**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**The Christian's Authority: Experience or the Word?, Part 1**
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1371

We're studying this morning continuing in our series in discussing the Charismatic Movement. I want to just express initially that basically Grace Church is a place where saints come together to learn the truths of the Word of God and how to live Christianity in the world, to reach people for Christ. We may have many visiting guests this morning. I'm confident we do. You may not really understand everything that we're talking about because it so happens that in this particular series we've been in for awhile we're trying to confront a current issue that faces the Church in the world and one which needs to be resolved by the authority of the Word of God.

Now everything we do revolves around the Word of God. Our message this morning will come in two parts. Today we will analyze something of this aspect of the movement and next week we will deal with the scripture itself and how it deals with this certain issue. The issue we want to talk about is the issue within the Charismatic Movement that I like to call the issue of experiential theology or drawing all of your conclusions about God from your own experience rather than from the authority of the written Word of God. That's basically what we're going to talk about this morning and next week.

Now let me begin by saying we've endeavored in this series to bring the light of the Word of God on the current Charismatic Movement. There is a movement going on in America and around the world that is called the Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Movement and many people are claiming to have visions and speak in other languages and all kinds of phenomenas occurring and all of this supposedly is connected with Christianity. It's important that we examine whether in fact this is the truth of Biblical Christianity. The purpose of the series is to call the Church to a position of true biblical faith based on New Testament apostolic doctrine. We believe in the authority of the Bible and that's what we teach and preach. The Bible speaks to every element of life and very often as tragic as it is the Church drifts off into areas of error and it must be called back to the Word of God.

For example, recently in a conversation with some theologians a certain view was expressed about how the Church was to be organized and one of the theologians that I was talking with said, "Well the Church is to be organized such and such. It's clear in the Word of God." This other theologian said, "But on the other hand do you mean to say that this particular group that's been doing it a different way has been wrong for 200 years?" To which the other theologian answered, "Listen, when the reformation came along the Church had been wrong for 1,500 years and aren't you glad it came along?" There are plenty of times when the Church gets off center from the Word of God and runs into problems. Unfortunately the world has picked this up.

For example, if you look at Ireland today what's going on supposedly in the name of Christians is certainly off center from what the Bible teaches, isn't it? It's very, very true that throughout history Christians and so-called Christians have gotten misdirected away from the Word of God and then the confusion begins to reign. So our approach is simply to say the Church has gotten off center and we want to try to call it back to a place of biblical Christianity.

There are many things wrong in the Church today, many. There are things in our own Church, Grace Community Church, that need to be brought more in line with the Word of God, need to be harmonized with His Truth, things in our lives. There's no difference on the Church on a wider basis, the Church around the world. There are many things that are wrong. There are many places where the Word of God is not being properly taught or taught at all even to Christian people. So there is much confusion in the name of Christianity. I really believe that it's time in our world. We've got media and we can get the word around that we ought to begin to ignite the prophetic voice again and call the Church back to a biblical position.

In fact in Ezekiel chapter 9 verse 6 God was telling about His judgment. He was talking about judging and slaying and killing and bringing vengeance. He says to the prophet, "Begin at my sanctuary," Ezekiel 9:6. "Begin at my sanctuary." Peter said the same thing in 1 Peter 4 when he said, "Judgment must begin at the House of God." We can't have any impact on the world unless the house is clean. It has to begin here.

The apostle Paul wrote at least 13 letters in the New Testament many of which were directed at Churches and pastors of those Churches to correct the abuses and the problems both doctrinally and practically that were going on in the Churches. Our own dear Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 wrote seven letters to the seven Churches of Asia Minor and a great preponderance of the material in those seven letters is corrective. It is rebuke. It is condemnation. It is judgment against them because their misbehavior is so flagrant.

The letter which we are currently studying of 1 Corinthians is one great big long diatribe against the unprincipled behavior, the unbiblical activity of the Corinthian Christians. So it has been the historic pattern from the New Testament on that God has sent people along who have called the Church back to a biblical position. It's no different than the prophet of the Old Testament who cried out to God's people and to the leaders of God's people and to the divine institutions of God's creation to conform to God's law. That's all we're doing.

Now I realize in doing that we are in danger of being intimidated and criticized but there is a mentality today in the Church has a great desire for unity and love and I like that if it's biblical unity and biblical love. We want everybody to be one and it's brotherhood and happiness and light and let's hold hands and all that and that's good and that's wonderful but what happens is in this great run for unity and

this great run for love nobody's allowed to say anything about truth without being considered somebody who's divisive. I suppose I get as many letters as most people or probably more because I say what I think but it's not because I have an ax to grind with other people. It's simply because I love God and I love His truth and I think His truth deserves being heard.

It's kind of like David in Psalm 69. It said, "Zeal for thine house is eaten me up." It's like Jesus when he came to Jerusalem to announce his Messiahship the very first act that he did was make a whip and clean out the temple. Judgment must begin where? The House of God. That's exactly where Jesus started. We have to call the Church back. But it isn't easy because it's like Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress. We've all arrived in the Land of Enchantment.

Christianity has become like a great, big club. I saw yesterday in a Church – day before yesterday – no yesterday, sometime. It had a thing sitting on a table and it was called The Christian's Business Directory for Orange County so that you could absolutely have everything in your entire life done by Christians. I thought, "What does that mean?" We've just become so – you can be born into a Christian hospital with a Christian doctor to a Christian mother and a Christian father and go to a Christian school and study nothing but the things of the Church and have a Christian insurance agent, Christian dentist, Christian doctor, Christian gas station getting sanctified ethyl.

You can go the whole – you never – we got this great, big – we're all hugging each other and we're sitting here in this little pile of people. When somebody comes along and say, "Hey, something's rotten in Denmark." "Yikes! He's divisive, see." Because we're all in the Land of Enchantment.

We're spending over a billion dollars, Christians are, in one year buying Christian records so we can hear each other sing to us. If anybody comes along and tries to rock the boat and say some things aren't wrong you accused of being divisive. Well that isn't the issue, people. The issue is wisdom crying in the streets calling people back to a biblical position. It's sad to say that many people won't take a stand. Many people won't speak on issues that ought to be spoken on outside their Church and they won't even take a stand within their Church and they just let things go along. I don't think it's right to do that because why should God be offended so we won't be? That's not right. Let us be offended. Sin is an offense to Him long enough.

It's a divine mandate. It's a divine mandate for the man of God to call the people of God to divine principles. When the Church doesn't live by divine principle then a man would be unfaithful if he didn't point that out. You see? The world, to say nothing of the Church, the world itself – do you understand the kind of Christianity the world sees today? They turn on their television and what kind of Christianity do they see? They see what looks like a some kind of hysteria. They see a plethora of people with weird things happening in their life.

I turned it on the other day on one of those programs and a lady's flat tire was healed and the world sees that. The world hears that. What kind of Christianity is that? The confusion of experiences and teachings and mishmash then everybody's on the radio and TV and they all disagree with each other. Then following their disagreements comes a big plea for money. That's the kind of thing the world sees. No wonder they get disillusioned.

Mainly what I see in the Charismatic Movement that's kind of the mainstream thing that the world sees and that I really feel that we have to face is this whole issue of experiential theology where the whole of Christianity is presented as a whole bunch of crazy experiences, miracles and visions and revelations and healings and voices out of Heaven. No end to the stuff. What's so scary about it is that no experience ever really has to stand the test of scripture. The experience itself is okay. "Whatever your experience that's fine." Then, "We don't worry about the Bible. We had an experience."

The other day I got a letter from somebody in Florida. This is a typical example of many things that I have in my file who said that a lady gave a wonderful testimony that she had taught her dog to praise the Lord and speak in an unknown bark. Well you say, "Well that's really strange. Now you shouldn't use that against the movement because that's bizarre." I'm not using it against the movement.

I'm simply showing you that nobody has any way to stop that or to judge that because the experience itself is the validator of itself. If you have the experience that's all there is. So when somebody says their dog speaks in an unknown bark, amen. Because it is experience that is the issue and we'll see why and how in a few minutes. Then they'll try to get the Bible to fit their experience or just ignore the Bible in many cases.

Now we've discussed in our study the issue of revelation, the issue of interpretation, the issue of apostolic uniqueness, the issue of historical transition and now the issue of experiential theology. This throws us into the mainstream. Let me show you where it all starts. The major doctrine of the Charismatic Movement is the baptism of the Holy Spirit with attendant phenomena. That's the major doctrine. That's their major distinction that you're a Christian and after that sometime you seek very diligently for the baptism of the Spirit and when you get it you get physical phenomena along with it.

Experiential feelings and voices and tongues and whatever so that throughout the whole movement everybody is desperately seeking and experience, a feeling, a physical phenomena, an emotion and that's the whole orientation from the very beginning. The unbiblical teaching of a post-salvation experience of the baptism opens the flood gates for believing that the whole of the Christian life is nothing but one experience after another. If that's the major doctrine then you've got to believe that that's the key to everything else. So they just go from one experience to the next.

They say you do not have the fullness of the Spirit until you've had the experience. So everybody's chasing the experience. "Have you had it? Has it happened to you?" They become intimidated and they chase it and then that opens the door to emotion, emotionalism, experience after experience being sought. Of course the claims of the experiences are incredible and no criteria is ever brought to evaluate them. Nobody ever says, "Well that can't be right because the Bible says." It's just, "Oh how wonderful." Then you try to find a verse here and there to fit the experience. It's like laying a veneer on the Bible that hides the real truth.

For example, and this is just published in a national magazine with any comment, national Charismatic newspaper. There's no comment. There's no editorializing. It's just there and this is what it says. It's an article. "A genuine photographic image of our Lord. Yes, I believe I have one recorded on film. In midsummer I woke at 3:30 a.m. to a strong voice though impression. 'Go and photograph my sunrise.' Beside the river I set up my camera and waited for the sun. In that predawn I felt so very close to God, perfect peace. On one negative is the perfect shape of a figure, arms raised in blessing as reflected in the water exactly opposite to every other shadow. I believe God gave me an image of Himself to share, signed Dudley Danielson, photographer." And he gives his address and so forth. "8x10 copies in perfect natural color are available for $9.95, prepaid. Large sizes on request. This portrait will bless you."

Now it doesn't seem to bother Dudley Danielson or anybody else in that newspaper that the Bible says, "No man hath seen God at any time." It doesn't seem to bother him that the Bible says, "God is a spirit." It doesn't seem to bother him that the Bible says, "No man shall see me and live." All of that stuff aside he has a photograph of God. Now you see the point? The point is nobody hassles the experience because that's the orientation of the whole thing. You've got to re-explain the Bible to make sure that it doesn't mess up your experience. Then you get into the problem of the faulty hermeneutics we talked about a few months ago.

Give you another illustration. This just very recent. I could be here for a week just giving you illustrations. Here's one. On April 11th, 1977 the Praise the Lord Club on Channel 40 in Los Angeles carried an interview. The interview was with the Pastor Ed Smith interviewing Dr. Richard Eby. This is the way the interview basically went. Dr. Eby had been dead and gone to Heaven and back again.

Now I told you a few months ago this would start happening a lot and it is. Once Marvin Ford had made the trip a lot of other folks wanted to go and now this has become the ultimate experience and everybody wants to be the one who's been to Heaven and back. Since that time I've heard four people personally say they've had the same trip. So it's the new thing. But anyway, he was dead.

He said it all began when he fell off a balcony and landed on his head. He was clinically dead supposedly or at least he thought he was. Then he had this experience. He said the experience was marvelous. He went to paradise. He needed no glasses, could see 100 miles. His body was

wonderful. It moved anywhere at his own will. It was visible and yet transparent. The aroma of Heaven overwhelmed him. It was the sweet savor of sacrifices. He added that the whole purpose – he found out when he was there that the whole purpose for sacrifices was to send up this smell to Heaven.

He said that he found some flowers and he broke them off and noticed they had no water in their stems because Jesus is the Living Water. He discussed the fact that the human brain has 12 cranial nerves, 1 for each tribe of Israel. He said this proved to him once and for all when he found this out in Heaven that we are indeed created in the image of God. Further he said the number one nerve in God's cranium is the sense of smell so that the number one reason for sacrifices is to put the sweet aroma in Heaven and satisfy God's main nerve. The host kept saying, "Marvelous, wonderful." And he said, "Oh this is meaty."

We laugh at that and the only reason we laugh at that isn't because it's funny because it isn't funny. We laugh at it because it's ridiculous. It's absurd and yet there was never any check on it at all. He just went on and on. It doesn't seem to bother Dr. Eby that he doesn't make any distinction between paradise and Heaven but the Bible does.

There isn't anything in scripture to indicate that he would have a transparent body and that his body would be floating around. The fact that the matter is that nobody in Heaven has a body. The resurrection hasn't happened yet except a few folks here and there who were translated. Our bodies are still in the grave, right? What's he doing up there. No wonder he couldn't wear his glasses. There's no place to put them. His body couldn't move around at will because he didn't have a body if he was in heave. The body would be in the grave.

He betrays a total misunderstanding of the sacrificial system, the major feature of which was death, not the smell. Totally misunderstands that. It's an unbelievable extrapolation to make the link between the cranial nerves and the 12 tribes of Israel. If you were going to do that you'd also have to conclude that since we have 10 toes the bottom half of us is made in the image of the beast. That's just about as sensible. So I checked this week and found out there are not actually 12 cranial nerves. There are 12 pairs which makes 24 which of course really corresponds to the 24 elders.

Well you see, it's just foolishness. It's foolishness. What grieves my heart is what an adulteration it is of His truth, isn't it? Of His word. It's just foolishness. It's just stupidity. You know, yet it goes on and on. If I ever say something about it or against it then I'm the one who's criticized. Well I decided that I'm going to be criticized if I have to be but I can't let this just go on without saying something. I prayed that God would give me a bigger platform to say it and I received a contract this week from a major publisher that wants to publish all this material and make it a lead in their catalog. They are probably the biggest publisher in America. So I thank God for that. Christian publisher. Because it has to be said. Somebody has to say, "This can't go on like this. We can't have this kind of thing. It just

isn’t right.”

Pastor Vellard’s Charismatic Church in Southern California told his people God was giving them a new revelation and the new revelation was that they were to go out and evangelize the world two by two, one Protestant and one Roman Catholic. He said the reason he knew it was true is because five people received the same revelation and anytime five people receive a revelation it’s of God. Does he know there are more than five Harikrishnas, five Zen Buddhists all claim to have a revelation from God? Foolishness.

You know when you add all this stuff up what you have is you have sub-Christian mysticism, nothing different than TM or Harikrishna or any of that other stuff. It is mysticism and mysticism is this. Here’s a little definition. It is the comprehension of a spiritual idea by intuition rather than by revelation. It is the comprehension of a spiritual idea by intuition or feeling or self-generated thought rather than by receiving a revelation so that Christianity instead of being a response to the Word of God is a whole pile of experiences and then the Word of God is twisted around to make it fit the experiences. That’s nothing but sub-Christian mysticism.

There are only two classical approaches to truth in the Bible. Only two. Only two approaches. One, the historical objective approach which emphasizes God’s action toward man as recorded here. The other is the personal subjective which exercises man’s experience of God. Now listen, if you were going to build a biblical theology, write down all true principles about God in the world would you rather do it by adding up the experiences of a whole lot of people or would you rather do it by seeing what this book says? Imagine trying to build a biblical theology of all the truth there is about God from the experiences of people. What a mess. What a mishmash. You’d have as many views as you have what? People. That’s why God gave us an authoritative revelation.

Now there are only two approaches to truth biblically. You either take the Bible as the historical objective record or you go with a personal subjectivism and chaos. The historical objective kind of approach is what is called Creedal Theology. Is it based on creeds? Jesus is, God is, the Holy Spirit is, God said, boom, bang. It’s all Creedal and we would call it a theology of the Word. But the personal subjective one is simply intuitive. “Well I think and I feel, well to me God is, well I think that God is,” and what you’ve got there is a theology of experience. But the difference is that the theology of experience is authored by man and the theology of the Word is authored by God. Who knows best about Himself? God.

You know something? Satan absolutely would love - and I think he’s behind it - he would love people to have a theological conclusion on the basis of experience because he can really confuse experiences but he can’t do anything with this because it’s done. It’s written.

Objective historic theology is reformation theology. It is historical evangelicalism. It is historical orthodoxy. You begin with the Word and anybody's thoughts and anybody's ideas and anybody's experiences are validated or invalidated on the basis of what they have to say in comparison with this book. On the other hand, the second view, the personal subjective one is historic Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholics have always built their theology on their intuition, on their experiences. The appearance of the Virgin so forth, here, there and everywhere, Lourdes and Guadalupe and wherever else it's always been a mystical kind of thing and that's why they have so much extra biblical stuff that grows up and constitutes Roman theology.

The second one is not only Roman Catholic but it's historic liberalism. Liberals for years have been saying, "The truth is what you think. The truth is what you feel. The truth is what happens to you. It's whatever zaps you." It's Neo-Orthodoxy. The Neo-Orthodox has been saying the same thing and it's also Charismatic. So Charismatic Theology of experience doesn't come in the tradition of historic orthodoxy. It comes in the tradition of Roman Catholicism, liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy.

A perfect example of this approach to theology is at the heart of the Charismatic Movement. There is a historian in the Pentecostal Movement by the name of Klaude Kendrick. He writes for Gospel Publishing Company which is the Charismatic publisher in Springfield, Missouri and he has written a book which is kind of the history. It's called The Promise Fulfilled;: A history of the *m*odern Pentecostal movement, published in 1961. And in that book he sort of chronologs the history of the movement. He has an interesting statement that just really shows you the whole point. He records the experience of the first person who ever sought the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues and got it. First person. Her name was Agnes Ozman.

This is what he says, "According to Ms. Ozman's own testimony," and then he gives her testimony. She says, "It was as his hand - " that is the name of Charles Parham who was the man in charge there. "It was as his hands were placed upon my head that the Holy Spirit fell on me and I began to speak in tongues glorifying God. I talked several languages and it was clearly manifest when a new dialect was spoken. I was the first one to speak in tongues." Stop there. That's the testimony of Agnes Ozman.

Now Kendrick goes on from there. "Although Agnes Ozman was not the first one in modern times to speak in tongues she was the first known person to have received such an experience as a result of specifically seeking a baptism in the Holy Spirit with the expectation of speaking in tongues." Stop there. Now listen to that. This is a woman on January 1st, 1901, the first woman ever recorded to seek the baptism of the Spirit and speak in tongues.

Now if you were there what would you conclude? I would say this is the first time it's ever happened in 2000 years. It must not be too important. Secondly, I wonder if it's biblical. But listen to what they concluded. The next statement by Kendrick. "From this time on Pentecostal believers were to teach

that the baptism in the Holy Spirit should be sought and that it would be received with the evidence of tongues." Where did that teaching come from? Did it come from the Bible? No. Where did it come from? The experience of a lady named Agnes Ozman. Do you see? It's experiential theology.

Then of course after they had established that that was the experience and they wanted the experience and the feeling and the emotion and the phenomena then they began to try to find things in the Bible to support it and of course they twisted and turned them to try to make their case. But listen, "From this time on Pentecostal believers were to teach that the baptism in the Holy Spirit should be sought and it would be received with the evidence of tongues." Did it start because somebody discovered that that truth was in the Bible? No. It started because some lady did it. An experience because the beginning and the initiator of the Charismatic kind of theology. Perfect example of theology coming from experience and then being forced into the Bible.

The whole Pentecostal Movement is united around experience and when the whole mentality is experience, experience and phenomena and feeling and emotion then everybody who gets that certainly can't be told they're wrong. So there's no checks on it. There's no way to stop it. It just runs wild. It's like the America today. Christianity in America is literally drowning in a sea of subjectivism and mysticism and experience. They're all over the land like the frogs of Egypt, just everywhere. Dale Bruner and his helpful Book of Theology of the Holy Spirit, a very scholarly work says, "Pentecostalism wishes in brief to be understood as experiential Christianity with its experience culminating in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is not the doctrine that is important to them but the experience irrespective of doctrine."

I want you to listen to something. It was in a book. I only tell you this just to show you how bizarre it becomes. I don't say this as a joke and I don't say it to make you laugh although you may just because you need to relieve some of the unbelievable tension in your mind when you hear this. This is in a book called It Can Happen to Anybody by Russell Bixler, published by Whittaker Books. It is telling what can happen in your life if you have this baptism experience and all the physical stuff that goes with it.

Well they got the baptism, this fellow Russell and his wife Norma and I'll pick it up at that point. "As Norma sat down her body went limp and she slide gracefully to the floor. I didn't feel anything. Norma spent 20 minutes on the restaurant floor while Jim continued to talk to me." Now just listen here. I want to finish this. "Several of our new friends tried to encourage me to pray in tongues but I felt nothing. I heard nothing. I had nothing to say and apparently the Holy Spirit had nothing to say through me. As we prepared to go home it was nearly 2:00 a.m. I began to giggle." This is the first result incidentally of his receiving the baptism, began to giggle. "Soon everything anybody said would cause me to laugh. A feeling of love deeper than any I had ever felt oozed into my heart. I loved everybody in the room. In saying goodbyes I embraced the other men and even picked up a Presbyterian's wife and hugged her. This was so unlike me with all my reserve and shyness."

I'll stop there for a minute just to say you see the result of being baptized in the Spirit was giggling and hugging people but you don't find that in the Bible. Further - and this really gets strange - "The next morning, Saturday, we were rudely awakened by one of our boys. 'Daddy, Mother, the commode is running over.' Norma dashed to the bathroom to discover water flowing all the way out on the carpet in the hall. We had discovered the problem on Friday evening but hadn't time to fix it before leaving for the dinner. So we had left instruction for our four children to use the downstairs lavatory. That morning five-year old Harold forgot so Norma quickly gathered every rag and towel she could locate, soaked up the water and went downstairs to prepare breakfast.

"After the excitement died and everyone else had gone downstairs I entered the bathroom to brush my teeth. As I was brushing I prayed, 'Lord, why do I feel so joyful yet have not been able to speak in tongues? Did I really receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit last night?' Immediately I heard the voice which had been silent since seminary days. For the third time in my life He spoke, 'Put me to the test.' As I marveled at hearing the voice again I said, 'How?' The voice said, 'Flush the commode.' 'Just a minute,' I thought, 'Is this the Holy Spirit or is this Satan?' I continued to brush my teeth. "Again, He spoke. 'I said flush the commode.' There was a note of insistence. I looked at the damp floor, the spot on the hall carpet and said, 'Nothing doing.' 'I said flush the commode.' Urgency was the note this time. I thought of the flood we had already seen. I thought of how irritated justifiably so Norma would be if I added another overflowing when I knew better. I put up my toothbrush, stepped over to the commode and said, 'I just can't do it.' 'Flush the commode,' came the fourth time and this command sounded highly impatient.

"An idea popped into my mind. I looked for all the wet rags and towels to place around the commode then I would flush it. But Norma had taken every cloth to the basement and put them in the washer. I had no safeguards, no earthly protection. I placed hand on the handle and drew it back. Again, I tried and couldn't do it at last praying, 'Lord, this had better be from you.' I pushed the handle down and jumped back from the inevitable overflowing. The water came up and up almost to the top. As I put my hand to the sides of my head and said, 'Oh no, here it comes,' the water suddenly shot down the drain as if a giant hand had thrust it down. I stood there in disbelief.

"There came a little chuckle and then a laugh. Within seconds I was doubled up with laughter and I laughed most of my waking hours for the next two weeks. Never had I felt such overwhelming joy. I walked through the house, through the Church, up and down the stairs laughing hilariously. I laughed away a lifetime of heartaches." The conclusion of the whole thing is that God proved to him that he had the baptism of the Spirit by unplugging a plugged up toilet.

"Several other physical reactions followed my baptism." That's not water but this experience. "I was overweight; perhaps ten pounds more than I wished. Within ten days the Holy Spirit took of nine pounds and in subsequent weeks removed two or three more. All my physical reactions were

heightened. It made me sensitive to physical stimuli such as I had never felt before. Food tasted better, the bed felt better and on and on." He concludes by saying the Holy Spirit really turned me on.

That's really sad, isn't it? What an adulteration of the truth of the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What a gross adulteration. But you see, it's all right to say that because it's the experience that is the thing. You see? Nobody would argue with him. Foolishness. Idiotic. Silliness. Listen, the result of being empowered by the Power of God is not flushing toilets and giggling. Can't find that in the Bible. What a terrible, terrible injustice to the marvelous nature and character of a Holy God to make some stupidity like that consonant with His work with His Holy Spirit.

This is the kind of thing – and I'm not using these illustrations to try to grieve the people involved. I just want you to see where this thing goes. There's no way to stop it. It just becomes bizarre. The Church is riding a crest of humanism. It's nothing but humanism. Even in testimony times when people get up rarely do you hear somebody really glorify God or talk about the Bible. It's "Me, me, me this, me this, me this, the Lord did this for me and look what I did and this happened to me and this is how I feel and this is what I think." It's just quasi-spiritual, quasi-Christian humanism.

The fly leaf of a Bible once shown to my grandfather were written these words. "I don't care what the Bible says. I've had an experience." In the sense that's really what I hear coming from this movement today although they might not want to admit that. The mystical experience becomes the determiner of truth. How do you know you're baptized by the Spirit? When the toilet flushed you knew.

Joseph Dillow writing in his book Speaking in Tongues says, "A subtle and gradual movement is traceable in the lives of many from living according to the scripture to living according to emotion. In the lives of many a personal experience becomes a substitute for clear teaching from scripture or serious Bible study." I'll even go a step further. I think many Charismatic people do not – although they study the Bible and they'll say they do they do not study the Bible to learn its truth. They study the Bible with the hopes that it will induce some kind of a spiritual thrill.

The emphasis on experience is costly because it nullifies the place of scripture and that's exactly what Satan wants to do. You see, it is a question of authority. What is the authority in the believer's life? Is it his experience or is it God's Word? It's God's Word, isn't it? Jesus said, "Father, sanctify them through thy Word. Thy Word is truth." There is no maturing, there is no sanctification, there is no legitimacy in an experience apart from the truth of the Word of God. This kind of teaching, this kind of stuff occurs I believe only in places where true biblical teaching is not being done. So we have to lay the blame not at the feet of the people but at the feet of the leaders. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," Hosea said and it's true again.

Then when you come along and say, "But the Bible says," you know what they always say? "Well how can you evaluate this? You've never had the experience." You know what I say? "Who cares

whether I've had the experience. I don't need to have an experience to judge it by the authority of the Word of God."

Moody Monthly, October '73 carried an article entitled, "Facing the Issue." In it the writers said, "A tongued speaker recently wrote the editor of Christianity Today and said, 'You cannot give fair treatment to a gift from God which you neither believe in nor have experienced.' This person has really said that tongue speaking is not subject to critical examination in the light of scripture and yet to say that the one who has spoke in tongues is the only one qualified to comment on the subject is to assume that experience is a gift of God and to put the subjective above the scripture." He's right.

The person is really saying, "You can't judge this because you haven't experienced it." That will show you what his criteria for judgment is. It's not the Bible. It's what? Experience.

I've never died but you know something? I can tell you a lot about death, an awful lot. You know why? Because I know what it says in here. In fact if you turn on your television, see, April 27th at 1:00 in the morning which is very late they asked me to be on a 90 minute deal on CBS to discuss life after death and they're going to bring these people who supposedly have come back from the dead and they said they wanted someone who would be a skeptic. I am a skeptic. I think those people have an encounter with their subconscious. But you know intuitive theology is not the biblical way. People, I'm burdened by this.

There is a man on the television who's on all this 450 or 500 stations, Robert Schuller, and recently in an interview in Wittenburg Door Magazine, January of '76. He said this, "I don't have time to write a systematic theology which would give a solid theological basis for what I intuitively know. What I intuitively believe is right." He doesn't need any theology. He knows what's right intuitively. Do you realize what a disaster that is? He went on to say, "I would never publicly deny the Virgin birth or the resurrection but things like that that I don't understand I never preach about."

You see, this is a bigger thing than you think people. This is a wide spread thing, this experiential approach. It is not historic Christianity. It is not traditional orthodoxy. In the first place it is the old line liberalism. It is liberalism. It's what the rank liberals have been saying. You can go back to the 19th century to the German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher who is well-known in theological circles and Schleiermacher said, "The determiner of truth is experience." He was a liberal who didn't even believe in the truth of the Bible.

Recently in an article in Christianity Today Robert Johnson evaluates Schleiermacher in relation to the Charismatics. This is what he says, "What is being increasingly attempted today is a reversal of the reformers approach to the Christian faith. Evangelicals are suggesting that theology must travel from Spirit to the word and not from the word to the Spirit. Evangelicals who have adopted either a relational or incarnational approach or a charismatic or neo-Pentecostal approach to their theology

are more and more challenging their fellow believers to rethink the Gospel from the standpoint of their own experience with it. Their claim is that traditional evangelical theology is largely irrelevant or inadequate."

The Charismatics are saying that the Bible without all these experiences is inadequate; there's got to be more. Johnson further says, "Catholics, Episcopalians, Assembly of God, believers, Methodists, Presbyterians all come together freely experiencing the fullness of the Spirit and letting traditional denomination and theological distinctive all formulated with primary reference to theology of the Word fade into oblivion." Doctrine's going out the door.

Do you know what's going to happen? It's not so bad for us but we've opened the cage and when the truth flies out wait till your children grow up and try to find it. It won't be there and they won't have any connection to it. I agree with Frances Schaeffer who said, "We're tearing the rug out from under the next generation and they're going to look for the truth and they're not going to have any connection to it."

One of the leading spokesmen for the Charismatic Movement is a man by the name of Michael Harper who is very high in the movement. He is the editor of an English Pentecostal magazine titled Renewal. He has written a book entitled, A New Way of Living, in which he says, "The world awaits a fresh manifestation of Christ within his body, the Church. It is tired of the airy, fairy doctrines of theologians." Tired of airy, fairy doctrine. He says, "We must begin with experience." This is liberalism. This is plain Schleiermacher liberalism, not historic orthodoxy. The Bible wasn't written to approve your experiences.

This kind of approach like Schleiermacher's approach is meant to destroy the dogmatism of Creedal Orthodoxy. It's meant to destroy the theology that says, "This is what God says, this is what God did," and to replace it with, "This is what I feel, this is what I experience." It is not only liberalism but I'll add it's also the kind of theology that's consonant with Neo-Orthodoxy. Neo-Orthodoxy is just another brand of liberalism that denies the truth of the Bible.

The Neo-Orthodox Rodman Williams who is as I've told you before is the head of the Melodyland Seminary says in his book, the Error of the Spirit, what I have been attempting to stress is that, "The theological implications of this dynamic movement of the Spirit are of no little significance. At the critical center there is the knowledge that something has happened. That's the key for him. Something has happened for which one has difficulty finding adequate theological language or ways of relating it to various doctrines of Christian faith." "We just know something has happened even though we don't know how it figures into the Bible. We know it's happened. Isn't it wonderful?" Then they assume that the Holy Spirit did it because it happened.

Larry Christenson, a well-known Lutheran Charismatic said, “The Christian faith is based on experience and theology is only an explanation of that experience.” You know something? He’s dead wrong and so are all the rest of them. What’s going to happen is Satan will give them experiences in which they will conclude wrong things about God and build an erroneous theology and the rug will be pulled out from under orthodoxy. We must call the Church back to a biblical position of authority.

What is the authority in the life of the Christian? It’s this book, isn’t it? Next week we’re going to look in this book. I just gave you the introduction today. Next week we’re going to look in this book and we’re going to find what the Bible says about itself being the authority as over against experience. Let’s pray.

Thank You Father for giving us the time together this morning to reflect on these truths. Father help us to be strong, to uphold Your Truth and to be loving in its proclamation. Help us not to set ourselves up as some kind of authority but simply to hold the book high as the only authority and to call the believing community back to it and all of its marvelous truths. We wonder how we could begin with the Word, be saved by its great truths and then find ourselves running wild, far beyond its pages to define our Christian life in terms of experience rather than the Word which was the agency of redeeming us and is still the only thing that can sanctify us. So make us people of the Word for the glory of Him, whose story it is, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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