercise of these gifts of the Spirit to You. Use us, Lord, empower us, Lord, as You see fit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS314. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

1 Corinthians 12:7 says,

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

If the Spirit of God is dwelling in your life, it will be manifested in many different ways. We have discussed how having the Holy Spirit in you is distinct and separate from having the Holy Spirit overflow from you. There is that indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, that marvelous indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, which is purely subjunctive. It is that blessed work within my life giving me understanding of the Word, teaching and instructing me in the ways of the Lord, conforming me into the image of Jesus Christ, and empowering me to be what I could not otherwise be. It is the blessed work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer.

But it is yet quite another thing to have the Holy Spirit flowing forth from your life. Now if the Holy Spirit is indwelling you there will be certain manifestations of that. We know from the love that He has given us, from the work within our hearts, that the Spirit of God abides in us. But that overflowing has different manifestations other than just those that are manifested through the indwelling of the Spirit. And Paul is going to talk about the manifestations that result from the Holy Spirit flowing forth from your life—the blessings of releasing the Spirit, not just bottling Him up inside, but allowing Him to work through you.

Now Paul begins to talk to us about the way that the Holy Spirit might be manifested through your life. He points out the fact that the purpose of His working through your life is for the profit of all—for the profit of the whole body of Christ. You see, there are many things that the Holy Spirit does in us that profit us. There is just a glorious profit in having the Holy Spirit working in us. But with these manifestations of this empowering of the Spirit,—the empowering is that which flows forth from you—the purpose is to profit the whole body of Christ.

There are many people who have great gifts. I think of those composers who had such great gifts at composing inspiring music and how the gift was in them. It was something they could hear, but it was not of benefit until they scored it and then conducted the symphony. It was only then that everyone could profit from what was happening inside of the composer—the gift that was there, which only the composer could hear. Likewise, a gifted artist is the same who has the capacity of seeing the beauties and being able to put them on a canvas so that others can see and enjoy the gift. The Holy Spirit within us is manifested through us, so that all might be blessed and all might profit—from that gift of the Spirit that has been imparted.

There is great evil today with men who seek to personally capitalize on the gifts of the Spirit that they possess. People have been touched by God through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and some of them then take advantage of the fact that a person has been so blessed. Maybe they have been healed or maybe a friend of theirs or a child of theirs has been healed. And now they are so thrilled and so excited about how God used the gift in this person to help them that they want to shower upon that person, lavish upon them, gifts in appreciation. And many people have used those gifts to personally enrich themselves.

There are even those ministries that solicit funds. When there has been a gift of God at one time in their lives and people have been touched by it, they will develop a mailing list and send out

monthly letters. And the bottom line of the letter is always, “Please use the enclosed envelope to send a generous offering to help us at this particular time of emergency in our ministry.” And they try to fleece the flock of God because they have had some gift of the Spirit operating in their lives. Often they give the intimation that if you want an answer to your prayer, if you have an unsaved loved one, if you have a sick child, that surely a generous offering will be blessed by God and they may see the salvation of their loved ones. That is subtly intimated by some of their endeavors to raise the funds. There is sort of a hidden suggestion that you can actually buy the blessings of God, if you are generous enough in supporting their ministry.

The true gifts of the Holy Spirit, when manifested in their scriptural and correct way, will always focus people’s hearts upon Jesus Christ. When you see the genuine manifestations of the Spirit, as Jesus said, “He is not going to testify of Himself. He is going to testify of Me” (John 15:26). You are going to get a new vision of Jesus and a fresh vision of His glory. You are going to fall in love with Him and be drawn to Him. Your heart is almost going to explode with your love and appreciation for what Jesus is and what Jesus is able to do.

And that is one way by which you can tell whether or not it is a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Is there a great deal of attention drawn to the person who is exercising the gift? In their magazines that they send out, is their picture on every other page? Who are they drawing attention to? Who are they promoting? Who are they seeking to raise up in the eyes of the people? A true manifestation of the Holy Spirit will always exalt the person of Jesus Christ. That is what the Holy Spirit has come to do.

So as Paul introduces these various manifestations of the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit from a believer’s life that benefits the church, he begins with this introduction. And then he tells us:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom.  
(1 Corinthians 12:8)

It is important to note that there is a definite and distinct difference between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. They are not similar kinds of gifts. There is a definite difference between the two, just as there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Wisdom is the proper use of the facts. Knowledge will tell you that little black animal with a white stripe going down its back is a skunk. Knowledge will tell you that that skunk can excrete a pungent odor. Wisdom will tell you get out of there before he hits you with it. Wisdom will tell you do not go up and try to pet that little animal. Knowledge will tell you that the snake that is coiled and rattling is a poisonous snake. And wisdom will tell you to keep clear from it.

So there is a vast difference between knowledge and wisdom. And some of the smartest people, as far as knowledge is concerned, are really some of the most stupid people in the world. They do the most stupid things. I think of Timothy Leary, a very brilliant man: he had much knowledge. But I think of his folly in destroying himself with the use of LSD and leading so many others down that path. So you see it is knowledge without wisdom. And knowledge without wisdom can be an extremely dangerous thing.

Through knowledge we have been able to create superweapons that have the capacity of destroying mankind. However, if we do not have wisdom, we will destroy mankind with the superweapons. So knowledge without wisdom can be extremely dangerous.

I have often said that I marvel at the stupid things brilliant people believe and do once they have rejected the truth of Jesus Christ—because, you see, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And when a person rejects the Lord, when he rejects the idea of God, then he is prone to do the most ridiculous things. And he is prone to believe the most ridiculous things.

Over in India, some of the most educated people in the whole world live almost like animals in filthy and unhealthy conditions in order that they might spend time at the compound of Sai Baba. They want to be near this man and to hear him speak. And they—these brilliant people—believe that one of the greatest honors is to be able to eat his excrement. Brilliant people do stupid things.

I am amazed that when people are given over by God to reprobate minds and are in rebellion against the truth of God, that Satan seems to always reduce them to the worst kind of filth. Have you ever noticed this process? It is interesting that in the homosexual community, they call it scattung, but it is the same thing that these people who are over worshipping Sai Baba do. Satan seems to reduce people to the filthiest, lowest level and it is shocking. Your mind just cannot conceive of something like this. But this is what Satan reduces brilliant people to, who reject the truth of God.

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians since the unbelievers did not want to have the truth of God, He gave them over to a strong delusion because they did not have the love of the truth. So God allowed them to believe a lie rather than the truth. And of course Paul follows the whole downward progression in Romans 1: “Who when they did not want to retain God in their mind, God gave them over to reprobate minds”—doing things that are just unspeakable, unthinkable. And so, it is when a person rejects the truth of Jesus Christ and gives his mind over to the impurities of darkness and Satan. As Satan leads them down the path, he will lead them down to the very bottom. If you do not have the fear of the Lord, you do not have true wisdom. You have not even begun in the path of wisdom.

Solomon, in talking to his sons said,

Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom. (Proverbs  
4:7)

A lot of people are seeking knowledge. You should also seek wisdom, for knowledge without wisdom is dangerous.

Now this gift of the word of wisdom is not just a reservoir of wisdom that I have so that I can become this guru with a reservoir of wisdom. “Anything you want to know just come to me and I will open up to you these treasures of wisdom that I possess.” No, it does not work like that. It is not just a reservoir of wisdom that I can tap into at will. But the word of wisdom is that anointing of the Holy Spirit which is exercised when issues arise and when there are important decisions that must be made. It is that imparting of the word of wisdom that just is so right that it brings divided factions together. People say, “Oh yes, that is good.” And it is just that word of wisdom.

Now many times I believe that this gift is exercised without even our knowledge that it is the exercise of the gift of the word of wisdom. I think that many times when an issue comes up we just go ahead and express our opinion—how we feel. But in reality it is a word of wisdom from the Spirit on that particular issue and we are not even aware. You see, you do not get some kind of a buzz. Or you do not get some kind of a ringing or hear bells go off. And “Oh, hearken! Listen

now, words of wisdom are going to flow from my lips.” It does not work that way. It works in a very natural way.

And I think many times we make a real mistake in not seeing, or not discerning the supernatural in the natural. I think that so many times we are expecting the supernatural things to only happen in supernatural ways. But so often they happen in such natural ways we do not recognize the supernatural in it.

As I look back on my life and how God has led me, I see how He supernaturally led me in very natural ways. Ways in which I had no idea it was God leading me. But as I look back on it now, I can see that the hand of God was on me. “Oh Lord, You are so good because You have led me without my even knowing I was being led at the time!”

When I first began in the ministry, I began as a hopeful evangelist. And all of my messages were evangelistic even though I was pastoring a church. And all of my messages were topical, evangelistic messages. And always there at the end of the message was the appeal for people to accept the Lord. And of course if there were no sinners there, which was often the case, then I appealed for people to dedicate their lives, or to repent for not bringing sinners to church. I mean, I went down the list until I hit them somewhere. I thought they had to get down to the altar and repent. And the success of the sermon was always measured by how many people came forward and how hard they cried. And so I was always trying to motivate people to repent for anything. Just come forward and repent.

And I had prepared two years of topical sermons and when I would finish my two years in a church, I would request for a change of church. And then I would go to a new church and preach my two years of messages at the new church. That happened until we landed in Huntington Beach, back when Huntington Beach was just a lazy little beach community of 6,000 people. It had the lowest tax base in Orange County because all the oil wells that were there provided tax money. The city had the finest library and the finest schools and it was a sleeper of a town.

People did not know about Huntington Beach—how great it was to live there, but I discovered it by living there. And after the two years, when I preached all my sermons and it was time to request a change, the problem was that I did not want a change. I liked living in Huntington Beach. Our daughter had started to go to school and it was such a tremendous school system, that we wanted her to have the advantage of the school system there in Huntington Beach. And in those days there were not a lot of surfers out in the ocean. The publisher of the newspaper, George Farquardt and the fellow who had the pharmacy in town, Sam Terry, and I used to meet down at the beach and go surfing in the morning. And it was wonderful, because we would be the only three people out surfing in the morning. We would go down and watch the break to see if it was breaking best on the north or the south side and we would go out and have it all to ourselves. And we could be through by ten in the morning and we could go to our various tasks and it was just—it was paradise.

I did not want to leave Huntington Beach. This was nice but I had run out of sermons. I was reading a book called *The Apostle John* by Griffith Thomas. And in about the seventh chapter of the book he had outline studies on 1 John. And I started reading those outline studies in 1 John and they were marvelous. I thought, “This is tremendous sermon material. These are great sermon outlines. My, I can get a sermon from every one of these outlines!” And I counted them and there were 43. And I thought, “Wonderful! I can stay in Huntington Beach another year.” So the following Sunday I announced to the people that we were going to do something different. We

were going to start a study of a book of the Bible. We were going to study 1 John and so we started the study of 1 John.

By the end of the year, and of course I used Griffith Thomas heavily, and I also got other commentaries and I was able to stretch the 43 into 52. And I spent a whole year in 1 John. But the amazing thing is that in that year's time the church doubled. And I had baptized more people in that year than I had in any year in my ministry. And yet I was not preaching evangelistic sermons. I was just teaching the saints the Word of God, and evangelism was happening.

And so I still enjoyed living in Huntington Beach and still did not want to move. So I remembered the words of one of my college profs who said that the Book of Romans would revolutionize any church. And I had heard so many people talk about how wonderful Romans was. I had read it, but it really did not do much for me. But I decided if it would cause a revolution, I would teach it. I was not ready for the revolution it caused because it revolutionized me! I discovered the grace of God. I discovered a new relationship with God. I spent two years in Romans. I still did not want to leave Huntington Beach.

So I came across a new edition of *Haley's Bible Pocket Handbook*. And on the little cover it said the most important page in this book is 748. So I turned to page 748 to discover what he figured was the most important page in that little book of great Bible helps. And I discovered that he proposed that every church have a systematic way of reading the Bible all the way through as a congregation. And ideally the pastor's sermon would come out of the portion that the people had read the previous week. And I realized, "Hey, I have the whole Bible. I can spend the rest of my life here!"

Now that is the way God naturally did a supernatural work in my own life and in my own ministry—leading me into expositional Bible studies. From topical, evangelistic messages to just going through the Bible. I was going through a book in the Bible and becoming a teacher rather than a preacher. And it seemed so natural. He took my natural love for the beach, my natural love for surfing, and He used it to guide me in His path to become a Bible expositor. God works His supernatural work in our lives in very natural ways.

And these gifts of the Spirit, such as word of wisdom, so often happen so naturally that we are not even aware that that gift is being exercised at that moment. And many times it is not until later, when we have more information that we suddenly discover that we were speaking words of wisdom that were beyond us. I did not have all the facts and yet the wisdom was right on.

Now the gift of the Spirit in words of wisdom or in wisdom itself is not a gift that is unique to the New Testament. It is something that is found throughout the Old Testament. Daniel was known for the wisdom that God had given to him. It was testified of Daniel, "There is a man in the kingdom in whom is the wisdom of the holy gods" (Daniel 5:11).

The first mention of wisdom in the Bible is associated with the Spirit of God. Exodus 28:3 is the first time the word "wisdom" is mentioned in the Bible. And many times in looking at a subject, it is interesting to look at what they call the "first mention." Where was it first mentioned in the Bible? What were the surrounding events and the context in which it was mentioned?

Exodus 28:3 says,

And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom.

Now God is talking to Moses, as He is ready to build the tabernacle. And God speaks of having filled men with the spirit of wisdom.

Exodus 31:3

And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

God gifted Moses in wisdom, knowledge, understanding, the capacity to make things, to develop, and to put things together.

Exodus 35:31 says,

And He hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

Again this is the same as Exodus 31:3.

Deuteronomy 34:9 says,

And Joshua [who was the successor of Moses] the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Now here Joshua was filled with wisdom through the laying on of the hands of Moses. Even as in the New Testament, the gifts of the Spirit were often imparted by the laying on of hands and prayer and many times prophecy.

You remember that Paul writing in 2 Timothy said,

Stir up the gift that is in you that was given unto you by the laying on of hands of the elders. [And then again he told him] Do not neglect the gift that was given to you by the laying on of my hands and the word of prophecy.

So the gifts of the Spirit were imparted in the Old Testament through the laying on of hands. As Moses laid his hands on Joshua and God gave to him the spirit of wisdom, he was full of the spirit of wisdom.

Proverbs 2:6 declares,

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 says,

For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

In the prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, that righteous branch that shall arise out of the stem of Jesse, Isaiah 11:2 says,

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

So on Jesus there would rest that spirit of wisdom.

Now how was this word of wisdom manifested in the life of Christ? I think probably the most classic manifestation of this gift of the word of wisdom is when the Pharisees were seeking to trap Him and turn the people against Him. And they were sitting around trying to figure out ways by which they could catch Him in His speech. They were always asking leading questions by which they were hoping to trap Him and to turn the people against Him. But Jesus was always wise enough to give answers so that they could not really pin any charges against Him. But they finally came up with what they thought was a Catch-22 situation.

“Let’s ask Him in front of the people if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.” Knowing that every Jew hated paying taxes to Caesar, it was a sore spot—it was an irritant. “And if He answers ‘Yes, it is lawful,’ then He will lose His popular appeal among the people. They will all shun Him. If He says ‘No,’ then we can report Him to the Roman government because He is leading a tax revolt and He will be charged by Rome for the crime.” They thought they had the perfect question.

So they came to Jesus and they said, “We know you are a straight shooter. You always tell the truth. You are not a respecter of persons. I mean, if it is true, it is true. We want to know, is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar?” Jesus said, “Got a coin?” They gave Him a coin and He held it up and He said, “Whose image is that on the coin?” They said, “It is Caesar’s.” He flipped it back to them and said, “Alright, give to Caesar what is Caesar’s. And give to God what things are God’s.” With a word of wisdom Jesus just answered the situation so righteously. It is just the gift of the word of wisdom.

In Solomon the word of wisdom was manifested when there were two women who came to him both claiming that a baby was theirs. And so here they were arguing with each other and the one was saying, “You are lying.” And the other was saying, “You are lying. It is my baby.” “No, it is my baby.” So Solomon said to his guard there, “Take your sword and cut the baby in half and give each one half of it.” And the one who was not the true mother said, “Fair enough.” The other one said, “Oh no, give the baby to her.” Solomon said, “No, give the baby to her. She is the true mother. She was not willing to sacrifice the baby to settle the argument.” This was the word of wisdom and the wisdom of Solomon was spoken of abroad.

In the New Testament in Acts 15, certain Judaizers had gone to the Gentile church in Antioch and had created a ruckus. They were trying to tell the Gentile believers that unless they converted to Judaism, unless they accepted and followed the law of Moses and were circumcised, they could not be saved. And so Paul and Barnabas went to these fellows who were creating division there in

Antioch and they came back to Jerusalem and the first church council was called in order to determine what relationship the Gentile believers should have to the Mosaic law. Peter gave his testimony of how God led him to the Gentiles and how they received the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas testified of their ministry among the Gentiles and the marvelous miracles that God had wrought among the Gentiles. And finally James spoke up and he said,

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely Judas surnamed Barsabus, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. (Acts 15:19-22)

These were men who came with a message from the church. But you see the solution that James gave was the word of wisdom and the result was this division was cured. And everyone was satisfied with the way that James proposed the solution to a divisive issue.

Earlier in Acts 6 a dispute arose concerning the welfare program of the church. The Jewish widows who were living by the Greek or Hellenistic culture, felt that their widows were not getting the same kind of treatment as those other widows who were living by the Hebrew culture. And they came to the apostles and they complained, “There is not a fairness in the distribution of the church’s welfare program. There is a favoritism that is being shown.”

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, the whole church. They said,

It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. (Acts 6:2-4)

You see it is the exercise of the gift of the word of wisdom. And what it does is remove the divisiveness. It removes the rancor between the people and settles it. It is a peaceful solution. Everybody is happy with it—the word of wisdom.

Often times within the church there are divisions that arise. And how necessary it is when these divisions do arise, that there is someone with the word of wisdom, the gift of the Spirit, to offer a solution that will be acceptable or amenable to both sides, so that both sides are happy and division does not take place. Many congregations of God’s people have been severely divided because of the lack of the gift of the word of wisdom.

Now later in Acts 6, we read of the word of wisdom as it was manifested in the life of Stephen who was one of those who was appointed to oversee the distribution of the church’s welfare.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the

synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and the Cyrenians, and the Alexandrians, and them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. (Acts 6:8-10)

This is the gift of the word of wisdom. They could not handle it. They were not able to handle that spirit of the word of wisdom by which Stephen spoke to them.

When Paul was praying for the churches, often his prayer was that God might grant to them wisdom. In praying for the Ephesians in 1:17 he prayed,

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

In Colossians 1:9 Paul prayed for the church at Colossi,

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

James wrote:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

James also told us,

Yet ye have not, because you ask not. (James 4:2)

To me it is hard to understand why, when God has made available to us His wisdom, that we would rely upon our own and that we would make decisions without seeking His guidance and His wisdom. “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6). And I would like to suggest that that is the wisest thing you could ever do.

Have you ever made decisions that afterwards you rued the decision that you made? You thought, “Oh no. How could I have decided that? Look how it has turned out.” And you usually say, “God, why did You let me get into this mess?” It is because you did not ask for wisdom— “Ask and it shall be given. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7). Men like Daniel asked God to give him wisdom and understanding in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Ask for wisdom. You will discover that the Holy Spirit can speak through you and give to you a word of wisdom whereby you can be guided by the counsels of God.

It is yours. God will do it. It is a marvelous gift that God will give to you, that word of wisdom when you have been challenged by an unbeliever. God will give you that word of wisdom if you will just look to Him and seek His wisdom

Have you ever had an occasion where a person asked you a question and while they asked the question you were thoroughly stumped? You did not know the answer. And you sort of started off by saying, “Well, I will tell you, that is an issue that a lot of people have been troubled by and I

think that...” And as you are sort of stalling, suddenly an answer comes in your mind. And as you are explaining it, you marvel. You think, “Well, that is right! My, that is wonderful! Yeah, that is the way it is.” It happens to me all the time. The word of wisdom, how that the Lord gives it to you and it is just the right answer.

God is willing to impart to you His wisdom. The Bible tells us that “in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). And they are available to you for your asking.

Father, we thank You for the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and for this gift of the word of wisdom. And how, Lord, You have given to us so many, many times, in that hour of need, Your word of wisdom that settled the controversy, that answered the question, that satisfied. Lord, we need Your wisdom and we look to You, Lord, to guide us with Your wisdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS315. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

We would like to continue our study on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Presently we are dealing with the manifestations of the Holy Spirit as they are recorded in the first section in 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul gives us a partial listing. We will go over to Romans and Ephesians to look at further listings of the gifts of the Spirit. But first in verse 8,

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another  
the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:8)

Now we talked about the word of wisdom in our last Thursday session that we had with you. And we pointed out that wisdom was the proper application of knowledge. Wisdom is probably preferable to knowledge. Like someone said, “When you ain’t got no education, you just gotta use your brains.” Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. Knowledge in and of itself without wisdom can be extremely dangerous. I think this is being demonstrated to us more all the time as we see a lot of knowledge in the world today. They have the knowledge to create superweapons and the knowledge to do all kinds of things, but not much wisdom. And unfortunately they do not have enough wisdom not to use some of these weapons that are being created.

But then following the word of wisdom, there is that word of knowledge. I believe that the word of knowledge is knowledge that is given to us supernaturally. It is a knowledge of things that you would not know through a natural acquisition or study.

I believe that in 2 Kings 5, in the Old Testament this gift was manifested in the life of Elisha, as God would give to him supernatural knowledge of various things. You remember Naaman, who was a captain of the Syrian army, had heard that there was a prophet in Israel through whom he could have a cure of his leprosy. So the king of Syria who loved this captain very much, sent him with a message to the king of Samaria basically saying, “Heal my servant, my captain whom I love.” And when the king of Samaria got that message he ripped his clothes. He said, “Look at how this guy is trying to pick a fight. I am not God. How can I heal this leper?” So Elisha sent and said, “Send him over here. He will know that there is a prophet of God in Israel.”

So Naaman came. You remember the story. And Elisha sent the servant out with a message, “Just go down to the Jordan River and dip in it seven times and you will be cleansed of your leprosy.” And Naaman was extremely upset. The prophet did not even come out to greet him. He was an important man. Did the prophet know how important a man he was? And he was just fuming on his way back—just fuming. “Dip in that muddy Jordan River, are you kidding? We have good, pure, clean rivers up in Damascus. Why should I dip in the Jordan?”

And finally one of Naaman’s little handmaidens said, “Well look, what is it going to hurt? You have come this far. We are coming to the Jordan River. It cannot hurt anything and who knows, maybe something will happen.” So he was convinced to dip seven times in the Jordan River. And when he came up the seventh time, the leprosy was gone. His skin was normal and cured.

Naaman came back to the prophet and sought to reward the prophet of God, Elisha, with great gifts. And the prophet said, “I will not take anything from you.” And just told him to go on his way and rejoice. He made his vow. Naaman said, “I will serve the God of Israel. He will be the

God that I will serve. When I go into the house of Rimmon with my king and I bow my head, I will be bowing my head to the true God. I will fulfill my obligation.” So Naaman made a real commitment of his life to God.

But you remember the story, as he was heading back to Syria, Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, saw all of the rewards that the prophet had turned down. So Gehazi decided that he would go and collect the rewards. And so he went pursuing after Naaman and he made up a story. “After you left a couple of young prophets came along. They needed some help—a little bit of silver and a few changes of clothes and so forth.” And Naaman gladly gave it to Gehazi, the servant of Elisha.

We read in 2 Kings 5:20, the man of God said,

Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat [just a little bit] of him.

But notice, the spiritual jargon. Here he is out on a nefarious journey saying, “As the Lord liveth I will go.” Watch out for those who are just always saying, “Praise the Lord.” It does not always indicate a real commitment.

We read in 2 Kings 5:21-27,

So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, “Is all well?” And he said, “All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, ‘Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.’” And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, “Whence comest thou, Gehazi?” And he said, “Thy servant went no whither.” And he said unto him, “Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.” And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Now Gehazi did not receive the olive orchards. He did not receive the sheep and the oxen, the vineyards, or the men servants and maid servants. But this was what was in his mind, he thought, “If I just had a couple of talents of silver I could buy me an orchard. I could buy me a vineyard. I could...” And the prophet Isaiah, receiving the Word of knowledge, is just telling him exactly

what was going on in his mind—what he was thinking about what he could do with that money. Thus, we have an Old Testament example of the word of knowledge.

Again in 2 Kings 6, when the king of Syria was warring against Samaria and Israel, the king took counsel with his servants saying, in such and such a place we will set up our camp. And so the man of God, Elisha, sent to the king of Israel saying,

Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. [They were setting up an ambush.] And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, “Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.” And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, “Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?” And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.” (2 Kings 6:9-12)

And so, here is an example of the word of knowledge. There is no way that Elisha could know this except by the Holy Spirit revealing it to him—knowledge imparted to him by God. But the word of knowledge, or this gift, is not a reservoir of knowledge that you can just tap into at any time that you desire it. It is a gift of God. It often comes at unexpected times and many times without your even realizing that what you are saying is indeed a word of knowledge from God.

I do not think that Peter had any idea at all when Jesus was asking His disciples,

Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)

Now I do not believe that Peter received any kind of a buzz or sensation or—bzzzz—“Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God.” I do not think there was an elevation of the level of the voice, or a tremor in the voice, or anything that would indicate that there was some kind of a supernatural activity that was going on at that moment. And I do not think that even Peter was aware. I mean, he just said, “Well, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” But Jesus acknowledges, “This did not come to you from flesh or blood, but a revelation of the Father.”

Now as I was pointing out, the word of knowledge is not a reservoir that we can just tap into at any time. Now it does seem that quite often with Elisha this word of knowledge was demonstrated when God would give him knowledge of things, knowledge of events—a supernatural knowledge. But you remember in 2 Kings 4, when the Shunamite son had passed out in the field and he was brought to his mother and he died. She laid him in the bed and then she

headed off for the prophet of God. She told the servants not to slow down but to get to the prophet as fast as they could. “Do not slow down! Do not spare for me! Do not worry about me!”

As the Shunamite woman was coming to the prophet, Elisha looked up and he saw her coming and he sent his servant out to inquire if everything was all right. She said to the servant, “Yes, everything is all right. Get out of the way,” and she kept driving towards Elisha. When she came to Elisha, we read that she grabbed him there at Mount Carmel.

And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. (2 Kings 4:25-27)

Now Elisha was sort of surprised at the fact that there was something desperately wrong. “Her spirit is vexed within her, but God has not shown me. God has not told me what it was.” So it is not just knowledge that you tap at will. It is something that is given to you by God—a divine revelation or knowledge. It is just there. Though in the moment, it is not something where I just now have all of this knowledge and I can just speak to you about anything.

It is interesting that he was surprised that God had not told him. Now I believe that in my life, on different occasions and at different times, God has spoken to my heart and shown me different things. And when that happens, it is such an exciting experience that I get a real high over the realization that the Lord has shown me something. Now a lot of times, I am not really aware that the Lord is showing me something until after it happens. I get this strong impression that something is going to happen and then it happens. I say, “Wow! The Lord showed me. Oooh, this is glorious! I knew it!” And I get that excitement that the Lord actually showed me something.

Here in 2 Kings, Elisha was surprised when the Lord did not show him something. I am always surprised when He does. But he was surprised that something was going on and the Lord had not told him what it was.

Surely in the life of Jesus we see this knowledge manifested. Of course He was the Son of God, yet in coming to earth, He did lay aside some of the aspects of deity, being limited in a body. And He does speak of the fact that the time of His return was knowledge that was not privy to even the angels of heaven or even to Him at that point in His limited state, but that it was something that was only known of the Father.

We do see, when Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus,

Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. (John 1:47-50)

We read that Jesus did not commit Himself to men because He knew all men. And He did not need for people to testify to Him of people. He knew what was in men. In John 16:30 they said,

Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

But this is the gift of the word of knowledge and we see its manifestations in the lives of the apostles. One manifestation we already mentioned was with Peter there at Caesarea Philippi. But then in Acts 5, when Ananias and his wife Sapphira had sold their property and brought the money to lay at the apostles' feet, they made a pretense of giving the whole amount. In reality they had decided together to hold back a part of the price that they received for their property.

Now the sin, as is definitely pointed out by the Scripture, was not in the fact that they did not bring in all the profits. Peter takes special care to note that while the property was theirs, they were under no obligation to sell it. And when they sold it they were under no obligation to bring the money in. But it was the hypocrisy—it was the pretense of giving everything to God, when in reality they were holding some back from God. This is the same kind of a pretense that we see many times today where people are making a pretense of giving everything to God, when in reality they are holding back much from God.

So Peter said, "Why have you decided in your heart that you were going to lie to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied unto man, but you have lied unto God" (Acts 5:3-4). And so this is the word of knowledge, whereby Peter knew that they were in a conspiracy to hold back a portion of the money.

I think, perhaps, in the manifestations of the Spirit, we try to classify the gifts. And I think that often there is sort of a crossover between the gift of discernment and the word of knowledge and also between the gift of prophecy and the word of knowledge. And we find when Philip had gone to Samaria and was preaching Christ, many believed and were baptized seeing the miracles that were wrought. When Peter and John came up to Samaria that the believers might receive the Holy Spirit, Simon, a man who had been baptized—formerly a man who was noted for his powers and abilities to perform magical feats—now seeing Philip and the power of God, he believed and was baptized. Now as Simon observes Peter and John laying their hands on the people, and as these people are receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, he came and said,

Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness. (Acts 8:19-23)

There was this resentment for the fact that Simon had lost this power over the people that he once had, hoping to regain it perhaps through the powers of the Spirit, and thinking that perhaps he could purchase this power. So Peter was reading what was in the heart of the man. This is the word of knowledge, the understanding or knowledge of what was going on in his heart. Though

there was an outward, visible kind of profession, yet within the heart this stuff was churning and by word of knowledge Peter exposes what is going on in the fellow's heart.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he records two prayers for the church in Ephesus. In chapter 1 he prays for them,

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. (Ephesians 1:17)

Now you cannot really know God apart from the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God. One of Job's friends asked,

Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (Job 11:7)

And the answer is: you cannot find God by an intellectual quest. The knowledge of God comes as the result of a revelation of the Holy Spirit. And so that is what Paul is praying for, that they might have this spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. (Ephesians 1:18-19)

In writing to the Galatians, Paul declared that the gospel that he was preaching unto them did not come to him by men, and neither did he learn it of men. But it came to him as a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. This knowledge of the gospel that Paul obtained came by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Now this gift of the word of knowledge often times happens during the ministry of the teaching of the Word of God. Quite often while I am teaching, the Holy Spirit will suddenly give me an understanding of a passage of Scripture that I have never really seen before. While I am just sharing, there comes this understanding—this knowledge of what God has declared or said—this insight and knowledge. And I often just share that knowledge or that insight that God gives me. I personally get as excited over the truth, perhaps even more so than you, because I know that it came as an inspiration from God at that moment. You might think, "Well he found that in some book somewhere." But I know that this is something that the Holy Spirit has just opened up my understanding to and so I get really excited. I get excited over the truth that the Holy Spirit is revealing knowledge to my heart.

Quite often when I am seeking to illustrate a particular point, I will sort of make up a hypothetical case to illustrate a particular point. But as I am making up this hypothetical case, quite often it is hitting someone right between the eyes. They are saying, "That is me! Who told him about me? How did he find out?" We have actually had people who have brought their friends to church who have called us later and said, "You know, our friends will not speak to us anymore. We brought them to church Sunday and they are certain that we called you up before the service and notified you all about what they were doing because you so nailed them Sunday. And what you said just hit exactly where they were and we tried to convince them that we did not call you, but they will not believe it. They are sure that we called you."

We were studying 2nd Peter one Sunday night, examining false prophets and I was talking about paper ministries. There are fellows who just have a mailing list and a computer and they mail out letters to their mailing list across the country. In fact you can buy these mailing lists. And they are sending out these mailing lists across the country with these computerized letters telling about their ministry. They are soliciting funds and telling how they are going into the inner city, or they are doing this, or they are doing that. They are telling all about the ministry, which only exists on paper.

And I said these fellows live down on Lido Isle in these big homes. They have fancy yachts in front of their places. They drive Cadillac convertibles and wear white shoes. And they are just living high off of the proceeds of this mailing list. They really do not have any ministry at all. It is just all soliciting funds. And they do not have a true ministry at all.

And that was on a Sunday night that I was talking about it. We were going through 2nd Peter and on Monday morning I got a call.

The secretary said, "This guy sounds awfully mad. He wants to talk to you."

I said, "Well put him on."

And so he said, "I want you to know that I have a legitimate ministry."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "You know what I am talking about. Last night you were telling the people that my ministry was not legitimate." He said, "You know I live down on Lido Island. I drive that Cadillac convertible." He said, "But I have a ministry. It is a legitimate ministry. I want you to know that."

I said, "Wait a minute. I have never heard of you. I do not know you." I said, "I was just making up a hypothetical case." But I said, "If I were you I would ask the Lord how legitimate your ministry really is."

So this was a manifestation of the word of knowledge. I was not aware I was nailing some guy. He was listening on the radio and I was not aware that I was nailing him.

And so often, as the gift is operating, the person through whom the gift is operating is not really aware at that moment that indeed it is the gift of the word of knowledge that is being exercised. Again I think that there is a tie sometimes with prophecy, when you might be warning someone by saying, "I think what you are doing is dangerous and if you continue this may happen." This can turn out to be sort of a word of knowledge when you find out that this does happen. In other words, you sort of have said or given them a warning about what could take place and then it does take place.

And so it is sort of tied in a sense with a prophecy in the sense of predicting what will happen. Yet at the time you are not really saying, "This is going to happen to you," but you are just saying this is what could happen. And often in time it does happen. But that is a little difficult because the supernatural works in such a natural way. And I think where we so often make a mistake is when we think that it is supernatural—we think then it is going to operate in some kind of a

supernatural way. And so many times it happens just so naturally that we do not recognize the supernatural in it.

Sometimes the Lord will reveal what is going on in a person's life, as with Peter, in his interaction with Ananias and Simon. The question is: Why would the Lord give you an insight into what is happening in their lives? The word of knowledge sometimes is difficult because you do not know what to do with the knowledge. And many times I think that the Lord gives you that word of knowledge or knowledge of a situation just so that you will be praying for the situation.

We were pastoring out in Los Serranos at the community church there. And one Sunday my wife said to me, "Honey as I looked at"—and she named a man in the church who was a highly respected man. He had a very important position out there in Pomona Valley and was a great family man with a tremendous personality. And she said, "When I looked at him this morning," she said, "I just felt I knew by the Spirit, as I looked at him—I just saw him in an affair with his secretary." And she said, "It just came to me so strongly." And she said, "I thought, *Oh, that is terrible to think that and I should put that out of my mind.*" But she said, "The thought just keeps coming back to me. He is in an affair with his secretary."

And so a few months later, I received a call and both he and his wife were on the phone. They were on extension phones in their house and all they got out was, "Pastor Chuck," and their voices broke up and they started crying and they could not continue. And so I said, "That is all right. I know what the call is all about." I said, "You have been in an affair with your secretary for the last six months. Come on out. Let's talk about it and pray about it." They were shocked that I knew exactly what was happening. And the Lord had just shown it to my wife. So watch out, the Lord shows her lots of things. It is not easy living with a prophetess!

Personally, I do have some difficulty with what we often see passed off as the word of knowledge. When there is a large group of people and someone says, "I believe that there is someone here tonight who has been very discouraged, and very despondent, and even considering suicide." Well now I dare say, that there probably is someone tonight who is discouraged and despondent in a crowd this large. Now that was not a word of knowledge. But so often we see broad generalizations—someone has a knee that is bothering them. That is me! And to pass that off as word of knowledge, I have a little difficulty with that.

Now let me say that I know that I am as open-minded as I can be. I want to be open-minded but not so open-minded that I am gullible. I want to be open to all that the Spirit is doing and wants to do. And I think that sometimes when people are passing off as spiritual gifts what is not necessarily of the Spirit, it sometimes takes away from the genuine gift. And it closes people to the genuine work of the Spirit because they have seen things that have been done in untoward ways and fashions that have, more or less, closed their minds. And I will frankly confess I have seen a lot of things that have been passed off as spiritual manifestations or spiritual gifts that I am certain were not of the Holy Spirit. He is not the author of confusion and what was going on was thoroughly confused and confusing.

But I have always sought to keep an open mind to the Spirit and not close the door on an area of possible blessing and power from God just because there has been a misuse or abuse in these areas. And I pray that I might always maintain an openness to God, so that He can do whatever He wants to do in me, whenever He wants to do it, and however He wants to do it. I want to be open. And I pray that I am always open unto the Holy Spirit.

I thank God for those experiences that I have with the Holy Spirit and for the relationship that I have with the Holy Spirit. I am grateful for all that the Spirit has done and is doing in my life. But I will frankly confess that I believe that there is much more He would like to do and wants to do—and I want Him to. I want to be fully open to be led by the Spirit, to be used by the Spirit, that the Spirit of God might be manifested through my life in whatever way God desires. So I covet earnestly the best gifts. And yet I seek the more excellent way of walking always in His love. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, though I may have tongues of men and angels, if I do not have love it is meaningless. Though I have all knowledge and can understand all mysteries, if I do not have love it really does not profit. And so we will go on and we will explore these things. But then we will explore the more excellent way. Now that does not put down the others, you see. It does not negate the other gifts. I still want the others too. I want all that God has. I need all that He has.

Shall we pray.

Father, give to us wisdom and understanding in Your ways. Help us, Lord, to always be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Not only open, Lord, but sensitive and obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness. Thank You, Lord, that You do speak to our hearts, even though at times we do not respond. Yet Lord, You were there and You were faithful. And for that we give thanks. Now Lord, fill us with the fullness of Your Spirit, until Your Spirit flows forth like a gusher of living water from our lives, touching those around us with Your love. In Jesus' name, Lord. Amen.

This is tape number SHS316. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Paul is talking about the diversities of the gifts of the Spirit and the various manifestations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:9, as he declares,

To another faith by the same Spirit.

This is the gift or the manifestation of faith.

Now there are different kinds of faith. We talk about saving faith. In Ephesians 2, Paul said,  
For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

And we call that saving faith. That faith that believes the promises of God that if we believe on Jesus Christ, we will be forgiven and cleansed of whatever sins we may have committed. This is the faith that brings us salvation. As John said in the opening of his Gospel,

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

In the third chapter John spoke about Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness,

Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

And then that Scripture that we all memorized in Sunday school,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

And we call that saving faith. It is that faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is believing that He paid the price for our sins. It is believing that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed as a sacrifice accepted by God—the sacrifice for our sins. As a substitute Jesus took our sins upon Himself, and died in our place that by our believing in Him we would not perish but have eternal life.

Paul says in Romans 3:23-26,

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say at this time, his righteousness: that He might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

And then that passage familiar again to all of us,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

This is saving faith.

When Paul was writing to the church in Romans 12, he said,

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

So there is that gift of faith as God has dealt to every man—that measure of faith. We believe Paul's reference to that measure of faith was the saving faith that God has dealt to every man. If a man will exercise that saving faith that God has given to him, he will be saved from his sins. And he will have the gift of God which is eternal life.

In Hebrews 12, where it declares that Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith, this also seems to be related to that saving faith. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. And referring to that saving faith, we find that it comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, according to Romans 10:17. Faith comes by hearing—hearing by the Word of God—that would be the saving faith. “For how can they believe on Him whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). So God has given to each one of us, a measure of saving faith. If we exercise it we will be saved from the guilt of our sin.

There is another kind of faith and that is the faith that trusts in the Word and in the promises of God. This is the faith that God's people have in God, in the Word of God that causes us to commit ourselves to the promises of God. We are believing the promises of God, being assured by the promises of God and rejoicing in the promises of God. This kind of faith in the believer in the Word of God and the promises of God is hallmarked for us in Hebrews 11, as it recalls the various things that people did who believed in God and who believed the promises of God. It lists the exploits of those men of faith and those women of faith.

This is the kind of faith that is many times lacking in the followers of Jesus. You remember Mark's Gospel tells us in 16:14, that after Christ's resurrection,

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

They did not believe the witness of the women who said, “We have seen the Lord. We touched Him. We held Him by the feet.” But the disciples did not believe and so Jesus was rebuking and upbraiding them because of the hardness of their hearts to believe what He promised He would do and what the women declared He had done.

When Christ was walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He said to them,

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. (Luke 24:25)

“Here is God’s Word,” He says. “You have not believed or trusted the Word of God.” And so this is the childlike faith in the children of God to just simply trust the promises.

This is the kind of faith, I believe, that can be increased and does grow. Jude told the believers to “build themselves up in the most holy faith” (Jude 1:20). In Thessalonians Paul talks about their increasing in faith. And I think that this kind of faith grows by experience through the years, as we experience the faithfulness of God in our own lives.

It is one thing to read about what God did for those in the Bible, but oftentimes we think of them as a special class and surely we do not qualify with them. We are forgetting that Elijah was a man of like passions, as we are. (cf. James 5:17) And he prayed and it did not rain for the space of three years, and he prayed again and it rained. But the Bible says he is just like us.

But I think that through the years, as we experience the faithfulness of God, that this kind of faith in the promises of God and this kind of faith in the Word of God grows. I think that it just grows as we experience God’s faithfulness. Through the years we have seen God and the faithfulness of God to take care, to provide, and to guide us. And so, you come to where you just have that faith. It has increased to the extent that things do not disturb you any more because you know it is all in God’s hands. God is going to take care of it.

Then I think there is what could be termed “healing faith.” In Luke 8:42-48, remember the story of Jesus on His way to the house of Jairus whose daughter had died. As the crowd was pushing Him along, following Him, shoving, and trying to get close, suddenly Jesus stopped and He said, “Who touched Me?”

And you remember Peter’s response was, “Lord, You have to be kidding. Everybody is pushing and shoving You and then You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ Everybody within ten yards has touched You.”

Jesus said, “No, I felt virtue go forth out of Me.”

And so you remember the woman came and knelt before Him trembling and confessed that for the space of twelve years she had been hemorrhaging. And she believed that if she could just touch the hem of His garment this would stop. She had spent all of her money on doctors and was no better. And she felt if she could just but touch the hem of His garment, this would stop. And so, she made her way through the crowd until she got close enough to touch the hem of His garment. And immediately her hemorrhaging ceased. She was healed. And you remember Jesus said, “Daughter be of good comfort because your faith has made you whole.” And that could be classified as healing faith—faith to be healed.

In Matthew 15:28, there was the woman from the area of Tyre who came to Jesus concerning her daughter, who she said was grievously vexed by the devil. When the disciples came and said, “Lord do something. She is troubling us.” To them He said, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

And so, she then came directly to Jesus. “Lord, help me.”

And He said, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and to throw it to the little puppies.”

“True, Lord, but the little puppies,” she said, “eat the crumbs that fall from the master’s table.”

And Jesus said unto her, “O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as you will.” And her daughter was made whole that very hour. “Woman, great is thy faith. Be it done unto you as you will.” That healing faith is faith that brought healing to her little daughter.

Mark 10 tells us,

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, “Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.” And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” The blind man said unto him, “Lord, that I might receive my sight.” And Jesus said unto him, “Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

This is healing faith. Immediately he received his sight.

I think that healing faith is more apt to be related to and associated with what we read here in 1 Corinthians 12 as the gift of faith. For it would seem that this gift of faith is related, many times, to healing or to miracles. In fact, in the listing of the manifestations of the Spirit, I do not think that it is just accidental that the gift of faith is right next to the gifts of healing. Because I believe that many times there is a very close relationship between the gift of faith and the gifts of healing.

Now I found something quite interesting, although it has been there all the time and I am glad that I am still learning. I found out as I was studying for this lesson, that the word “faith” is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament. It is mentioned 247 times in the New, but only twice in the Old Testament and once was in a very negative way.

In Deuteronomy 32:20, God is complaining about the lack of faith among His people. The other reference, of course, is in the Book of Habakkuk which is a great book of faith. When Habakkuk went into the tower to just wait and see what God was going to do because he was confused, he cried unto the Lord by the reason of the corruption that was going on and the Lord told him basically, “You have not seen anything yet. It is going to get worse. But, “God said, “I am working.” And Habakkuk’s complaint was, “God, things are going down the tube and You are doing nothing to stop it.”

I think he sort of felt like we feel today. We look at the nation and we see a downward plunge. We say, “God, You are not doing anything!” But God says, “I am doing something and if I should tell you what I am doing, your ears would tingle.”

So the Lord revealed to Habakkuk the fact that He was going to bring the Babylonians and they would be God’s instrument of judgment against these people who had turned their backs on God. And Habakkuk complained. He said, “Lord, I do not understand that. Why would You use a nation that is even worse than we are to punish us? Yeah, we need punishment. I admit that. But why would You use a nation that is even worse than us.” And then he said, “I will just go in the tower and I will wait to see what God is going to do.”

And while he was in the tower, God gave him the word that he would need to sustain him in the dark hours that were coming upon the nation. And these were the words that God gave to Habakkuk: “The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). God is saying, “Habakkuk, you are just going to have to trust Me.”

And so those are the only two mentions of faith in the Old Testament. One is in the negative and the other is in sort of a positive way.

In Acts 3 Peter was going into the temple with John at the hour of prayer at about three o’clock in the afternoon. There was a man about forty years old who had never walked in his entire life, who was begging alms from the people going in to worship God. And Peter said to the man, “Look over here.” And the man turned, expecting to receive some money. And Peter responded,-

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. (Acts 3:6-9)

And the people in the temple said, “Is that the lame man who has been begging all these years out at the gate? It sure looks like him. What happened? How is it that he is walking?” “I do not know. Let us find out.” And they followed him out to Solomon’s porch and there they saw him grab hold of Peter and begin to hug Peter and sort of dance up and down. And they suddenly related the fact that the man was talking to Peter in some mystical way that they could not understand.

And when Peter saw these people suddenly all staring at him with this kind of awe and adoration, he said,

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? (Acts 3:12)

And he went on to preach to them concerning Jesus. But then, as he explained the miracle in Acts 3:16, he said, “And His name, that is Jesus, through faith in His name hath made this man strong whom you see and you know.” It was through the name of Jesus and faith in the name of Jesus that this man was now standing there healed of that infirmity of over forty years.

But then he went on to say, “Yea, the faith which is by Him.” In other words, Peter is not saying it is my great faith, but he is acknowledging that it was the faith that was given by Jesus. In other words, it was the gift of faith that was operating. It was the gift of faith that was given to Peter to say to the man, “What I have I give unto you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!” The faith that was given to Peter at that time, Peter is saying, it is the faith that is by Him—recognizing this was the gift of faith in operation that brought to pass this healing and miracle upon this lame man.

So you might say that you have three gifts in operation: the gift of faith, the gift of healing, and the gift of the working of miracles—all three in the healing of this lame man.

We read concerning Stephen in Acts 6:8,

“And Stephen full of faith and power did great wonders and miracles among the people.”

The miracles and wonders were attributed to the fact that he was filled with faith, the gift of faith.

Barnabas who accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, was described as a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith and many people were added to the Lord through his ministry. So again, Barnabas was a man of faith. Here faith is related to being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 14, when Paul was in Lystra preaching, there was again a lame man about forty years old who had never walked and Paul perceived that this man had the faith to be healed. The man was probably very intent in listening to what Paul was saying and this perception was probably the gift of discernment. Paul perceived that the man had faith to be healed.

And so he said to him, “Brother, Jesus Christ of Nazareth makes you whole. Stand up and walk!” And the man stood up and began to walk. And the people were amazed. They said, “The gods have come down!” And they ran down to the temple of Jupiter and they said, “Hey, Jupiter is down the street. Your god has come down to earth! He brought Mercury with him.” Because Paul was shorter they thought he was Mercury and Barnabas was Jupiter. And the priests of Jupiter came dragging an ox up the street to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. And they were scarcely able to dissuade them from sacrificing. But again, this is the gift of faith—declaring to this man the word of faith—“Jesus of Nazareth, maketh thee whole.”

When Paul was writing to the Galatians, he said, “He who is ministering to you the Spirit and is working miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?” And so, those who were working miracles among them had to acknowledge that they were doing it by the word of faith.

Jesus was talking to His disciples one day concerning forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness. They began to catch a little insight on forgiveness and how important and necessary it was in the whole scheme of God that they were to forgive others. And they finally began to catch the extent of the forgiveness they were to have for those who wronged them. They said, “Lord, increase our faith.” In other words, they recognized that they could not forgive as Jesus was commanding them to forgive. It was not natural. The natural bent is to get even or to have revenge. But the Lord was saying they were to forgive and they recognized they did not have that

capacity. And so their prayer was, “Lord, increase our faith, so that we can be obedient and forgive even as You tell us we are to forgive.”

And this seemed to open the door for Jesus to talk to them about this special gift of faith, when they said, “Lord, increase our faith.” For Jesus responded,

If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, “Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” (Luke 17:6)

Now that is pretty awesome. If they had faith as a grain of mustard seed—imagine what could you do if you had faith like an avocado seed?

And thus, Jesus seemed to talk to them about this gift of faith. It cannot be worked up. Although I have observed many attempts of people trying to work up faith, it is not something where you work yourself into a state of believing—like a frenzy or whatever. It just comes as a gift. It is just there. Suddenly you have the faith to do it. Many times you just wonder, “What am I doing?” But the Lord just seems to give you the faith to go ahead and do it.

Many years ago when we were still in the little chapel over on the next corner, after a Sunday morning service these young people came wheeling their grandfather up the aisle where I was standing in the front of the church. And they asked me if I would pray for their grandfather. He was in a wheelchair, so I naturally assumed that they wanted him healed so he could walk. So I prayed, “Lord, You are a great God. You can do anything. And it is nothing to You to help whether we are weak or strong. Help us, Lord. And we ask that You would touch this man and that You would heal him. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the name above all names.”

And while I was praying I had this very strong urge and feeling to lift the man up out of his wheelchair and to command him to walk. And so when I said, “Amen”—and again, well, I did not think of what I was doing or I would not have done it. But I lifted the man to his feet. And I said, “Now, in the name of Jesus, walk!” And the man began to walk, much to my great relief! And he walked up the aisle and then he sort of trotted back. And the grandkids were almost doing handstands, they were so excited. They said, “He has not been able to walk for over five years! But he had a cold and we wanted you to pray that God would heal his cold.” And I thought, *Why were you not more specific?* Now I cannot explain to you why I did that, except that I just had this strong urge and impulse to do it and that the Lord would honor it if I did it.

The following Wednesday night was the night before Thanksgiving and we were down in Tucson, Arizona to be with our family for the holiday. And they had asked me to speak there in the church while I was in Tucson. And after the service a man came up with his wife in a wheelchair. He said, “My wife has had a stroke and I want you to pray, Pastor, that God will heal her so she can walk.” And of course I immediately thought of the previous Sunday morning. And I laid hands on her and I prayed that God would heal. And I tried to pray the same prayer that I had prayed before, trying to remember, *Now, what did I say?*

And I patted her on the shoulder and I said, “God bless you, sister. We will continue to pray for you. God can do anything” And the husband wheeled her out the door. My son was with me and he turned and he said, “Dad, how come you did not lift her out of the wheelchair like you did that guy last Sunday morning?” And I said, “Because the Lord did not give me the faith to do it.

You see, I do not think, in the Bible days, that the apostles had this faith all the time for every situation; otherwise, we could go to the hospital and empty the place. I think that it came on special occasions, according to God's sovereign grace and God's sovereign work. I do not believe that the apostles healed all of the people who were sick that they encountered. In fact, Paul the Apostle seemed to have special faith and the gift of faith, as well as the gift of miracles, and there were many miracles wrought by the hands of Paul. And when he testified to the church in Jerusalem he testified of the miracles that God had wrought among the Gentiles.

And we remember that in Ephesus they would even take Paul's sweatbands (or handkerchiefs) and lay them on sick people and they were healed. Although Paul had the gift of faith and the gift of working of miracles, we read of him telling Timothy to take a little wine as a medicinal remedy for his stomach problem. And we read of him speaking of Epaphroditus being sick almost unto death. We read of him leaving Trophimus at Miletum because he was sick. And we read even of Paul's own thorn in the flesh for which he asked the Lord three times to remove, yet it was not removed; but instead, Paul did receive God's abounding and all-sufficient grace.

So it is not just faith that remains—"these gifts remain, the Holy Spirit dividing to each man severally as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). And it is not that I have suddenly become a gifted man with the gifts of healing and I can go around and heal everybody; or with the gift of miracles and I can go around and perform miracles for every situation. It is just that at special times and in circumstances that are all in God's control, He will manifest the power of the Holy Spirit through our lives. And it can be with a word of wisdom. It can be with a word of knowledge. It can be by special faith. It can be through the healing of a person. It can be through the working of miracles. It can be manifested in many different ways, according to the situations that you might be facing at certain times.

We read in Acts 12 that Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he had James put to death. And when he saw that pleased the Jews, he put Peter in prison intending to bring him forth the next day and no doubt execute him. The church was in a faithless prayer meeting, so it does not seem that their faith is the thing that sprung Peter from jail. But an angel of the Lord came and commanded Peter to put on his sandals and follow him. And the doors opened of their own accord. When Peter got out in the street, the angel disappeared and suddenly he realized, "I am not dreaming! I am actually out of prison!" He thought it was a dream.

And so he went to the house where the disciples were praying, knocked on the door and a little girl came to the door and said, "Who is it?" He said, "It is Peter. Let me in!" She was so excited she ran back to those who were in the prayer meeting and said, "Peter's outside." They said, "Ah, you are crazy. It must be a ghost. It cannot be Peter. He is in jail." But Peter continued to knock until they came and opened the door.

So James was beheaded and Peter was delivered by a miracle with an angel coming. You see, it is not that James had less faith. Peter ultimately was crucified upside down. And so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not going to forever keep you from any kind of difficulty or any sickness or problem.

Paul spoke oft of his infirmities to the Galatians, hinting that he had a real eye problem. He spoke of their great love for him. "I testify that if you could, you would have taken your own eyes and given them to me" (Galatians 4:15). But God, according to His sovereign purposes and His sovereign will, can and does, at various times, just manifest His power, His glory, and His ability. And those times of manifestation are always thrilling and exciting.

Let us always be open that God might manifest Himself however He desires. Let us not be closed in our minds. Let us not relegate God's ability to intervene to some period of past history. But let us realize that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. And that He can still sovereignly manifest His power and the miracles of healing or faith. Let us just be open and let us rejoice when He does, but not question when He does not manifest His power. This requires our just committing it all to Him as the sovereign Lord who knows best. And Peter said,

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God,  
commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a  
faithful Creator. (1Peter 4:19)

He says, "God, You are faithful. You have a purpose in this. You are working out a purpose in this. So I just commit myself, Lord, to You. The purposes that You are seeking to work out through these experiences I commit to You."

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the power of Your Holy Spirit. And You know, Lord, how our hearts long to see the power of Your Spirit manifested. And how thankful we are, Lord, that You have manifested and do manifest Your power in our midst. Lord, how thankful we are for the way that You have been working and for the miracles and the healings that we have seen—the faith, Lord, and the gift of faith that has been at work. That kind of faith that just commits the keeping of our souls unto the faithful Creator and to Your wisdom. The faith that sees mountains moved and lives transformed. Lord, we look around and we see so many manifestations of Your love and of the power of Your Spirit. And for this, we give thanks. And now Lord, help us, as a church to move forward in faith. And Lord, when we are faced with obstacles that are too great for us to deal with, grant to us that faith that will believe and trust You to work and to remove those obstacles that Your work might go forward. Thank You, Lord, for the faith that can move sycamore trees and move mountains. May we experience that kind of faith in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS317. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

Let us turn to 1 Corinthians 12:9, where Paul is listing the gifts or the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the last study we looked at the gift of faith and we pointed out that faith is really related to the gifts of healing. We read, “to another faith by the same Spirit and to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.”

Now throughout biblical history, God has manifested His power to heal. In Genesis 17, we find the recording of the healing of Abimelech, his wife, and his maid servants in answer to Abraham’s prayer. We find that God gave wonderful promises of healing to the children of Israel.

In Exodus 15:26, God said,

If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

He is saying, “I am the Lord that healeth thee.” He is *Jehovah Rapha*, the Lord Our Healer.

In Deuteronomy 32:29, God said,

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

As David is talking about the wonderful benefits of God in Psalm 103:3, he said,

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.

And then in the New Testament we find that James 5:14-15 says,

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.

And so, there are promises both in the Old and New Testament of healing.

Again in the Old Testament we find Miriam, the sister of Moses, was healed of leprosy in answer to the prayer of Moses. Hezekiah was actually healed from a deathbed as the result of prayer. And it is interesting to me that in Leviticus 14, God made provision for the leper in the day of his cleansing. Though leprosy was incurable, God left the opening to heal the leprous person, and thus a way of restoration back into society. This was the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing:

He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper. (Leviticus 14:2-3)

And as we look at the ministry of Jesus, there can be no denial that healing of the sick was one of the dominant factors of His ministry. We read such passages as Matthew 4:23,

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Then in Matthew 9:35,

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

When Jesus sent the disciples out on their mission to preach the kingdom and to heal the sick, He said,

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. (Matthew 9:1-2)

It seemed to be sort of the preaching of the kingdom and the healing of the sick in the ministry of Jesus. And now in the command to His disciples:

And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. (Matthew 9:3-6)

So the healing of the sick was a dominant part of the ministry of Christ and also of the disciples.

As we go on in the book of Acts when the disciples were telling about Jesus, they said,

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:38)

But in Acts 5:12-16,

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

After the ascension of Jesus, the ministry of the healing of the sick through the power of the Holy Spirit continued working through the disciples.

Acts 28:8-9 says,

It came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed.

There were Old Testament manifestations of God's healing as well as the promises and the declaration that He is the Lord who heals them. And in the New Testament during the ministry of Christ, one of the prominent features of His ministry was the healing of the sick. And then the power was given to the disciples and a prominent aspect of their ministry, when they went out to preach the gospel, was the healing of the sick. Later when Christ ascended into heaven, they went out proclaiming the kingdom of God and again healing was a very important part of their ministry to people.

Now there are those who say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the divine miraculous manifestations of God ceased with the apostles. They say that God gave the apostles the supernatural power and these extraordinary manifestations to help get them started in a world that was antagonistic toward Jesus Christ—a world for the most part that did not know of Jesus Christ. Since they did not have seminaries and great cathedrals, the disciples needed a little extra boost in the beginning. But now that we have our educational facilities and now that we are so well organized, we no longer really need the divine manifestations of the Spirit to convince the world. They believe we can intellectually challenge the world and give our apologetics, and thus, we can convince this world that they need Jesus Christ. That might sound good in theory but it has not worked practically, as they have tried to put it into practice.

In the book called *The Ministry of Healing*, Dr. A. G. Gordon, who is the founder of the Christian Missionary and Alliance Church (which is a fellowship or denomination of churches) goes through church history from the early church fathers. He shows that throughout church history the gifts of healing have been manifested and there were men who wrote about the many people who were cured of their sickness and many people who were healed through prayer. Even John Wesley experienced seeing many people healed from their sicknesses as the result of prayer. Thus throughout church history, there are those manifestations of healing among certain groups—so that to say that it ceased completely with the apostles is to deny the validity of what some of the early church fathers have written and recorded.

Now it does not seem consistent to me that if all through biblical history, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament times, God healed the sicknesses in answer to believing prayer, yet God would suddenly stop healing the sick today. Surely you cannot make either a biblical or historical case that God has ceased healing today. I believe that people can be healed today by the touch of God upon their life, from all manner of sicknesses. I do not believe that God is limited, nor has He limited Himself. But I do believe that a person can be healed in response to believing prayer.

Now though I believe that God can heal and God does heal, I also realize that not everyone is healed. And for that I have no answer or no explanation. I know that I have prayed for many people and God has healed them. I have prayed for many people and they died. So if I pray for you, you have a fifty-fifty chance. You may get healed and you may die.

But it is interesting that we read of the gifts of healing throughout Scripture. And I believe that if at any time you have been prayed for and you have been healed that you have received a gift of healing. The Bible does not really talk about the gift of healers—that men would have the gift of healing—it is just the gifts, plural, of healings, plural. So that on many occasions I personally have received a gift of healing, as God has touched and healed my body. And if at any time in response to prayer you have received a touch of God and healing in your body, you have received, in a sense, a gift of healing.

And yet, in saying that, I also recognize that there are certain people who God seems to use in helping people to have the faith to believe He will heal them. Certainly with Peter there was that faith and God used him in the healing of many people. So much so, that they would lay the sick people in the street so that just the shadow of Peter falling on them, they might be healed.

Paul the Apostle also seemed to have that certain faith, so that many people were healed as a result of his ministry. And yet Paul wrote to Timothy and suggested that he take a little wine for his stomach's sake because he had stomach problems. Now I believe that Paul, no doubt, prayed for Timothy—that God would heal him of that stomach disorder. And when God did not supernaturally heal him, Paul suggested a little wine for his stomach's sake.

Paul talked about Epaphroditus being sick almost unto death. He talked about leaving Trophimus in a place because he was too sick to travel. And Paul spoke of his own sickness, calling it a thorn in the flesh—a minister of Satan to buffet him—for which he sought the Lord three times. When Paul was in Galatia and he wanted to go to Bythunia to preach the gospel, he said, “the Spirit forbade us.” But we know that Paul was so sick he could not travel. So although there were many marvelous healings in response to Paul's prayers and his faith, not everyone was healed. When he was in Ephesus they used to take his sweat bands (or handkerchiefs) and lay them on the sick people and they would be healed. So there were many healings, but not everyone was healed.

Now why is it that some people are healed and some are not? I do not know. There are just a lot of things that I do not understand about divine healing. And I do know that many times there are people who think that they have developed some kind of formula about how to touch a person, where to touch them, and how to read the body language. They have developed a lot of formulas and they even hold seminars on healing. It is interesting that some of the people who conducted those seminars on healing are quite sick right now. But you know, when you think you have all of the answers, then God sort of shows you that you do not have all the answers. And you cannot put it down to a formula.

Again with the gifts of the Spirit, we read that the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. And the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowal of the gifts. Thus in the gifts of healing, whether or not I am healed is a sovereign work of God's Spirit and we are helpless. If God does not do the healing we are helpless to heal ourselves. And there is no magic formula whereby you can bring healing just to everyone. In fact, we read that when Jesus was in Nazareth He really did not do many marvelous miracles there because of the unbelief of the people. The unbelief probably kept them from coming to Jesus to receive help. But not all are healed and we need to acknowledge that. Paul received the all-sufficient grace of the Lord. "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

And I think that many times it takes greater faith not to be healed than it does to be healed. To love the Lord and trust the Lord even though I have not been healed takes really greater faith than just to be healed. And it is a greater witness many times for me to just say, "Well, I have prayed. I have asked the Lord. And I know the Lord can heal me. He has not yet seen fit to heal me. He has a purpose and a plan for my sickness." And thus I have just committed myself to His plan and His will. And He knows what is best and I rest in that. I am not all upset. I am not all frantic because I am not healed. I have just committed it to God."

As Peter said,

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God  
commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a  
faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:19)

And that takes tremendous faith to just say, "Well, it is all in the Lord's hands and He is doing what He knows to be best." And resting, not really struggling with it or fighting it, but just resting in that my life is in God's hands and He knows what is best.

At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul does ask the question,

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all  
workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak  
with tongues? do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)

These are rhetorical questions and obviously the answer is, "No! Not all are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all work miracles. Not all have the gifts of healings. Not all speak with tongues and not all interpret."

Now we are told however, there in the last verse of chapter 12, to "Covet earnestly the best gifts." And for years I coveted the gifts of working of miracles, faith, and healing. I would go out in the desert for prolonged periods of time, fasting and praying and waiting upon God for the gifts of healing faith. In my earlier years my ambition was to be a medical doctor. I was interested in the ills of humanity. I had a desire to help the sick. I had compassion. And thus when God called me into the ministry I felt perhaps I could still, through prayer, help a lot of people from their physical maladies. And knowing that the gifts of the Spirit are divided to each man severally as He wills, I was hoping it was His will that I might have these gifts. It never happened. And so I just committed it to the Lord.

But about twenty-eight years ago I was conducting a home Bible study down in Laguna Beach. It was the home of some people who were affiliated with the Church of Christ and they had become quite interested in the subject of the Holy Spirit. I was living in Corona and I was commuting to Laguna Beach for these studies. A good number of people were coming out on Monday night for

this home Bible study. One evening we had a couple of ladies from Laguna Beach who had been heavily into the New Age Movement, who came to the Bible study all excited. The previous day they had gone up to Los Angeles where Kathryn Kuhlman was having her services in the Shrine Auditorium. They had seen several people healed miraculously through her ministry. And as the result of what they saw there, they turned from the New Age Movement which they were deeply involved in. They had a genuine conversion. These women were excited. They had a genuine conversion experience.

And they were just bubbling with excitement in the Lord and in the power of Jesus Christ that they had seen manifested. And they were so changed, with such a dramatic change! That night as I was driving home to Corona, though I had not spoken to the Lord about it for a long time, I said, “Lord, You know if I just had the gifts of healing, the gift of faith, I could see these kind of dramatic transformations by people seeing the genuineness of Your power in healing.” And I was trying to convince the Lord that He ought to bestow these gifts upon me. And I told Him, “I understand why You did not give it to me in the early years of my ministry. I realize that I would not have been able to handle it then. But I feel I have matured and perhaps now...”

And I felt the Lord speaking to my heart saying, “I have called you to teach My Word.” You see, not all are teachers. Not all have the gifts of healing. So I was satisfied and I accepted that. I accepted just being what God had enabled me, gifted me, and called me to do. Teach His Word. And so for ten years I never talked to the Lord about that again. I just taught His Word.

But a little over fifteen years ago I was standing here in the pulpit after an evening service in which there was a beautiful move of the Spirit of God and there were scores of people that had gone back to the prayer room to pray to be saved. And for those who were still here in the auditorium, we were just worshipping the Lord. There was a beautiful spirit of worship that was among the people here. And as I was standing here at the pulpit, holding on to both sides and just basking in what God had done. I was praising Him for the people who had gone back to accept the Lord and just enjoying the sweet flowing and moving of the Spirit that we felt as we were just here worshipping God and giving thanks.

I said, “Lord, You have done so much here at Calvary Chapel. It is such a complete ministry. It is so exciting. There is probably only one aspect of the church of Acts, the New Testament church, that is missing and that is the gift of miracles and the gifts of healing. And although there are people who are being healed and though we have just seen a bunch of miracles, this is not quite what I read in the Book of Acts. And maybe, Lord, now I could handle it.” And as I was standing here the Lord again spoke to my heart and this time He said, “I have called you to the more excellent way.” And I remembered that Paul said, “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” which I thought I was doing. He said, “And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

A more excellent way than the gifts of healing, gifts of miracles, or whatever: that is the gift of love. Because scripture says, “though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and I have not love, it is meaningless noise. Though I have the gift of prophecy and I can understand all mysteries and I have all knowledge, and I have all faith, faith that I could remove mountains, if I don’t have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). And so the Lord said, “I have led you in the more excellent way.” You know what? I just said, “Thank You, Lord. I will walk and show Your love.” And you know I have not talked to the Lord about it since. And I do not expect to. Why should I come down when He has led in the more excellent way?

Now I still pray for the sick. And I believe in praying for the sick. I believe in laying hands on the sick in the name of Jesus. I believe in anointing with oil because it is scriptural. And thus, I do

that. And as I say, some are healed and some are not, but that I leave with God. I know that I cannot heal them. I know my own limitations. I mean I might have great compassion and great empathy for them, but I cannot heal them. I know God can. But I recognize my own limitations. And all I can do is anoint a person, lay hands on them, and ask God to heal them. But then it is in God's court. I cannot heal them. Nor can I work up faith or whatever. I mean, if God does it and it is there, praise the Lord! But again there is just an awful lot to the gifts of healing that I confess I do not understand.

Now Paul in talking about the gifts of the Spirit, said there are diversities of gifts and there are diversities of operations. And I do believe that in the gifts of healings that God can and does use medical science today. I believe that God has given to the researchers a lot of insight and knowledge of the human body and the chemical makeup of the human body. And I believe He has helped in the designing of drugs and helped in the designing of operation procedures in bringing healing to the sick. Because I believe that God has compassion on the sick. Surely it was manifested through Jesus. And if a person cannot be healed just through prayer, then God has provided men with skills to operate and to diagnose and to give prescriptions for medicines that will help people in their sicknesses. And I believe that here also we see the gifts of healing in operation. I believe that God can use human means, natural means, and supernatural means to help those who are sick.

And thus I am not opposed, as are some, to medical doctors. I believe that God does use them. But I also believe that when a doctor sews up a gash on your arm—puts the sutures in—that as he sews it up he has done all he can do. It is God who causes that flesh to adhere together and to heal over. I mean it is still a work of God in the healing process. They do what they know to do, but the actual healing has to come from God. And thus these are the gifts of divine healing.

Now I believe in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Jesus, where he said,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

I believe that God was declaring prophetically that Jesus was going to suffer not only for our sins but for our sicknesses. He bore our sins but He also bore our sicknesses. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, but by His stripes we are healed.

Now Matthew quotes this passage in Isaiah and he quotes it in the context of the many people who were being healed by Jesus. Matthew 8:16,

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bear our sicknesses."

So he makes reference to this prophecy in declaring that the healings of the sick by Jesus were the fulfillment of this prophecy, in that He bore or took our infirmities, and He bore our sicknesses.

Now when Peter wrote his first epistle he also quoted this prophecy of Isaiah declaring,

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1Peter 2:24)

Isaiah said, “By His stripes you *are* healed.” Now Peter looks back at the stripes or at the scourging of Jesus and said, “By whose stripes you *were* healed.”

Now we know that before Jesus was taken to the cross, Pilate gave Him over to the soldiers to scourge Him. The purpose of the Roman scourging was to illicit the confessions from the criminals before they were crucified. It was a third-degree kind of a process. They forced confessions by tying the prisoner to a post where his back was bent over and stretched and then laying on his back this cat-o-nine-tails whip. That is a leather whip embedded with little bits of lead and glass that, as it was pulled back, would pull out little chunks of flesh. And the purpose was to make the prisoner confess to his wrong doings.

At one time Paul almost received a scourging when the captain of the guard wanted to know what he had said that created the riot. He just said, “Examine him by scourging. Find out what he said that created all of the ruckus.” And as the guy was getting Paul ready to scourge him, Paul said, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a Roman citizen who has not been charged with anything?” The fellow said, “Are you a Roman citizen?” Paul said, “You bet.” And so he went to the captain of the guard and said, “Did you know that that guy is a Roman citizen?” So he came back and said, “Are you a Roman citizen?” Paul answered, “You bet I am.” Well they did not scourge him because it was not lawful to scourge a Roman citizen. But they scourged Jesus.

Now the scourging was by design. That is easy to prove. The fact that it is there prophetically shows that it was by design. The fact that it was prophesied, it shows it was part of God’s plan. Now the question is, “would God allow His Son to suffer needlessly?” To suffer this painful scourging, so painful and so debilitating that many, many prisoners never even got to the cross. They often died as a result of the scourging. It made your back look like hamburger. And would God allow His Son to go through that kind of torture if there was not a special purpose in it and for it?

Taking it one step further, in Matthew 26, when Jesus took the bread and broke it, He said, “This is My body which is broken for you” Then when He took the cup He said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for the remission of sins.” We all understand the cup. We all understand that through the blood of Jesus Christ atonement was made for our sins—the price was paid for our sins. So when we take the cup we are conscious that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for us, and through that we have the forgiveness of our sins. But what about the bread? What about His body broken for us?

First of all, we recognize and realize that it was not a reference to broken bones, for the Bible is very specific in showing us that though they broke the bones of the other men who were crucified with Jesus, they did not break His bones. When they came to break Jesus’ legs they found He was already dead and thus they did not break His legs. But the soldier took the spear and put it through His heart and blood and water came forth. This of course, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “a bone of Him shall not be broken” (John 19:36).

And in order to be the perfect sacrifice, you could not offer a sacrifice to God that had any broken bones. So we know that when Jesus said, “This is My body broken for you” He cannot be referring to broken bones. It would seem that He is referring to the scourging. Back to the

prophecy of Isaiah, “By whose stripes you are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). And it would seem that when He took the bread and said, “This is My body broken for you,” He is making reference to the scourging.

Now again, God would not allow His Son needless suffering—of that I am certain. There had to be a value, a spiritual value in the scourging of Jesus, otherwise God would not have ever allowed it. Could it be that the value in the scourging of Jesus is indeed healing for His people?

When Paul was writing to the Corinthians concerning their abuses in many areas, one of them was in their taking of the Lord’s Supper. And he wrote them to correct the abuses of the Communion service. And in writing he talked about how they were partaking in an unworthy way. But then he went on to say, “For this cause many are weak and sick among you and many have actually died”—because they did not discern the Lord’s body (1 Corinthians 11:30). When He took the bread and broke it and said, “This is My body broken for you,” they did not discern the Lord’s body, and as a result many of them were sick. The inference is that they perhaps could be healed if they only knew that by His stripes they were healed.

Now I know that there are many Bible expositors who say, “Well that is referring to spiritual healing.” I do not think that is encompassing enough. Yes, it probably is there too, but I do not think that such a solution answers it fully. I do believe that there is, through the scourging of Jesus, the availability of healing for us. And I think that we need to discern the Lord’s body, broken for us—“By His stripes you were healed.”

So I will continue to pray for the sick. And I will continue to rejoice as the result of prayer God gives gifts of healing to many. It is there. And I believe that if we only understood the Lord’s body many more would be healed. Jesus bore in His body our sicknesses and our infirmities, when He was scourged for us.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the love of Jesus Christ towards us. And we thank You that He bore our sins and by His stripes we are healed. Lord, we come to You in our limitations. We do not know Your ways. We do not understand Your ways. We know that they are beyond our finding out. But Lord, we come and we trust You and we believe in You. And if there is a failure and a weakness in the manifestations of Your Spirit and the power of Your Spirit, Lord, we recognize that it is not Your fault. It is our fault. So Lord, bring us to that place where You can do that which You are wanting to do. Give us, Lord, a greater openness to the working of Your Spirit. Take away any barrier, any restriction that might come from us that would hinder the flow of Your Spirit from our lives. Lord, help us, that we might be a witness to the world of the power and of the love of Jesus Christ. In His name, Father, we ask these things. Amen.

May the Lord be with you and fill you with His Holy Spirit. And may He divide to each of you severally as He wills of the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit. Now though He has seen fit not to give certain gifts to me, hey, that does not keep them from you. And really I have a longing and a desire to see the full- orbbed work of the Spirit in the church. And it does not have to happen through me and I know that it will not. That is not the whole body. We each make up a part of the

body. And it would be thrilling to me if God would give to many of you the gifts of faith or the working of miracles. I would love it. Let us just be open. Who knows what God wants to do in your life.

This is tape number SHS318. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

We are looking at the manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they are listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul speaks of the gift of prophecy. Now we realize immediately that the gift of prophecy is not something new to the New Testament, but that the gift of prophecy has been exercised throughout the entirety of biblical history. Prophecy is men speaking forth the word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Peter tells us,

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but  
holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.  
(2 Peter 1:21)

So prophecy is something that has been a part of God's ministry to His people. There are those men and those women who have been anointed by the Holy Spirit to speak forth God's word to God's people.

Now we usually think of prophecy as something that is predictive of the future. And it can be that because God knows the future and if God is speaking He can speak of the future. But it is not always just predictive. It can also be speaking forth God's truth—God's Word.

In the New Testament it is recognized that in the Old Testament there were men who were anointed by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God. 2 Samuel 23:1 says,

Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse  
said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the  
God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, "The Spirit  
of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."

Those were some of David's last words. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and His word was in my tongue." This is confirmed in the New Testament in Acts 1:16 as Peter is quoting David, he said,

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled,  
which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before  
concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

He is acknowledging that David spoke by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:25 says,

Who by the mouth of Thy servant David has said, "Why did the  
heathen rage and the people imagine vain things?"

God spoke by the mouth of David saying, "Why do the heathen rage?" So David acknowledges, he recognizes that his words were anointed by the Holy Spirit. And I do not believe that a person could really read the psalms of David without recognizing that these are anointed words. Now some of the psalms of David are predictive. Many of the psalms of David were prophesying of the Messiah who would come. But many of the psalms are instructive and many of them are

prayers. Many of them are just pure worship unto the Lord. And so, in the prophecy, it can be predictive, but not exclusively so.

In 1 Corinthians 14:3 Paul declares,

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Now Paul is making reference to this gift of prophecy. And in contrast to the gift of tongues, (which is addressed to God and which we will be looking at in a couple of sessions), the gift of prophecy is addressed to men. God is speaking unto men and speaking unto the church through this gift of prophecy, for their edification.

Now the word *edification* means to be built up in a scriptural sense. It means to be built up in your walk with Christ and in your relationship with Christ. And so the purpose of prophecy is just to build you up in Jesus and in the things of the Spirit.

The gift of prophecy is also for exhortation. And I do believe that there is a gift of exhortation. And of course it would be in line with this prophetic gift, whereby we are exhorted into action. There are a lot of things that we know we believe, but we are passive in our reaction to them. We know that we should pray, but we do not always pray. We know that we should be worshipping the Lord, but we do not always worship Him. We know that we should be faithful, but we are not always faithful.

So there is a gift of the exhorting of the church to pray, or to praise, or to trust the Lord, or to love as the Scripture gives us commandment. And I think all of you ladies who have been in the Friday morning services will concur with me that exhortation is one of my wife's gifts. And she gets you gals just fired up. She exhorts you into doing the things that the Lord has commanded you to do and she has a great gift of exhortation.

Pastor Romaine also has the gift of exhortation. I have the gift of teaching and I can lay out the principles of Scripture but then you need someone to come along and give you a kick to get you going. "Now do it! You heard what he said, just do it!" James was an exhorter, "Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only deceiving your own self" (James 1:22). And we need those who will spur us into action, motivating us to act upon what we know and to act upon the Scriptures. And so the gift of prophecy works spurring us to good works, to praise, to prayer, and to worship.

And then the gift of prophecy can be used to comfort believers. As a person is going through trials and tribulations, testings and hardships, it is comforting to know that God is on the throne. It is comforting that the Lord understands and knows your circumstances and that the Lord has not forsaken you. He is watching over you and He is going to bring you through victoriously. And Paul the Apostle speaks of the comfort that he is able to give to the Corinthians, calling God, "the God of all comforts," who comforts us with the comfort wherewith we are able to comfort others.

There used to be a little lady in Huntington Beach by the name of Mother Berg and she had this gift of comfort. She had a radio broadcast and she always began the broadcast with the words "God is on the throne, you do not have to worry." We sometimes forget that God is on the throne. We sometimes think that things are out of hand but we need to be reminded and comforted by the fact that God understands. God knows. God is in control. God is on the throne. God rules. There is a comfort we receive from knowing that God is in control.

Now the gift of prophecy in the New Testament was exercised by a man named Agabus. And it seems like Agabus exercised the gift in more of a prophetic way. We are told in Acts 11:28,

And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

It was predicted by Agabus that there was coming a great dearth in all the world.

In Acts 21:8-11, Paul had come to Caesarea on his way to Jerusalem and was visiting with Philip the evangelist in his home. It declares,

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

That is one of the seven who was chosen to wait the tables earlier in the book of Acts when a dispute arose over the administration of the church's welfare.

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

This is the same fellow that we met in Acts 11 who predicted the dearth.

And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

And so in both cases, we find that Agabus prophesies; that is, his gift was exercised in a predictive nature.

In Acts 13:1 we read that there were certain prophets in the church at Antioch. Now as we look at the various gifts in Ephesians 4, there were apostles, there were evangelists, there were prophets, and there were pastor/teachers. It seemed to be one of the ministries in the church, the ministry of prophets or a man who had the prophetic gift. And so in Antioch there were certain prophets (plural) and teachers such as: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucias, Minain, and Saul. So these men, it seems, all possessed that gift of prophecy. And we read,

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." (Acts 13:2)

Now, how did the Holy Spirit say, "Separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas"? By the fact that in the previous verse it mentions these men with the gift of prophecy, I have no doubt that there was a prophetic utterance whereby God directed them to separate Paul and Barnabas for a special ministry. And so, when they had fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit sent them forth and they began the first missionary journey, taking the gospel into Cypress and

then on over into Asia Minor. So it was, no doubt, through the exercise of this gift of prophecy that the Holy Spirit spoke and directed the activities of the early church.

When Paul was writing to Timothy, he told him not to neglect the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said,

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery [or the elders]. (1 Timothy 4:14)

So when Timothy came before the elders, they laid hands on him and there was a word of prophecy that indicated the gifts that the Lord was giving Timothy, in order to fulfill his ministry. And so, prophecy played a very important part in the direction of the early church. It defined for them just what gifts God was imparting to them.

Now in the New Testament there are certain rules regarding the exercise of the gift of prophecy. There was one rule that seemed to apply only to women, when they prayed or prophesied. Remember Philip's four daughters did prophesy. The promise in the last days, saith the Lord, "And your sons and daughters shall prophesy"—shall speak forth the word of God (Joel 2:28).

There is no prohibition whatsoever for a woman exercising the gift of prophecy and speaking forth the Word of God. The only prohibition was to the Corinthian church and that is where Paul said if a woman prays or prophesies with her head uncovered she dishonors her husband. And so, he suggested that the women cover their heads. But then he went on to say that they did not have any such rule in all the churches. It seemed to be dealing with a local situation in Corinth. As Paul was speaking to them about chain of command; how the wife is in subjection to the husband, the husband to the Lord, and the Lord unto the Father. So if a woman would pray or prophesy with her head uncovered she dishonors her husband. What is he talking about?

The city of Corinth was an extremely wicked city. In fact it was associated with total debauchery. And to say that a person lived like a Corinthian would say that the person was just a debauched person, reveling in drunkenness and partying. It was known for being an extremely wicked city. It was basically a seaport, where east met west. Because the ships coming from the east with the goods for Rome would come to Corinth, the ships would be unloaded and the goods carried across the two-mile isthmus there, and then loaded on to ships going to Rome. So it was a seaport that had a bunch of sailors passing through and the place was just wild.

At the top of the hill above Corinth, there on the Acropolis was this huge temple to Aphrodite—the female goddess of love. In the evening a thousand of the priestesses of Aphrodite would come down into the city and they were prostitutes. And thus they would fill the city and prostitution was rampant there in Corinth. These prostitutes would not wear veils in order that they might be identified. And so, an unveiled woman was thought to be a prostitute, and thus, she was approachable by a man.

Whereas the women Paul was addressing would generally and customarily wear veils. So Paul is saying if a woman prays or prophesies and does not have a veil it is sort of dishonoring to her husband. But again, we do not have any such custom in all the churches. But it was one that Paul did apply to the women in Corinth—if they were to exercise publicly the gift of prophecy in church. In 1 Corinthians 11:16 he said,

But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom,  
neither the churches of God.

Now the second rule for prophecy is that the services are to be conducted decently and in order. God is not the author of confusion. And the services ought to be conducted with a mind towards the response or the reaction of an unbeliever.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 says that if the whole church be gathered together and there be unbelievers present, and if everybody is getting up and speaking in tongues the unbelievers will go away saying, “They are crazy.” But if everyone could prophesy, then the secrets of people’s hearts would be revealed and the unbelievers would go away saying, “God is in them, they speak of truth”—because the secrets of their hearts had been revealed through the exercise of the gift of prophecy.

But even then it is to be done orderly.

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.  
(1 Corinthians 14:29)

Many times in the Pentecostal circles, prophecies or utterances are made ostensibly in the name of the Lord. They have a tendency to begin a prophecy by saying, “Thus saith the Lord.” And often it is interspersed, during the body of the prophecy itself. “Thus saith the Lord.” And maybe at the end of it they will say, “Thus saith the Lord.”

Well, did the Lord really say it? Is it in keeping with what God has said? We are to judge prophecy. You are not just to accept it. If I come up to you and say, “Brother, the Lord has been showing me something about you. He wants you to go to Africa as a missionary.” You should seek the Lord for yourself, rather than just taking off saying, “Well God has called me to Africa.” You should seek the Lord for yourself. Judge it. Is this bearing witness with your heart?

Now it is interesting, I have often had people come up to me and say, “Chuck, it seems to me that the Lord has been speaking to me and you should do this or that.” And interestingly enough, often it is something that I have been mulling over in my own mind wondering, *Is this really what the Lord wants me to do?* And it comes as more or less a confirmation.

Now I have other people who come to me and say, “You know the Lord said this.” I say, “Ah. I do not accept that.” They will come up with all kinds of condemning things. With a “Thus saith the Lord, you have been leading the people astray...” I say, “Wait a minute. The Scripture asks the question, ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who has died, yea rather has risen again, and is even at the right hand of the Father making intercession.’ And you are coming to me with condemnation in the name of Lord?” Jesus said, “I did not come to condemn. I came to save” (John 12:47). So if someone comes to me with some terrible condemnation, I shrug it off. Jesus did not come to condemn me. He came to save me.

So the prophesying in the church is to be judged. And then he said, “If anything be revealed to another that is sitting by, let the first hold his peace” (1 Corinthians 14:30). In other words, do things orderly. And there is room for others.

It is interesting that many times as a person is speaking, the Spirit will begin to amplify, in my own mind, the things that are said. He will be giving me illustrations or amplifying what is said. Sometimes if it is a guest speaker and the Lord has spoken to my heart and amplified certain

parts, I will get up afterwards and expound on this one point and amplify it as the Spirit had amplified it to my own heart.

So let the first hold his peace. “For you may all prophesy one by one.” In other words, it is to be in an orderly fashion. You do not all get up and start prophesying at once. It would be mass confusion. But you may all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be comforted. So the prophecy was used as a teaching method.

We are not studying the tongues yet, but let me just say that tongues was never used as a teaching tool in the church. Because the gift of tongues is not addressed to man, it is addressed to God.

Howbeit in the Spirit he is speaking unto God divine secrets.  
(1 Corinthians 14:2)

But prophecy can be used for instruction in the church. The gift of prophecy is for learning, that all may be comforted. “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32). Make note of that because I have had people say, “Well, I just had to say it.” No, they did not. The spirit of the prophet is subject unto the prophet. The Spirit of God does not take over control and make you like a robot and force you to do things. The spirit of the prophet is subject unto the prophet. We will get to that more emphatically when we get to the subject of tongues.

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (1 Corinthians 14:23-25)

Now, in the exercise of the gift of prophecy we are told that we are to do it according to our proportion of faith. Romans 12:6 says,

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.

Now I believe that all of the gifts of God are exercised—received and exercised—by faith. You have a thought or an inspiration that comes into your mind. And you believe that it is an inspired thought of the Holy Spirit. And you wish to share that thought, then you do it according to the proportion of faith that you have. Now if you are doing it in such a way that intimates that it is the gift of prophecy from God, then the others are to judge it to determine whether or not it really is indeed of God. The basis, of course, of the judgment would be whether it is in keeping with the body of Scripture—the whole body of Scripture.

You see, God will not give you a prophecy or an inspiration that is contrary to the written Word. A lot of people make the mistake of saying, “Thus saith the Lord,” when they are saying things that are actually contrary to what God has said. The Word of God is forever established and God is not going to give any revelation that would be in conflict or contrary to His already written Word. And so, the Word of God is the filter through which we put the prophecies in judging them

whether they indeed are of God or not. Do they pass through the filter of the already spoken Word?

Now the Scriptures warn over and over again concerning those who would speak their own ideas in the name of the Lord. And I am afraid that this is a very prevalent practice. I get probably two or three letters a week of “thus saith the Lord” kinds of things in which a person is expressing their own ideas.

Jeremiah 14:14 declares,

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

This is pretty heavy. God is denouncing those who would presume to speak their own thoughts and their own ideas in His name.

Jesus warned over and over concerning false prophets. In Matthew 7:15 in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

In His predictions of the events of the last days, Jesus said, “And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:11). Jesus said, “Not all who say, ‘Lord, Lord’ are going to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

He tells us in Matthew 24:24,

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

John warns us when he said,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

He is saying, “Try the spirits. Judge them. Test them. That is your duty.”

God warned through Ezekiel,

Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! (Ezekiel 13:3)

Under the law God declared in Deuteronomy 13:1-3,

If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and gives a sign or a wonder and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spoke unto you saying, “Let us go now after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them,” you will not hearken to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams for the Lord your God is proving you to know whether or not you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.

You see the prophets should not tell you to do something that is contrary to the Word. They may show signs, they may sort of read your mind, and they may tell you what your name is, and tell you what your address is, and recall what happened to you this past week. However, if they would then say, “Now Jesus Christ is not the only way unto God. There are many ways by which we can reach God,” then God is just testing you to see if you will hold true to the Word—if you will let the Word be the final authority of your faith and of your practice.

Deuteronomy 18:22 says,

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Sometimes they try to cow you with fear. “Brother, you better be careful. I prophesied to a man last week and he laughed at it and he fell dead when he walked away.” The Lord says you do not need to be afraid of them.

I had an experience in the early years of my ministry where these fellows were into some false doctrines and they were so convinced that I was to espouse this false doctrine to my congregation that they called me out on a Saturday night and they began to prophesy over me a black coffin and I was in it. And they said God was going to smite me dead if I did not espouse their doctrine. I was not afraid. I did not go home and think, *Oh my, am I going to die?* I had the Word of God. Interestingly enough, the fellow who gave the prophecy died in two weeks. He just saw the wrong face in the coffin. I mean, his prophecy was correct, but...

We must never forget that the Word of God is superior to anything of prophecy that might be given. Paul said,

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8)

The Word of God—that is the touchstone by which everything is to be measured.

Finally Jeremiah said,

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:28)

You can come and tell me of your visions and dreams and I do not discount them. I believe that God can and does speak to man through visions and dreams. But God speaks to us through His Word as well. And visions and dreams are but as chaff compared to wheat, when you are comparing them to the Word of God. It is the Word of God that nourishes and strengthens. Chaff can choke you. The Word of God will sustain you and feed you.

The Bible tells us not to despise prophesying. It is interesting that the gift of prophecy was exercised many times in our church here. Much of my preaching is the exercise of the gift of prophecy. Years ago as we were in a prayer group, hands were laid on me and prophecy was given that at that time seemed to be just something maybe of a dream, but nothing of reality, as the Lord spoke to me of the future ministry that He was going to give to me.

Now the background of this is that I had been spending about seventeen years frustrated in the ministry because nothing was happening. I just hung on because I knew that God had called me, but ministry was frustrating. Having been given the prophecy that told of how God was going to bless my ministry and He was going to make me a shepherd of many flocks and it was, at that time, a seemingly preposterous thing—yet God fulfilled it!

The Lord said He was giving me a new name. The name meant shepherd, for He would make me the shepherd of many flocks. The Calvary Chapel group that was meeting here in Costa Mesa decided to call me to come on down and to pastor and I had accepted the invitation. Then they called me and said, “Do not come. We are going to disband.” And I said, “Well, I have already resigned here. I am coming anyhow.”

So as they were praying, a prophecy was given that God was going to bless Calvary Chapel. That the little church that they were meeting in on Church Street would not be sufficient to hold all the people that were going to come and they would have to move to a new church on the bluff overlooking the bay. It was prophesied that the church would have a nationwide radio ministry and we would become known around the world.

Well, to a group of twelve people who were so discouraged they were ready to quit, it was sort of like the fellow on whom the king leaned in the Old Testament and said, “If the Lord would open windows in heaven could such a thing be?” I mean it seemed totally preposterous. They said that we would come down and I would be the pastor and that we would remodel the church immediately. And the interesting thing is that after the first Sunday service, we all went out to lunch together—our church was that small. And as we sat in the Sizzler Restaurant, I drew out the plans for the remodeling of the church and they all got excited. I did not know why.

And then as a year or so went by, we outgrew the little church and we had to look for a new facility and we found some property over on Bay Street in Costa Mesa. It was inadequate but we thought we could make it work. They then informed me about the prophecy and they said, “No, the church is to be on the bluff overlooking the bay.” And I said, “Well, you know, prophecy... There can be, you know...” I said, “We *are* going to be overlooking Bay Street.” And they said, “No, it was overlooking *the* bay.”

The city of Costa Mesa rejected our conditional use permit for the property on Bay Street and we went into the planning department to get our plans that we had given to them. Actually it looked so good that we sold our church and so we were going to have to move out. And so here we were stuck. We thought we were going to be able to build a new church and meet there. But now we were going to have to move out because we sold the church. I thought, man, here we have a

growing church and here the pastor sells the church out from under the congregation! They are going to wonder what in the world they got hold of with me.

So we went in to get the plans and the lady said, “You know, maybe you could move to our church.” She said, “The state has bought it for the freeway and we are going to be building a new church. And you could probably get our church.” She said, “You know, it is the Newport Harbor Lutheran Church. It is on the bluff overlooking the bay.” And so, we were in the Lutheran church on the bluff overlooking the bay for two years, while we were building the little chapel a block away. Then we went on the radio and one by one the prophecies were fulfilled.

Now the prophecy came as comfort to those people who were so discouraged and ready to quit. Prophecy is given for comfort, for exhortation, and for edification. I believe that the gift of prophecy is a legitimate, valid gift for today.

“And he that prophesieth, let him prophesy according to the proportion of faith that God gives to him,” says Romans 12.

Father, we desire and covet earnestly the gifts of Your Holy Spirit, that they might be in operation in our lives and in the church. Lord, that even as in the church of Acts that was guided and directed by the Holy Spirit and often times through the use of the gift of prophecy, Lord, so guide and direct our church and our lives by the Holy Spirit. Lord, we want to be Spirit led, Spirit filled, Spirit directed. As a church, Lord, we recognize that Jesus Christ is the head of His body, the church. And we, in acknowledging that, submit ourselves Lord, to that which You have purposed and that which You desire for Your church. Guide us, Lord, by Your Holy Spirit. May we indeed become everything You want Your church to be—a light in this darkness and salt to preserve in this rotting world. Lord, fill us with Your Spirit. Open our hearts to all that You have for us. May we not come short in any good gift. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS319. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, as Paul is continuing the list of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, he speaks about how the Spirit divides to each one of us severally as He wills of those gifts or manifestations. In verse 10 he said, “To another the working of miracles.” We have dealt with the gift of faith and the gift of healing and how these two gifts seem to be tied together. Actually, also tied with the gift of faith would be the gift of working of miracles.

A miracle is something that is humanly impossible but divinely simple. Difficulty always has to be measured by the capacity of the agent that is doing the work. When God is the agent doing the work, talk of difficulty is absurd.

Paul the Apostle said to King Agrippa, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). It is no problem for God to raise the dead. He breathed life into Adam when he was just inanimate matter made out of mud. God breathed life into him and so, for God to raise the dead, as Paul was preaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ—“Why should you think it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?”

The Bible, of course, is full of miracles and probably the biggest of these starts in the first verse. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Now if you can buy that, you should not have any trouble with the rest of the book because it gives to you the proper concept of God. He is wise, omnipotent, and powerful—creating the entire universe. A God who is big enough to do that is big enough to do anything.

Many people have difficulty in accepting miracles and it is because they do not accept God. They only think in the realm of the natural and natural phenomena. And they have excluded the supernatural from their thought process. Therefore, when you talk about a miracle they are naturally skeptical because they do not believe in God, and thus, they have to rationalize or deny all miraculous or supernatural manifestations.

There are those who say that the Bible is actually Hebrew mythology and that the authors were developing their heroes for the Hebrew people. In their mythology, they sought to establish those heroes who the people could look up to and admire. And so, Moses was one of those fabled Hebrew men around whom was built many stories of miraculous manifestations but in reality all of these manifestations can be easily explained as the result of natural phenomena, according to these skeptics.

In his book *Worlds in Collision*, Andreav Vilaskovski seeks to relate the plagues that came upon the Egyptians with a near pass of the planet Venus to the earth. And the dust and debris in the atmosphere turned the Nile River to a bloody red. And he seeks to explain away these miracles of God’s judgments upon the Egyptians as mere natural phenomena.

There were many miracles in the life of Moses and the gift of the working of miracles surely was something that Moses possessed. With the Egyptians in Exodus 7, as we mentioned, there was the turning of the river into blood, the flies the boils upon the Egyptians, and then the frogs. And you have to believe that God has some kind of a sense of humor with a plague of frogs as it talked about their frogs being in their beds. And can you image crawling into bed and having slimy frogs there in your bed. And how they would jump onto the kneading troughs and get into the dough that the women were kneading.

There was the miracle in Numbers 17 of God showing His approval upon Aaron as the high priest and his family. There was the water that came out of the rock when it was smitten by Moses. And of course the great miracle, that the nation always looked back to acknowledge as the sign that God was with them and that they were God's people, was the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea so that the children of Israel were able to pass through on dry land; the Egyptians, attempting to do so themselves, were drowned.

Now there are those who would try to explain, by natural phenomena, the parting of the Red Sea from Exodus 14. And they say actually it is not the Red Sea; it is the Sea of Reeds, which is quite shallow. And that oftentimes in the Sea of Reeds when the wind is blowing for a period of time it sort of blows the water back and it is only ankle deep. And in reality it is very shallow and thus, with this wind they were able to pass over in ankle-deep water. That does not explain how the Scripture said that the sea stood up on both sides. Also, it does not really remove the miraculous because if it was only ankle-deep water, it was quite a miracle that God could drown the whole Egyptian army in ankle-deep water!

The prophet Elijah seemed to possess this gift of working of miracles. You remember he prayed and it did not rain for the space of three years. This brought the great drought into the country. He prayed again and it rained. During this period of drought, he came to a widow and asked her give him something to eat. And she said that she and her son had only enough oil and enough meal to make some bread for themselves. They were going to eat it and then just die—starve to death. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah said, "Make some for me first." And she did and during the entire period of drought the meal in the barrel and the oil was never empty. It miraculously lasted through the whole period of the drought.

Through the prayers of Elijah, a child was restored back to life. And of course we remember the story of the challenge of the prophets of Baal there on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18, where they were to build their altars but they were not to kindle a fire on the altar. And the prophets of Baal were to pray to their god to kindle their fire and consume their sacrifice. And having prayed futilely all day long, with a little chiding and prodding, Elijah said, "Maybe your god's asleep. Maybe he is on vacation. Maybe you should cry a little longer." And Elijah was really watching them whip themselves into a frenzy. And when still there was no response, then just to rub it in he commanded that they dig a trench around his altar. Elijah commanded them to pour water all over the sacrifice and pour more water on it until the sacrifice was soaked and the water filled the trench. And then he prayed and God answered by fire, consuming the sacrifice and the altar itself, licking up the water round about. And the people were falling on their faces acknowledging that Jehovah was God. This was quite a miracle.

There was the miracle of the captains that were sent by the king with their fifty men to bring him into custody. And how they came out and said, "Oh thou man of God, the king has commanded that we bring you into custody." Elijah said, "If I am a man of God let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down and consumed them. And so, this happened to three of the captains. The fourth had a little better sense. He came out and said, "Look I am a family man. Have mercy on me! I am only doing my duty. And would you mind, please, to come with me." These are the miracles that accompanied Elijah.

And of course, just before his death as he was being pursued and followed by Elisha, who had asked him for a double portion of the Spirit, Elijah said, "You have asked a difficult thing but if you are with me at the time of my departure you will receive it." When Elijah came to the Jordan River going over into the area of Moab in 2 Kings 2, he took his mantle and smote the river and it

parted and he walked through with Elisha following him. And then Elijah was translated into heaven and the mantle fell upon Elisha. It is interesting he asked for a double portion and there are twice as many miracles recorded in the life of Elisha as there was Elijah. It seemed that he did get the double portion. As he came back to the Jordan River he took the mantle and said, “Where is the God of Elijah?” and the river parted and he came across.

There was the multiplying of the oil in 1 Kings 17 with the woman who was poor. And the prophet said, “Well, how much do you have here?” And she said, “Just a little oil.” And he said, “Well go around to all your neighbors and borrow all of the pots that you can get. And then take from your little oil and fill up all the pots.” And she took the little oil she had and she filled all the pots and sold it and was able to survive on it.

Other miracles occurred when the spring in Jericho was healed in 2 Kings 2. The water was actually bitter and the people complained to Elisha and he asked for some salt. He threw it in and the water was healed. A child was raised to life. Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy. And of course the prophets were building a house down by the Jordan River and as one of the fellows was cutting down a tree with an ax, in 2 Kings 6, the ax head fell off into the Jordan River. And he came and he said to Elisha, “Alas, I borrowed it, you know.” And he said, “Where did it go in?” And he threw in a stick and the ax head made of iron did swim. And so these are marvelous miracles accompanying the life of Elisha.

Then as you move on in the Old Testament, through Isaiah there was that marvelous miracle of the healing of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38 when the sundial went backwards as a testimony that God was going to heal Hezekiah.

But then of course moving to the New Testament and the life of Jesus we have so many miracles. They began at the feast of Cana in Galilee when Jesus turned the water into wine. He healed the nobleman’s son from a distance. He raised the dead son of the widow of Nain. He raised the dead daughter of Jairus. And then finally, He raised Lazarus, who had been buried for four days, from the dead. He fed multitudes with the five loaves and the two fish. And then He walked on the water. These are marvelous miracles.

Now we know and understand certain basic laws of nature. We have observed these laws. We have codified them and classified them and described and defined them. And we have sought to understand some of the laws of nature: the laws of magnetism, the laws of electricity, and the laws of gravity. And we have sought to use these powers, to harness them, for our benefit. And for a long time without understanding the law of gravity, we knew that things just fall to the ground. We did not know why, but we knew that they did. And of course, as Newton observed the apple falling from the tree, he sought to understand gravity. And he began to measure the rate of speed and the increased rate of speed as the objects would fall to the ground from various heights. And he studied the acceleration of the speed as they were falling. And then we have the explanation of the attraction of mass by Einstein, as we began to understand the laws of gravity more.

Now we know certain laws. We have observed how they operate in our universe. But we do not know all the laws. And God is knowledgeable of laws of nature that we do not even know. As far as Paul the Apostle was concerned it would have been a miracle to see a 747 to take off from the ground—that huge plane with all of its cargo and passengers. The apostles would have said, “That cannot happen. You cannot get something that big into the air.” But we have learned laws of aerodynamics. We have learned how the air flowing over the airfoil creates a lift. And thus, by

the use of other laws, we are able to seemingly defy the law of gravity. But in reality there are other laws—we could call them higher laws—that do not negate the law of gravity, but when they are in operation they can seemingly defy the laws of gravity.

So God knows other laws of nature and laws in the universe that He is able to make operative. And as we behold the event we say, “What a miracle!” And we say that is impossible—that cannot be! Yet God is only using laws that He knows and understands, that we are not yet knowledgeable of. Maybe one day we will develop even greater knowledge of some of these laws in nature and we might be able to do other things that, at this point, we would look at and say, “It is a Miracle! It is Impossible!”

Now those men who do not believe in miracles, who are purely naturalists and only believe in the laws of nature as we understand them, they seek to take the miraculous or the supernatural out of the miracles of Jesus. For instance, William Barclay explains how Jesus could feed a crowd of five thousand men, plus women and children, with five loaves and two fish from a little boy.

Barclay tells us that in those days people wore robes and they had these long flowing sleeves with sort of a strap around the cuff or drawstring. And they would often carry their food—little bits of bread or cheese or whatever, in their sleeves. It is nothing miraculous. He has something up his sleeve! This was the idea.

And so, it was evening and the people were hungry and obviously had nothing to eat and no possibility of buying anything at that time of the day and in that wilderness area. When Jesus asked, “Well what do you have?”—everyone was so selfish. They were holding their sleeves tight and they were not going to give up their food. And then when they saw this precious little boy bringing to Jesus his five loaves and his two fish, they were so touched by the example of the little child they all untied their sleeves and pulled out their loaves and their fish. And so, they were able to gather up twelve baskets full of fragments after they had all eaten and were filled. So there really was not a miracle except that the people’s hearts were touched by the generous example of the little boy (cf. Barclay 103). Isn’t that sweet?

Barclay further explains to us that when the disciples were in the ship, the wind had actually blown them much closer to shore than they realized. And when they saw Jesus walking towards them, they thought He was on the water because of the waves and it just looked like He was walking on the water; when in reality He was walking on the shore. They had almost beached their little boat. And so it really was not a miracle at all. It just appeared that He was walking on the water (cf. Barclay 105).

And thus, they seek to explain away the miraculous element of the Bible. The only reason why you would need to do that, or seek to do that, is because of your concept of God. Somehow your concept of God is very narrow and very limited in thinking that God can only operate within the laws of nature that we presently know and understand. Not recognizing that God is the one who created and formed the laws of nature. And I am certain that if time should tarry and we continue to advance in our scientific developments, we are going learn a lot more about nature and laws of nature. And in the future we will be doing things that at our present state of knowledge we would have said, “It is impossible! It is a miracle!” But as we learn more of these higher laws, we will be amazed and astounded at what is possible.

Now this gift of the working of miracles, it would seem, is one of the requirements for apostleship. When Paul was writing to the Corinthians defending the title of apostle, he said to

them in 2 Corinthians 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” So Paul is pointing to the miracles that were done through his ministry while he was there in Corinth. And he used those as a badge to attest to the fact that he was an apostle. And thus, it seems that it was one of the requirements of apostleship in the early church to have this gift of working of miracles.

But the gift of the working of miracles did not seem, in the early church, to be limited to the apostles. When Paul the Apostle was on the way to Damascus to imprison those who were calling upon the name of Jesus, he had his encounter with the Lord. The Lord spoke to him and called him into the ministry—into following Jesus Christ. And as a result of this encounter with Jesus, he was blinded and had to be led into Damascus.

Now there was a certain disciple of Jesus in Damascus whose name was Ananias. He was not an apostle but just a disciple. In Acts 9, the Lord spoke to him and told him to go to the street called Straight, to inquire at the house of Simon for this fellow Saul. “Because,” the Lord said, “he is praying.” And Ananias said, “Lord, I have heard about this fellow, how he has really wrecked havoc in the church in Jerusalem. And actually he has been sent here to Damascus to imprison those who call on Your name.” In other words, “Are You sure, Lord?” And the Lord said, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me. I have shown him the things he is going to suffer for My name.”

So Ananias came to Paul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me unto you that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And so he laid hands on Paul and Paul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. And so here is a disciple exercising the gift of miracles.

Philip, one of those who was chosen to wait on the tables, went to Samaria to preach Christ and many believed and were baptized when they saw the miracles that he did. And then also Stephen was one of the other of the seven men who were chosen to wait tables in the early church. We are told concerning Stephen in Acts 6:8, that he was full of faith and power. And as we said, the gift of faith seems to be related to the gift of working of miracles. I think you have sort of a “trinity” of gifts: faith, the gifts of healing, and the working of miracles. I think they are all three tied together. Stephen was full of faith and power and he did great wonders and miracles among the people. So, although it was necessary to have this gift if you were to take the title of apostle, there were others who had the gift who obviously were not considered apostles in the early church.

Now I believe that there are incumbent dangers to one who would possess the gift of working of miracles. And I think the first danger would be the using of the gift for your own personal benefit. And this is pretty much what Satan suggested to Jesus in the temptation. In Luke 4, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and there He fasted for forty days. And afterwards He was hungry. Satan came unto Him and he said, “Since You are the Son of God...” The King James says, “If you are the son of God,” but the case is not in the indicative but rather in the subjunctive case, and so it properly translates as “*Since* You are the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.” In other words, use Your miraculous powers to satisfy Your own physical needs. Use Your powers in order to just satisfy the flesh. And you remember Jesus refused to do so. He said, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Father” (Matthew 4:4).

We note in the Old Testament when Naaman the leper was cleansed and realized that he was cleansed and saw the miracle, he returned to the prophet Elisha and sought to give him rewards and gifts because of the miracle of his healing. But we note that Elisha refused to accept any remuneration or any of the rewards or benefits from Naaman for the miracle that he experienced.

I think there is a danger in having the gift of the working of miracles. The danger is in taking personal glory unto yourself for what God has done. Because if a person sees a miracle and you seem to be the instrument through which that miracle was accomplished, people are very ready to put you on some kind of pedestal. They look up to you in awe as some kind of mighty man of God. And there is a danger in accepting that adulation and that wonderment and awe of the people.

It is a very embarrassing thing when God uses you as His instrument and people seek to extol or exalt you. I really have been blessed of God. Yes, to a great extent I admit that. But I have actually had people come up and sort of touch me and say, “Can I touch you?” And I say, “Pet my dog. He appreciates it.”

When Peter was going into the temple there was a man who was born lame who was seeking alms. And Peter said, “I do not have silver and gold, but what I have I will give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise to your feet and walk” (Acts 3:6). And he took him by the right hand and lifted him to his feet. Immediately he received strength and he began to walk. He began to run—running through the temple. And the people said, “Look, is that the lame man who has been out there all these years? It sure looked like him. How is it that he is walking?” “We do not know. Let us find out.”

And they followed him out to Solomon’s Porch where Peter was still standing. And he grabbed hold of Peter and began to hug him—probably even kiss him. So as all the people gathered because of the lame man’s response towards Peter, they related the miracle of this man walking to him. And Peter looks up and all of a sudden all these people are looking at him, saying, “Wow! What is this?”

And Peter said, “Ye men of Israel, why marvel you at this?” This was sort of a rebuke. “You see, you are the men of Israel. You are the men who worship the God of Israel, who is a God of miracles. So why should you marvel that God should work a miracle? I mean after all, He is the God who created the universe. Why should you marvel at this? Why should you look on us as though we, through our own righteousness, have done this good deed to this lame man? Why are you looking at me like I am so holy or righteous?” And he pointed them immediately to Jesus Christ. “This was done through the name of Jesus Christ, whom your rulers crucified. And it is through the faith of Him that this man stands here before you whole.” So the people were ready to exalt Peter for the miracle. Peter had enough wisdom not to take the glory from the people. Modern day evangelists would have passed the offering plate.

In Acts 14 when Paul was in Lystra, there was a lame man about forty years old who had never been able to walk. And as Paul was preaching—and we will get to this gift of discernment—Paul discerned that the man had enough faith to be healed. And he said, “Brother, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. Stand up and walk!” And the man stood up and walked. And all of the people there in Lystra said, “The gods have come down!” And they ran up the street to the temple of Jupiter. And they got hold of the priest and they said, “Man, what are you doing here? Jupiter is down the street! He brought Mercury with him.” And so the priest came dragging an ox down the street. He was going to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas right there.

Now the whole human rationale would say, “Alright! We have them in the palm of our hand. We will let them think that we are gods and we will sort of manipulate them. We will ultimately get them around to the Lord. But in the meantime we can live a pretty good life.”

There is a danger any time God uses you as His instrument to do His work of love and grace in another person's heart and life. People want to respond to the instrument, many times, rather than to God. They are so grateful for what God has done, they want to reward the instrument that God used. And thus, unless a person had really come to the place in their own life where they do not have personal ambition or personal desires for glory, one of the worst things in the world would be for God to give to them the gift of working of miracles. It could absolutely destroy them. It is not an easy gift to have.

Now does God work miracles today or did all of the miracles cease with the last of the apostles? That seems to be an argument that has occupied the theologians for many years. But it is my firm conviction in answer to the question, "Does God work miracles today?"—the answer is an unqualified, yes! Salvation is a miracle.

In Mark 10 when the rich young ruler came to Jesus seeking the way of salvation and when he finally went away sorrowful, Jesus then turned to His disciples and He said, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of heaven. Really it is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Peter, in astonishment said, "Lord, who then can be saved?" And the answer of Jesus was, "With man it is impossible."

So if a miracle is something that is humanly impossible, then salvation is a miracle because it is humanly impossible for any man to save himself. So to say that the days of miracles are over would be to deny that people could be saved today. No, the days of miracles, thank God, are not over. God is still working miracles today.

Are there people today who have the gift of the working of miracles? It is possible. I personally do not know of any who have the valid gift. That is not to say that there is not a valid gift in operation today. I think I came close and perhaps met a person who had the gift of the working of miracles when I was in New Guinea. She was a very simple native girl. And as they began to relate the stories of the prayers of this girl and the things that God was doing through her prayers, it was quite possible that she had the gift of working of miracles. It was quite an astounding testimony that was given to us of how God had used her in praying for people who were blind and they were able to see! And there was one miracle after another. But she was a very simple, plain, native, New Guinea girl.

I do believe that it is possible for people to have the gift of the working of miracles, but I also believe that there is a lot of fraud as there are those who would like you to think that they have the gift of working of miracles. And this is always tragic to me. Charlatans will use deceptive means to cause people to think that they have powers that they really do not possess. And they seek to deceive people into thinking that they have a great power of God in their lives and the working of miracles. Now, so often these men who do these things have a rationale. They say that it helps increase the people's faith. It is that old argument that the end justifies the means. But you will never find any scriptural support for such an argument in regards to such deception.

One of our assistant pastors who is also a writer (a columnist) went to one of these healing meetings back in Philadelphia. And the first person in the healing line was an elderly man. And as they brought him up he had an oxygen tank and the tubes and so forth in his face. And so the evangelist made quite a thing over the oxygen tank and the tubes and so forth. And then he prayed for him and took the tubes out and took the tank away and he said, "Now run up the aisle." And the man ran up the aisle and ran back again. And he said, "How you feel?" "Oh, I feel great!" Everybody was excited—the place went wild.

And so after the service, this friend of mine who was a reporter asked this couple as they were going to their car, “Wait a minute, I need to talk to you about what happened tonight.” And the lady said, “Oh, does [and she named the evangelist] he want us to run it for tomorrow night too—the oxygen thing and all?” He said, “No, no, I was just wanting to interview you about your husband.” It turned out that it was just a rented thing because it was staged. They said, “Well, he was really healed earlier, but they wanted to stage it again for the people in order to build their faith.” You see, that is fraud.

And unfortunately there are a lot of fraudulent things that are done. And as I say, they use the excuse, “Well we are building faith in the people so that they can see God work.” But I cannot buy that. I do not think that God needs gimmicks. And I just cannot buy using gimmicks in the name of God. God can do it and He does not need us to put on acts or whatever.

I would love to see the gifts of the working of miracles in operation here at Calvary Chapel. Through the years of our ministry here there have been many miracles. There have been miracles of healing—marvelous miracles. There have been miracles that we cannot deny and would not deny. But I do not believe that we are anywhere near approaching the church in Acts. And I would like to see us get a little closer. I do not know that we ever will.

The Lord said to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3, “You have a little strength.” And I think we probably qualify as the church of Philadelphia. And we have a little strength but not much. I do not believe that the days of miracles are over. I believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And I do not believe that there is any scriptural evidence that would lead one to believe that God would remove this gift of working of miracles from His church.

And again I would not be ready to fault God for us not having this gift of the working of miracles. I would be willing to accept the fault and the blame. I do not believe that I would be able to handle the notoriety that would follow having the gift of the working of miracles. And personally, I do not know of anyone in this congregation who would be able to handle the notoriety that would come as the result of the working of this gift. Perhaps there is someone. I would pray that there would be. I know I am not the one.

And thus, I see it as our weakness and not as God’s reluctance. And if a person would come up to me and say, “Well, I am really praying and seeking for the gift of the working of miracles.” Honestly I would, in my heart, question his motive. Why would he want that gift? Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know them? I know that for years I wanted the gift of the working of miracles, but I know in my heart of hearts, that I always thought if I only had this gift—my how the people would be attracted! The church would be full. I would not have to work at Alpha Beta Market to make a living. That was my motive.

Will we see this gift in operation before the Lord comes? It is possible. I know I for one want to be open to it. And if God should see fit and the Holy Spirit should sovereignly will that this gift be in operation in the church, I for one would rejoice and be glad. Whether or not it will be manifested is in His hands and not in ours.

It is a valid gift and I do not believe that God has ceased working miracles. As I said, we see so many miracles. Salvation is a miracle of God and we see that by the hundreds. Transforming lives

is only something God can do. It is a thrill to me, when I see a life transformed by the Spirit of God.

We have been up at our new youth camp again this week, being blessed to the extreme. We have watched God working miracles in the high school kids up there this week. I thank God every day for this facility that God has enabled us to provide for the young people. I only wish that each of you could come up and spend a little time there to see how God is using this facility in touching hundreds of young people.

Last night as we spoke to the kids and then we called those who wanted to make a full consecration and commitment of their lives to Jesus to come down around the fire and join me. Watching over three hundred kids just come down weeping and surrendering their lives to God. What a thrill! What a blessing!

I taught them the chorus—and you would have to have been a long time in the Lord to know this one—

Only to be what He wants me to be, every moment of every day.  
Yielded completely to Jesus alone, every step of this pilgrim  
way. Just to be clay in the Potter's hand and willing to do what  
His will commands. Only to be what He wants me to be every  
moment of every day. (*Only To Be What He Wants Me To Be*)

We stood around the fire with these kids and with our hands lifted, singing it to the Lord. "Lord, I only want to be what You want me to be every moment of every day." They were yielded fully, completely, to Jesus alone. Oh God is working in marvelous, miraculous ways there in the camp and in that we rejoice.

These kids are so on fire up there. You should have heard their testimonies around the fire last night. You should hear them challenging each other. It is beautiful. I mean, some of these kids I was ready to just hand the Bible and say, "Go for it!" as they challenged each other. It has been an exciting time.

It is a miracle—what God is doing. The fruit and the results that are going to come from this—I will tell you that only eternity will be able to tally up what God has done. My heart is full. My cup overflows. God is good.

Shall we pray?

Father, we come to You tonight and acknowledge our faith in You. We believe that You are the Creator of this whole universe and also the sustainer. And we know, Lord, that You are God and there is nothing that is too hard for You. With Abraham we know that You are able to do that which You have promised. And we thank You, Lord, for Your promises. Lord, we desire to see Your work and Your hand working in our midst. We desire to see the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, those things that are in our lives that would hinder the flow of the Spirit or restrict the flow of the Spirit, Lord, we ask that You would work in removing them. For Lord, it is our desire that Your Spirit flow forth from our life like a torrent of living water,

unrestricted. Just a full rich flow. And so, Lord, we commit now ourselves to You. We present our bodies as instruments through which You can do Your work. Fill us until we overflow with Your Spirit. And Lord, let Your love just flow forth out of our lives, touching the needs of those around us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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This is tape number SHS320. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

As Paul is listing the various manifestations and gifts of the Spirit for us in 1 Corinthians 12:10, He tells us, “To another discerning of spirits.” There is a spirit world that is just as real as the material world in which we live.

Scientists say that there is much more space in an atom than there is solid matter. In a hydrogen atom, which is made up of one proton and a single electron revolving around it, there is so much space that if you would enlarge the proton to the size of a baseball, the electron would be about the size of a BB. The electron would be rotating around the proton at the rate of 10,000 miles a second, but it would be ten miles away. That is how much space there is in an atom of hydrogen. It is 30,000 times the diameter of the mass. Now if the earth was as a proton and the moon was an electron—if there was the same distance between the earth and the moon as there is between the proton and the electron of a hydrogen atom, the moon would be a thousand times further away from the earth than it is right now.

If all of the atoms in your body would suddenly collapse there would be no more space between the solid matter and we would have to get a powerful microscope to find you. You would be a microscopic speck of dust. The problem is you would still weigh the same as you do now.

Scientists talk about the density of atoms. And we know that there are dwarf stars whose density is much greater than that of the atoms here on the earth. There is a star of the first magnitude called Sirius. In 1888 they discovered that it was actually a double star. It is also called the Dog Star. The smaller of the two is called the pup. It is a dwarf star that seems to rotate around the major star as it orbits out there in our universe. But they say the density of Sirius B (or the pup) is so great that one cubic inch of it would weigh 1,750 pounds.

Now there is another star out there called Van Manen that is even much denser than Sirius B. One cubic inch of it would weigh twelve and a half tons. Now imagine if a small meteorite from that particular star would happen to hit the earth, and you saw it as a pebble on the sidewalk you decided to kick it off! And as dense as the star is, it is still in a gaseous state; there is still a lot of space between the solid matter (the solid parts being the protons, neutrons, and electrons).

Because there is so much space in an atom, some say that it is theoretically possible for two worlds to coexist at the same time and at the same place—both of them passing through each other and both of them unconscious of the other’s existence. All it would take is for them to be made up of a different molecular structure.

Now in a sense that is what the Bible teaches—that there are two worlds coexisting, passing through each other. For the most part we are not conscious of that other world. However, the Scripture tells us that the other world (the spirit world) is very conscious of us. The spirit dimension is made up of a different structure. Probably the resurrected body of Jesus was of a different molecular structure. When the disciples were gathered in a room with the doors shut and locked, suddenly Jesus appeared in the room with them. So that this world of spirits is a very real world. And it has a tremendous influence on all of our lives. And the influence can be either for good or for evil.

The Bible teaches us in Matthew 4:10-11 concerning angels that:

He will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Concerning the angels, Hebrews 1:14 declares:

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

And we are aware of the Holy Spirit and His influence upon our life for good. He is convicting us of sin and drawing us to Jesus Christ. This is the beautiful work of that Holy Spirit and the influence of the Holy Spirit in molding, and shaping, and forming us into the image of Jesus.

But there is another realm of spirit beings that are opposed to your walk in Christ. And these spirit beings can be a very negative influence upon you. As Paul the Apostle wrote,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.  
(Ephesians 6:12)

And so there is a battle that goes on, a spiritual battle and we (all of us) experience this spiritual battle. And these forces or spirits of darkness can create a real problem for us as we seek to walk after the Spirit of God.

Now the thing about the evil spirits is that they are able to come on as angels of light. And thus it is possible for a person to be deceived by these evil spirits who, as 2 Corinthians 11 says, “Satan is able to transform himself as an angel of light.” His ministers are able also to do so and that is why we need to have the gift of discerning of spirits.

Now have you ever met people who seemed to be all right—what they said was fine. You watch them and they seem to do the right things, but yet you had an uneasy feeling about them? There was just something that you could not define and you could not describe. There was just an uncomfortable feeling around them. And then later on you discover that it was just all a charade with them. There was no reality of a walk or a relationship with the Lord and you understand why you had that feeling of discomfort when you were around them.

That is the way the gift of discernment of spirits operates. There is just something that is not quite right. It is sort of an intangible thing. You cannot really put your finger on it always. But I have discovered that one of the difficult things in having the discerning of spirits is that if a person does not have the discernment of spirits you cannot understand why they can be so gullible. It is so plain. It is so obvious. You say, “Can you not see?”

This gift of the discerning of spirits apparently was in operation in the church in Ephesus. For as Jesus addresses the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2, He commends them because they had tried those who claimed to be apostles and were not, and they found them to be liars.

But the most classic use of the gift of discerning of spirits is probably found in Acts 8. When Philip had gone to Samaria and preached Christ unto them and there was a genuine revival, many

believed and were baptized when they saw the miracles that Philip did. Among those who believed and were baptized was a man by the name of Simon, who before Philip's coming was a sorcerer and he was held in great awe by the people. They thought that he had the power of God in his life. But when Simon saw the miracles, he wondered at the miracles that Philip was able to do and he believed and was baptized.

Then we read that when the church in Jerusalem had heard that the Samaritans had also received the gospel, they sent unto them Peter and John, for as yet the Holy Spirit had not come upon them. They had not had this release, the outflow, the over-pouring, or what many term the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit. So that, Peter and John came and laid their hands upon the Samaritan believers and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when this Simon saw that through the laying on of hands by Peter and John, that the Holy Spirit was imparted to these Samaritan believers, he desired to have this power. From the context he evidently offered money to Peter and John. He sought to buy this power. In the realm of the magicians there is the selling of the tricks. "How did you do that?" And with many of their magical tricks—the secrets of how they do it are for sale. The magicians will buy tricks from one another. This has been going on as long as people have been tricking each other—that is the buying of the inside information.

And evidently this thing with Simon was something like that. He had been into sorcery. He had been used to fooling people or deceiving people, and working seemingly magic tricks. And now here is something that he cannot quite figure out. All Peter and John are doing is laying hands on these people and they are receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Simon said, "I would like to do that. How do you do it? What would you charge me for that one?"

So Peter said unto him,

Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. (Acts 8:20)

Peter was reading the spirit of the man. Although he had joined company with the people who were being saved, followed into baptism, and was there with Philip, yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. And so Peter said,

Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. (Acts 8:22)

So here Peter was exercising the gift of discernment of spirits, as he saw that the spirit that Simon had was wrong. His heart was wrong. And he encourages him to repent. He said,

For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. (Acts 8:23)

It is quite possible that down in his heart he was jealous that the attention that he once had (the power that he once had over these people) was being diverted to Peter and to Jesus Christ, who Philip was preaching. And thus, he thought that if he could buy this power, he could again get the

people under his control. But in his heart there was bitterness; there was this gall of bitterness and there was the bond of iniquity.

Now throughout the Scriptures we are told that we are to try the spirits to see if they be of God. And there are many prophets who have gone out into the world who are not of God. And therefore it is important that we have the discernment of spirits, so that we are able to try the spirits. As in the church at Ephesus, when someone comes along and claims to be an apostle, we have that capacity of spiritual discernment and we can find them to be liars.

Throughout the Scriptures there are the warnings concerning the false prophets—those who would come in the name of God and supposedly speak the word of God. But God said so many times that He did not send them. He did not speak through them. And He denied the words that they were saying as coming from Him.

There is sort of a dilemma because today there are many false prophets who are gaining a great amount of notoriety. As a shepherd over the flock of God, I feel a certain responsibility of warning the flock of God concerning some of these false prophets. The problem is this: the minute I begin to give names and incidences and proofs that a person is a false prophet, then there are always those weaker souls who are offended. And they say, “Oh, how can you say that about brother so and so? I was blessed by his ministry. I was healed when I reached out and touched the television set. I have been supporting him.” So, many times it is difficult to warn the people of things that you know or understand. Sometimes you know by the Spirit and just sometimes by observation and sometimes you know by information that is coming to you.

We had an evangelist who came to our church when we were pastoring in Tucson many years ago. And he was fleecing the flock of God. He was fleecing the flock that God had put me over. I was very, very young in the ministry. In fact, this was just the second church that I had pastored. But both Kay and I recognized that this fellow was just plain fleecing our flock. Now I think there was a bit of discernment involved, but yet there were other big clues. He was praying for a badly-needed new pair of shoes, size nine, black wingtips, and one of our sweet members brought those shoes to him the next night. He said, “Oh praise the Lord.” I said, “No, no, no! Do not praise the Lord. Thank them. You know, everybody heard your prayer.” He was a very humorous man in his preaching and many people were taken in by him. But he was obviously fleecing the people and they just did not seem to realize it.

We had an elder in the church—and to show you how long ago it was—it was the time when tape recordings were just coming in. Now prior to that they had wire recorders. And they would record on little wires. But the wire recording industry did not last very long. It was very short-lived because they soon had the tape recorders. But this evangelist had a wire recorder. It was not working and of course it was fast becoming obsolete. And he wanted to buy a new state-of-the-art tape recorder.

So one elder had invited him out to dinner at their home, which was a very lovely, hospitable thing to do. But the evangelist told him all about this wire recorder that he had and he would make him a real good deal on it. Which really was not a good deal, but he made out like it was a good deal. So that night before service, the elder said, “You know the evangelist was over and I am buying his wire recorder.” I said, “Be careful, that thing does not work.” And I said, “It is obsolete. You probably will not be able to get the parts to fix it.”

Well, he went around the church telling people that I was jealous of the evangelist. And you know, I was young and he was an older evangelist and skilled and all. They said that I was just jealous because he was such a good preacher. About a month later the elder came to me and he said, “I have had that recorder in the shop for repair and the fellow said he cannot get parts. Do you have any idea where I might be able to get the parts for that?” I said, “I told you.” As I said, the difficulty with the gift of discernment is when you can see something so clearly and others just cannot seem to see it.

Now Jesus warned in Matthew’s Gospel,

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

That is why it is extremely important to have the gift of the discernment of spirits. You cannot always tell a false prophet by what he says. Many times what he says is 99% correct and that is what makes them so dangerous. You cannot always tell them by their actions. Here Jesus said they are going to do great signs and wonders.

Peter warned that:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

But here is a key: through their feigned words they will make merchandise of you (that is, take advantage of you financially). Through feigned or false words—through flattery or whatever—their whole motive is just to make merchandise of you.

Paul, writing to Timothy said,

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

Those who would teach you that godliness is a path to riches are false prophets. Paul warns us against them.

Now there is a classic story in the Old Testament that perhaps better than any other, warns us of the dangers of not discerning the spirits. And that is found in 1 Kings 13. It was the time when Jeroboam was the king of Israel in the northern confederacy. And Jeroboam was a wicked king. He had led the people in idolatry. He would offer himself sacrifices and incense at the altars of the pagan gods. There was a young prophet who had come from Judah—the southern tribe. And Jeroboam was there offering incense before the altar and we read that this young prophet cried against the altar in the word of the Lord and said,

Oh altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, “Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priest of the high places that burn incense upon thee and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee.” (1 Kings 13:2)

This is an interesting prophecy concerning this altar to the pagan god in the nation of Israel. “Altar, altar, your priests will be burnt upon you and men’s bones.” And that prophecy was later literally fulfilled.

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the Lord has spoken. Behold the altar shall be rent and, the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.” And it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God which had cried against the altar in Bethel that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, “Lay hold on him.” And his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. [I mean, it just locked.] And the king answered and said unto the man of God, “Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again.” And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king’s was restored to him again and, became as it was before. And the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.” [Really showing now that he is a man of God.] And the man of God said unto the king, “If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, “Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.” So he went another way and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel. Now there dwelt an old prophet [and here is where the plot thickens with this old prophet in Bethel] and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, then they told also to their father. And their father said unto them, “What way went he?” For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, “Saddle me the ass.” So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon. And went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, “Art thou the man of God that came from Judah?” And he said, “I am.” Then he said unto him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” And he said, “I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: For it was said

to me by the word of the LORD, “Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.” He said unto him, “I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, “Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water.” But he lied to him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. (1 Kings 13:3-19)

So the old prophet said, “Well I am a prophet too. And the angel of the Lord came and brought me the word of Jehovah and told me to come and get you to bring you home.” So he went back with him.

Now it is interesting he had this powerful prophecy. He gave the word of the Lord. It was confirmed. Jeroboam the king stretched out his hand to order the old prophet to be arrested and the hand was frozen. Jeroboam begged that the old prophet would pray that he might be healed and he did and Jeroboam was healed. The altar was torn and the ashes spilled like he said—but here he does not have the discernment of spirits. When the old man comes to him and lies and tells him something that is contrary to what God had spoken.

Now let us be sure about this. God does not contradict Himself. And also, it is possible that God will speak to you through someone else but God is capable of speaking directly to you. I am always very skeptical when someone comes to me and says, “The Lord told me to tell you,” because I wonder, *When did He lose my address?*

So here the old prophet is bringing word that is contrary to the word of the Lord to him. The Lord told me to bring you back.”

And he went back with him and did eat bread in the house and drank water and it came to pass as he sat at the table that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back. [Now there is a true prophecy.] And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah saying, Thus saith the LORD, “Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the LORD did say to thee, ‘Eat no bread, and drink no water, thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.’ “And it came to pass, after he had eaten the bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him thee ass, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase. And behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, “It is the man of God, who was disobedient to the word of the LORD: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD which he spake unto him.” And he spake

to his sons, “Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him. And he went and found his carcass cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcass: the lion had not eaten the carcass, nor torn the ass. And the prophet took up the carcass of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: And the old prophet came to the city to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his carcass in his own grave; and they mourned over him saying, “Alas, my brother!” (1 Kings 13:19-30)

It is an interesting story of a man who had power—a man who had the gift of prophecy, but also a man who lacked the discernment of spirit and it cost him his life. Because he respected the older prophet, accepted his word and did not have the discernment of spirits to know that he was lying to him. A tragic story, really it is a very sad story. But what makes it so sad is that it is a story that is so often repeated by people who do not always listen to the word of the Lord. And people get ideas and they lead other people after themselves. And tragically, many people have lost their lives because of false prophets.

I think of those who followed Jim Jones. I think of those who were following David Koresh and the tragic thing is that there is that lack of the discerning of spirits. When a man professes to be a prophet of God and the people do not seem to have the discernment to realize that they are being taken—hoodwinked!

So this gift of the discernment of spirits is an important gift. And as I said, I am certain that many times it has operated in your life without your being thoroughly cognizant of the fact. There is just that queasy, uneasy feeling that you often get when someone comes along and they seem to say the right things and do the right things, but there is something that seems just—well, you cannot put your finger on it. It is an intangible thing but you are just uncomfortable. When I get that kind of a check in my spirit, I always walk very carefully.

Now I have not always been correct in my evaluation of a person. Again when we were pastoring in Tucson, we were very young and green and we were in a denomination at the time. And we received a letter from our denominational headquarters warning us of a couple who were going around fleecing the churches. It described the couple, and they were name droppers. They would drop the names of the leaders of the denomination. They were very smooth operators and had taken many of the churches for tidy sums of money on the basis of borrowing funds and bringing them right back.

So there was a knock at the door and I went to answer it and here was this man and a lady. They fit the description perfectly—even with the dark glasses. And immediately they started name dropping the names of all of the leaders of the denomination. I thought, “Man, I have got them!” So I was just very cool. I was cold. And they said, “You know we started the church here in Tucson.” I said, “Yeah, tell me about it.” “May we see your new sanctuary?” I said, “Yes, come on in.” Then they got very dramatic. He turned and he said, “Honey, look. It was worth it all.” I said, “Give me a break,” under my breath. I was just thinking, “You are not fooling me.

And then he started the old thing, “We are passing through and our car broke down.” Man, I have heard that so many times. “And we do not have the money to get the repairs. We just need so much to get the thing fixed.” I said, “Yeah, I know all about it. Yes, uh-huh.” And so I was certain that this was the couple I had been warned about. And they said, “When do you have church?” I said, “Well it is Wednesday evening. We have church tonight.” They said, “We are going to come.” I said, “Yeah, I have heard that one before.” And so, they were there but to my

amazement, when one of the long time members of the church came in and saw them, she let out sort of a scream and hugged them and said, “Oh, how are you?” And they were legitimate.

And here I had been so icy cold, frozen and all. Oh, did I feel horrible. I lacked discernment! Here I should have been showing compassion and love. And they actually stayed around town and painted a few houses to get enough money to get his car fixed and they went on. He never did put the bite on me. He never did say we need the money. He never did get to that and how I had to apologize! I showed them the letter I had received. I said, “And look how you guys fit the description.” And I asked for their forgiveness.

The Lord wants us to be wise but there are the limitations to our wisdom and that is where the Spirit comes in. And He is able and He is faithful also. And I have been taken more than once but every time I have been taken there was a check, or there was a warning, and I sort of just said, “No, they are fine. I can tell by the look in his eye.” How important it is that we learn to follow the leading of the Spirit. It saves us from a lot of trouble.

Father, we thank You for the help that the Holy Spirit gives to us. How He helps our infirmities, which are so many. Not only do we not always know how to pray as we ought, but Lord, many times we do not know who we can trust or not trust. We do not know if the man is a deceiver or real. And so Lord, we pray that You would grant to us that discernment of spirits. Lord, You know the hearts, and You know the thoughts and the intents of a person’s heart. And Lord, we want to be kind. We want to be generous. We want to be giving and compassionate to those who are truly in need. But Lord, we do not want to be taken. And so, help us, Lord. Give us keen, sharp discernment. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

May the Lord watch over you and fill you with His Spirit, until your life just overflows—not just content to be filled, but may it be overflowing. Like Jesus said, “Gushing like a torrent of living water.” May you be drawn close to Him. May there be a renewal of commitment and dedication. May the Spirit of God just work in our hearts and in our lives, until we become everything He wants us to be, all the time.

This is tape number SHS321. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

In this lesson we come to the gift of speaking in tongues. And of all of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, this is by far the most controversial. Theological debates really heat up when you get the subject of speaking in tongues. It seems as though, of all of the gifts of the Spirit, this is the only one that was not manifested in the Old Testament. The rest of the gifts of the Spirit are found manifested in the Old Testament. This one seems to be limited to the New Testament.

There is one possibility of this gift being manifested in the Old Testament and that is concerning King Hezekiah, when he got the message from the prophet Isaiah to set his heart in order for he was going to die and not live. He was not really ready to die. He turned his face to the wall and he began to pray desperately to God for healing. Describing his experience, Hezekiah said,

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me. (Isaiah 38:14)

So he describes this night as chattering like a crane or a swallow and mourning like a dove. So it would seem as though there were sounds that were not articulated into syllables at all. He understood that there was just a deep intercession from his heart when he felt that he was going to die.

Now the speaking in tongues is something that was promised in the Scripture. Isaiah 28:11 prophesied,

For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, “This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing”: yet they would not hear.

This particular prophecy concerning speaking in tongues would probably not be allowed in theological circles as an argument for the gift of tongues—except that in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul uses this very Scripture as being predictive of the time when they would be speaking in tongues. So Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaks of the Isaiah passage as a prophecy of speaking in tongues.

Now it is one of those prophecies of which they say it has a dual fulfillment. They often call it the near and the far. The immediate sense of this prophecy was concerning the drunkards of Ephraim who had turned their backs on God and were mocking Isaiah and his teaching method. In a mocking way, they were saying he ought to go back and teach children. His teaching is very simple. It is “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little” (cf. Isaiah 28:10).

So because they were mocking the prophet of God (and really they were disregarding God because it was a drunken debauchery that was going on there), God said He was going to bring the Assyrians against them and that they were going to fall to the hands of the Assyrians. And so, because they will not listen to the teaching of the prophet—precept upon precept, line upon line—they will actually be hearing other languages (stammering lips). God will speak another tongue to this people and yet for all of this, He said, “They will not hearken” (cf. Isaiah 28:12).

Now what the prophet was prophesying was concerning the coming Assyrian invasion, when the Assyrians would occupy the land and the people would be hearing this strange tongue of the Assyrians in their streets. The Israelites would be hearing the Assyrian's strange language. And thus, hearing the Assyrian language would be a sign of God's judgment against them. This is God's judgment for their debauched lives and their forsaking Him.

The far fulfillment, of course, is found in the New Testament and the gift of speaking in tongues. And thus, Isaiah 28:12 said,

This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

Now in Mark 16, Jesus promised the gift of speaking in tongues. In the commandment, Jesus said,

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. (Mark 16:15-17)

So this is the prophecy of Jesus, or the promise of Jesus, concerning the signs that would follow those who believe Him. One of them would be speaking with new tongues.

Now there are those who would argue that the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel are not found in some of the earliest manuscripts. It is true that these last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel are not found in the Codex Sinaiticus or the Codex Vaticanus, which are both a part of the Alexandrian family of manuscripts. However, it is interesting to note that the early church fathers, Irenaeus, who lived from AD 140 to 202, and Hippolytus, who lived from AD 170 to 235, both quote from these last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel.

Now the argument that some of the scholars give is that because this portion of Mark's Gospel does not appear in the Codex Sinaiticus, which is one of the oldest complete manuscripts that we possess (though it really is not complete), they say that this passage then was inserted later on by a copier. However, Codex Sinaiticus actually dates back to sometime into the AD 400s. They do not know the exact date, however 420 to 460 are the dates that are usually established for the Codex Sinaiticus. Here is Irenaeus, one of the church fathers, 200 years before the Codex Sinaiticus was ever copied and he is quoting, no doubt, from an earlier manuscript. And so, the overwhelming evidence is that the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel actually were in the original manuscripts and somehow got deleted from the Codex Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus which comes, as I say, from the same Alexandrian family of manuscripts.

Now there is no question that these promises and prophecies were fulfilled in Acts. First of all in chapter two,

“And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the

house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

This could be translated, “as the Spirit gave them the ability.” or as the Catholic Douay Version says, “as the Spirit prompted their speech.” So here they are on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is given to the church and one of the remarkable signs was that they were all speaking in other tongues.

The word *tongues* is the Greek word *glōssa* (actually in this particular passage it is *glōssais*). And we do know that there were Jews from all over the world who had come to the Feast of Pentecost. Under the law, there were three major feasts each year and it was required of the Jews—it was mandatory—that the adult male Jew attend these three festivals or feast days in Jerusalem during the holy days. If they lived within a close radius, they had to be there. If they lived in another nation then they had to make a pilgrimage as often as was possible to be in Jerusalem for these feasts.

So always, when they would have one of the major feasts of the year (*i.e.*, Passover, Pentecost or Trumpets, and the Feast of Succoth), there would always be Jews who were gathered there from all over the world. And this particular feast was no exception. And so, “when the Day of Pentecost was fully come,” the Holy Spirit had come upon the church and there was a sound like of a mighty rushing wind, filling all of the house where they were seated. There were these cloven tongues of fire that were sitting upon each of them and they began to speak in these other tongues as the Spirit gave them the utterance—gave the ability or prompted their speech.

Acts 2 :6 says, “Now when it was noised abroad...”—what was noised abroad? Maybe it was the sound of the mighty, rushing wind. People came to see the origin of this sound that sounded like a hurricane to find the origin of the sound. When they gathered they were all amazed because they heard them speaking in the various dialects. And now you have another Greek word, *dialectus*. They heard them speaking in their own languages or in their own dialects. They were declaring the wonderful works of God.

In Acts 10, when Peter went to the house of Cornellius at the commandment of the Spirit, he came into the house and was preaching unto the friends of Cornellius that had gathered. In verse 44,

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

So again this is the manifestation of speaking in tongues in the tenth chapter when the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile believers.

Now in Acts 19, Paul came to the church at Ephesus and saw that there was a lacking in the church. And this was probably a lack of love because the fruit of the Spirit is love, which manifests itself in joy and peace and these other aspects of this word love. And Paul, seeing that there was perhaps very much life but not much joy, he asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “We haven’t even heard of the Holy Spirit.” And so

Paul asked them then, “Well then, how were you baptized?” They said, “John’s baptism.” And he said, “Well, John indeed baptized unto repentance, but he spoke of the one that was coming after him.”

And he preached unto them concerning Jesus Christ and they were baptized. And then Paul laid hands on them and we read there in Acts 19:6, “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” So two of the gifts of the Spirit were manifested, the speaking in tongues and the gift of prophecy.

Now, what is the purpose of the gift of speaking in tongues? First of all, it is to assist the believer in his prayer life. In 1 Corinthians 14:2 Paul said,

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries [or divine secrets].

So Paul said that when you are speaking in tongues you are not speaking to man, you are speaking to God.

Now, Paul said that no man understands the person speaking in tongues. How do you equate this with Acts 2 where all of them understood in their own dialects as they were declaring the wonderful works of God? They were all amazed. They said, “Are not all of these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that each one of us is hearing in our own languages as they are declaring the wonderful works of God?” Paul said, “No man understands him.”

Now this has led some to conclude that there are two types of tongues. One they call the “sign gift” of tongues and this is the sign that a person has received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that is usually a language or a dialect. And then they have developed a term called the “prayer language.” And they say that Paul, here in 1 Corinthians 14, is talking about a “prayer language” that God gives to the people to assist them in their prayer life.

In 1 Corinthians 13 where Paul is talking about the supremacy of love, he said, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels...” And so they declare that the tongues of men would be the dialects or the “sign tongues,” which could be understood by man. And the tongues of angels would be the “prayer language,” which would be a heavenly language that is not any earthly dialect.

Now to be honest with you, that is not something that you can establish as doctrine. It is speculation in an endeavor to explain an apparent discrepancy. But there is not enough evidence to really present that as doctrinal truth. There is not enough Scripture and not enough background in the Scripture to present it as absolute kind of doctrine. So there is insufficient scriptural basis to make such a distinction. The argument is made by reading into the text, rather than reading the text.

Now in 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, Paul said,

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

So Paul, by his own admission prayed in tongues and sang in tongues. But it should be noted that he did not do this in the public worship services. He said,

“When I am gathered together with the church, I would rather speak five words with the understanding than ten thousand words in tongues that the church might be edified.”  
(1 Corinthians 14:19)

And yet he did declare that, “I thank God I do speak in tongues more than all of you” (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:18). So Paul speaks about his praying in tongues. And I suppose that is where they get the idea of the prayer language.

The gift of tongues is not only to assist you in your prayer life, but it is to assist you in your worship of God. In Acts 14:16, Paul speaks of blessing God with the Spirit and the reference is to speaking in tongues. In verse 17, he declares it is a good way to give thanks. Again he is referring to speaking in tongues. So the gift of tongues was used to bless God and it was used to give thanks to God.

One of the difficulties that I have is that feeling of inadequacy in expressing to God my love, my appreciation, and my thankfulness for all that God has done for me. I often try to express my thanks to God but I find that many times words are inadequate. They really do not express the depth of feeling that I have.

It is interesting that the modern-day philosophers of existentialism are talking about what they have called “the ultimate experience.” They have postulated the possibility of a person having what they term the “ultimate experience.” And as they talk about this ultimate experience, they talk about the difficulty of it. Because it would be an experience that would be beyond anything you had ever experienced before. So that, you would be in such new territory that there has been no vocabulary developed to describe what you would feel. And thus, you would be totally incapable of explaining the ultimate experience to someone else, because there is no vocabulary that has been developed or devised that could actually relate what the ultimate experience was.

So if you should walk into a group of your philosophical friends and say, “Last night it happened,” and if they would say, “Tell us about it,” you would know that they were ignorant. You cannot tell about the ultimate experience, because it is the ultimate experience and there is no vocabulary. So it would be very isolating. You would be all alone. “I have had this ultimate experience, but I cannot tell you about it.”

Now it is interesting as Aldous Huxley, one of the philosophers, talks about this “ultimate experience,” he felt that the ultimate experience was probably dying high on LSD. And so, he died in a hallucination on LSD. He was not able to tell us whether or not it was the ultimate experience for him. The professors in Germany who were talking about this ultimate experience started having so many students commit suicide that they had to assure the classes that, “We are not certain that suicide is the ultimate experience.” They were trying to discourage them from committing suicide because they did not know.

The Christian experience-of being born again is, in a sense, the ultimate experience. It is hard to describe to a person who does not have any spiritual understanding. The Bible says, “The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit and neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned” (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14). So it is like trying to relate the beauty of the

symphony to a deaf man. He lacks the faculties by which the enjoyment of the symphony is held. And so, try to describe to the blind man the brilliant colors of a sunset on a cloudy day. They lack the faculties. And so, the natural man lacks the faculties by which the things of the Spirit are understood.

And that is why we have difficulty in expressing to people the joy that we have and the peace that we have, because there is nothing that they can relate to. They have no base to relate to the things of the Spirit. They are foolishness unto him. Yet he who is spiritual understands these things, though he is not understood. They look at you and they scratch their head and they say, “I don’t know. He is weird. He goes around smiling when they are repossessing his car. Look, they are towing his car off and they guy is just smiling. He is crazy!” We are not understood.

Now as the Bible speaks of some of the spiritual experiences it speaks about “the peace that passes human understanding” (cf. Philippians 4:7). So, how can you describe something that is beyond human understanding? You see the difficulty of it. It speaks of the “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (cf. 1 Peter 1:8). The unspeakable is indescribable. How can you describe something that is indescribable? It is just something that you have to experience. That is why the psalmist said, “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8). Until you taste it and experience it, I cannot describe it to you.

Now it may be that you go down to the Serrano Indians there in the jungles and you take a little ice-cream mixer with you and somehow get some ice and you make some vanilla ice-cream and you have some hot fudge and you whip up some cream and you put some roasted almonds on it. And these people have never seen ice-cream and never tasted chocolate. And you start eating it and you say, “Oh, this tastes so good. Ooh!” And they do not know. Their taste buds have never had the chocolate sensations. They have never had the cold vanilla ice-cream sensation. Never. And so they do not know—maybe it is bitter? And you have to just say, “Well taste it.” You can say, “Well it is good. It is delicious.” It is hard to describe to someone what chocolate flavor tastes like. I mean, “Well, it tastes like chocolate!”

So there are those experiences, there are those feelings, and there is that joy that is unspeakable. Paul, in praying for the Ephesians prayed, “that they might have a spirit of wisdom and understanding, to know the love of God that passes knowledge” (cf. Ephesians 3:19). So you are dealing out here in realms that are beyond us. It passes knowledge, and it passes human understanding. It is indescribable and full of glory. And thus we are talking about feelings and sensations that we have as we walk with God.

Now in the same token, as we come into this relationship, and we begin to experience God’s love in our life, we begin to experience the joy of the Lord and the peace of Christ. And then trying to describe these to a person who has not felt them and does not know them—it is an impossible thing. You just cannot. Like David, you just have to say, “Well, taste and see that Lord is good” (cf. Psalm 34:8). You just have to try it for yourself.

By the same token, in trying to express our thankfulness and our gratitude to God for these wonderful things that He has done, again we find the limitations of language. And I always feel like what I have said is really very inadequate to describe what I am feeling in my heart. It is just overwhelmed with God’s love and with His goodness and with these blessings that God, through His grace has bestowed. And I always feel that I have not adequately expressed to God the depth of all that I feel.

And thus Paul declares that this is where the Spirit can assist us in blessing God, in our giving of thanks to Him. And as the result, as Isaiah prophesied, “This is the rest whereby I will cause My people to rest” (cf. Isaiah 28:12). He said it is a very refreshing and a restful experience.

Now to see how agitated some people get, I question whether or not it is a restful and refreshing experience to them. But the exercise of the gift of tongues in a person’s own devotional life, I can assure you, is a very restful, refreshing, and beautiful experience.

Now the third purpose of speaking in tongues is also to edify the believer. The word “edify” means to build up or to be built up. In a spiritual sense it is to be built up in Christ Jesus or to have Jesus Christ be built up in you. We are exhorted many times in the Scripture to edify one another in love. And here Paul declares that when a person is speaking in tongues he edifies himself. And it is a very edifying experience.

Paul gives us the fourth purpose of the speaking in tongues. And here is a difficult passage because it seems to be contradicting itself in the context. So as you look at 1 Corinthians 14:22, Paul said, “Wherefore tongues are a sign not to them that believe but to them that believe not.” This is a very difficult passage because in verse 23 he said, “If therefore, the whole church be come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?”

You see that seems to be totally contradictory. First of all, he tells us they are a sign for unbelievers. And then he said, if the church is gathered and an unbeliever comes in and you are all speaking in tongues, they are going to say you are crazy. So if it is a sign to the unbeliever, it is a sign that you are crazy. I mean—this is the way you would have to look at this.

J. B. Philips translated the New Testament into modern English and he has a very conversational kind of a translation. It is probably one of the easiest reading translations of the New Testament because of its flowing conversational style. He took the liberty to change 1 Corinthians 14:22 to read: “That means that tongues are a sign of God’s power, not for those who are unbelievers but to those that already believe.”

So he has changed it completely and then he explains in a little footnote: “This is the soul instance of the translators departing from the accepted text.” He felt bound to conclude from the sense of the next three verses that we have here either a slip of the pen on the part of Paul, or more probably a copiest error.

Now by changing the translation it definitely removes the apparent contradiction. But I am not certain that he is correct or that this is the only possible way of interpreting what Paul is saying here. Again, the context of the passage is the prophecy of Isaiah. With stammering lips and other tongues God would speak to this people and yet, for all of this they would not believe. And therefore, tongues are a sign not for those who believe, but for those who believe not. “And yet for all of this they will not hear, saith the Lord” (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:21). So it is a sign—but not a sign to make a believer out of an unbeliever—is one way to look at it.

Deuteronomy 28 and Isaiah 5 both seem to be prophesying of the Assyrian invasion as a sign of judgment. Deuteronomy 28:49 says,

The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose

tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.

And it talks about the besieging of the gates and so forth. So in this interpretation, the sign to the unbelievers is not to bring them to a state of belief but to be a sign of God's judgment upon them.

Now another possibility as we mentioned, there are those who talk about the “sign gift” of tongues versus the “prayer language.” Looking at it as the sign gift, tongues are a sign to the unbeliever. Going back to Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit did come upon the church, these unbelieving Jews (they believed in God but did not believe in Jesus Christ), when they heard the disciples speaking in their various languages and saw the wonderful works of God, they realized that the disciples were all Galileans and could not have learned these languages. When Peter shared with them exactly what was happening, they were convicted by the Spirit and some three thousand of them were added that day to the church. And so, it did serve as a sign to the unbelieving Jews and it brought them to salvation on the Day of Pentecost.

Let me give you one more possibility. There are those who teach that speaking in tongues is the primary evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And so, many people who have been exposed to this teaching do not believe that they have been filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit until they have spoken in tongues. And they look at that as the primary evidence of the fact that they have been baptized or filled with the Spirit, so that they do not believe that they are baptized until they speak with tongues. Thus, tongues become the sign to the unbeliever—not to the unbeliever in Jesus Christ, but to the unbeliever who does not believe that he has been baptized or filled with the Spirit until he has spoken in tongues. And that then becomes the sign to him that he has been baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. And so that is one further possibility.

There are many people who are seeking the gift of tongues more than they are seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And they really do not believe that God has baptized them until they have spoken in tongues. So tongues becomes a sign, but not to the believer—I mean, if you just believe which is the gift of God, and receive the Holy Spirit, that is great! But it is a sign to the believer in Christ who thinks, *Well I have to speak in tongues before I can rejoice and say God has filled me, or before I have been baptized.*

So there are six possibilities. Take your choice. You cannot really settle on any one of them and say, “This is absolute.” You know, these are all possibilities and you have a wide variety of choices.

In the next lesson we will deal with a very important issue, as we continue in this series. Do all speak with tongues? Is it necessary to speak in tongues to be filled or to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? And we will be looking at just a lot of interesting issues on this fascinating subject of speaking in tongues.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Truly it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And Lord, we desire to walk in the light of Your Word and to walk in fellowship with You. And we know that if we walk in the light, as You are in the light, we

have fellowship with each other. And how we thank You, Lord, for the joy of that fellowship, for the comfort, for the peace, and for the blessing. Thank You, Lord, for what You are, what You have done and what You are doing. Receive, Lord, from our hearts the deep-felt thankfulness and appreciation of being a child of God—a son of God and if a son, then an heir and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Lord, even as Paul told us to covet earnestly the best gifts, so Lord, we desire to walk in the fullness of the Spirit. And like the Corinthian church, Lord, that we would not come short in any spiritual gift. That we might be open, Lord, to whatever You might do. And so, Father, You see our hearts. You see the longing of our hearts for Your fullness. Fill us, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS322. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

In this lesson we will be looking at 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 (but mainly chapter 14), as we continue this very controversial subject of speaking in other tongues.

The question arises, “Is speaking in tongues for everybody?” In chapter 12, after Paul is talking about the various gifts of the Spirit and naming the different gifts, he then declares, having given a list of nine, “that the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills” (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:11).

Now in looking at this listing of the gifts of the Spirit, notice how Paul said that “to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith [and so on] to another... to another...” When he gets to the gift of tongues he says, “To another kinds of tongues [or diverse kinds of tongues].” Now even when reading that, we would not infer that everyone has the gift of the word of wisdom or that everyone has the gifts of healing or the word of faith. So we would also infer that not everyone has the gift of speaking in tongues.

In fact, when you get down to 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 Paul seems to be a even little more clear on the subject as he said,

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that, miracles, then the gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

So these are rhetorical questions and the answer is obviously, “No.” Not everybody has the gifts of healing. Not everybody is a prophet or has the gift of a prophet within the church. Not everybody has the gift of the working of miracles. And thus, not everybody has the gift of speaking in tongues.

Now this particular gift has definite restrictions and limitations on its use. First of all, in a person’s own personal devotions there is no limitation on the use of the gift. You can speak in tongues in your own personal devotions just as much and just as often as you please. There are no restrictions whatsoever. In fact, Paul thanks God that he speaks in tongues more than all of the Corinthians. It was a popular gift in the Corinthian church and many people liked to exercise the gift to an excess. Paul said,

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that [by my voice] I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19)

So in the church services the use of tongues are definitely restricted and regulated. First of all, it is restricted to a person being present with the gift of interpretation. In 1 Corinthians 14:28, Paul said,

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church;  
and let him speak to himself, and to God.

In other words, you are not to speak out in tongues in church if there is no interpreter present.

And then Paul places other limitations on it. He said in I Corinthians 14:27,

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at  
the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

And then another rule is that it should always be done decently and in order.

Let all things be done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians  
14:40)

I do not believe that utterances in tongues in church should ever be disruptive. I do not believe that they should ever be given during the time that the pastor or the minister is ministering the Word of God. I do not believe that it is proper or right to interrupt him with an utterance in tongues. In the Pentecostal circles they often do this. A sermon will be interrupted-many times by utterances in tongues. So much so, that we used to call them tongues and interruptions because they were so often interrupting and disruptive in a service. And it really gets to be quite confusing when that takes place.

In 1 Corinthians 14:33, Paul said,

“For God is not the author of confusion.”

What should our scriptural attitude be towards speaking in tongues? Now there are some who forbid and would forbid the use of the gift of tongues even to the point of saying that it is of the devil. There are rumors that continue to circulate through the church and they keep coming back.

I keep getting letters about Madelyn Murray O’Hare who is trying to get some kind of a prohibition for all religious broadcasting. And please fill out this form and send to the FCC. The FCC sends out letters every once in a while saying, “Please do not send us any more letters or any more of these forms. There is nothing at all to this rumor.” But you know, someone gets it and they print up a lot of them and here they come in the mail again! People are all upset because this rumor is passing by again. And I guess that I have seen that one come through probably twenty-five different times in the last twenty-five years. About once a year it comes around.

There are those rumors that are always circulating of someone who took a picture out of an airplane window of a cloud formation. Or I heard another version of it that was at a funeral where a person was touched and as they were taking pictures of the flowers, they decided to take a picture of a beautiful formation of the clouds in the sky. And when it was developed, there was Jesus standing with outstretched arms in similar style to how Warner Sallman has painted Christ.

There was also the example of the face of Christ in the melting snow and the different stories you get of how that particular picture was taken. But you never can trace that down to the original source. It was always a friend of my aunt’s or it was someone that my cousin knew. And you never can get back to the first cause on those rumors.

And thus, these rumors have a way of just constantly circulating. There was the disappearing angel who was hitchhiking. These are rumors that just have ways of circulating. In fact, we even got a letter a while back and it said, “We understand that your wife picked up a hitchhiker” She never does that, but they said she picked up a hitchhiker and it turned out to be an angel. No, that did not happen. But it is just that old rumor coming around again and you never can get back to the original source. It was always a friend of a friend and you cannot find out who it was.

Now probably one of the oldest rumors (and it continues to circulate) is that someone was speaking in tongues and there was a person there who understood the language. They happened to be a missionary or someone who had known that language or grew up in that country or something. And when they heard this person speaking in tongues, they were supposedly saying horrible, blasphemous things about Jesus. That rumor has been around since the Corinthian church. And Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to correct that particular rumor as he said,

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed:

You see how that rumor was going around even then and so Paul is saying, “No, no. It does not happen. No man, by the Spirit, calls Jesus accursed.”

We are not to forbid a person to speak in tongues, as long as it is within the scriptural parameters. Paul said,

Wherefore brethren, covet to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:39)

But in the church it is to be limited in its use. And we have spoken of two or at the most three utterances and it is not to be used at all unless there is an interpreter present. But it is to be preferred that the gift of prophecy be exercised rather than the gift of tongues. And Paul definitely stated his desire was to speak in a known language that the church might be edified. Certainly the gift of prophecy is a preferable to the gift of tongues as far as the exercise within a church.

Paul said in 14:1, 4-9,

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifies himself, but he that prophesies edifies the church. And I would that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied, for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues except he interpret that the church might receive edifying. He that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater [is] he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life

giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

So Paul is definitely putting prophecy and the exercise of that gift above that of tongues in public services. Then he declares,

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?  
(1 Corinthians 14:23)

So what about the Scripture, “Whether there be tongues, they shall cease”? Those people who say that tongues are not for today usually use this Scripture as their proof text. “Whether there be tongues, they shall cease,” there in 1 Corinthians 13, where Paul is comparing, first of all, the eternal things with the temporal things. He is comparing the things that will go on versus the things that are going to be set aside. “And now abide these three: faith, hope, love.” These are the abiding things. There are things that will not abide. Love will never fail. That will go on. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. So, whether there be tongues, they shall cease. But notice the contrast. It is between the abiding things and the things that are temporal and that will pass.

Now the controversy arises then over the interpretation of “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Corinthians 13:10). Let us read it in its context.

Love never fails. Whether there be prophecies, they will fail. Whether there be tongues, they will cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.  
(cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10)

Now what is “that which is perfect?” Those who try to relegate the gift of tongues only for the apostolic period (only for the early church) interpret “that which is perfect” to be the full canon of Scripture. The idea or the inference is that until the full body or canon of Scripture was written—until John finally put the “amen” at the end of the Book of Revelation—that up until that time the word of knowledge and the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues were used for teaching and instructing in the ways of the Lord.

Now there is no indication at all in the Scriptures where speaking in tongues was ever what you would call “revelatory” or the “revealing” of God’s word—of God’s will. That did happen in prophecy and it could happen in the word of knowledge, but never were tongues used in the Scripture as a teaching tool. Contrariwise, Paul tells us that:

For he that speaketh in an [unknown] tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. (1 Corinthians 14:2)

So they were never used in the Scriptures as a teaching tool or as a tool whereby the will or the purposes of God or the word of God was revealed.

Now you have two possibilities. First, that which is perfect is the complete body of Scripture, completed in the Book of Revelation. But the question arises, is the revelation complete? The Bible tells us that God has given us all that pertains to knowledge in the understanding of God. It is all there—all that we need. But yet there are parts of God's revelation that were not given. Even in Revelation 10, when the seven thunders uttered their voices, John was about to write what the seven thunders said. And the angel said, "Do not write that. Seal that up." And so what the seven thunders uttered was not written. So we actually do not have a complete revelation because part of it was sealed.

Jesus, in talking to His disciples in John 16:3 said that He had many other things to tell them but they could not bear them now. And Paul, in writing to the Corinthians said that there were things that he could not share with them.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

There were things that Paul would like to have shared with them but they just were not able to handle it. So there is a part of the revelation that has not been complete. And thus, to say that *that which is perfect* is the complete revelation of God's Scripture could be argued. Most of the earlier theologians interpreted "that which is perfect is come" to be a reference to the coming again of Jesus Christ. And it would seem to fit better in the context to interpret that as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

As we mentioned the word of knowledge and the gift of prophecy were revelatory gifts. But there is no indication that the gift of tongues was ever used in that way. But the question then comes, "do we have perfect knowledge today?" Paul said,

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Do you know everything? I have met some people that thought they did. But I have to confess to you, I know in part. As Shakespeare said, "But man, proud man...Most ignorant of what he's most assured" (*Measure for Measure*, 2.2). I know the Scriptures better than any other subject but I will frankly confess to you that I am very ignorant in the Scriptures. There is so much to be known. And I have always discovered that the more anybody knows about any particular subject, the more they realize that there is so much that they do not know. The person who thinks he knows it all is usually the person who knows the least. And it is something that "we know in part and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come then this, which is in part, shall be done away" (1Corinthians 13:10).

The argument is forwarded that the word *perfect* (that which is perfect) is the neuter gender in the Greek language and thus, it is a reference to the Word rather than to the coming of Jesus. But that really is not a legitimate argument because the word *Spirit* used with reference to the Holy Spirit is always in the neuter also, and yet we know that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead.

Now in Acts 2, when the Day of Pentecost had fully come and the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit and the first exercise of this gift of tongues, we do read there that they were convicted. The people who had gathered were convicted at the preaching of Peter and said, “What shall we do seeing we have crucified the Lord of glory?”

Then Peter said unto them,

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:38-39)

Now when the crowd had first assembled on the Day of Pentecost because of the phenomena, they were all wondering “what does this mean?” They were in amazement because they heard these people speaking the wonderful works of God in seventeen different languages. And they had come from all over the world, and thus, they heard the language that they were familiar with in the other parts of the world—the Medes, Parthians, and all the others. They heard these various languages being spoken and they wondered, *What does this mean?*

And so Peter stood up and he said,

Ye men of Israel, hearken unto me. This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel who declared, “In the last days,” saith the Lord, “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams. And upon My servants and handmaidens will I pour out of My Spirit in that day,” saith the Lord. There will be blood and fire, vapor of smoke, the moon will be turned into blood and the sun into darkness before the great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (cf. Acts 2:16-21)

Now notice the prophecy of Joel is first of all for when? “In the last days,” saith the Lord. Are these the last days? I believe they are. But the prophecy is for the last days and the prophecy takes you right on through the Great Tribulation. Because one of the aspects of the Great Tribulation is the sun will darken and the moon will turn to blood (turning a bloody color). That is one of the things that will happen during the Great Tribulation period and that is spoken of by Jesus as one of the signs of the Great Tribulation. And of course it is told in the Book of Revelation as one of the events of the Great Tribulation period.

Now notice that the prophecy of Joel, “Upon My servants and handmaidens will I pour out in those days of My Spirit and they shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28). So it was a prophecy of Joel that this “gift of prophecy” would be exercised by those upon whom the Spirit was poured out in the last days, those who would actually be going into the tribulation period. Thus, if you take

“tongues they shall cease, whether there be prophecies they shall fail,” if that is all tied together and knowledge is vanishing away, then we realize that prophecies have not failed. They continue and will continue on into the tribulation period, according to the promise of God through the prophet Joel. This is a prophecy for the last days.

So the gift of prophecy was to fail concurrent with the ceasing of the gift of tongues and the gift of the word of knowledge. So the assumption that I would have to make is that the gift of speaking in tongues is indeed a valid gift for the believers today. And that it is an excellent gift whereby you will be enhanced in your own personal devotional life and in your prayer life.

Now we are told in the end of 1 Corinthians 12, to “covet earnestly the best gifts.” And Paul said, “Yet I will show you a more excellent way.” What are the best gifts? That all depends upon what you need. If there is someone who is here tonight who is blind, then I would say one of the best gifts would be the gift of faith and perhaps the working of miracles. It would probably be one that they would appreciate more than any other. If we are in real confusion over a particular problem, then I would say that the gift of the word of wisdom would probably be the best gift to have exercised, to give us direction. If someone was here purporting themselves to be some great spiritual person and yet there are some weird aspects about them that would cause us to question, then I would suppose the gift of discerning of spirits would probably be the best gift in that situation.

So it all depends on what the situation is as to what is the best gift. And if the situation is involving your own personal devotional life—to be enriched that you might be edified—then I would say that the gift of tongues would be the best gift to help you in your prayer life, to enhance your personal prayer life and worship and that intimacy of worship with God. That would be the best gift for you.

So we want to have one more lesson on the subject of the gift of tongues. We will be talking about the gift of tongues and sort of the mechanical kind of aspects of it. We will be looking at it from the very practical standpoint of this particular gift of speaking in tongues. We will look at some of the practices of some of the Pentecostal churches and how to receive the gift of tongues. We will be talking about some of the methodologies that we have observed in the past. How a person is encouraged to say, “Glory, glory, glory, glory, glory,” as fast as he can and, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.” What we will study will probably surprise and shock you, as we deal with some of these “helpers” of the Holy Spirit in seeking to help people to receive the gift of tongues.

We will be talking about the receiving of the gift of tongues in our next study, as we will conclude this particular section on speaking with tongues. We will then go on to other fuller, richer aspects of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Father, we thank You for all of the help that we can get. And Lord, surely You know that we need it. And we thank You for the Holy Spirit and His help in our worship and in our praise and in our prayer life. Lord, we thank You for the gift of tongues and for the ability that You give us to express to You our praise and our thanksgiving. When we find that our human intellect is weak and inept in its abilities to express all that we feel within our heart and within our spirit. We thank You, Lord for this ability and this help that You give to us. So Lord, we pray that You will help us to be open to all that You are wanting to do. May we never, Lord, be guilty of closing any doors and placing any

restrictions or limitations upon You and that which You might desire for us or to do for us. And Lord, forgive us if we should have ever said, “Well, I do not need that,” because Lord, anything You give us we need and we need desperately. And Lord, we need all the help we can get. And so we thank You for that help. And Lord, just know, that we are open to all You might want to do in us, through us, and for us, Lord. We want to be totally open to You and to the working of Your Spirit within our lives. So Lord, move in our hearts. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS323. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James version.

First Corinthians 14 mentions speaking in an unknown tongue several times. The Greek word is *glossa*, which means tongue. The word *unknown* is added by the translators and it is correct according to the context. It is speaking in a tongue that the speaker himself does not understand. It could be a known tongue or known language—as Paul said, “Though I speak with the tongues of men...” Or it could be perhaps the dialect of heaven or the language of angels. “Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels...”

Speaking in tongues is extremely difficult on the human intellect. In fact our intellects rebel against uttering sounds that we do not understand. It is an affront to the intellect and this is why many people very sincerely declare that they do not see any reason or purpose for the gift of tongues. Why should I speak to God in a language or a tongue that I myself do not understand? It is an insult to the intellect, and thus, it is understandable that a person would feel that way.

However, if God has given a gift there must be something worthwhile in having that gift or else why would God give it? I personally want to be open to whatever God might want to do for me in order to enhance my walk with Him. I desire to be everything that God would have me to be and I desire to have everything that God would desire for me to have. I do not want to close any doors to God. I do not want to say, “God I want everything but maybe not that.” I just want everything that God knows is necessary and good for me. I do not want to close any door to what He might want to do in my life.

Because it is an insult to the intellect, I believe that this is the reason why many people have not received this gift of tongues. They have intellectual difficulties that hinder their faith. Have you ever stood on the street corner in a foreign land and heard the people talking to each other in their native dialects? I find it extremely fascinating because the sounds that they are making to each other are totally unintelligible to me. And I am amazed that they can actually be communicating their ideas to each other with such strange sounds. It baffles me. And I realize that they must be communicating intelligently and intelligibly to each other, yet it is so totally foreign to my own ear and to my intellect. Their talking to each other often sounds just like jabber.

Our word *barbarian* comes from the Greek language and the Greeks called those who spoke in languages they did not understand “barbars.” They felt that the Greek was the cultural language and anybody else that did not speak Greek but communicated to each other in some other tongue were barbars. To the Greeks the language just sounded like barbar. And thus, we got the word *barbarian* from the barbar-arian or from the Greeks who considered everyone who communicated in any language other than Greek as a barbar.

Language is actually an agreement between people that certain sounds express certain ideas. We have a covenant or an agreement with each other. We are able to form certain sounds and we have agreed that these sounds are conveying these particular ideas. And as long as you and I have this covenant and we have this agreement that this is what these sounds mean, we can communicate to each other in these sounds, which to some foreigners would sound like barbar. They would sound strictly unintelligible to them. But we are able to communicate our ideas to each other because of this covenant or this agreement that you and I agree upon what a particular sound is conveying. This is the thought or this is the idea that this sound is conveying.

So it would be possible to actually invent a language, provided that we agree that these particular sounds were expressing these particular ideas. So “ugh” means “let us go out after service and get

a hot fudge sundae.” “Nugh” means “who’s buying?” “Tug” means “I will treat.” And “lug” means “you are on!” So after service tonight you could say, “Ugh.” And I would say, “Nugh.” You would say, “Tug?” And I would say, “Lug.” And we would head off to the ice-cream shop because we have made an agreement that this is what these sounds mean. It is a covenant that we make with each other by which we express our thoughts and our ideas with sounds that we agree upon.

I see the gift of tongues as a covenant between you and God. That by faith I am going to utter certain sounds that I do not understand, but I am going to trust the Holy Spirit to prompt those sounds so that they are a language of praise and worship from my spirit unto God. I make that covenant with God. I am going to trust the Holy Spirit to prompt the sounds. Although I do not understand them, “Lord I trust that You will understand these sounds to be praise, to be thanksgiving, to be worship, and to be the expression of my spirit unto You.” It is a complete act of faith that my intellect will rebel against.

But it is also a confession of my intellectual limitations. I do not have an adequate vocabulary to express to God the extreme joy and thanksgiving at the abundance of His grace that He has manifested to me. I often find that words are inadequate. Severn Orolus said, “When prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible.”

In 2 Smauel 7, David came to that place at the time in his life when he was sitting there in his palace watching people go up to the tent to worship God and he thought, “This is not right. I am living here in the luxury of this beautiful palace and God’s house is a tent. I want to make God a house that will exceed anything ever built.” He called his friend Nathan the prophet and said, “Nathan, I have been thinking. I want to build a house for God, a glorious house for the Lord, where people can come and meet with God. It will excel everything.” Nathan said, “Splendid idea, David. Do what is in your heart.”

And that night the Lord came to Nathan and said, “Nathan, you spoke too quickly. You spoke out of turn. It is good that David wants to build Me a house but his hands are so bloody. He is a man of war. It would be inconsistent for him to build Me a house, being the man of war that he is. So you have to go back to David tomorrow and tell David that he cannot build a house for Me. Now I know that is going to be greatly disappointing to him. But you tell him that I will build him a house and there shall never cease from his seed one to sit upon the throne.

Nathan the prophet came back and said, “David, I have got some bad news and some good news. Bad news first—you cannot build a house for God. Your hands are bloody. It would be inconsistent with God for you to build Him a house. But God said He is going to build you a house and there never will cease one from your seed sitting upon the throne.”

And so David went in before the Lord and he was overwhelmed to think that God would bring the Messiah from his seed. This just overwhelmed him. And he went in before the Lord and he knelt and he prayed and he said, “O Lord, You took me from the sheep coat, from following after the sheep. And You made me the ruler over Your people.” He remembered his humble beginnings. He was just a shepherd. “Look, You took me from following the sheep over the hillsides in Bethlehem. And You made me the ruler over Your people. And if that is not enough, now You speak to me of the future and of what is to come.”

Now David in my opinion was probably one of the most articulate men who ever lived. He was a man who had a gift of expression of praise second to none. Whenever I desire to expand my praises and my worship of God, I will turn to his psalms in order to be refreshed. In the things

that God has done and the ways by which praise can be expressed to God for His mercies, His grace, His goodness, His kindness, and in all of these things I always turn to David because he was so articulate. But as articulate as David was he found that when he saw the true grace of God he was so overwhelmed by it that he said, “What more can David say? I mean, Lord, I am speechless. What can I say? I do not have a vocabulary, Lord, that can adequately express what I feel inside in gratitude, in love, in appreciation for what You are and what You have done.”

So I experience limitations much more than did David. I find that my vocabulary is limited in my endeavor to express to God my thanksgiving, my appreciation, my praise for what God is and for what God has done for me. So often I say, as David said, “Lord, what can I say? You know my heart. You know what I feel, but I cannot express it. I do not have words that can express it. How much I do love You and how much I do appreciate, Lord, all that You have done for me.” And so, it is an acknowledgment of my limitations. I cannot fully express that which I would like to express to God of the feelings that I have deep in my spirit.

And there are also times when I have intellectual limitations in regards to praying for somebody. I do not always know how to pray as I ought. I know that it is important when I pray that I pray according to the will of God. John said,

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1 John 5:14)

I do not believe that prayer should ever be intended on our part, to change the mind of God. Through prayer I seek to discover the heart of God, but I do not want to change the mind of God—if that were possible. I do not think it is. I think He loves us too much to change His mind concerning us, because His will and His desires for us are the best.

But I do not always know how to pray as I ought. I do not know what God is doing. I do not know what God’s plan is. I do not know what the future holds. I do not know what purposes God might be seeking to work out in my life or in the life of that person I am praying for. I do not know what God has purposed through a trial that others are going through. I want to pray for them, but I do not want to pray contrary to God’s good purposes or God’s good will. And so, I pray and I tell God what I would like to see, and I tell Him if He is open for suggestions I have a few, but in the final analysis—“Lord, Your will be done.”

But Paul says,

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. (1 Corinthians 14:14)

Well if the Spirit is praying then you can have the confidence that you are praying according to the will of God, though you still do not understand what the will of God may be.

But as the result of being able to be aided by the Spirit in worship, in praise, and in prayer, according to the will of God, it is a very restful experience. I can rest in the fact that I am adequately praising God. I can rest in the fact that He receives the praise and worship and understands it as the expression of the deepest area of my being—deeper than my intellect. It is deeper than my conscious level. From that deep area of the spirit, God can receive and understand and appreciate the love and the praise that I am offering to Him.

And also, He can know and understand the fact that I want His work and His will wrought in the situations for which I am praying. I am praying according to His will and thus it is very restful. It is very satisfying and it is very fulfilling to just rest in the fact that God understands and interprets my spirit-aided prayer as worship and praise and intercession, as the case may be.

Now in the Pentecostal circles, they have developed various traditional ways by which they seek to help or aid a person to speak in tongues. And I have observed these methods through the years. One way is through the encouragement of the person to repeat a word over and over again—such as the word “glory, glory, glory, glory, glory, glory” or “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.” Now if you repeat this word over and over and over again, in time your tongue will get twisted and a sound will come out that does not sound like glory. And a person, at that point, oftentimes begins then to speak in tongues.

I have often seen them take a person by the chin and as they are praising the Lord, shake their chin. And again, as you are trying to praise the Lord and someone is shaking your chin, there are sounds that sometimes come off that you do not understand, and often then a person begins to speak in tongues. There are those who will say, “Now repeat these sounds after me.” And they, in praying for the person, will start to speak in tongues and encourage the person to sort of speak after them.

Now I used to look at all of these methods as totally reprehensible and unscriptural. I still look at them as unscriptural. But age does marvelous things for you as far as sort of mellowing you out. And I am much more mellow than I used to be. And I suppose if the Lord tarries and He allows me to tarry, I will even be more mellow as the years go by. I have found that some things that used to be so important are not that important anymore. Things that I thought I could not live without or I thought that it had to be this way, I have realized it does not and I can live without those things.

But in looking at these practices, as I say, I still see them as unscriptural but I see perhaps a principle that is at work. One of the most difficult obstacles that we have to overcome is our intellect. And if God has a gift for me, the only way I can receive God’s gift is through faith. I have to receive the gifts of God by faith. Salvation is the gift of God. By faith I have to receive that gift of salvation for it to be mine. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God to me. I have to receive, by faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Though it is there (a gift of God) yet it is not mine until I receive it by faith. I have to appropriate God’s gifts through faith. I cannot earn them. I do not deserve them. They are mine as I appropriate them by faith.

I think that many times a person’s faith is passive—if that is possible. I am not sure if it is or not. It may be an oxymoron to say passive faith—I am not quite sure. But many times a person believes that God is able and that what God will perhaps one day do it, and that would seem to be sort of a passive faith, to me. Yes, I believe God can do it and perhaps sometime He will. That seems to be sort of a passive faith to me or what I would classify as passive faith. I believe that active faith declares, “I believe God is doing it right now or that He will do it when certain conditions are met.”

In Matthew 9, the woman who had the issue of blood for twelve years felt, in her heart, that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, that she would be healed of her plague. And so she made her way through the crowd and grasped the hem of His garment and Jesus felt that the

virtue had gone out of Him. And the woman was immediately healed. And when Jesus faced her for what she had done, He said to her, “Your faith hath made thee whole.”

Now her faith was set to be triggered by an action. She thought, “The moment I touch Him, I am going to be healed.” So there was that point of the activating of her faith and she had said in her mind that the time and the place by which the faith would be activated was the moment she could touch the hem of His garment. Now I believe that she could have said, “The moment He smiles at me I will be whole.” And she could have made that the point of contact. And she could have kept trying to run in front of Jesus smiling real big and hoping that He would smile back. And the moment that He responded to her smile, she would have been healed. And Jesus would have said, “Who smiled at Me?”

But I believe that we can set places for the releasing of faith. I really believe that this is the value and the reason why we are told to lay hands on the sick because it gives them that point of releasing the faith or activating the faith. I know that when the elders come and they lay hands on me, the moment they lay their hands on me God is going to touch me and I am going to be healed. Or the anointing with oil is the same idea. The moment that I am anointed with oil and prayed over by the elders, I know that God is going to heal me. And it is a point of releasing or of activating faith.

In Matthew 8, the Centurion whose servant was ill said to Jesus, “I know that all You have to do is say the word and my servant will be healed.” And so, that is all he knew was that just the word of Jesus would heal his servant. And He said, “I have not seen so great a faith.” This man had the faith in the power of the words of Jesus and the moment Jesus spoke the word he believed and his servant was made whole, in that very hour.

Now getting back to these Pentecostal practices of shaking the chin or saying “glory, glory,” I think that when they repeat the word until their tongue gets twisted and an unintelligible sound comes out, when they hear this sound, I think that many times their faith is activated. They think, “I have it! Praise the Lord!” And by faith they receive the gift—it is received by faith. And I think that often that is the thing that triggers their faith.

So rather than condemning them as I used to do, I think that I may see a principle at work. I think they have accidentally stumbled across a way by which they have helped to trigger a person’s faith to believe that they have received the gift of God. And when that faith is triggered they do receive the gift by faith. It is a wonderful thing to have your faith triggered and to have that moment when you say, “Yes, I have it.”

Many years ago we were conducting a Bible class in Newport Beach in a home on Monday nights. This one lady had been attending the class quite regularly and we were teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit. We were in the house of some people who were Episcopalians and it was at that time when many of the Episcopalians were receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, this lady requested that we pray for her to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at the close of the class—which we did. And when she got home her husband, who was a football coach, was watching Monday night football. So she knew that there was no sense in talking to him and she went into the family room and decided to just kneel and worship the Lord and just continue to seek Him.

As she was there kneeling, suddenly she heard the sound of a rushing wind and she felt, “Oh wonderful!” We had been studying Acts 2 and there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind and they were all filled. So she heard this sound of a rushing wind and she just began to rejoice and

by faith received the gift. Then later on she realized the furnace had gone on, but it had triggered her faith. Faith is the key to receiving the gifts of God by believing that He has promised and that He will do what He has promised. And it is not sometime ambiguously in the future, but He will do it now.

Years ago when we were pastoring in Tucson, Arizona, there was a young boy who desired the gift of the Holy Spirit. And there were several of us after the service just waiting upon the Lord and praying. And so, we laid hands on this young boy to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and he began to say, “Daja, Daja, Daja.” And I thought—“Daja? What’s that?” But this lady who was there also praying with us, came around the circle to me and she said, “Brother Smeeth, Brother Smeeth. He is speaking my language! That is Czechoslovakian for thank you, thank you, thank you.” And I thought, “forgive me, Lord.” The boy began to speak in Czechoslovakian and she began to tell us the worship and the praises that he was offering to God. It was a glorious experience!

There is that faith, and so often the necessity to have that faith triggered, because the gifts of God are received by faith. When Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, he said,

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:2)

And obviously the answer is they received it by the hearing of faith.

Now many times we do associate it with the works of the law. I have heard people testify to the receiving of the Holy Spirit and they said that they knew the thing that was holding them back from receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was that pack of cigarettes in their pocket. They would say, “And the moment I took them out and laid them there before the Lord, then God filled me with the Spirit.

Well again, it is the thing of faith. You see their faith was hindered by their conviction of smoking cigarettes. And they felt that if they would just surrender this to the Lord, then they knew God would fill them. Thus, when they gave that to the Lord their faith was triggered to receive it at that moment. Though this would appear like the works of the law, it was not. “The moment I made a full sacrifice, then God rewarded me.” No. The moment you made that commitment that was holding you up mentally from believing and trusting God to give you the gift—the moment you surrendered that—your faith was activated and you accepted the gift.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to make us holy. It is not given to us to give us exciting, exhilarating experiences. You do not have to achieve some degree of holiness to be filled with the Spirit. Many people would intimate that you have to attain or achieve a particular degree of holiness. He will make us holy and He is given to make us holy. But He is given primarily to give us power—power to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Now, in all of these things, I realize that we are in extremely controversial territory. So I would like to say that in all of these things, we must remember the supremacy of love.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.  
(1 Corinthians 13:1)

Having the gift of tongues is not evidence that I am more spiritual than the others around me who have not received the gift. Unfortunately, there are some very mean-spirited, cantankerous people who speak in tongues, thinking that it does manifest some superior spiritual attainment. But nothing could be further from the truth. If the gifts of God in your life do not produce love, then they are totally meaningless.

And if I were to hold to a traditional, fundamentalist position and condemn all of those who speak in tongues as being from the devil, and I have no love for them, my fundamental orthodoxy is a meaningless diatribe. The answer is to walk in love. “Three things that abide: faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is love” (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:13).

So if you speak in tongues, enjoy! However, do not despise those who do not understand the gift and do not think of yourself as somehow spiritually superior to them. You are not. If you do not speak in tongues, do not despise those who do, nor attribute that gift of God to Satan. They love our Lord with a great emotional fervency and are as much of the body of Christ as you are.

So let us walk in love. If a person speaks in tongues, fine, as long as he does it within the scriptural context. If a person does not speak in tongues, fine. He can still have a very close, intimate, marvelous, Spirit-filled relationship with God. Tongues is not the issue. The issue is how much love is manifested by the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. That is the real litmus test of the Holy Spirit—the love that I have. The love that can accept someone who is different from me, but acknowledges and recognizes that Jesus loves us both and has brought us both into His family that we might learn to love one another, even as the Lord loves us.

Father, we thank You for the gifts of Your Holy Spirit. And as we continue, Lord, in the study of these gifts, we pray that You would give to us understanding. But not only understanding, Lord, we desire the gifts. That the Holy Spirit would divide to each of us severally as He wills. And again, Lord, help us to be open and not close any doors, but be willing and ready, Lord, to receive from You whatever You may desire to bestow upon us. We wait upon You, Lord, and we look to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS324. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

We have been looking at the subject of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and as we have pointed out, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, conforming us into the image of Jesus. Everyone who has received Jesus Christ as their Savior has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. As Paul said,

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Paul exhorted the Ephesians to “not be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but to be continually filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). This is the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit within our lives as He gives us victory over the flesh life and He conforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

So this is the glorious work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer. But there is then that out-flowing of the Holy Spirit from the life of the believer.

Years ago when I was at a pastors' conference at Forest Home where many pastors had gathered from all over the Southern California area—to show you how many years ago it was, I was one of the youngest pastors there at the time—but we had a noted speaker who was telling us that the highest capacity of man was the ability to contain God. And it was a very inspirational talk. He had actually written a book on the subject.

And he went on to declare how we can have this treasure in earthen vessels. Our bodies can be the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have the capacity of containing God, which he said is the highest-capacity of man. Through the years I have thought of that message, but I have wondered about whether or not that is indeed the highest capacity of man. Is the highest capacity the ability to contain God or is the highest capacity when God flows forth from my life? When I am a channel through which God can pour forth His love and His power to the needy world around me.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” But this spake he of the Spirit. (John 7:37-39)

It seems to me that this is what Jesus was pointing His disciples toward. It is not just the indwelling of the Spirit within our lives, as marvelous as that is, but the releasing of the Spirit from my life. This is where He begins to pour forth out of my life like a torrent of living water, so that the world around me is affected by what God has done in me.

The one is subjective. It is marvelous and it is necessary—that subjective work of the Holy Spirit within my life. But it is always toward the objective that my life might be the instrument through which God can touch a thirsty, needy world around me.

In his letter to the Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14, Paul is describing some of the gifts of the Spirit. He is describing some of the ways by which the Spirit of God is manifested in our lives and manifested through our lives. First of all in the early part of chapter 12, he gives a listing of some nine various manifestations which he declares the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. Not all of us possess all of these manifestations. As he closes out the twelfth chapter, Paul asks the rhetorical questions:

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)

And the answer is obviously, “no.” But the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. So put it all together and you have the whole body of Christ functioning as God would have the body to function.

But in a body, as Paul points out, we have many different parts and not all of the parts fulfill the same function. However, they are all necessary for the total body to function, so you cannot really declare that you do not have any need for the rest of the body. You are not complete in yourself. The ear cannot say to the eye, “I have no need of you,” because where then would be the seeing? (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:21). So it is the Spirit gifting us with various gifts. When they are all put together, you have a functioning body which becomes a powerful witness to the world around us.

Now as we have moved through the first eight manifestations, we have come to the ninth one which is the interpretation of tongues. Paul said, “To another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Now this is a companion gift to the gift of speaking with tongues. It is, interestingly enough, the only gift that a person is told to pray for specifically. And that is, as Paul said, “If a person speaks in an unknown tongue.” That would be a reference to speaking in church or actually before the church, in an unknown tongue. He is speaking to God, but before the church in an unknown tongue. Then he needs to pray that he might interpret in order that the whole church might be edified by his praise and giving of thanks.

Now I do not believe that this verse applies to the private use of the gift of tongues. And as we pointed out in the last three studies, when we studied in detail the subject of speaking in tongues, we pointed out that definitely the Scripture is encouraging the use in a believer’s personal devotional experiences. But it limits and restricts the use of the gift of tongues in the church. It can be used in the church, preferably when just the church is gathered together with no unbelievers present. But if it is exercised in the church then it is under definite restrictions and limitations.

Paul said that he personally would rather not use his gift of speaking in tongues in church. He reserved it for his own personal, private devotions, preferring to speak five words in a known tongue, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue when he is gathered together with the body of Christ. So in the use of tongues in your own private devotions, there is no need for interpretation. The only time the need for interpretation arises is if there is an exercise of tongues within church.

The Greek word that is translated *interpretation* is *hermeneia*, from which we get our word *hermeneutics*. This is the science of scriptural interpretation. Hermeneutics or *hermeneia* is the interpretation. Now this same Greek word *hermeneia*, in other places is translated *translation*. But it would seem that the gift is properly referred to as an interpretation. Now we realize that there is a difference between a translation and an interpretation. A translation is a word-for-word kind of a transferring from one language to the other.

Now I have had translators working with me who sought to be interpreters. I would make just a short remark and sometimes they would take a couple of minutes interpreting the remark that I made. So they were not just translating for me, they were interpreting for me. And I always wondered what they were saying or how they were interpreting what I said. And quite often I discovered that they were misinterpreting me because they did not understand what I was saying.

When I was in Korea several years ago, I had a fellow who was translating for me and I was speaking in a large Presbyterian church in Seoul. And I opened up with one of the best jokes I have. I wanted to just sort of warm the people up and let them know that I was human and had a sense of humor. And so, I came to the punchline and they all just sat there and looked sort of dumbfounded. And I thought, *this is going to be tough. These people do not respond*. And so after the service I got hold of some people and I said, “What do you think I said?” And the problem was the translator did not get the joke at all and he missed the punchline. I mean he just totally messed it up. And so from then on, I made a practice—if I was going to tell any jokes or whatever—to tell it to the translator first. If he laughed, then I would use the jokes. If he did not laugh then I would just shelve it.

But sometimes interpretation is going a little further. It is giving the meaning (the understanding) or sometimes a sort of an explanation. And I have heard sermons that I thought needed some kind of explanation too. That is why I do not think that the interpretation must exactly correspond to the utterance in tongues, in terms of length. There could be a short utterance in tongues and a rather prolonged interpretation as the explanation is being given, and sometimes vice versa.

There have been times working with a translator, when I would be talking and I would get sort of carried away and I would talk for maybe forty-five seconds. Then I would remember I had to have it translated, so I would stop. And then he would give a couple of words and then sort of nod to me to go on. I thought, *He really condensed it!*

Paul definitely states that in the exercise of the gift of speaking in tongues, a person is not speaking unto man—“Howbeit in the spirit, he is speaking unto God mysteries” (cf. 1Corinthians 14:2). Or as I think Weymouth says, “divine secrets.” Now if, when a person speaks in tongues, he is not speaking unto man but speaking unto God, then it would naturally follow that the interpretation would not be addressed unto man but that the interpretation would be the interpreting of what was declared to God. Whether it be the prayer or the praise or the giving of thanks, it would be an interpretation addressed to God.

Now I have observed in Pentecostal circles, that quite often they will give an utterance in tongues and then the person who is supposedly giving the interpretation begins with: “Thus saith the Lord, ‘My children if you will hearken to Me and lift your voices and praise Me, then I will bless you and I will pour out My Spirit upon you.’” And it is more or less exhortation to the church. That is not an interpretation of the utterance in tongues. They usually refer to it as a message in tongues, but that is totally unscriptural terminology. God does not speak to the church in tongues. He

speaks to the church through prophecy, but not through the gift of tongues even with the interpretation.

Growing up in a Pentecostal church, quite often on Sunday morning the message would be interrupted by an utterance in tongues—two, three, four times. They called it a message in tongues and so as a child I thought that God was speaking to us in this. I thought it was a message from God in tongues with the interpretation. And I remember inviting my friend to go to church with me. His name was Ed Hanky. He was a big German kid and he later played defensive end for San Francisco Forty-niners. We were close friends. We went everywhere together after school. He had a foul mouth. But I was witnessing to him.

So he went to church with me this Sunday morning and this lady sitting in front of us started the heavy breathing and I knew that preceded an utterance in tongues. And I bowed my head and I started praying, “God, please do not speak to us in tongues today.” I knew that Ed would never understand it. And I knew that there would be embarrassing questions afterwards that I did not have answers for. But I guess God did not hear my prayer.

But quite often in the Pentecostal circles there is a message in tongues and then the interpretation, which is God’s message to the church. Now as I have sought to analyze this, I believe the people are sincere and they love the Lord. And I am certain that they have genuine experience with God and I do not discount that. But I think what I was observing and what you will commonly observe in the Pentecostal or charismatic circles when an utterance in tongues is given—rather than being followed by a genuine interpretation—it is followed by the gift of prophecy.

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and  
exhortation, and comfort. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

And if you will notice the content of the supposed interpretation—which I believe to be a prophecy—the content is generally edification, exhortation or comfort. And thus, I think that the people actually believe that they are experiencing the gifts of tongues with interpretation, when in reality it is tongues and prophecy. And what I believe takes place is that when the utterance in tongues is given, a person with the gift of prophecy is emboldened by the utterance in tongues to then stand up and give an utterance of prophecy to the congregation.

I think that, as Paul said in Romans,

Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion  
of faith. (Romans 12:6)

So I think that the faith is more or less built through the utterance in tongues for the person to then give a prophetic utterance to the church.

Now Paul declares that if a person feels anointed to give an utterance in tongues—unless there is an interpreter present in the church—they should not then give the public utterance, but speak unto himself and speak unto God. This to me brings out a very important point, and one that again the Pentecostals seem to miss. So often among the Pentecostal circles there is that thought or idea that I have no control over the speaking in tongues and that somehow the Spirit takes over. I have lost control and the Spirit just—I try to speak in English but I am speaking in tongues.

I remember a lady who is a dear saint of God—and I am not really putting her down—I am just seeking to point out what I feel is sincerely erroneous. And I am not saying they do not love the Lord. I do not say that they are wrong or whatever. But I remember her giving her testimony of having received the gift of tongues and the next day when the gas meter reader came by to read the meter at her house, she went out to ask him about something and she started to speak to him in tongues. And he got frightened and went off. The thinking behind this was “I had no control over it.”

But Paul definitely teaches that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You do have control. You do not have to speak out. If there is no interpreter present, let him speak unto himself and unto God. You do not have to speak out.

Then also Paul in referring to the use of the gift in his own life, he said,

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19)

And then he says, “What shall I say then? When I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prays though my understanding is unfruitful. What will I say? I will pray with the Spirit” (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:18-19). In other words, it is the exercise of will. I will pray with understanding also. I have control over it. It is not something that I do not have control of. The Spirit of God is subject unto the prophet.

A lot of times we like to blame Satan for things that I do not believe he is necessarily responsible for. Sometimes it is just our own stupidity. And I think that many times we have blamed the Lord or blamed the Holy Spirit for things that the Holy Spirit is not really responsible for. But we do not want to take responsibility for some foolish thing that we did, so that we then say, “Well the Holy Spirit prompted me or the Holy Spirit—I just could not help myself.” No, I cannot buy that.

How does the gift of interpretation operate? Now the Bible says there are diversities of gifts and diversities of operations. So the gift of interpretation may operate in my life in one way. You may have the gift of interpretation and it operates in your life in another way because there are diversities of operations. I love it that God is diverse. He does not do things in a patterned way, so that we begin to pigeonhole God by saying, “This is the way He does things.” I think He does things in diverse ways so that we will be open to other ways by which God may choose to work in a given situation.

Notice the blind people that He healed. With one man, He spit in his eyes and said, “Can you see anything?” With spit in your eye things would be blurry. He said, “I see men walking like trees.” And so Jesus laid His hands on him again and then man then saw clearly. But in Jerusalem He spit on the ground, made mud, put the mud in another man’s eyes and said, “Now go down to the pool of Siloam and wash your eyes out.” And when he did this, he was able to see.

In Mark 10, we have Bartimeus there in Jericho and Jesus just spoke to him and he was healed of his blindness. So you have three blind men who were all healed of their blindness, but not in the same way. Each one was healed in a little different fashion. There are diversities of operations.

So I can tell you how the gift operates in my life, but that does not mean this is the way it is going to operate in your life. I think that we make a real mistake in listening to people's testimonies when they are testifying of their particular experience and how they related physically or emotionally to this particular work of God in their lives. And we then think, "Oh well, that is the way it is going to be."

Finney said when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit he felt like there were just waves of liquid love coming over him and over him. So a person would think, "My, that is what you feel." And so they think, "Lord, I want the waves of liquid love. Just let the waves flow over me, Lord." Well, that was the way that he related to it but it is different with different people.

Someone might say, "I felt like someone was just pouring warm oil all over me from the head and it just went all over my body." And others might say, "I had this tingling sensation." And so, "Lord, let me tingle." But we are trying to emulate someone else's experience and it does not always work that way. There are diversities of operations.

And so, God is not patterned. And I wanted to preface the remarks on how the gift operates, because I can share with you how it operates in my life, but it is not necessarily the way it would or does operate in your life, if you have the gift of interpretation.

As a person is giving an utterance in tongues, it is as though I understand what they are saying. It is as though they were saying it in English. The thoughts, the praises, and the thanksgiving just come into my mind. And quite often they go on for a few minutes and I cannot always remember immediately. But I start off with the thoughts as they first came. And then they come back again. As I am speaking them, it just begins to flow and it is the interpretation of what was said.

Now I do not always get an interpretation every time I hear someone speaking in tongues. And I appreciate that fact because it helps me to realize that it is a gift from God and it is not just something that is there. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

There is an anointing of the Holy Spirit that a person can experience, especially as he is ministering the Word of God or teaching the Word of God. And you know when you have it and you sure know when you do not have it. And sometimes the teaching and the preaching of the Word can be the easiest and most exciting experience because it just flows. There is just a beautiful flow. There are other times where it is just a struggle. The thoughts are not coordinated. They are not coming together. You are stumbling. Even in your mental processes, it is just not flowing. And I really think you would be better off just to say, "Folks, come back next week," rather than trying to push your way through it, when it is not there.

Now if, when a person is giving an utterance in tongues or speaking in tongues and I do not receive an interpretation, it does not take away from the validity of their gift. It just means that God did not give an understanding or interpretation to me of what they said.

Now is there any manifestation of this gift in the Old Testament? I do think that a gift that is somewhat similar, but not exactly the same, would be the gift of interpreting of dreams. And there were those, such as Joseph and Daniel, whom God had gifted with the interpreting of dreams. With Joseph we remember his own dreams, but when he was in prison, the baker and the butler both had dreams that he interpreted. And his ability to interpret dreams ultimately brought him before the Pharaoh where he interpreted the dream of the Pharaoh and was then raised to a high position in Egypt.

And the same is true with Daniel having the gift of the interpretation of dreams. Now with Joseph, he attributed it to God. His capacity to interpret the Pharaoh's dream, he attributed to God. With Daniel, it was the reputation of Daniel that the Spirit of the Holy God dwelt within him and he could interpret dreams and solve mysteries. And he was noted for it in the palace. The queen mother spoke of him as the man in who dwelt the Spirit of the holy gods, or the Holy Spirit.

Now in that one occasion when Belshazzar was having his big feast with a thousand lords and he had the gold and silver vessels that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem. And they began to drink the wine out of these sanctified vessels, praising gods of gold and silver, when suddenly upon the plaster of the wall there was a form of a hand that was writing strange words. "*Mene mene tekel upharsin.*" He called in his wise men (his counselors) to interpret for him the meaning of the writing on the wall, which they were unable to do.

And that is when the queen mother said, "There is a man who, during your grandfather's reign, was a tremendous assist to him in that he could interpret dreams and solve riddles. You ought to call him in." So Daniel was brought in and he interpreted for him the writing on the wall. However, that would not parallel the gift in the New Testament, in that this was a message of God to the king. And it was definitely God's message to the king in that instance.

Now when you come to the New Testament it is interesting that, to my knowledge, we do not have any recorded cases in the New Testament of the exercise of this gift of interpretation. All we have is teaching on the subject by Paul in 1 Corinthians and that is very limited. But that is all we have concerning this particular gift of interpretation. We do not have any actual incidents where the combined gifts were used with the interpretation. So that really leaves us without much to go on.

In G. Campbell Morgan's commentary on the Book of Acts, he suggests that on the Day of Pentecost, when they all began to speak with tongues, the people from the various linguistic groups heard them speaking in their own languages or dialects. This was the wonderful work of God and G. Campbell Morgan believes that the miracle was in the fact that they heard in their languages. He implies that he believes that they were all probably just speaking Greek but the miracle was in the hearing. They all heard in their own languages in which they were born, as they declared the marvelous works of God. I do not know where G. Campbell got that, but it is an interesting concept. I do not agree with it, but I just thought I would share with you so you would know that there is another thought on this.

Back in 1968 or 1969, somewhere in there—we had moved from the little church that we had started in Costa Mesa. We were sharing the facility of the Lutheran church in Newport Beach there on Cliff Drive. They had their morning service and then we rented the facility and had our services in the afternoon. We were waiting for them to vacate the premises, so that we could then take over that facility completely. As it worked out, we outgrew the facility before we had a chance to take it over and then we built our church over on the next corner.

But on Sunday evening we were meeting in the clubhouse in East Bluff. I cannot remember if it was '68 or '69, but we were meeting on Pentecost Sunday. And at that time there was probably 45 to 50 of us on Sunday evenings. And we were able to have a much more informal Bible study. I just sat with them and we just shared the Scriptures. We were going through the Bible, even then, but it was in a very informal way. And at the end of the study, because there was just a very

small group of us, I said, “You know this is Pentecost Sunday, the Sunday that we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church.”

And we had a lady in our fellowship whose name was Lynn, who had a remarkable gift of tongues. Whenever she spoke in tongues, she spoke in French. And so, I said, “You know, let us just worship the Lord. And Lynn, just exercise your gift that God has given to you of speaking in tongues because it is just us here and it is Pentecost Sunday. We will have sort of a memorial since this is Pentecost Sunday.”

So Lynn began to speak in tongues (speaking in French), and I can understand enough of French that I knew that she was giving thanks to God for a beautiful song. Now because I could intellectually understand some of the French words, I did not make any endeavor to exercise my gift of interpretation. I was afraid of trying to interpret when, naturally, I knew some of the words. I had sort of the gist of what she was saying naturally, and I was afraid of some kind of a natural or supernatural hang-up. I might get out into nah-nah land and not come back between the two. So I did not make any endeavor to interpret.

However, my wife began to interpret. And it was very beautiful as she was thanking God for the beautiful new song that He had put in her heart, which was her love song to Him. And she spoke of the joy and the blessing of singing of her love for Him. Of course it was rather significant because she had been singing in nightclubs and did have a beautiful voice. And so it was quite significant that she was rejoicing in a new song that God had given to her, a song of praise and love unto Him.

We closed the meeting and we had a fellow who was going with this girl in Palm Springs and she was having some problems and he brought her down that night so that I could counsel with her after the service. So as we sat down to counsel, she said, “Before we start talking about the things that I need to talk to you about,” she said, “I am curious as to what was going on here tonight at the end. The woman who spoke to the group in French and the other woman who translated for the group.” And I said, “Would you believe that neither of those women know French?” She said, “No, I would not.” And I said, “Well, it is true.” I said, “Neither of them know French.”

And I took her to the Scriptures and I showed her the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of interpretation. And I said, “What you saw was what Paul is talking about here in Corinthians, where one speaks in an unknown tongue and another interprets.” She said, “Well I lived for five years in Paris.” She said, “She was speaking the most beautiful French.” She said, “She was using an aristocratic pronunciation.” She said, “It was not just the common French. She had an aristocratic pronunciation.” I said, “Well, what would you expect from the Lord.” And she said, “The other lady translated it perfectly.” I said, “Well, I know that she does not know French. That is my wife!” She said, “Well, before we go any further, I have to receive the Lord.” And so we had the joy of leading her to the Lord as the result of that experience of seeing the genuine exercise of the gift. And here is one of those cases where tongues did become a sign to an unbeliever, as she saw the gift of tongues and the interpretation.

It used to be that I spent my vacations in Williams, Arizona, conducting youth camps. That was the only way I could afford a vacation because they would give us our lodging and our food. And so, we would go over and I would conduct these camps in Arizona and it gave the family a great opportunity to be up there in the beautiful mountains of Arizona, around Williams. We would go over to the Grand Canyon. So every summer I would take my vacation conducting and directing their youth camps there.

And we were getting ready to go over because it was summertime and I was going to take my two week vacation over there. And so, this particular year our daughter Jan, who had five years of French (she took French at UCI) and is quite fluent in French. She was going to be a girls' counselor at that camp. And so, it was after Sunday night and of course that was before we even moved out of the little church, so we had even less people that night. There were maybe 30 or 40 of us six months or so after we had started Calvary Chapel. So our family went down and the church gathered around us; laid hands on us and prayed for us; that God would be with us; that God would use us and bless us in the ministry to these young people in Arizona. And Lynn happened to lay her hands on Jan and began to pray in the Spirit for her.

Now of course the interesting thing was that Jan could understand it because she was praying in French. And she was praying that God would help Jan to be a very beautiful witness to these young girls. She was praying that God's love would just pour forth from Jan and would make her a great blessing. And that the impressions that these girls received would be lifelong impressions as a result of her ministry to them.

And as she was going on praying for Jan, Jan said, "Dad I just felt, just sort of trembling all over, because I realized that this is what the Holy Spirit was praying for me." As Paul said, "The Spirit makes intercession according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). And she realized that Lynn did not really know what she was praying because she was praying in an unknown tongue to her. Yet to Jan, she understood it and said, "What a thrill to realize this is what the Holy Spirit was praying for me—interceding for me." And she said, "Oh, it just was so glorious to know that this is the Lord's desire and prayer for me."

So there has been a lot of abuse in the use of these gifts and that is actually why Paul was writing to the Corinthians. For the most part, his Corinthian Epistle was a corrective epistle. They had all kinds of problems in the church in Corinth. They had problems with factions that had developed. They had problems with immorality in the church that they were tolerating. They were feeling some kind of a spiritual superiority in that they could tolerate the evil within the church. They had problems with the Lord's Supper and the manner in which they were partaking of the Lord's Supper. And then they had problems with the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. And finally they had problems with their understanding of the resurrection. It was really a problem church.

However, if they did not have these problems we would not have any instruction on the subject. So it is probably good that they had the problems, because it brought to us a lot of clarification and instruction on some of these important subjects, as Paul dealt with them in his letter to the Corinthians. But it is sad that these problems do continue even to the present time. There are so many abuses of the gifts of the Spirit, that the work of the Spirit is oftentimes held in ill-repute because of the abuse of the gifts. And as the result, many sincere Christians have neglected the gifts of the Spirit or denied the gifts of the Spirit because all they have observed is the abuse and they have not observed the genuine exercise of the gifts.

I think that it is a mistake to just close the door completely. I think that what we need to do is to be open to the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, using the guidelines that are in the Bible for their exercise. We are to be regulated by the rules that are laid down in the Bible, so that things are done decently and in order and the exercise of the gifts does not create confusion. God is not the author of confusion. But let us not just throw out the baby with the bath-water because the bath-water is dirty. Let us throw out the dirty bath water and let us keep the baby.

Shall we pray?

Father, our hearts long for the genuine manifestation of Your Holy Spirit in our lives—the lives of believers. And Lord, we desire to be open to You, so that You might be able, Lord, to do those things You desire to do within Your church. Lord, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We thank You for the dynamic that it brings to our Christian experience. And so, Lord, tonight again we want to offer to You our bodies, yielding them to You as instruments of righteousness, that You might fill us with Your Spirit, that You might guide us by Your Spirit, so that we will be led by the Spirit. And Lord, we desire to walk in the Spirit. And even as the Corinthians church did not come behind in any spiritual gift, so Lord, we would pray that we also would not come behind in any spiritual gift. That You will be able to do all that You want to do within Your body, the church. No closed doors. No restrictions, Lord, but open to You. But in the same token, Father, we pray that You will help us to put the guard against any fanaticism or any spurious manifestations that are not from You. Give to us as You did in the church of Ephesus, the capacity of discerning, Lord, when a person comes in and declares they are a prophet and he is not. Lord, give us that discernment and guard us and guide us in the things of the Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS325. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

Shall we turn in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12? Paul is describing the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they operate within the church. He then likens it to a body, which is one, and yet has many members or many parts. Although there are many parts, it is only one body. So also is Christ.

For by the one Spirit are we all baptized into the one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into the one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. (1 Corinthians 12:13-31)

So, as he likens the ministry gifts and the various members of the body, note that God has a place and a purpose for every part of the body. You are a part of the body of Christ. And as such, God has fit you for a particular place of ministry and service within the body. You are necessary for the function of the whole body. So many times there are parts that we think are not so important, but God has chosen to bestow upon them a greater importance. Some parts of the body that really do not get noticed very much (some of the more uncomely or not so beautiful parts of the body) God has chosen to bestow upon them a greater beauty.

Now your big toe is not really very beautiful. If you really just sort of look at it, it is really sort of funny looking. And yet how important it is for your balance. It is so important for the balance of the body. And thus, we all have a part and a place in the body of Christ and we are interdependent upon each other, functioning in that place in the body where God has chosen and is pleased to place us.

Now as he makes this analogy with the human body to the body of Christ, he then talks about some of the ministry gifts within the body. He makes mention of these in his letter to the Ephesians also. First of all, he said “apostles.” Now they were the recognized leaders in the early church. They were the founders, you might say, of the church. You remember that there were many people following Jesus. There were main disciples, but of the disciples He chose twelve that they might be called “apostles.” And the requirement for apostleship was that, first of all, a man be called of God. It is not something that you just make yourself or declare that you are. There were false apostles, but to be a true apostle required the call of God. So as Paul makes reference to his apostleship, over and over he said, “Paul, an apostle by the will of God.”

Secondly, it was a requirement that they had seen the risen Lord. As Peter was talking about the necessity of choosing someone to take the place of Judas, he said, “We need someone who has been with us from the beginning, who can bear witness of the resurrection” (cf. Acts 1:22). And then finally, he must have the gift of miracles to be an apostle.

Now when Paul was defending his apostleship he said that he was an apostle by the will of God. And he said that he was an apostle to the Gentiles. He affirmed that he had seen the Lord when he was writing to the Corinthians and also he declared that the signs of an apostle were wrought by him. That is the gift of miracles and faith as it was exercised in the life of Paul.

I do not know that there are apostles today. I know some men who have claimed apostleship. Usually the reason why they claim to be apostles is that they want authority over people and they want to speak with apostolic authority. In other words: “If I say it is right, then it is right.”

Now the Mormon Church declares that they are the only legitimate church today because they are the only church that is governed by the twelve apostles. And having the twelve apostles they are the only ones who can legitimately ordain someone for the ministry. And thus their big question is always, “Who gave you the authority to preach? Or who gave you the authority to baptize?” These are the same kind of questions the Pharisees were asking John the Baptist. And they later asked Jesus when He had cleansed the temple, “Who gave You the authority to do these things?”

It was interesting that when we met one of the leaders of the Mormon Church there in Salt Lake City a few weeks ago, the question that he had was, “All of these men that are out pastoring these churches, who ordained them?” The thought was *Who gave them the authority?* And I said to him, “Well, we do not believe that any man can ordain another man for the ministry. We believe that only God can ordain a man for the ministry.” And I said, “We seek to only ratify what we recognize God has ordained. So we really do not ordain anyone for the ministry. We do ratify what we recognize to be God’s ordination.”

There is no use beating around the bush. I do not believe that the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church are legitimate. I have known other men who have claimed to be apostles and those that I know who have made that claim, I do not think they are legitimate either.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he said,

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. (2 Corinthians 12:12)

And Paul declared that he was a preacher, he declared that he was an apostle, and he declared that he was a teacher. So as he lists here, “First apostles...” he claimed that he was an apostle. And I accept his claim and believe it is true that he was called of God to be an apostle. But he was also a preacher (or an evangelist—because the evangelist is the preacher). But he also declared that he was a teacher. And he thus had all three of these ministry gifts: that of evangelist, that of an apostle, and that of a teacher in the body of Christ. And Paul did all three very well.

So the Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills. And it is possible that you can have more than one office or one ministry within the church. We have several of our Calvary Chapel pastors that I believe are pastor-teachers, but I believe that they also have the gift of evangelism. Greg Laurie, of course, Mike McIntosh, Raul Ries, Brian Brodersen—many of these young fellows are pastor-teachers, yet they also possess the gift of an evangelist. And thus it is possible, as with Paul, to have more than one ministry gift.

Paul mentions the prophets here. Now they were those who were the exhorters and the encouragers of the church. In the New Testament we are told that there were prophets in the church of Antioch. We do know that Agabus had the office of a prophet within the church in Jerusalem. I believe that Billy Graham is a modern-day prophet. As much as Isaiah or Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the nation of Judah, I believe that Billy Graham has been called by God to be a prophet to the United States.

There were teachers in the early church. Now they are down the line a bit, but I believe that God has called me as a teacher in the body of Christ. And the Bible says, “make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). And I believe that God has called me and gifted me as a teacher. And I believe that the ability is from God. The teaching ability is a gift of God and I recognize it as such. And I believe that the teaching is anointed by the Holy Spirit. If I did not believe that, I would not be here. I would not presume to be here. And I think that one of the proofs that it is anointed by the Holy Spirit is the fact that I can listen to my own tapes and enjoy them and actually be fed by them. Sometimes I think, *Did I say that? That is really good! I do not remember saying that but that is excellent!*

And so, we do recognize that there are gifted teachers within the body of Christ. I believe that Pastor David Hocking is a gifted teacher in the body of Christ. I believe that we have many gifted teachers in Calvary Chapel. I believe that Skip Heitzig and Damian Kyle are gifted and there is just a long list of really gifted teachers. Larry Taylor is a gifted teacher. And I thank the Lord for the many gifted teachers that He has placed here in the body.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he adds “evangelists” to this list that we have here of apostles and prophets and teachers. And then he couples pastors with teachers. I believe that to be a pastor the gift of teaching is an essential. Now when Paul adds evangelist to the list, of course I would put Billy Graham again in that category. Not only is he a prophet of God to our nation, but he is a gifted evangelist. In my opinion, he is one of the finest that the church has seen. As we mentioned, Paul had multiple ministries and so there are many today with multiple ministries within the body.

Now for every one of these gifts or gifted men with gifted ministries, there are gifts of the Holy Spirit that enhance and help in the exercise of that ministry. And again, I want to declare that I

think that it is unfortunate that we have used the term “minister” to specify usually the man who is up in the front and has been called of God to minister to the church. And we say he is our minister. When in reality, all of you have been called to the ministry—not necessarily the pulpit ministry, not necessarily the teaching ministry, or not necessarily a pastoral ministry—but you have all been called into the ministry. You have all been called to serve God and that is what the word ministry actually means, “a servant.” And you have all been called to serve the Lord. God has a place for every one of you in service here in the body of Christ. There is no one that is called into the body of Christ who does not also have the call to the ministry—for whatever God has ordained and gifted you.

So as we get to 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul mentions these various ministry areas (the apostles and prophets) and then he adds to the listing of the nine gifts of the Spirit that we had in the earlier listing. He adds the gifts of helps and the gifts of government to the other list. And so Paul adds the gifts of healing, gifts of helps, gift of governments, diversities of tongues, and of course the interpretation, which are given here in the verse 28.

We would like to look at the gift of helps and those who help in the work of the Lord. There are so many things that need to be done in order that the church might have a full ministry to all of the needs of those within the body. And thus, I think that the gift of helps is one of the most important gifts in the body of Christ. I think perhaps that this is one of those gifts that we are prone not to place too much honor upon. But God puts on it the more abundant honor because oftentimes the gifts of helps are unnoticed. It is not recognized. And thus, we are prone to notice those who are up in front teaching. We are prone to magnify the gift of teacher or evangelist or whatever. And I believe God really places the more abundant glory and honor upon the gifts of helps.

I believe that when people have the gift of helps, they really do not wait to be asked to do things. They just see a need and they just plug in and fill that need. And we have those kinds of people here at Calvary Chapel and how grateful I am for them! They are exercising the ministry of helps and they do it quietly. They do not do it with a lot of flare and drawing attention to themselves. It is just a beautiful, quiet ministry.

We have a lady in our church who is involved in the Monday morning intercessory prayer group and her husband comes with her. And while she is in intercessory prayer with the ladies, he goes through the parking lot picking up all of the papers (paper cups and junk) that you left on Sunday. And I see him walking through the parking lot and I just thank God for that man. Now no one asked him to do it. He just saw that on Monday there was stuff left in the parking lot from Sunday and since he had to drive his wife here for the prayer meeting, he figured, “Well, here is something I can do.” And it is a ministry of helps, but I will tell you that our parking lot would look a lot worse if it were not for his ministry of helps.

We had a couple of retired men in the church who realized that these air conditioners all have filters on them which need to be changed regularly. And so, these two men would come down on a regular, scheduled basis and they would go through all of the air conditioners. There are over a hundred filters and they would replace them. And they had the schedule all worked out. They would order the filters and then they would go through on a regular basis and change the filters to help keep the air cleaner. What a beautiful gift! One of these men is already getting his reward for his exercise of his ministry. And the other one has moved away from the area, but it was always a blessing to see these fellows come down and they would go through the whole thing. They had placed charts up for which air conditioners needed new filters each week as they would go

through the whole complex here changing the air conditioning filters. This is the ministry of helps. It is a very beautiful ministry.

I think of all of the ladies who are involved in the ministry of helps here at Calvary Chapel. Of course tomorrow we will see the Joyful Life Studies begin once more. But it would be impossible for these ladies to have such an extremely successful program if it were not for all of the ladies who are involved in the ministry of helps in getting the lessons together. They help in getting the groups together, in seeing that there are rooms for everybody—I mean it is just glorious to watch how God has gifted these women. Many of them have organizational skills and they are able to just come and offer themselves in service to the Lord in the ministry of helps.

There are many opportunities to exercise the gift of helps. If you hear of someone who has gone to the hospital or maybe a wife who has gone to the hospital, they will prepare a meal and take it over to the family. And they might go over and clean the house. If the wife is in the hospital for any prolonged period of time, you can be sure the house is going to get to be a mess. And they will go over and help, just showing the love of Christ in a very practical way.

In the Old Testament, Joshua had the gift of helps and he ministered unto Moses. He was there beside Moses. Moses could give him orders and he stood by to carry out the wishes of Moses. And we read, “So Joshua did as Moses said unto him” (Exodus 17:10). He was there just to be a right-hand man for Moses—just to help Moses. But it is interesting to me that he was a very faithful servant to Moses. He exercised the gift of helps. And being faithful in the ministry and the gift of helps, when Moses died, God chose and ordained Joshua to then take over the leadership of the people.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus commended the one who had increased the five and he received another five. And he said, “Lord I went out and I have ten here now.” And the Lord said, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in the little things, now I will make you ruler over more things, or larger things” (cf. Matthew 25:21).

And the beautiful thing is that as we are faithful in the place where God has called us, it does not mean that I am going to forever be stoking the furnace. But if God has called me to do that, I need to be faithful in doing it. Whatever God has called me to do, I should do it with the best of my ability. I should do it with a willing heart, a ready heart, and a joyful heart because I should be doing it as unto the Lord, not as unto man.

Now the Lord has taught me some interesting lessons in this regard, because I want the grounds here to look clean and neat. I like to go on the grounds where it looks like somebody cares. I do not like going where it looks like people do not really care or they are not interested. If it is junky looking, I do not like that. And so as I walk around the grounds, when I see the papers on the ground, I usually pick them up. And of course with the school here of almost 2,000 students, these plastic sandwich bags blow all over the place and the kids are not the most tidy kids in the world. You know that probably better than I do because my kids for the most part are grown and gone. The school kids let their papers go and they leave their cans of pop or the empty cans everywhere around the grounds.

And so I often find myself, as I am walking back to one of the other offices, picking up these papers or picking up cans and depositing them in the trash can. And I found that I was resenting it somewhat. I began to say, “Trashy kids!” And I found that I was beginning to resent it, because it becomes one of those jobs like washing dirty clothes. It never ends.

I have a eucalyptus tree in my front yard that is dirty all year long. Now the trees that I plant are the deciduous type as a rule, so one part of the year I clean up leaves—sure—but that is it. With the eucalyptus every week it deposits a pile of dirty leaves. And I wrote the city and asked them to please remove the tree in the parkway because it is in their parkway, and thus, I do not have jurisdiction over it. And they like the looks of it but they do not have to sweep the sidewalk all the time. It is one of those things that just does not quit. It is always there. And thus, with those kinds of tasks you go through and do it, but then tomorrow at lunch—there it is again!

And so I found that I was resenting it and I was sort of picking up with force some of the pop cans and crushing them. And the Lord spoke to my heart and He said, “Who are you doing this for?” “You, Lord!” And He said, “Forget it. If you are going to do it with that attitude I would rather you not do it.”

So what we do for the Lord we should do cheerfully. We should do it for the joy of knowing that we are doing it for the Lord. “Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all for the glory of God” (cf. Colossians 3:17). And so with the gifts of helps, you need to exercise them for the glory of God, realizing, “I am doing this for the Lord. And whatever I do for the Lord, He wants me to do joyfully as service unto God.”

In the Old Testament, we find Gehazi was the servant of Elisha and he would do Elisha’s bidding. He was helping Elisha. Elisha’s ministry was greatly enhanced by having Gehazi there to help him. The problem with Gehazi is that he began to lust after the rewards that Naaman had offered to his master Elisha and coveted the wealth and went after it and was thus plagued with the leprosy that was once on Naaman.

In the New Testament, Timothy was Paul’s servant. He went with Paul so many times and helped Paul. When Paul needed to move on, He said, “Timothy you stay here for a while.” And then he would write and say, “Come on and meet me, Timothy. And when you do, bring some parchments and some of these other things” (cf. 2 Timothy 4:13). And he was a tremendous help to Paul.

Paul speaks of Priscilla and Aquilla as being his helpers in Christ Jesus. And when the early church had a problem with its welfare program, they chose seven men who were filled with the Holy Spirit, (men who had a good reputation) and they put them over the administering of the church’s welfare program. They were given a position of the ministry of helps—helping in distributing the church’s welfare. But as they were faithful in that ministry of helps, we find that Philip then was gifted as an evangelist and was given the gift of the working of miracles (the gifts of healing). And he went up to Samaria and brought Christ unto the Samaritans and there was a tremendous revival under Philip. He was one of the men who had the gifts of helps and was administering the church’s welfare program.

Another was Stephen, who also was one of those seven chosen to wait the tables. He was faithful in that ministry of works and God then used him to challenge the Jewish high council. And I believe as a direct result of his witness and his martyrdom that Paul the Apostle was touched in his heart and was fighting against the convictions of the Spirit until the day the Lord apprehended him on the road to Damascus. And the Lord said, “It has been hard for you, has it not, Paul, to kick against the pricks?” (cf. Acts 9:5). In other words, “Your conscience has been goading you because of what you heard from Stephen. You heard the truth and it struck but you have been fighting against it.”

Paul, writing in Romans said,

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching. (Romans 12:6-7)

And I believe that he is here referring to the gifts of helps.

What a glorious and wonderful thing it is when God brings alongside of you those who have the ministry of helps or the gift of helps. They do not have to be asked to do things. They just see what needs to be done and they go quietly about doing it. They do not exercise the gift for public recognition and would be very embarrassed if someone praised them for the work that they did.

Now there are many people who are not that way and then it is not really the gifts of helps. But there are many people who do things for recognition. Though Jesus said, “Take heed to yourself that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of men, because I say, you have your reward” (cf. Matthew 6:1). But that is the case many times.

I went to pastor the Los Serranos Community Church years ago and on the first Sunday there was a very beautiful floral piece on the table there in front of the platform. And I thought it was a beautiful arrangement. After the service the head of the board of elders came up to me and he said, “Now, Pastor Smith, I know this is your first Sunday. You are new here but,” he said, “If you want to see those flowers there in front, you must make mention of them.” And I said, “Well, you probably did not know what you were getting into when you voted for me as your pastor. I do not believe in giving public recognition to men because I feel that I would be robbing them from their heavenly reward.” He said, “Well, if you want to see flowers there, you better, you know...” So there were flowers the following Sunday, which was a beautiful arrangement again but I did not make mention of it, and sure enough that was the last bouquet.

What you do, you do for the Lord and as unto the Lord and you look to the Lord for the recognition and the reward for what you have done. That is the true gift of works. Paul told them to do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. It is a ministry gift that should be exercised, as we said, “with joy because you are doing it as a service to the Lord.”

And the Lord loves a cheerful giver. It should never be exercised in the sense of duty or obligation, where you then feel the resentment for what you are doing. If you find yourself resenting the work that you are doing, then it would be best that you not do it. Because rather than it being a positive experience for you, it is a negative experience for you and it is not really going to produce any rewards. So you would be better off not to do it because it is really going against your record rather than for your record, if you are doing it with a bitter heart or out of resentment. And you are upset because, “They have asked me to do this. I am going to do it.” But God does not want our clenched-teeth kind of service. And so it is important that, in the exercise of this gift, it be exercised out of a heart of love and a heart of joy.

I have observed people with the gifts of helps who are always so excited and so thrilled that they can do something for the Lord. They are just bubbling over with excitement to think, “I have this service that I can offer to God and He will actually let me serve Him this way.” That is the true gift of helps and it is an important gift. It is a necessary gift within the body, because there is just

so much to be done. No one man can do it all. No ministerial staff can do it all. There is some way for everybody to serve the Lord.

And you might say, “Well, I do not have any gifts.” Well, anybody can have the gifts of helps and by faith exercise that gift and be a blessing and a benefit to the whole body of Christ. Every one of you has a place in the body. That is what Paul taught us tonight.

Do you know your place in the body? Are you fulfilling your place in the body? Are you using your gifts?

Shall we pray?

Father, what a joy and blessing it is to be able to serve You. And how we thank You, Lord, for Your gifts and Your callings. And Lord, we pray that each of us will discover just that place that You have for us in the body of Christ. And we pray, Father, that we might see the body of Christ functioning as one body, unified together, ministering to each other, sensitive to each other and each other’s needs. May we be loving one another, caring for one another and doing for one another. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS326. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul says,

Now God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.

We are looking at the gift of teaching. As Paul was writing to the Ephesians concerning the ministry gifts within the church, again he said, “He gave some apostles; and some, prophets...” Here he adds to the list, “evangelists,” before he gets to the pastor-teachers in Ephesians 4:11.

In Romans 12, as Paul again is talking about the gifts of the Spirit,

If your gift is serving, then let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching (cf. Romans 12:7).

The gift of teaching is first mentioned in Exodus 4:12 where God, speaking to Moses, said, “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.” The Lord is saying to Moses, “You go. I will be with you. I will give you your words. I will teach you.” Moses was God’s representative to the people. He spoke to them the Word of God.

When Paul the Apostle was writing to the Corinthian church, he said, “That which I have received from the Lord, I also deliver unto you” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Whenever I stand before you to minister and to teach God’s Word, it is always my prayer that I can preface the remarks that I make with those same words of Paul—“that which I have received from the Lord, I also deliver unto you.” I wait upon the Lord in my studies. I seek the Lord. I seek the mind of the Lord. I seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I seek enlightenment from the Holy Spirit on the Word of God. And I do believe that while I am in study, the Spirit of God does minister God’s love and God’s truth to my heart. And then I come and I share with you that which I have received from the Lord by ministering God’s truth unto you.

In Exodus 4:15 (close to the other reference 4:12) says,

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

Now in the first one, “I will teach you what you should say.” And then, “I will teach you what you should do.”

In Nehemiah 9:20, we read, “Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them.” The help of the Holy Spirit in teaching the Word of God—how essentially necessary that is! I do not believe that a man is qualified to teach the Word of God apart from the empowering and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the most scholarly person in the world, who does not have the Holy Spirit, has less understanding of the Word of God than any of you who possess God’s Spirit in your life. It is only through the Spirit of God that we can understand the things of God. The natural man does not understand it, neither can he know them. The Word of God is spiritually discerned and so we see the necessity of the Holy Spirit to know the Word and to teach the Word.

Jesus promised,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.  
(John 14:26)

And so even in the Old Testament, Nehemiah speaks of God's good Spirit to instruct them.

Jesus said in Luke 12:12, "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." He said, "They are going to call you before their magistrates (before their councils) but do not take any forethought of how you are going to answer or what you are going to say because the Holy Spirit will give you the word at that time" (Luke 12:11).

Now we see how that was manifested in the Book of Acts. When the lame man was healed as Peter and John were going into the temple, they used the opportunity to witness to the people concerning Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead by the power of God. They were arrested and put into prison. The next day they were brought before the religious council and the chief prosecutor asked a very leading and self-incriminating question: "By what name or by what power did you perform this miracle on this lame man?" (Acts 4:7). Now Peter could have said, "I refuse to answer on the grounds of the Fifth Amendment"—because the answer would be self-incriminating.

You see in the book of the law, it declares that if a person comes and does a sign and a wonder and they lead you to worship any god other than Jehovah God, they are to be stoned to death. So they wanted to trap Peter because out on the porch he had said it was through the name of Jesus Christ (through faith in Him and by the faith of Him) that this man stands here before you whole. Now they wanted him to repeat that. But Peter said, "The God of our fathers has honored His Son Jesus Christ." And it says, "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8) and through the power of the Holy Spirit he gave an answer. This was a very strong answer to the religious council before whom he stood.

And then later on Stephen stood before the very same council and preached one of the most remarkable sermons that is recorded in the Bible, through the power of the Holy Spirit. They looked upon him and his face was that of an angel, glowing with the power of the Spirit as the Lord gave to Stephen that brilliant defense which was so convicting to those who heard him.

Paul the Apostle said in 2 Timothy 1:11, "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." Now you remember that Paul told the Corinthians, "The Holy Spirit divides to each man severally as He wills." There are many who are gifted both as preachers and as evangelists, teachers and evangelists. I look at Greg Laurie, Mike McIntosh, and Raul Ries and these fellows not only have a teaching ministry, but they are evangelists. They have the preaching gifts also and God has blessed both their evangelistic efforts as well as their ministry of teaching their flocks. And I think that with those combined gifts they sort of accent and complement each other. I think that as pastors and as teachers, they have the pastor's heart; and thus, they have a greater knowledge of what evangelism should be doing for the local church.

Paul the Apostle declared that he was a teacher and we find him exercising that gift in Acts 11:26. After Paul's conversion, he came for a short while to the church in Jerusalem after his sojourn in the Arabian desert. The Jerusalem church found him a little too hot to handle. He was too eager to go after the religious leaders—especially the Pharisees. And so they sent him into a forced

retirement to Tarsus. He was not that well received by the church in Jerusalem but he was too good a man to just be sitting in Tarsus.

And so, Barnabas went to Tarsus and found Saul because in Antioch there had developed a strong Gentile church. And realizing that Paul had a Grecian cultural background, as well as the Hebrew culture background, he decided that Paul would be an excellent minister and helper to the Gentile church in Antioch. So Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Paul and in Acts 11:26, it says,

And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

And then in the listing of the teachers in Antioch in Acts 13:1, Saul is named with those who were the teachers in Antioch. Acts 15:35 says,

Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

So Paul was not only teaching but preaching with the combined gifts, as we have seen in others.

In Acts 18:11, Paul was in Corinth and he continued there a year and six months teaching the word of God among them. So he was teaching a year in Antioch and teaching eighteen months in Corinth. And then in Acts 20 Paul declares to the elders of Ephesus how that he “kept unto you, having showed you and having taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). And then Acts 20:26-27,

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Paul could say to the Ephesians that in that two to three years he was among them, he had declared to them all the counsel of God. I think that that is a marvelous boast for a minister to be able to declare to his people. “I have declared to you all the counsel of God.” And I know of only one way that you can make that declaration and that is to take the people through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. And when you have gone through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation then you can safely say, “I have declared unto you all the counsel of God.”

Now Paul declared to the Galatians that the message that he taught, he did not receive from men; for he was not taught it by men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. So Paul declares that the message he taught them was directly from the Lord. His understanding of grace came from Jesus Christ. He was not taught it by the church in Jerusalem. Paul was not taught by men, but through direct revelation of Jesus Christ.

In writing to the Corinthians he said,

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my

preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

These are amazing and interesting statements by Paul. Paul was a brilliant man. You cannot read the writings of Paul without recognizing that he was a brilliant man. He declared that he had been schooled at the feet of Gamaliel—one of the leading rabbis of the day. Yet Paul's desire was not to try to persuade them intellectually to a faith in Jesus Christ that would be an intellectual faith, but that his preaching would be the demonstration and the power of the Spirit and that the Spirit of God would reach their hearts. You see, there is a difference between intellectual conversion and a heart conversion. There is a difference between believing in your mind and believing in your heart. And Paul was interested in reaching the heart. It is the Spirit that reaches the heart of man and the conversions that are of the heart are really the true conversions.

Paul wrote to the Galatians and he said, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you would so soon turn from the truth. Having begun in the Spirit are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3).

And one of the greatest concerns that I have as I approach that time when the Lord will be rewarding me for the ministry and my service to Him is that I would obstruct His handiwork. We have had the glorious experience of seeing the Spirit of God do a remarkable work that is (I would think) unparalleled in present-day church history. The work that God has done in and through His church is remarkable!

And this is a work of God's Spirit. There is no other explanation for it. It is not the genius of man and it is not the planning of man. It is a work of God's Spirit. And having begun in the Spirit are we now going to be made perfect in the flesh? (Galatians 3:3). Can we improve upon the Holy Spirit? The minute we get our paws in God's work and start meddling with it, we are taking it down rather than building it up. I like to keep my hands off of God's work. We must let God do His work and just sit back and smile and enjoy it. Oh, may God help us to continue in the Spirit!

So Paul said, "I did not want your faith to be established by the wisdom of man, by the intellectual arguments or the apologetics that I might offer. But I wanted it to be established in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, so that your faith would not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among those that are complete, yet not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world that comes to nothing" (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:5).

If you want to know a wisdom that comes to nothing, get into quantum physics. And the quantum physicists say that nothing exists—everything is an illusion.

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man,

save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1Corinthians 2:7-11)

So Paul is saying that without the Spirit you cannot really know the things of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (1 Corinthians 2:12-3:2)

So the tragic thing with the Corinthian church is that Paul, in seeking to teach them the deeper things of the Spirit, found himself restricted because they were not able to bear the truth. Now the disciples were the same with Jesus. Jesus said, "I have many things to say unto you, but you are not able to bear them now" (cf. John 16:12). And Paul is saying much to the church of Corinth. "There are a lot of things I would like to share with you, but you are not able to bear them. I have given you milk and it seems like it is still necessary that you be bottle-fed, because you have not developed or grown."

And of course that is the purpose of the teaching ministry within the church; it is to bring spiritual growth and spiritual development. You see, people make a great mistake in thinking that they can grow spiritually on experience alone. This is not so. It is only the Word of God that feeds the spirit of man and brings real spiritual growth—the Word of God taught through the anointing of the teaching of God.

So this gift of teaching is such a vital and necessary gift in the church. And if there was ever a time when the gift of teaching needed to be exercised in the church, it is today. There is so much carnality that the church is much like Corinth in the state of arrested spiritual development. At the time when they should be mature (having grown and developed) they are still babes in Christ. And that is a tragedy indeed!

Somehow preaching has become the major focus of the ministers today and the church has almost been preached to death. Preaching is really the proclaiming of the Gospel; and thus, preaching is more to the unconverted. Paul went and he preached Christ unto them and he stayed and taught them. Once a person has come to the faith in Jesus Christ, then the great need is being taught the Scriptures.

The purpose of the pastor-teacher is:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity

of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-15)

The goal is that we might have that spiritual maturity. So God has appointed in the church the pastor-teachers for this purpose of perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry and building up the body of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews 6 said,

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.  
(Hebrews 6:1-2)

He is saying, “let us leave these first principles. Let us go on into maturity. Let us not go back and keep laying the foundations over.” Foundations are important, but you are to build on the foundation. You are not to just keep working on the foundation. Having first established the foundation, then you begin to develop the building; and thus, the perfection or the maturing of the saints. Without the solid teaching of the Word of God, the believers remain in this state of arrested spiritual development and Paul grieved over the Corinthians for that very reason.

Through the prophet Hosea, the Lord cried,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. (Hosea 4:6)

So this is God’s lament over the people. They are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.

Now as he was instructing Titus in the teaching, Paul said, “For the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (cf. Titus 2:11-12). We are living in a world that is given over to sin—a world that is under Satan’s control. However, we are to deny ungodliness and those worldly lusts and we are to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.

In 2 Timothy he said,

And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

So the teaching ministry goes on. You see, you commit the truths of God to faithful men who then are able to go out and to teach others. And they in turn teach others that they might teach others and it goes out and out and out. And how important this is! A wonderful thing about the teaching ministry is that as you teach the Word of God and people receive it, then they become capable and able to teaching it to others, who then, in turn, can teach it to others and you have that glorious kind of exponential growth.

Now the method of teaching the Word of God is given to us in Nehemiah 8, and for context, let us start reading with verse 1:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the morning until midday before the men and the women and those that could understand, and the ears of all of the people were attentive. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose and Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, amen,” with lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Nehemiah 8:1-6)

So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading. There is your secret. They read it distinctly. Then they gave the sense and caused them to understand the meaning which is expositional teaching of the Word of God.

Now the result of good teaching is found in Isaiah 54:13-14, where the Lord declared,

And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

The result of the teaching is great peace to your children. The fear and terror will be gone. Through the teaching of the Word you will come to understand the greatness of God, the love of God, and the concern of God for you. And when you understand how much God does love you and how much He is concerned with you, you do not have to fear the uncertainty of the future. You are not terrorized by the events that are going on in your life, but you have great peace and great confidence. God loves me. God is on the throne. God is watching over me. God is going to see me through.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul tells us that:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

So the Word of God and the teaching of the Word of God will thoroughly furnish you for all good works. It will bring you into maturity and into spiritual growth in your walk with the Lord. So this is the teaching gift of the Holy Spirit. What a blessing it is to a church. How important it is for the church!

For you who are teaching in the Sunday School, what a vital and important ministry God has given to you! You have the opportunity of bringing into those pliable little minds some of their primary and first impressions of God. You have the opportunity of encouraging them to memorize the Scriptures and letting them know how much God loves them. You are teaching them and planting in their hearts the foundational truths of the God that we worship and serve.

And if you are teaching, then Paul said, “He that teacheth on his teaching”—that is, wait upon your teaching. Seek the help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make you a better teacher (an able teacher) that through the Spirit of God you can plant into their minds and into their hearts lasting truths of the eternal God. Many of us can think back to the Sunday School days and remember some of the lessons that we were taught concerning God. You can remember some of those beautiful, childish illustrations that are necessary so a child’s mind can perhaps grasp it. These illustrations can last through their lifetime.

We have many opportunities to study and learn the Word of God here. We have our Tuesday night School of the Bible. Those who are teaching in the School of the Bible, again seek the help and the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the gifting of the Holy Spirit.

When I was in seminary, the most brilliant professor in the seminary did not have the gift of teaching. And his class was the most boring class I had because he did not have the gift of teaching. I had other professors who had the gift of teaching and they could make you want to learn. They made it exciting. Now I hate to say this, but I cannot remember a thing I learned in that one professor’s class. But with the other professors (those who had the gift of teaching) the truths that they shared are a part of my life and my understanding of God today. So it is not really how brilliant you are that counts. It is the gift of teaching that is so necessary and if God has given you the gift of teaching then use it. Exercise it. Invite the children from the neighborhood into the house and teach them about God. Use the gifts that God has given you. Do as Paul said to Timothy, “Stir up the gift that is in you that was given unto you” (2 Timothy 1:6).

Father, we thank You for the anointing of Your Holy Spirit and the power of Your Holy Spirit; for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the enablings of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we pray that You will bless many with the gift of teaching, that they might be able to go out and teach others, who in turn will be able to go out and teach others. We rely, Lord, not upon our worldly wisdom or knowledge, but as we rely upon the Holy Spirit to make clear and to make plain the things of God to the hearts of the people. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS327. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

Paul tells us that:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

It is interesting to me that the first mention of *government* in the Bible is in the prophecy of Isaiah.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

So we recognize that in God's order the finest and the highest form of government is that of a monarchy. It is a most efficient form of a government, providing that you have a good monarch. And when Jesus comes to establish God's government upon the earth, He will be here as King of kings and as Lord of lords.

Now the purposes of government should be to promote the common welfare, to insure domestic tranquility, and to establish and enforce laws that will guarantee the common welfare of the society. Government should seek to eliminate the evil and to preserve the good.

And there are men whom God has gifted with the gifts of government. We often say concerning a person that he is a gifted leader or that he just seems to be a natural leader. We say that he has the kind of personality or the kind of demeanor and leadership to which people are attracted.

As we look around the world today, we find that there are people whom God has gifted with different types of gifts and talents. There are those that we would classify as gifted musicians. There are people who are gifted in math and they do not have to study like you or I have to study in order to learn math. It just seems to come naturally to them. They are just gifted in that area. And so it is important that we discover and learn the gifts God has given to us, because all of you are special and all of you are unique. When God created you He threw away the mold and He wanted you just as you are—special and unique as you are. And He has given to you special aptitudes and special giftings.

Now these gifts and talents that God has given to people always find their highest use and highest expression when they are used to glorify the Lord. And if you use those gifts to bring glory to yourself, or if you use those gifts for your own personal profit and gain, in a sense you are prostituting the gifts that God has given to you. Those gifts are for the profit of the whole body and they are to glorify the Lord.

There are many forms of government that men have tried throughout the history of mankind. Some of the earliest forms of government were feudal serfdoms with local kings over villages or cities. And these gradually developed into monarchies that ruled over sections and ultimately over nations. And so, this led to the form of government known as a monarchy.

The United States was formed as a republic, in a constitutional form of government. And as a republic, we have what is known as a representative form of government. That is, the people elect men or women to represent them in the formation of the laws by which the nation will be governed.

I think all of the flap that is being made by some of the candidates concerning our desire to know where they stand on issues that are very important to us as Christians is rather pathetic and tragic. If they are to represent us and if we do have a representative form of government, the idea is that we are to elect people who represent us. They should represent our thinking and our ideals and they should be seeking to promote them. And if they are there to represent me, I want to know that they are properly representing my feelings and my values.

I do not want to see our schools dispensing condoms. And if a school board member, or one who desires to be on the school board, would be voting to use the tax dollars that are designated for education to buy and to distribute condoms to the students, that does not represent how I feel. And if that is the way they feel and would vote, that does not represent me. And I feel that I have a right to know how they feel on these very important moral issues.

There are those who believe that it is wonderful and very commendable that the homosexual community wants to know their positions concerning legislation on homosexuality. However, the moment we want to know how they stand on truly moral issues, they begin to scream, “Foul!” They begin to cry, “Separation of church and state!” This is a bunch of dust thrown in the air to cloud the issue.

I would be the first one to object to a state church. The quickest way to kill the church of Jesus Christ is to let it join the state, or let the state join the church. You are going to guarantee that it is going to be dead before long. Every state church has come to a sad, pathetic spiritual death. I want separation of church and state. I value the separation of church and state. But that does not mean the separation of state from morality, from decency, from common sense, or from the moral issues that make a nation strong or that destroy a nation.

And so, it is not an issue of the church trying to impose its will upon society. Although, it does seem that the other side wants to impose their will on society and they seem to feel that is quite all right. It is all right for them to impose their low standards on society—impose pornography and abortion rights—that is fine with them. But oh how they scream when we say, “Well, we would like candidates who would have the gumption to stand up for what is decent and what is pure and what is right.” I could get upset over issues like this.

There are totalitarian forms of government where people are ruled by dictatorships. They really do not have a true say in those who represent them. They only have ballots where they vote *yes* or *no* on the candidate. They are already selected so there are no real choices involved. And sometimes I question how much of a choice we actually have in the candidates that we have to vote for.

Actually all of these forms of government that have been devised by man are unsuccessful. Man has definitely proven that he is thoroughly incapable of governing over his fellow man without graft, without corruption, and ultimately destroying every form of government that man has attempted. Because of greed, man is incapable of ruling over his fellow-man in righteousness.

The only form of government that God endorsed and established was theocracy—God ruling over the nation of Israel. The name Israel means “governed by God.” God ruling over the nation is a theocracy. Now Moses was a leader of the people, but he acted as God’s representative; and thus, with the gifts of government, Moses was the accepted earthly leader. However, it was recognized that Moses was being guided and governed by God.

When the children of Israel saw the fire and the thunder and the fire rolling on the ground on Mount Sinai, they said to Moses, “You go up and talk to God. Find out what He has to say and come back and tell us. And whatever He says we will obey. But we do not want to try and approach the mountain. You go up and you talk to Him” (cf. Deuteronomy 5:27). So it was recognized that Moses went to God and that God directed Moses and the things that Moses spoke were God’s guidance and God’s rules for the people.

But there was that consciousness that God reigns and God rules over the nation. And as they would set up their camp with the tabernacle (the place of meeting) God was right in the center of the camp. All of the tribes were pitched around the tabernacle with the tent doors facing the tabernacle. The moment they would come out of their tents looking ahead, they would see the tabernacle of God. If it was at night, they would see the pillar of fire above the tabernacle and they were conscious of the fact that: “We are being governed by God. We are God’s people.”

In the day there would be the cloud which, again, was reminding them that they were God’s people. They were being governed by God. If you will look at the covenant God made with them: “If you will allow Me to govern over you; if you will obey My commandments; if you will follow after Me.” God gave them promise after promise of power, of greatness, of strength, and of blessings. None of the plagues that came upon the Egyptians would come upon them and they would rule over their enemies. They would be lenders and not borrowers and all of the things that God would do—“If you will just follow Me and let Me rule over you.”

But then God predicted the dire consequences that would come to them when they came to the place where they refused to allow God to rule over them. And if you will not obey these commandments that I give unto you—God then began to describe the disastrous results of any nation that rejects His rule.

It should be recognized that God rules through gifted men who are gifted by the Holy Spirit. Now as Moses was ruling over the people and the burden became heavier than he could bear—Moses finally complains, “I did not give birth to all these people.” He was submitting his resignation really. God instructed Moses to take seventy of the elders of Israel, and bring them into the tent of the congregation. And God would take the Spirit that he put upon Moses and He would put it upon the seventy elders that they might assist him in ruling over the people (cf. Numbers 11:16).

And so, filled with the Spirit, they were able to then help Moses in the governing over the nation. And rather than Moses hearing all of the complaints, the seventy elders would hear the complaints and when they had an issue that they could not resolve, they would bring it then to Moses. Moses in turn, would take it to God and God would direct Moses; and thus, the people were aware and conscious that God was reigning over them. He was using these human

instruments to represent Him to the people. What a glorious thing, when a person rules in such a way that the people are aware and conscious that it is really God who rules.

Now the Bible gives several rules to those who would exercise a role of leadership or a role of governing. 2 Samuel 23:3 says,

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”

Let me say that any man who does not have the fear of God has no right to rule over his fellow man. He is not qualified. I will guarantee that any man who does not have the fear of God will be a corrupt ruler. He will be crooked and dishonest.

In Romans 12:8, Paul talks of the gift of governments and in speaking of the gift of ruling he said, “And he that ruleth with diligence.” It is an awesome responsibility to represent God to the people, because God does not like to be misrepresented any more than you like to be misrepresented.

God does not like to be misrepresented either. He does not like people saying, “Well, God said...” when He did not say it. And God tells what He is going to do to those prophets who are going around saying, “Well, God said...” when God did not say it. “Woe be unto the prophets!” They are going to have to answer to God when they go around saying, “Well, God said...” and God did not say it. He does not like being misrepresented.

And thus, when we lead or have a role of leadership, we must do so in the fear of God with all diligence, making certain that we do not misrepresent God to the people. That was the sin that kept Moses out of the Promised Land. When the people came at the waters of Meribah, and said, “Moses, we are dying of thirst. We are sorry we ever left Egypt. We have been in this wilderness for forty years. You have not brought us into the Promised Land. We were crazy to ever listen to you.” And they were ready to stone Moses. And Moses went in before the Lord just totally upset with the way the people were treating him. He was angry at the people.

In Numbers 20, God said, “Moses, go out and speak to the rock that water might come forth for them.” And Moses went out to the people and he said, “You rebels! How long do I have to put up with you? Must I smite this rock again to give you water?” And he took his rod and smote the rock. God is so gracious, so loving and so kind that water came gushing out. And the people drank and were refreshed.

But God said, “Moses, come here, son. Moses, what did I tell you to do?” “Speak to the rock.” “How is it, Moses, that you smote the rock? Moses, you did not represent Me before the people. You misrepresented Me. They think I am mad at them. They think I am angry with them. They think I am upset because you failed to represent Me. Moses, you will not be able to lead them into the Promised Land.”

“Wait a minute, Lord. Wait a minute. Forty years I have been putting up with these people just for the hope of leading...”

“Do not talk to Me any more about it, Moses. It is a closed issue because you failed to represent Me before the people at the waters of Meribah.”

That is how important it is that we are representing God in truth. And I wonder how many times even in the ministry when we have personal frustrations because the church is not growing as

rapidly as we think it should. Or there are some rumblings in the church and we are upset. And because we are angry, when we preach it is sort of through clenched teeth. And people think, “Oh, God is really mad at us tonight!” And we do not accurately represent God to the people.

And I wonder if God gets upset with us and says, “Wait a minute! I am not angry with them. I love them. You are My representative and from the things you said and the way you said them, now they feel that I am really angry with them and upset and ready to toss them out!” Oh, how we have to be careful in ruling, because as rulers we are representing God to the people. And we must be careful that we do not misrepresent Him.

Proverbs 12:24 says, “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule.” I think that that is probably what Paul was quoting when he said, “And he that ruleth with diligence” (cf. Romans 12:8). He probably was thinking of that Proverb—“The hand of the diligent shall bear rule.” Now ruling as God’s representative is not really lording over people.

Mark 10:42-45 says,

But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

So Jesus said to His disciples the night that He was betrayed, when He took the towel and washed their feet, “You see what I have done?” They said, “Yes, Lord.” He said, “Now you call me Lord and Master and that is correct because that is what I am. But if I, being your lord and master, wash your feet, then you ought to wash one another’s feet” (cf. John 13:12-15). In other words, He said, “I am giving you an example of how you are to rule over the people. How you are to exercise your leadership. It is to take the place of a servant. If you are going to represent Me, you must take the place of a servant. You must be available to the people.”

Paul said, in writing to Timothy, “This is a true saying. If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work” (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). Now the bishop was an overseer (or a ruler or a governor) within the body of Christ. The English word *bishop* in the Greek is *episcopas*. And thus, you have the Episcopalian church that follows this form of government with the bishops, or the *episcopas*.

Paul also speaks of the elders and the Greek word is *presbytuos*. And from that you get the word Presbyterian; and thus, the Presbyterian Church. They call themselves Presbyterians because of the form of government which is ruled by a board of elders or the *presbytuos*. And thus, there is the division between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians over whether or not the church should be ruled by the bishops or by the board of elders.

But here, Paul is talking about the bishops or the overseers. He said,

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre;

but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.  
(1 Timothy 3:2-6)

Now as Paul lists these qualifications for one who would be a bishop or an overseer in the church, I think he fully eliminates everybody with even just the very first requirement of being blameless. It is interesting how certain people will jump on certain requirements and they sort of emphasize them over others. It appears that there are some of the things in the list that seem to be certain disqualifications; while with others, we are willing to compromise a bit. The overseer is not to be covetous. Have you ever looked at your neighbor's fancy sports car and wished it was yours? Coveted?

Now no man can truly exercise leadership over others unless he is conscious of the fact that he himself is ruled. No man can rule who is not ruled. That is why I said "the fear of God" is an important and a necessary trait for anyone who would be in leadership over men.

When the Centurion requested that Jesus heal his servant, he said, "You do not have to come. For I also am a man under authority and I have under me men." (cf. Luke 7:8). In other words, there is a chain of command. I am under authority. I have those above me, but I also have those below me. I am in a chain of authority. I am under authority, but I have authority over others. And I can say I know what authority is about. "I can say to one, 'Go,' and he goes. Another, 'Come,' and he comes" (cf. Luke 7:8).

The Bible establishes many chains of command or levels of authority. But always God is at the top and unless a man is aware that he is governed by God and is responsible to God and will have to answer to God, that man is not qualified to have authority. When you give authority to that kind of man who is not governed by God, he will take advantage of it and he will soon pervert his authority to his own benefit and become a tyrant. No man can rule who is not ruled and has that awareness that "I am responsible unto One who is higher than I. And I will answer to him."

What we have in the United States today is a very sad situation, where many people who have been given authority do not recognize the authority of God in their lives. And thus, they are guilty of gross violations of their authority. Many judges feel that they are the end—that they are the gods. And they treat others as though they are the gods. They are not realizing that they are responsible to God and one day will answer to God for their judging. As judges they are supposed to represent God in their judgments. And if a judge is wise, before he makes a decision he will seek the wisdom and the guidance and the direction of God in the decisions that he makes. He is going to have to answer to God for those decisions that he makes.

2 Samuel 23:3 says,

The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Nebuchadnezzar, that great ruler over the Babylonian kingdom, was acknowledged by God as probably one of the greatest leaders in the history of man in 2 Kings. With the images of the governments of man, his was the head of gold and superior to all other kingdoms. All other kingdoms after Babylon were inferior to the Babylonian kingdom. Even as silver is inferior to

gold, so shall the kingdom be inferior to the Babylonian kingdom. And there was the gradual degrading down to the feet of iron and clay. They lessened from the valuable gold to the silver to the brass to the iron and finally to the iron and clay, as forms of government deteriorate through history.

But because of his greatness and his reign and his rule over the earth, Nebuchadnezzar began to rule out God. He thought that he was at the top and that he was the final authority. Those whom he condemned, he would. Those whom he would raise up, he would. There was no appeal to any higher power than that of Nebuchadnezzar. What he said went and there was no appealing it to any court.

But he was lifted up with pride and God humbled him. And God allowed him to experience a time of insanity “to the intent that the living might know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and He gives it to whomsoever He will, and He can set over it the basest of men.” This is a classic example for us today. “Until you know,” He said, “that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (cf. Daniel 4).

Now there is such a tremendous need for good leadership. Now Moses recognized that he was ready to pass off the scene. This great leader, the man who led the nation in its birth and in its beginning phases, the man who brought to the nation the laws of God, the man who brought them out of the bondage in Egypt under the direction of God to form a nation—as he was getting ready to die he said,

Moses spake to the Lord saying,

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

And the Lord said unto Moses,

Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit... and lay thy hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all of the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: and at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all of the congregation. (Numbers 27:16-21)

And there again is the qualification for leadership: he is a man who has the Spirit, a man who is governed by the Spirit, and a man who is led by the Spirit.

So this was the establishing of the leader to take Moses' place. But here he is to consult God before the priest Eleazar to get the directions from God, when they are to go and when they are to stop. And thus the people knew that the reign of God continued. Though Moses died, the reign of

God continued. There is no diminishing of the nation because the next man coming in is filled with the Spirit and is reigning under the guidance and the direction of God.

Isaiah 9:16 tells us,

For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

And that is the sad consequence of poor leadership—the nation was destroyed. Jesus said, “If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall in the ditch” (cf. Matthew 15:14).

Proverbs 29:2 says,

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked are beareth rule, the people mourn.

Now although there is a responsibility for those who are being ruled, there are tremendous responsibilities on those who would rule—those who would have the gifts of government and exercise them in the body of Christ. But for those who are being ruled, Hebrews declares, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their manner of living” (cf. Hebrews 13:7). In other words, consider the end of a godly life, a righteous life; and thus, you are to follow after those who are living godly, instructing you in the Word of God.

Paul the Apostle said,

Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Hebrews 13:17 says,

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Now there are those in the shepherding movement who take this as their key Scripture and they hold people in horrible bondage. They say you are to obey those who have rule over you and you must submit yourselves to them, for they watch for your souls.

When I was in Germany this past summer at the pastors’ conference in Siegen, there was a young girl who came to me and wanted to talk to me with her boyfriend. She was greatly disturbed. She was going to a church there in Siegen that was into what is commonly termed the “shepherding doctrine.” This is where the person in the church really cannot make any decisions on their own, but are required to talk to the shepherd of the church concerning every decision. You are not to buy a car, you are not to buy clothes, you are not to buy a pair of shoes, unless he gives you the permission to do so. You go and you talk to him and he will guide you in the ways and in the things of the Lord.

And this girl was there and she was being held in bondage because they said, “If you disobey us, you are disobeying God and you are going to hell! And if you go to another church, you are going

to hell because you are rebelling against the authority of the church.” And this poor girl was miserable and she had been coming to Calvary Chapel on the sly. And she was afraid the pastor might find out and consign her immediately to hell. It was tragic because they were holding her in such bondage. And Hebrews 13:17 is the Scripture that they gave to her.

Now whenever you have any chain of command, again, the final authority is God. And I showed her where Jesus showed us, if we were to be the rulers, how we were to be the servants of all. We were not to hold people in bondage and the threats of hell because that is not like our Lord, and that is not representing our Lord.

Finally in Hebrews 13:24 it says,

Greet all of them that have rule over you and all the saints.

So you are to remember them, follow them, obey them as they obey the Lord and lead you in the ways of the Lord. And then you are to greet them, having that kind of closeness. It is a glorious thing when there are those called of God to lead the people of God and there is that kind of bond of love and serving one another and submitting unto one another in the love of Jesus Christ.

Here in the church, we follow sort of a theocratic form of government. We recognize that Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church. He is the final authority and all of the decisions are deferred to Him. We have a church board that works with us and we meet each month and we discuss various issues of the church. We discuss various needs and the various directions. But at each board meeting, before we start, we always begin with prayer recognizing that Jesus is Lord over His church and that we are there only to implement His desires and His wishes. We are not there to rule and we are not there even to make decisions. We are there to find His decision and then to implement His desires.

And I thank God that He has blessed me with a board of men who are earnestly desiring to know the mind of the Lord and to implement the wishes of Jesus Christ concerning this church. They are men who are filled with the Spirit and men who have the gifts of government. Surely our church is blessed. And we are being blessed because of such men with the gifts of government who are seeking God through prayer for His direction, His will, and His purposes for the church.

There is one other Scripture that declares, “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” (cf. Psalm 144:15). And there is the joy and the happiness that we have because we seek to allow the Lord to truly be Lord and to guide the church in His path.

Shall we pray?

Father, we do thank You for the gifts of government and the way they are being exercised here in the church. And Lord, we thank You for the recognition that this is a church that is governed by God, as we look to You, Lord, for guidance and for direction and for wisdom. Lord, how we desire that the church reflect everything that You want the church to be, so that we might be true and faithful witnesses, Lord, to the world. Lord, bless, we pray and continue to bless Your people as we seek to follow You as the Lord over the church. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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All of the gifts of God are given to us according to His grace. That is, you cannot earn the gift, you cannot merit the gift, or else it would not be a gift. It is something that God has given to us and as a gift it must be received. And so, you have to set aside, in your own mind, your worthiness or your deserving of the gifts.

Now this can be a hang-up in two directions. A lot of times I think that our self-righteousness gets in the way and we think, “Well Lord, look what You have done for them and they are terrible. I am much better than they are. Surely Lord, if You did that for them, You should have done it for me actually, before You did it for them. I do not understand, Lord. How is it that when they are doing those things You would still bless them, and yet here I am doing my best, seeking You, and it seems like I am going through problems and not getting a thing.”

On the other side of the coin, so often in looking at myself I say, “Well, I am not worthy. I have failed the Lord so much. I am constantly stumbling.” And thus, I do not believe that God can really do anything for me. And I really do not expect Him to because I am so undeserving and unworthy. And a lot of times Satan uses that to keep us from just receiving the gift of God by faith and by the grace of God, by which the gift is given.

So if I look at myself and I see a lot of self-righteousness, then that is going to be a barrier to me. On the other hand, if I look realistically and I see all my failures and flaws, then that can be a barrier to me because then I can say, “Well, I know the Lord will not do it for me because I just am not deserving.”

But you see neither of these views are looking at the grace of God that we receive from God. God bestows all of His gifts on us through grace. That is, I do not deserve them. I am not worthy of them. And I could not earn them no matter how good I might be. And so, I just have to accept them by grace. In His grace, God has given to me the wonderful gifts of salvation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit. And they are mine just by receiving that which God has for me, not on the basis of my worthiness or unworthiness, but on the basis of His grace.

Paul said, “By grace are you saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). And it is God’s grace that has been extended to us and the gifts and the blessings of God are bestowed just because He loves us. We need to simply accept that. It is just because He loves us. We say, “But I am so miserable.” Yeah, but He loves us anyhow. Just receiving the grace of God can be difficult to do.

I think that one of the hardest things is to receive the grace of God gracefully. I am always stumbling. Whenever God does something nice for me, I think, *Well Lord, I will make this up to You. Now I am going to do better, Lord.* And I am trying to somehow get my worthiness in there, rather than just saying, “Oh Lord, You are so good. Thank You. I love You. Oh, what grace! I just cannot understand it, but I sure enjoy it, Lord. I enjoy Your wonderful grace to me.”

Now then, all of us have been given certain gifts by God. We have special talents, special aptitudes, and special abilities. And for each of us there are different talents or different gifts but that is what makes life so interesting—the variety of ways by which God has made up the human personality. You see when God created you, He created you very special and very unique. There

is no one else like you. God is interested in you as you are. And thus, it is a mistake to try to be like someone else, unless that someone else is Jesus. But God has made you as you are, unique and distinct. And He loves you just as you are.

Now a lot of times I think that we find fault with God for the way He made us. We look in the mirror and say, “God, could You have done this instead of that?” Paul said, “And what is the clay that it should say to the potter, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’” (Romans 9:20).

Sometimes we are not satisfied with the way God made us, but we need to accept our uniqueness as a gift from Him. God made you the way you are because He loves you the way you are. He accepts you the way you are. And thus, it is important that we accept ourselves because God made us like this. And realize that I am special and I am unique unto God. No one else can fill that place that God has for you in the body of Christ. He has made and fashioned you uniquely for that place that you have. And that is why it is important that every one of us find our place and take our place in the body of Christ, according to the gifts that He has given and according to His grace.

So as Paul goes on then and begins to list some of these various gifts, which we have already covered:

Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our]ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.  
(Romans 12:6-8)

Now last week we studied the gift of teaching. That is instructing the people in the ways of God, in the truths of God, and how vital and important that ministry is within the church. But a companion gift and certainly a necessary gift to go along with the gift of teaching, is the gift of exhortation. The gift of exhortation is tied, in the New Testament (and in the Old Testament too), with the gift of prophecy. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:3,

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

So the exhortation is a part of the gift of prophecy.

In Acts 15:32,

And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

So being prophets, they exhorted the brethren. This is a very important gift within the church. It seems that many people do not live up to what they know to be right. There are many people who are hearers of the word, but not doers. They know the truth, they even consent to the truth, but they do not do it. And thus, they need encouragement. They need a push. There are so many times when I say, “Oh yes, I should do that and I will do that,” but I get caught up with—with other things and I let it slide, though I really should do it. It seems like people are naturally procrastinators—always putting things off. “Well, I hope to get to that next week because I do not have time for it today, but maybe tomorrow...”

There was an excellent article in the *Reader's Digest* a few years ago on the subject of procrastination. My wife suggested to one of our daughters who is sort of a special procrastinator, that she read the article. And our daughter said, "Oh yes, I saw that article and I am going to read it one of these days." There is that tendency we have of putting off what we know we should be doing and letting it slide. And we need someone to come along and say, "Now look, get in and do it. Do it now!"

Exhortation could also be called encouragement. It is an encouraging of the person to go ahead and do what they really need to be doing. Now we need exhortation on prayer. For all of us know that we should be praying more than we are praying. And all of us know that prayer should not be a last resort, but the first resort. And yet, so often we get caught up in our situations and in the pressures of life, while we are just working ourselves silly trying to find the answers. And we come and we pour out our heart to a friend who says, "Well, have you prayed about it?" "Well, I intend to, you know." And so they exhort us, "Well let us pray. Come on, let us pray right now. Let us agree together right now." You see that is encouragement—that exhorting to prayer or to trusting the Lord.

When I was pastoring in Huntington Beach we had a little ninety-year-old lady who was just a wonder. And she had the gift of exhortation. Whenever I needed encouragement I would pay her a visit. And she always would just encourage or exhort me. And she used to have a radio program. It was broadcast in Florida and down through the Caribbean area. And—her whole thing was, "God is on the throne. He knows what you are going through. He is watching over you. You do not have to worry because the Father loves you and He cares for you and He knows what is going on in your life today. Just know that God is still on the throne." And it is truth that you know, of course, but you sort of forget it in the pressure of the situation. And so, we need those who exhort.

Now, there are some people who attempt to exhort without the gift of exhortation. And that does not comfort, but it riles. You want to say, "You do it!" You know, when they are exhorting you to do something that you know you should be doing and it just irritates you. And there are others who have such a gift of exhortation that they just make you want to do it.

Now we are commanded to exhort one another. When Paul wrote to Timothy he said,

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. (1 Timothy 4:13)

So these are the things that you need to be doing—exhorting one another, reading the Word, and getting your doctrine tight.

In Hebrews we are told,

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Again in Hebrews 3 they were commanded :

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)

And Paul, when he wrote to Titus said,

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.  
Let no man despise thee. (Titus 2:15)

Now the purpose of the gift is that we might abound more and more in the things of God.

First Thessalonians 4:1 says,

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by  
the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to  
walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

So we have exhorted you as to how you ought to walk—pleasing God. That, as a result of walking in this fellowship with God you will just abound more and more. Also it is so that we might convince the gainsayers.

Titus 1:9 says,

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he  
may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the  
gainsayers.

Now as we look at the Old Testament, we find that most of the prophets had the gift of exhortation. They were exhorting the people constantly: to turn to the Lord; to turn from their idolatries; to seek the Lord; and, to repent of their evils. Samuel exhorted the people to not “turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.” He said in 2 Kings 17:13,

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all  
the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil  
ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according  
to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent  
to you by my servants the prophets.

And so the prophets exercised the gift of exhortation, by exhorting the people to turn to God and to seek God.

In the New Testament we find Peter exercising the gift of exhortation when he wrote his first epistle. He said,

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder  
and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of  
the glory that shall be revealed. (1 Peter 5:1)

Here is his exhortation to the elders or the overseers of the church:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight  
thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but  
of a ready mind. Neither as being the lords over God’s heritage,  
but being ensamples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Thus the exhortation to them to feed the flock, to tend them, and to take care of them. And then:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)

And thus the exhortation:

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith. (1 Peter 5:6-9)

So you see, all of these exhortations that he is giving to them: to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight, and not being lord over God's heritage, but being examples and being in submission to each other. We are to be humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, casting our cares upon Him. We are to be sober and vigilant, thus resisting the enemy—Satan.

James is the classic exhorter. James was saying, "Do not talk to me about your faith. Let me see your works. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (cf. James 1:22). And so James was constantly exhorting them to prove their faith by their works. You show me your works and I will show you your faith. And that is such an important and necessary epistle because it really deals with practical aspects of Christianity. It is not just saying something. It is not just repeating an apostles' creed. It is not just standing up at the right time and sitting down at the right time. It is actually doing the things that the Scriptures tell us to do. And the proof then is in our doing; and thus, it is manifested.

Paul, writing to the Romans said,

I beseech ye therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

Again Paul is exhorting them to action—and not just to a faith or not just to a creed, but exhorting them to let it be seen in the activities of their life.

To the Thessalonians, as he closes out his first epistle, Paul just really gets on a roll exhorting them.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all [men]. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:14-22)

In 2 Thessalonians Paul says,

Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. (2 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

Now this is a good exhortation that Paul gives. Someone might say, “Well, I am doing the right thing, but I have not seen results.”

“Well, do not be weary in well-doing. Stick with it. Hang in there.”

To Timothy he said,

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; (1 Timothy 2:1)

Jude was an exhorter. He said,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3)

Now each one of us takes our place and part in the body and we exercise the gift that God has given to us. The teachers tell you what prayer is all about. They will teach you the value of prayer and they will deal with the proper forms of prayer. But the exhorter will come along and say, “Now look, you know that you should pray, so pray!” And they push you then in prayer.

And it is amazing how many conferences they have on prayer and seminars on prayer, telling you all about prayer and what prayer can do. But there are very few conferences where you just really pray. See, we need exhorters at those conferences. And after a great lesson on prayer, then we need to say, “Okay, you have heard it, now let us all pray.” You see, we need to put it into practice. And that is what the exhorter does. He comes along and he says, “All right, now you have heard it, now let us do it. Let us just get down to it.”

Pastor Romaine has the gift of exhortation and it is a great balance here in the church. I have the gift of teaching, but his exhortation is a great balance to the teaching ministry. Because you see, you could be well-fed and knowledgeable people as far as the Word of God is concerned, but if you do not do it, all of the knowledge is of no value—unless you are doing it. So Romaine comes along and he exhorts you then to do it. And that is important and that is good.

My wife has a wonderful gift of exhortation, as you ladies who come on Friday morning well know. She is an exhorter and she exercises this gift in a very special way for the ladies. And they go out of here all charged up, ready to go to battle. They are ready to fight the forces of darkness that are closing in and she has a way of just stirring them into action. She goes up to the conference center with the pastors’ wives and I mean they come off that mountain just floating. They cannot wait to get back to the battle and wait to get back to the problems that they left, the problems that they were so discouraged about when they came on up to the pastors’ wives retreat.

But boy, they go home all charged up, ready to go for another year and just tackle all life's problems. This is because of the gift of exhortation.

It is a glorious gift. It is a wonderful gift, and surely, it is an important gift. If the body of Christ is to be well-rounded—if we are to actually put into practice the things that we know, the things that we have heard, the things that we have been taught—then we have to have those who are exhorting us to be putting them into practice. “That is practicality. Let us now do it. We have heard it and let us do it.”

So the exhorter stirs us to action by pushing us to do the things that we really want to do and we know we should do, but we have just been hesitating or putting off doing it. And they are the ones who come along and get us actually doing the things that need to be done. They prompt us to action in order that we might truly serve God in a very powerful way and that the Church might have a strong influence in the community, because we are not just hearers of the word but we are doers. We are getting involved in doing that which is right.

I was thinking about how many of our songs actually are exhortations. “Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” There is so much exhortation there and we need that exhortation to just really do it— not just talk or learn about it, but to do it.

May the Lord bless you. And may each one of us become doers of the word and not hearers only. May you find that gift of the Spirit that God has for you, so that you might function in your place in the body of Christ, and that the whole body might be edified as the result of each one of us exercising the gifts that God has given us to edifying the entire body of Christ. Thus, may we be built up and may we grow in the Lord and in the things of the Lord, as we follow after righteousness and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank You for the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and for this gift of exhortation. And Lord, we thank You for those within the body who possess that gift of exhortation and are stirring us up for good works. And Lord we pray that we indeed might be the doers of the word, not just hearers; that we might put into action the things that we have been taught and the things that we have learned. And Lord, even tonight, for those who are going through some heavy trials, pressured and pressed down, tonight Lord, may they just commit their ways to You and trust also in You. And may they just rest, Lord, in You. Some of them have been having a hard time, Lord, sleeping at night because of the pressures of these things and they wake up in the night and their mind turns to them and they toss and turn, Lord, as they try to figure their way out. Oh Lord, help them to just commit it and to rest in You, Lord, knowing that You are watching over us and knowing that You care for us. And knowing, Lord, that all things are working together for good to those who love You. Let them really enter into that rest that You have for Your people. So Lord, raise up others within the body with that ministry of exhortation, that we might exhort one another daily, encouraging each other to good works, to faith, to trust, to prayer, to praise,

and to give thanksgiving. Help us to do the things, Lord, that we know we should be doing and really desire to do. Stir us into the activity of doing them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is tape number SHS329. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

In Romans 8 Paul gives us a further listing of the gifts of the Spirit. As believers we have one inlet of power and that is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8 NKJV). And the Holy Spirit is power in the life of the believer. But this power has several outlets and one of the outlets of power is in giving.

Now again, Jesus left an example for us that we should follow in His steps. We know how fully and completely Jesus gave Himself for us, setting a standard or setting the model for us. He is the standard and model for forgiveness. We are to forgive even as He has forgiven us. He is the standard and model for love. We are to love even as He has loved us. And He is our standard and model for giving. Christ gave Himself as a ransom for our sins. And so one of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of giving. So Paul tells us that “he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity” (Romans 12:8).

You know, there are those who, when they give, make their giving so complicated. Many times there are strings attached to it. Years ago a family gave a rocking chair to our church in Tucson—a rocking chair which we really did not want. It was sort of worn out but they gave it to the church. And my immediate thought was, “We have to get rid of this thing,” because the only place we had to put it was in our living room and it just did not go with anything. But then we found out that they did not want us to get rid of it. It had belonged to “aunt somebody” and she had given it to them and they did not want it or need it. However, they did not want to get rid of it because it had sentimental value to it, so they decided to give it to the church. But it was not given with simplicity because there was this condition attached to it—“You can not get rid of it.” Often when a person explains all of the conditions that go along with the gift I will say, “Well you know, maybe you just ought to keep it.” There are too many conditions.

Now Paul said if we have this gift of giving we should exercise it with simplicity. We should not make a lot of rules or a lot of things to go along with the gift but just give it. And then, if they decide they do not want it, and we want to give to somebody else, that is fine. Even if they decide because we do not want it they will junk it, then at least they saved you from discarding it. But we are to just give with no strings attached—giving with simplicity.

There are some people who are very ostentatious in their giving. Jesus mentioned that when we give, we should not be as the Pharisees who loved to sound a trumpet before them. Now I do not know if Jesus was just using that as kind of a figure of speech or if they actually did have bands going in front of them when they were taking their gift into the temple. But I have seen some people who give in such an ostentatious way that they draw everybody’s attention to the gift that they have given.

The gift of giving is certainly a beautiful and a wonderful gift. We know of people who model the phrase, “he would give you the shirt off of his back.” And we know people like that, who are just so giving. There are some people with whom you just cannot really express admiration for anything they have because if you do, you will find it sent to you in a box. I mean they just have the gift of giving.

We had a fellow around here who the Lord has taken home. But he lived down in Laguna Beach and he had the gift of giving. And one night, as he was walking home in Laguna, a fellow came alongside and stuck a gun in his ribs and said, “Give me everything you have!” And he

apologized. He said, “I am sorry I only have five dollars. Will you take a check?” Now that is the gift of giving!

Those persons who have the gift of giving always have many friends. In a proverb it says, “Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.” We love generous people. But God loves generous people. Think how generous God is with us, and has been to us.

The word *give* and its cognate forms is used in the Bible 1,981 times. So it should make you think that God has a lot to say about giving. But the interesting thing, as you go through and look at all of these references, is that by far the vast majority are references to what God has given us. These references are probably on a ratio of about five to one. Most of the references on giving in the Bible are referring to what God has given unto us.

It is not always those who have a lot who have the gift of giving. Sometimes they do and sometimes they do not. There was a man and he became very wealthy. His name was R. G. Levterno and back in the '40s and '50s he designed and invented a lot of heavy-duty, earth-moving equipment. He was a very sharp and innovative fellow. When he started his business he made a covenant to give God ten percent of everything they made, that is, of all his profits. As time went on and he began to be blessed more and more he made a new covenant with God to give Him twenty percent.

You know, sometimes as a person increases in wealth, they sort of decrease the percentage of giving. Giving a dime out of a dollar is not very much; after all, it is only a dime! But if you have made \$100,000 then \$10,000 seems like a big amount. And if you make a million, then \$100,000 is ten percent! And the more you make, the more you are prone to say, “Well, maybe five percent because after all...” Isn't that interesting? Hardly anybody has a problem giving a dime out of a dollar. It is only when it grows that it becomes difficult.

But Levterno did it the other way and as the business increased, he gave twenty percent. And as the business continued to increase he then raised it to thirty, then forty, then fifty, then sixty percent. And when he went home to be with the Lord he was giving ninety percent unto the Lord and to the Lord's work all over the world. Ninety percent! Of course, God had so blessed him that the ten percent which he kept was more than you make anyhow. But God just will not be out-given.

My wife is an extremely generous person. She has the gift of giving. She is always slipping money to people. And she was doing that even when we did not have it. I used to get upset with her, but the interesting thing is that there are times when God lays upon my heart to give extra and she has never once objected to anything that I wanted to give to the Lord or to someone else. In fact, she usually says, “Well, do you think that is enough? You know, they are really needy. She has that gift of giving.

Now the Bible tells us several things concerning our giving, as far as how we are to give. First of all, we are to give willingly from our hearts. When the children of Israel were going to make the tabernacle, God gave to Moses the design of the various instruments that were to be used. It was to be made of silver and gold that was to cover the ark of the covenant and the cherubim. And it was going to take a lot of silver, a lot of gold, and a lot of special types of cloth. And so, the Lord spoke unto Moses in Exodus 25:2,

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering:  
of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take  
my offering.

Now God did not want anybody to give who was not giving willingly or giving from their heart. God never wants a person to feel pressured in giving to Him. Whatever you give to God, you should always give willingly and from your heart. And you should only give that which you can give willingly from your heart.

Now the beautiful thing about this is that the people had a heart to give. And as a result, the people began to bring in their gold and their silver and their jewelry to make this tabernacle. And one thing that I think is really special, for materials for the brazen altar the women gave their mirrors which were made of highly-polished brass.

But they spoke to Moses finally, those who were counting and weighing all the gifts. And they spoke to Moses and said, “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to work.” So Moses had to give a commandment and caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp saying, “Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary” (Exodus 36:6-7). And so they had to restrain the people from bringing any more. The stuff that they had was sufficient for all the work in order to make the sanctuary.

They actually gave too much! Now that is the spirit of giving. When God moves upon the hearts of people to give, it really is an exciting thing. Because when we open up our hearts to give unto the Lord it is beautiful.

Now from a negative side concerning our giving, it should never be done out of pressure or grudgingly. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “According as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give.” We are not to give out of constraint, but just as we have purposed in our own hearts.

There are a lot of churches, actually, that put pressure on people to give. During the month that they seek to raise the church budget, usually the most influential people will go around and visit the church members in their homes. And they send these three very important people—maybe a doctor, and a lawyer, and a banker—usually those are the kind of men you want on your financial committee. They will come to your house and they will sit there and they will say, “Now you know, this is the church’s budget for the coming year. And these are the things that we want to do for the Lord. Now how much can we count on you to pledge this year towards the church’s budget? And as you make your pledge we encourage you to use faith—make a faith pledge unto God.”

And often they encourage you to give more than what you can actually afford to give. They encourage you to make this faith pledge. And then, as the year goes on and some of the people’s faith is “not what it should have been” and they do not have the funds to give, the church then begins to send out duns and say, “You know it has been three months and we have not received your pledge for the last three months. We are depending on you.” And the congregation really then begins to feel tremendous pressure to give; but then as they give it is usually with a feeling of resentment and animosity.

And that is really a shame because now if you are giving to God out of animosity or if you are giving to God out of a sense of pressure, you begin to think, “Oh, I cannot stand it. They are sending me these letters. That is horrible. I must get it in so then they will not send me any more.

I do not want them calling on me.” That is tragic because when you give out of that kind of motive, God will not bless it. God does not want it and you lose the blessing of giving.

The blessing comes from cheerful giving. It comes when I give willingly from my heart; and then I am blessed. I give out of love for the Lord and because I love Him, I want to do something special. I am often feeling like, “Oh, Lord, You have done so much. I just want to do something special and make a sacrifice.” And I am just loving Him as I do it. Then God blesses that and God honors that.

Surely Jesus indicated that it is not the amount that is given (in Mark 12) as He was watching with His disciples and the people were putting their money in the treasury offering. And the wealthy were coming with all their pomp and circumstance and glory, putting in their large gifts. Then one little widow came up and dropped in a quarter of a cent. And Jesus turned to His disciples, and said, “Did you see that? She gave more than all the rest—because they just gave from their surplus. This woman gave her very livelihood. That is all she had.” In the Lord’s eyes it is not the amount that is given, it is the heart that is behind the giving and what it has cost you to give.

Interestingly, the Lord loves sacrificial giving and this is something that seems quite rare. But if a person has the gift of giving, they really do not think of it as a sacrifice. They think, “Oh, praise the Lord! I am glad I can give.”

The Bible says, “As a person has purposed in his own heart, so let him give.” This is something between you and God. Paul says, “For God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for *cheerful* is a little more intense and would better be translated “hilarious.” God loves a hilarious giver.

And then, we are to give freely. Jesus said, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). The psalmist said, “I will freely sacrifice unto Thee. I will praise Thy name, O Lord, for it is good” (Psalm 54:61).

And finally our giving must be motivated by love. Whether we are giving to God or giving to someone in need, it must be motivated by love because Paul said,

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I  
give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me  
nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

If I go out and sell everything I have and give all the money to the poor, yet do so out of resentment and if I am not doing it out of love—if there is some other motive, maybe to be seen of men, to be recognized—it does not profit me anything.

Now we are to give, first of all, to God. But you might reasonably ask, “What in the world could I ever give to God?” And surely there is nothing that you can give to God that He actually needs. I like that Scripture where God said, “If I were hungry I would not come to you for a handout.” He said, “For the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine” (Psalm 50:10). In other words, God is saying, “I am not broke. I am not destitute. And if I were, I would not come to you.”

What do we give to God? Six times the Bible tells us to give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. Now if the Bible tells us to do something once, I so believe the Word of God that I think that we ought to do it—even if the Bible just tells us once. If it tells us

twice then we should really pay attention. But if God tells us six times, then we really need to pay full attention. Give thanks unto the Lord! Have you given thanks to God today? Have you given thanks to God this week? Oh, that there would go forth from our lips continually—thanksgiving unto God for His goodness.

Three times we are told to give to Him the glory that is due His name. Now the name of God is *Yahweh*. And we are told that the name of the LORD (*Yahweh*) is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe. And the Bible tells us that God honors His word above His name, but His name is so held in esteem that the Jews will not even attempt to pronounce it. Now give unto the Lord the glory that is due His name. His name means “the Becoming One” and speaks of God becoming to you whatever your need might be. How gracious God is! Whatever your need might be tonight, God becomes to you exactly what that need is. And so, the name of the Lord—give glory due His name.

And then we are to give to the poor. God gave commandment in the law concerning the poor in Deuteronomy 15 where He said,

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. (Deuteronomy 15:7-8)

Now *wanteth* does not mean “desires,” but that which a person is lacking or needing.

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto. (Deuteronomy 15:9-10)

God promises to bless you if you will do this. But then He said,

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. (Deuteronomy 15:10)

In other words, you will always have an opportunity to exercise your gift of giving.

Mike feeds the poor people down at his church. They invite the people to come in and they have a cafeteria and they simply feed them. That is glorious. It is glorious!

Now regarding the results of giving, Jesus said,

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give

into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

Paul said,

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Now that makes sense. This is sowing and reaping. If you go out to plant a field of corn and you want to be very frugal in the planting of the seed, you might decide to put each seed in about two feet apart instead of six inches—but then you will have a sparse crop. If you sow sparingly, you are going to reap sparingly. But if you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully. Now this is God's law of giving.

And a lot of times we have difficulty understanding the spiritual laws and how they work. Many times because we do not understand how these things can possibly work, we will just say, "Well I am not going to do that. I do not understand how that works." But do you understand how electricity works? Probably not! But you sure do not mind using it even though you do not understand how it works.

And the same is true with these spiritual laws of God because we do not understand the principle. We know the law of gravity. We know that mass attracts; but why it attracts, we do not really know. We can measure the force of the attraction, and we know that the larger the mass the greater attraction—but why? We do not really know, but we recognize that this is a law of nature and so we are very careful to obey it. We are not jumping off of twelve-story buildings because we respect the law of gravity. I do not know exactly how it works. Why do I drop to the ground? Why can't I fly? Why can't I just float? I do not understand how it works but I have enough sense to respect it. And with these spiritual laws of God, and certainly in giving, we are dealing with some spiritual laws that we cannot really understand but would be wise to respect them.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

So you who are giving it out in teaspoons will get it back in teaspoons. You who give it with a shovel, you will get it back with a shovel. Give it out with a skip loader; you will get it back with a skip loader. The measure that you use to mete it out determines how it will be measured back.

In Romans 11:35, Paul asks the question,

Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

In other words, he is saying, "Show me a case where a man has given to God where God did not give it back." It was recompensed to him again.

I have heard people say, "Well we just cannot afford to tithe." Well, I tell you what—"I cannot afford not to tithe." All that I have is God's and if He only claims a tenth as His, I will not challenge Him by failing to tithe it.

But God said, “Will a man rob God?” And the people responded, “Wherein have we robbed God?” And Malachi the prophet said, “You have robbed Him in the tithes and offerings.” And then God said, “See if I will not pour out onto you a blessing that you cannot contain” (cf. Malachi 3:8-10).

If we will give to God what is God’s and what God requires, then God has promised that He would pour out blessings that we cannot contain. It will come back to us many times over again. “Who has first given to Him and it was not recompensed to him again?” So it may be that you do not have the gift of giving and it may be that you really do not want to pray for that gift. But I would encourage you to do so.

Now again, in giving to the poor there is one other Scripture that I did not bring up and that is in Proverbs. It says, “He that giveth unto the poor.” And God said, “I’ll pay it back” (cf. Proverbs 19:17). Is that interesting? Would you like to lend some money to God? You know He pays great interest. “And he who gives to the poor lends to the Lord” and God says, “I will take care of it. I will pay it back.” Why don’t you try it?

Now, I would not go around looking for someone who has a sign “Will work for money.” I think that that is a racket. But you know, we have a lot of single moms here in the church who are really having a hard time. They love the Lord and they are going through some really rough times. Some of these women are going without food—some of them. They are the kind I would like to see helped. We would just be lending to the Lord and seeing what God will do.

You see giving is something, as the Scripture said, is a matter of a person purposing in his own heart what he wants to do. It is never to be from pressure, never by constraint or force, but it is something in your own heart where God speaks to you and God begins to minister to you and lays it upon your heart. He begins to give you that gift of giving. If you will respond to it, you will find that God will give you more to give—like R. G. LeVerno.

It just keeps growing. And God will give you more and more to give as you learn the blessing of giving. Start out small if you need to, but do it—even a little bit to learn the blessing and the rewards of giving. It is a spiritual law. I cannot tell you how it works all I can tell you is that it does work. I know that. It works. And so, I would encourage you to just start and see what God will do because He has promised that if you give it will be given to you, measured out, pressed down, running over.

May the Lord be with you, bless you, give you a generous heart, and make you a hilarious giver, so that you might know the joy and the blessings of seeing God’s work and God’s reward to those who do give.

Praise is another thing we can give to God. I think sometimes we try and just sort of buy out our obligation. Well, I give money, you know. God wants more than that. And just consider other things that you might be able to give to God: time, service, energy, or whatever. This is about giving to God and experiencing then the reward, the joy, and the blessing of having a part and a share in God’s work and in God’s kingdom.

Shall we pray?

Father, help us. You have blessed us so much and we thank You for that. Lord, we have such an abundance and we thank You for that. But help us not to close up our hearts to those who are in need. But give us a generous heart, Lord. Give us the gift of giving. And may we see that it goes far beyond just the material things, Lord, but may we give our time. May we give our energies. May we give of ourselves to help and to strengthen those who are weak, and minister to those who have difficulty ministering to their own needs. Lord, just make us giving people, so that we might bring glory to You. As a church, Lord, may we just honor You and glorify You through our being what You would have us to be—a medium whereby, Lord, we can give unto those who are in need and thus honor and glorify You. And Lord, when we do it, help us, Lord, to do it with cheerful hearts and willingly from our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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As we continue our study on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we will look at Romans 12:8 where Paul talks about the gift of showing mercy. Now right off the top, we should note that we need to show mercy. Whether we have the gift of showing mercy or not, as we will find in our lesson, exercising mercy is not really an option for it is a command that we be merciful. Paul declares, “He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.”

Now mercy is contrasted with justice, for justice is getting what you deserve. And so many times we say of a person, “Boy, I will tell you, he got exactly what he deserved.” That is justice. When you get just what you deserve. But not getting what you deserve is mercy. I deserve justice but God gives me mercy. And so, there is that thought of forgiveness along with the mercy.

We will be talking about the gift of showing mercy and Paul declares that he that showeth mercy should do it with cheerfulness (cf. Romans 12:8). Now thinking about it as a gift, we realize that there are some people who have the gift and some people who do not. There are some people who, as they show mercy, have a somber kind of reluctance: “I wish I could pound you into the ground but, you know, I suppose I have to show mercy.”

Others preface their mercy with, “I do not know if we will ever be able to recover from this.” And they try to make you feel so guilty and remorseful because they want you to realize how serious your offense was to them. And there is not much cheerfulness involved with the showing of mercy either by the person showing the mercy. And then there surely is not much in the receiving of that kind of mercy, which makes you still feel very guilty and somber for what you have done.

Many years ago when my wife’s father died, we went to the funeral home to make arrangements for his services. And as we came into the funeral home, this man (of course in a black suit and a black tie) came up to us and he was sort of wringing his hands and he said, “Maaay I heelp you?” And the poor fellow had chewed all of his nails off and he was an emotional wreck! And as he was talking to us about the service, he was saying, “Your father, dear, oh my... You are so young a child to lose your father.” And he started crying. And I thought, *We were handling it pretty well until we met this guy!* He was trying to show mercy but there was not much cheerfulness to it.

When Job was going through all of his trials and these friends of his came to comfort him, rather than showing mercy they were seeking to discover the cause of all of his problems. And each one had their theory for why Job was going through all of the suffering and misery that he was experiencing. They accused Job of being a hypocrite. They accused him of being a liar. And they made all kinds of accusations because he refused to acknowledge that they were right in their analysis. They felt that he must be some horrible sinner (guilty of some secret sin that nobody knew about) and that God was not going to let him get by with it.

And so, they believed all of these miseries had come upon Job because of some secret, horrible thing that he was doing or had done. “And God’s just not going to let you get by with it,” they were saying. And they kept this kind of pressure on him and it built each time there would be the interchange; there would be more accusations and more incriminating statements made against

Job. Finally he said, “Miserable comforters are you all! I mean, you do not show me any mercy. You are no help!” (cf. Job 16:2). And he just wished that they would never have come.

And there are some people who come to you ostensibly to show mercy; but by the time they leave, sometimes you wish they had never come because they seem to be so awkward in the showing of mercy.

There are times when you have blown it big time and you feel that your world has come to an end and there is just no reason to try and go on any longer. There are those who come along to show mercy and they are so cheerful and so confident about the future, they can lift you out of your despair. And that is the way we are to show mercy. Not with a somber “Well, I do not know. We will try and work this out together. You know I will always stand with you, brother.” But it should be done with cheerfulness:

The Lord is on the throne and we have not seen the end of it yet. God is going to bring us through and we are going to see God’s victory. All we have to do is just wait upon the Lord and trust in Him and He is going to bring it out. Yes you did wrong, but thank God He is merciful, He is forgiving, He is kind, and He is loving. And let us go on from here and let us not wallow in the past. Let us wait and see what God has planned.

There is that cheerfulness where you just feel you have been buoyed. You feel lifted up. You feel like, “Yes, I can go on another day and I can see what God has in store.” And that is the kind of way that we are to show mercy—with cheerfulness.

Now God is the source of all mercy and comfort. It is not something that we deserve or have coming to us—that is justice. Justice is what we deserve and have coming, but mercy springs from the very character and nature of God.

Jacob realized how unworthy he was of God’s mercy. He said, “I am not worthy of the least of His mercies” (Genesis 32:10). And Jacob was right: he was a conniver. His name means “heel catcher” and that is one who takes advantage of another by tripping his heel. And after we look at the story of Jacob, we read in the New Testament where God said, “Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated” (Romans 9:13). Now I can understand why God hated Esau. What I cannot understand is why He loved Jacob because Jacob was every bit as conniving as his brother; yet we see God’s love for Jacob.

And when Jacob fled from his brother’s anger, having deceived his father, he received the blessing that his father wanted to bestow upon Esau. And Esau who was planning justice, said “As soon as Dad dies, I am going to kill that brother of mine. I want justice.” So as Isaac was getting sick, Jacob’s mother said, “Son, you better get out of here because your brother has vowed to kill you.” So Jacob took off fleeing from the anger of his brother Esau. When he crossed the border of the land, all that he possessed was a walking stick, as he was on his way to Babylon.

Now seventeen years later Jacob returned as a wealthy man. He had herds, he had flocks, he had servants, he had wives, and he had children. And as he crossed that little stream again (the border of the land), he remembered seventeen years earlier—the last time he was there. The last time he crossed this stream all he had was a walking stick. Now he had so much. And he

realized, “I have been blessed. I do not deserve it.” He knew that he was not worthy, saying, “I am not worthy, the least of all of the mercies, and of all of the truth which You have showed to Your servant. For with my staff, or with my walking stick I passed over this Jordan. But now, I have so much I have to divide them into two companies to travel. We cannot travel in just one company. We have to divide it so that we can travel” (cf. Genesis 32:10). Jacob recognized the mercies of God: “I am undeserving and I am unworthy of what God has done.”

And as we look at our lives and see what God has done, we realize that it is not something we deserve. Truly, the Lord has been good to us and He has been merciful to us. And the blessings that God has bestowed upon our lives are not the result of our meriting them, but of His mercy toward us. Now there are many Scriptures that describe the mercies of God.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3 Paul said,

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the  
Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.

And so He is called the Father of mercies or the Author of mercies.

Daniel 9:9 says,

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though  
we have rebelled against him.

Lamentations 3:22 says,

It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because  
His compassions fail not.

How true that is. It is by the Lord’s mercy that we are still here and that we have not been consumed, but His compassions they fail not.

Psalms 116:5 says,

Gracious is the LORD and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Are you glad?

Numbers 14:18 says,

The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving  
iniquity and transgression.

Deuteronomy 4:31 says,

For the LORD thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake  
thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers  
which he swear unto them.

He is a merciful God.

Nehemiah 9:31 says,

Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.

And of course, we so often see the grace of God coupled with the mercy of God. And as we said, "Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. And grace is getting what you do not deserve." Grace is God's blessings poured out upon you, unmerited and undeserved. We are totally unworthy, but God just pours out His love and grace upon us.

Now mercy is a part of God's nature. God met Moses on the mount when Moses returned to again receive the tables of law, having broken the first tables. He returned back to the mountain and it says,

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. (Exodus 34:5-6)

Now compare this description that God gives Himself with what so many people think of God—people whose opinions have been largely formed by Satan's lies. People have such a wrong concept of God. And these concepts of God are something that Satan is constantly foisting on people, for he is constantly misrepresenting God.

For so many years growing up, I felt that God was angry with me most of the time because I knew what He wanted of me and I knew how He wanted me to live. I knew that He wanted perfection and I was far from perfect. I was a quite normal human being, living in the flesh; but I knew what God deserved. And so, I always imagined that God was angry with me and I never questioned why anything wrong ever happened in my life because I figured it was the judgment of God—that I deserved it.

Now let me read God's description of Himself again, and as I read it, does this match with what you have in your mind concerning God? Listen as God describes Himself.

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exodus 34:6)

That is the God we serve. I am glad that I serve Him. The Bible describes the vastness of God's mercy. It says,

The Lord He is merciful and gracious slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (Psalm 103:8)

Psalm 103:11 says,

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Now it used to trouble me that the astronomers were constantly revising their estimation of the size of the universe. When I was in high school, in our science classes we were taught that the earth or the universe was four billion light years in radius. Then as I was doing some post-graduate work in college and studying a little bit on astronomy, they were teaching us that the earth was twelve billion light years in radius. And now, some of the science magazines like *Discover* that I have been reading of late indicate that the universe is fifteen billion light years in radius.

The whole thing is premised upon the Big Bang Theory that at one time all of the mass of the universe was tightly compacted in a ball. And then there was a big bang, a big explosion. And because they said certain galaxies are nearly four billion light years away, that is how old the earth is—four billion years. Because of the explosion, they were pushed outwards a distance of twelve and now fifteen billion light years. You say, “Does it bother you that they are constantly revising and saying the universe is bigger than we thought?” No, it does not bother me. It excites me because “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is His mercy.” And I can use the fifteen billion light years of His mercy! I can handle that—it sort of makes me comfortable.

In Psalm 103:17 it says,

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

You know the other measurement is distance out, but now this is distance of breadth. So it catches you on both perimeters; back to the vanishing point and out to the vanishing point—it is always there.

Ephesians 2:4 says,

But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

So we serve a merciful God and He plants His nature in us as He conforms us into His nature. One of the characteristics that manifests and really is a proof that I am a child of God is when I begin to take on the nature of God—that nature of being merciful. And so, we are commanded in the Scriptures to be merciful.

In Luke 6:36 says,

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

In other words, you are to take on this characteristic of God's nature. Being a child of God, you are to be merciful just as your Father also is merciful. So, God is our example in showing mercy. We are to be as our Father and He sets the standard for us. Now what does the Scripture tell us about the mercy of God and the standard that God has set? It says, “He is rich in mercy. His mercy endureth forever. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. His mercies are manifold. He has great mercy. He is plenteous in mercy and He delights in mercy.”

Oh, I do not suppose you will understand that kind of mercy until you are a grandparent and are delighting in mercy. Oh, how I love to intercede for my grandkids. You know, when they are at odds with their parents and I will say, “Well, let me just take them for a walk.” And I get them

out of that spanking and walk with them and just delight in mercy. It is just glorious! But showing mercy is not an option, it is a requirement.

Micah 6:8 says,

He hath showed thee O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy.

This is a requirement: be honest, be fair, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7:9 says,

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, “Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother.”

Be fair and show mercy to every man and compassion to your brothers.

Now Jesus seemed to link our showing mercy to our receiving mercy. And many of the graces God bestows upon us are often tied to our bestowing those same graces on others. As we mentioned recently concerning forgiveness, we are told that God is the standard or the measure for forgiveness.

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.  
(Ephesians 4:32)

But then we are also informed that if we do not forgive men their trespasses against us, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses. And so our being forgiven was related to our being forgiving. So it is with mercy: our receiving mercy is tied by Jesus to our being merciful.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:7, Jesus said,

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

This seems to be born out in the Old Testament in 2 Samuel 22:26, which says,

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.

So God shows Himself merciful to those who are merciful. And this is the heavy-duty part: we actually set the standard for the measurement for our own judgment. In whatsoever measure you mete it out, as far as judging another, that is the same measurement by which you will be judged.

Now we are so merciful when it comes to ourselves—to the forgiving of ourselves for what we have done that we know to be wrong. And we are always ready to give a justification for what we have done. Somehow that is just a part of the human nature, I guess. We are clever at making excuses and rationalizing our behavior and our actions. But often when we see someone else doing the very same thing, we are so critical. We are ready to string them up. We are ready to call the lynch mob, “Do you know what they did?”

Now in judging others, you are actually setting the standard by which God will one day judge you. That is why I like to be very merciful, because when I stand before God I want Him to be very merciful to me. And so, we set the standards by which we will ultimately be judged.

James 2:13 says,

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.

That is pretty heavy, isn't it? When you stand before God, if you have not shown mercy, then He will judge you without mercy. Now can you handle that? Do you want to face that? Not me! And that is why being merciful is such an important thing in my life.

Matthew 7:2 says,

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Another verse that we cannot repeat too often is,

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

Now to whom is God's mercy revealed or manifested?

Deuteronomy 5:10 says,

And shewing mercy onto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

So God is merciful towards those who love Him and keep His commandments.

In Daniel 9:4, picking up on this, he prayed unto the Lord,

And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments.

This was of course, both in Deuteronomy and in Exodus, as well as and in Daniel's prayer, as he was praying that God would be merciful and return the people from their captivity. He was again acknowledging that this is God's character, being merciful to those who love Him and keep His commandments. It is interesting that Daniel incorporated this in his prayer.

And later on, when the Israelites were returning from captivity and Nehemiah was coming back to encourage and to lead the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem, Nehemiah also picked up on this same characteristic of God, which is manifested or declared in Deuteronomy and Exodus.

And Nehemiah said,

I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments.

So he picked up on the very prayer of Daniel and the very Scripture that Daniel used in his prayer.

God's mercy is shown towards those who walk before Him with all their hearts.

1 Kings 8:23 says,

LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.

God has such mercy toward those who love Him and keep His commandments and those who walk before God with all of their heart. It does not mean we are perfect, or that we never stumble, or that we do not get angry. It does not mean anything like that at all. It just means my heart is towards God; I love God and I want to walk in His commandments. I want to do what pleases Him. And when I fail and when I come short, God is merciful because He knows I love Him. And thus, these are the ones to whom God shows His mercy—He shows His mercy to those who will come before His throne of grace.

Hebrews 4:16 says,

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

So, as we come to God before that throne of grace, we obtain mercy, and then of course, His mercy is towards those who are merciful.

2 Samuel 22:26 says,

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful.

And then He shows His mercy to those that call upon Him.

Psalms 86:5 says,

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

So, we can call upon God because He is plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him. And of course, David called upon the Lord for mercy in his time of need. When he had sinned in taking Bathsheba and the prophet had come to him and declared his guilt, David prayed:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. (Psalm 51:1)

So He is merciful to those that call upon Him and David called upon Him and obtained mercy.

God is merciful towards those that fear Him.

Psalm 103:11 says.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy  
toward them that fear him.

And then, God's mercy is towards those who confess and forsake their sins.

Proverbs 28:13 says,

He who covers his sin shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth  
and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

It is a promise of God—we shall have mercy.

Now I trust that you noted, as we were going through these passages of Scripture referring to the mercies of God, and the compassion of God, and the graciousness of God, that there actually were more Scriptures from the Old Testament speaking of these characteristics of God than there were from the New Testament. And I point that out to bring up a common fallacy that people often have and that is that somehow the Bible reveals two Gods to us—the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.

And sometimes you will hear people even say, “Well, I have a little trouble with the God of the Old Testament. I sort of like the God of the New Testament. I like this love bit, you know. But boy, you know...” And they think of the God of the Old Testament as being one of wrath, judgment, thunder, fire, and destruction. Whereas, when they think of the God of the New Testament, they think of John 3:16, which says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son.”

But you find in the Old Testament the revelation of the mercy of God, the revelation of the grace of God, and the longsuffering and the patience of God. In fact, what a tremendous illustration the Jewish nation is of the patience, and the mercy, and the longsuffering of God. And yes, man's sin, and man's rebellion, and man's disobedience against God produced the fruit of his doings; and so the wars, and the pain, and the suffering, and the judgment came because they had forsaken the Lord.

Now the New Testament also reveals the love, the patience, the mercy, and the grace of God in a very beautiful way. But also the New Testament reveals the judgment of God that is going to come against all unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness. The wrath of God will be revealed from heaven. And when you get to the Book of Revelation, chapters 6 through 18, you follow the judgments of God that are coming upon the earth. There is just as heavy a judgment—in fact judgments that are yet in the future will be even greater than anything man has experienced in his past.

So, do not get this idea that there is the Old Testament concept of God which is different from the New Testament concept of God. They both show the grace, the mercy, the kindness, the love, the goodness, the patience, and the forgiveness of God to those who will call upon Him—those who will seek Him and to those who have a heart towards Him. And both the New and

Old Testaments show the ultimate consequences of those who have walked away from God, who rebel against the law of God, and who do the self-destructive things that God has warned us against. And it reveals the consequences of a life that is lived in rebellion against God. But the Old and New Testaments both reveal the one and same God.

Now, as we relate to God, we relate to Him in one of two ways: as a friend and servant of God seeking to do His will, or as a rebel against God doing our own will. In seeking to relate to God in love and in a loving relationship of submission, we experience then His glorious grace, goodness, forgiveness, kindness, and blessing. But then having received these, it is imperative that we show these same characteristics to others that, we might become merciful even as God has been merciful to us and that we are forgiving, even as God is forgiving to us. We show these things so that we are kind even as God is kind to us, that we are gracious even as God has been gracious to us, that we are patient even as God has been patient to us. And so, these very characteristics that mark the nature of God are the same characteristics that He wants to mark in your nature—loving, kind, and forgiving.

Now I wonder why this upsets the world so much that they want to bash believers? You know these are the characteristics that we are seeking to emulate. But Jesus said, “Marvel not that the world hates you. It hated Me. And the servant is not greater than his lord. If they did not receive Me, they are not going to receive you” (cf. John 15:18-20).

And so, we realize more and more that we are living in a world that is in an antagonistic position towards God. And as we seek to walk with God, it puts us at odds with the world.

But then we have to be careful because our old nature comes in—that nature of wanting to treat in kind. “You make remarks about me? All right, I will make remarks about you. You think you are so good? I will tell you...” And we want to respond in kind, which is exactly what we are not to do. We are to be merciful. We are to be tender. We are to be kind. We are to be forgiving. God help us. It is a big order, but we can do it through the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is what the Holy Spirit is all about—doing for you what you cannot do for yourself. He is transforming that nature of the flesh and bringing you into the realm of the Spirit—walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in you, conforming you now, and making you like God. And so, may the Spirit of God move in our hearts to mold us, to make us after His will, while we are waiting, yielded, and still.

Shall we pray?

Thank You, Father, for Your patience with us. As You are working in us, Lord, we realize that so many times the clay has been marred in the hands of the potter and it seems like You have to start over again. But Lord, we thank You that You are so patient. And how many times You have sort of started over again, to make a vessel that You can use for Your purposes—a vessel fit for the Master’s use. And Lord, that is exactly what we desire to be—instruments, Lord, through which You can work and vessels that bring glory and honor unto You. And so, Father, we just commit ourselves afresh to the anointing of Your Holy Spirit, to the filling of Your Spirit, and to the empowering of Your Spirit. We recognize, Lord, our own

human frailties and our own weaknesses. Lord, we yield ourselves to the fullness of that Spirit—Your Spirit. That He might indeed give us power to be Your witnesses throughout the world in which we live. Help us, Lord. Fill us, Lord. Make us Your instruments, Lord, to bring Your love and Your peace, Your beauty, Your grace, and Your mercy to a world that needs it so desperately. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

This is tape number SHS331. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from the King James Version.

When the day of Pentecost (the feast-holiday of the Jews) had come, the disciples had been waiting in an upper room in Jerusalem. According to the command of Jesus, they had been waiting for the promise of the Father. This was the promise that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Their sons and daughters would prophesy; their young men would see visions; and their old men would dream dreams. And upon God's servants and handmaidens He would pour out His Spirit in those days (cf. Joel 2:28-29). So, the promise of God was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting church—about one hundred and twenty of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. There was a sound like as of a mighty, rushing wind and there were cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each of them.

The supernatural phenomena that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit drew a crowd of people who were wondering just what was going on. Some mockingly said, "Oh, they probably got some new wine someplace." And so, Peter stood up in the midst of them and he called for the people to hearken to him. He said,

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh. (Acts 2:15-17)

When Peter had concluded his message concerning Jesus Christ, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the people were convicted and they said,

Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:37-39)

The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all believers in all generations. Throughout the history of the church, the gift of the Holy Spirit is God's promise to the believers.

Now it is referred to as the gift of the Holy Spirit, and as a gift, it cannot be deserved or earned. God does not give you the gift of the Holy Spirit as a reward for being good and being faithful, or for achieving or attaining a high degree of holiness. It is not a reward. It is not given to you because you have achieved a degree of holiness for the Holy Spirit is given to you to make you holy. Every one of you tonight in your present state of spiritual development, whether you have just started on the path or you have been on it for a long time, can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is for you and it is available to you. No matter how incomplete that spiritual development might be in your life, the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit are God's gift for you.

One of the greatest hindrances in receiving the Holy Spirit is our looking at our own unworthiness. The minute a person begins to seek the gift of the Holy Spirit, Satan begins to point out his shortcomings and his failings. He is always condemning me. He is always telling me that I am not good enough to receive God's gifts and in a sense he is right—I am not good enough. And

so, he can make a real strong point as he begins to point out my failings, my shortcomings, and my sins. And he says to me, “Look, you do not deserve it. You are not worthy of it. God does not want to do that for you because, look at you!” And he gets us looking at ourselves and there is nothing more devastating than to be honest when looking at ourselves.

It was Socrates who cried, “Know thyself. Man, know thyself.” But the Bible tells us that we really cannot know ourselves because our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Only God knows our hearts. God said, “I, the Lord, do search the hearts” (cf. Jeremiah 17:9-10). David recognized that God knew all about him. He knows more about me than I know about myself. Thus David prayed,

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Lord, show me what is there in my heart. Self-knowledge is, number one, the hardest knowledge that we will ever come to realize. I mean, to know oneself is difficult. We are so clever and deceptive in trying to make people think we are something other than what we really are that we oftentimes deceive ourselves. We are so good at it, and over and over the Bible tells us not to be deceived. But not only is it the most difficult knowledge you will ever come to attain, it is also (if you should come to attain it) the most painful knowledge you will ever experience—the knowledge of self.

And so, if I listen to Satan’s accusations (and he can find a lot wrong in my life), then often the result is that I listen to him saying I am not worthy. And then I do not even ask God. I get to the place where I do not expect God to bless me because how could He bless me as imperfect as I am? And thus, many people are in the very position that James spoke about when he said, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). And it is just that simple. You could have, if you would ask. But Satan, by pointing out your flaws and your weaknesses, has bullied you into not even asking; and thus, you have not because you ask not.

As a gift, it cannot be discerned or earned; it can only be received. Jesus said to His disciples, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). And when Jesus, in the seventh chapter of John, was inviting those who were thirsty to come unto Him and drink, He said, “And he that drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will flow rivers of living water.” In his commentary, John said, “This spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him should receive” (John 7:38-39). He cannot be earned. He must be received.

When Peter and John went to Samaria to the new believers who had come to Christ through the preaching of Philip, it says, “They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:15).

So a gift is not something that you beg for, it is something that you simply receive. The Holy Spirit is God’s gift to you, in order that you might have power in your own life to overcome sin and to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. And He is given in order that this power working through your life might enable you to be a real witness for Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is not given to us to make us feel joyful, so that we might have an ecstatic spiritual experience. He is given to you in order that you might have power to witness for Jesus. So it is a gift (it has to be received) but you must ask for the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:13). God is not going to force something on you that you do not want. There has to be that desire. God will not violate your free will. He has given you a free will. If He would violate it, then there is really no free will. So you must ask the Lord for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Bible we are commanded to ask. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount said, “Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:8). And then later on in the sermon He said, “Now ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7). We must initiate. We must ask. We must seek.

In Matthew 21:22 Jesus said,

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

In John 14:13 He said,

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

In John 15:16 He said,

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

And Paul said in Ephesians 3:20,

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

So God has many things for us; however, we must ask.

James tells us that we must ask in faith—nothing wavering. Now I have to confess that there are many things I ask God for that I have difficulty asking in faith. The difficulty lies in the fact that I am not certain if it is God’s will. And if it really is not God’s will, then I do not want it. I have an unwritten agreement with God that: “Anything I ask for in prayer, if it is not according to Your purpose and my best then, Lord, do not do it.” Underwriting every prayer, this is a given. I do not have to say it—God knows that I want His will above everything else and I often offer my prayers only as suggestions. “Lord, if You are open for suggestions this is what I would like to see happen, but You do what You know is best.”

I think that any man is a fool who asks with no regard to the will of God. I do not want anything that God does not want for me. And through my lifetime I have prayed earnestly and fervently for many things that I did not receive. As time went by, I realized the hand of God and I became thankful that God, in His wisdom and in His love, did not give me those things I was asking of Him. As a wise Father (knowing much more than I knew) He was helping to avert a tragedy that could have happened had He answered my prayers.

In his first epistle, John said, “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us.” So when I am asking for something that I know is according to the will of God, then I have great confidence—tremendous confidence in prayer. I know this is God’s will and thus, it gives me confidence because we know that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if He hears us, then we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. I mean, it is a slam dunk! If I am asking according to His will, then I have the petition that I have asked of Him.

So the issue is whether my being filled with the Holy Spirit is according to the will of God. Because the Scripture commands us actually, in Ephesians 5, “not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” So it is a command of God; and thus, I can be assured and I can be confident that it is God’s will that I be filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when I ask God for this gift of the Holy Spirit, I can be very confident that I am asking according to His will. And if we ask anything according to His will, He not only hears us, but then we have received that which we have asked of Him. And so, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him? So we ask God in faith and in confidence for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). I think a great hindrance that many people have in asking for the Holy Spirit is that they are expecting or wanting some kind of supernatural evidence to affirm that God has answered their prayer. It seems to be very difficult to just, by faith, believe the promise of God. I want God to give me a sign. “Give me some kind of sign, Lord, that You have given me the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

There seems to be a lot of “Thomas” in all of us. He said, “I will not believe until I can see the print of the nails in His hands and put my hand into His side.” In other words, “You are not going to convince me. I am not going to believe until I can see it.” And so, when Jesus appeared to the disciples and Thomas finally was with them, He said, “Look, Thomas, go ahead and touch it if you would like. Go ahead and feel the side here. Do not be unbelieving.” And Thomas said, “Oh my Lord and my God!” And Jesus said, “You see and you believe, but blessed is he who believes though he has not seen” (cf. John 20:27-29).

Now I think that many times we are seeking some particular sign to verify that God has filled us with His Holy Spirit. And if we do get that kind of supernatural sign that we are longing for or desiring, that many times God says to us, “Well, you have had the holy tingles and you believed, but blessed are they who believe without the holy tingles”—referring to those who just take God at His word and do not require a sign.

Now we read testimonies like Dr. Finney’s and we read of about waves of liquid love flowing over him until he finally cries out, “God, I do not think I can take any more. Please stop!” And I am certain it was absolutely a glorious experience for him. And we then look for some kind of similar experience. We hear others testify of their experiences and we want to have an experience that sort of correlates with theirs. And so often we are looking for signs rather than simply receiving by faith the gift of God because He has promised it—not requiring a sign.

And this would also be true for the sign of speaking in tongues. Now as you walk in the Spirit, and you develop in your relationship with the Holy Spirit, He takes over more and more of your life. It is very likely (and quite possible) that you will begin to have all kinds of glorious supernatural experiences as God’s Spirit is working in your life and you are responding to that work of the Spirit.

Sometimes there is a response of weeping; and sometimes there is a response of tremendous joy and overwhelming love. And there are many different kinds of responses that we can have as we are walking in the Spirit and as we are being led by the Spirit. It is always a glorious thing to realize that God's hand was upon you (God was guiding you) and God was working His perfect plan. And when you see it, you say, "Oh the Lord was leading me." Now at the time you may not realize it, but then as the event begins to come together, suddenly you realize—"God's hand was directing me!"

Several years ago I was called to visit one of the ladies from the church here who had been in a serious car accident and had broken her back. And so, I went over to Saint Joseph's Hospital to pray for her. And there in the six-bed ward were two other ladies from my church. And so, I was able to minister to all three of them. I did not know the other two were there, but when I came in they got all excited and thought I had come to visit each of them. And so I prayed for all three ladies.

As I was leaving the room and walking back to the elevator, I was excited. I said, "Lord, I love Your efficiency." I do not know how many rooms are in Saint Joseph's Hospital—an awful lot! But here, Lord, You are so efficient. You put the three ladies from my church in the same room so that I could see three with one visit. This is great efficiency, Lord. I love it!" And I was just loving the Lord and saying, "Lord that is so wonderful."

And I got in the elevator and pushed the button for the ground floor. When the elevator opened, suddenly I looked around and I was lost! There was a nurses' station—not the lobby! And I stepped back in thinking, "Oh, somebody else probably stopped the elevator on this floor." But it said, "G"—ground floor. So I was really confused and a nurse there saw my confusion.

She said, "Are you looking for the lobby?"

I said, "Yes, what did they do with it?"

She said, "Well, you took the service elevator."

And I looked up at the service elevator, "Employees Only" sign. I said, "Oh, I am sorry." I said, "I was not paying any attention upstairs."

She said, "That is all right."

I said, "Well, how do I get to the lobby?"

She said, "Very simple—just go down there to the first hallway, turn right and then you will turn right again and you will be in the lobby."

I said, "Thank you."

And I was going on my way thinking what a stupid mistake, but as I turned down this little corridor, there was a girl standing and weeping. And she looked up and she screamed, "Chuck!" And she came running up and just began to sob almost hysterically. And I finally got her calmed enough and I said, "What is wrong? What can I do? Tell me. Let us pray. But tell me what can we do? What can we pray for?"

And she said, “Chuck, my dearest friend in the whole world (the man who led me to Jesus Christ) is this very moment having brain surgery.” She said, “This man is such a wonderful Christian. He has been a missionary over in Africa and they sent him home to have this surgery. And the doctors give him very little hope for being able to walk again. The brain tumor has already affected his walking ability and they feel that...” And she said, “I cannot bear the thought of such a beautiful man of God being crippled.” She said, “I am just devastated!”

And so, we prayed together and I gave her some Scriptures, pointing her to Jesus. And she said, “I was so desperate. I was just here praying, ‘God I cannot handle this. Please send someone along to help me—to pray with me.’” And she said, “I looked up and here you came walking down the corridor!”

And, you know, the light went on! It was not a stupid mistake. I suddenly had that rush—“God’s hand is on me.” He is leading me by His Spirit. It was that exciting feeling of God directing me. God’s hand was on me and talk about a rush! Talk about an exciting thing—the realization that God used me! It got me so excited upstairs about His efficiency that I was not paying any attention to signs on elevators. If I had gotten in the main elevator, I would have been out the lobby and gone. But He had to get me in this other corridor, in order to meet the need of this young girl who was crying out of desperation to God for help.

So, as you walk in the Spirit and as you continue in the things of the Spirit, you will have exciting experiences that will thrill you to the core of your being. You will have blessed experiences and you will see the power of God and you will see the various manifestations of the Spirit. It is always thrilling to be a part of what God is doing.

But that is not the proof that you have the Holy Spirit. And that is not what we are to look for—these ecstatic kind of experiences. We just want more of God and we want Him to have more of us. “Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit.” And as you ask, then you receive by faith.

And you should then begin to properly thank Him for this gift. I mean, it is being quite ungrateful when someone gives you such a glorious gift and you go without thanking him. And as you begin to thank Him, many times that is when a person takes the position of faith—like Abraham.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but  
was strong in faith, giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

As you begin to give glory to God and give thanks to Him for His glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, when you have asked according to His will, then you have received that which you have desired of Him. And thus, if you ask for the Holy Spirit, it is according to His will. So it would only be proper for you to begin to thank the Lord for the power of the Spirit and for the filling of the Spirit. And it is in that position of thanksgiving through faith that so often people begin to then experience some of those supernatural, glorious ecstasies of the power of God in a very real way in their life. It is yours. It is a gift. God has given it to you. Ask Him and then receive and begin to thank Him and praise Him.

Shall we pray?

Father, how we thank You for the Holy Spirit and that You did not leave us comfortless orphans. You sent the Holy Spirit that He might abide with us; that He might indwell us; that He might lead us and empower us. Lord, we need all those things. We

need the presence. We need the power. We need the leading of the Holy Spirit. Lord, it is our desire to walk in the Spirit so that we would not fulfill the lusts or desires of our flesh. The flesh life is very strong, Lord—only Your Spirit is stronger. And so, fill us with Your Spirit; in order that we would forsake the flesh and not obey the desires of it, but obey the Spirit. And so, Lord, we need it. We desire it. And we ask for Your Holy Spirit tonight to come and to fill us until we overflow and there pours forth from our lives rivers of living water. Lord, we thank You. We receive now and we give thanks to You Lord. As we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit and to the power of the Spirit, Lord, we just give thanks now for this glorious gift whereby we might better serve You. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Lord.