

The Christian's Authority: Experience or the Word?, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1372

Well, this morning, we're going to continue in our study of the issues in the charismatic movement. And I want to preface it by saying that I feel that the things we're going to share with you this morning are really vital, that we're talking about something far broader than just the charismatic movement, but we're talking about a battle that the church has had to fight for many years now, for its own purity at a certain point. And I am very exercised in my spirit, and I'm very excited in my spirit, and very encouraged in my spirit that this is the message the Lord has for us. There are Christians all over America and around the world who are greatly concerned about this very issue, and I've received some phone calls in the past two weeks by some leading evangelicals who are concerned about this very issue that is facing the church. And so, this morning, we're going to dive right in, continuing our study of the charismatic movement and particularly the issue of experience. The issue of experience.

And I want you to understand that this is not the normal approach, that usually we're studying through verse by verse, and I know that's my first love and your first love. But the direction of the elders and my own heart, I have the great conviction that this is what God wants us to do for now, so that we understand where it is that we must emphasize and hold firm and stand in a day when Satan wants the church to fly apart and lose its testimony. So this is a vital thing, and this is like gearing up the troops for the battle, so you be with us in spirit and think through the things I say to you this morning. It's not the typical Bible-teaching approach. It's going to come out more like an apologetic, or a speech in defense, but I hope you'll understand for this time that this is the thing which is most needful as the Spirit of God has directed us.

To begin with, I'd like you to take your Bible and look at 2 Peter chapter 1. 2 Peter chapter 1. And I want to use this text as a starting point to illustrate to you the point at hand, and then I want to talk about it in some further detail. In 2 Peter chapter 1, the apostle Peter is writing to believers, and the main emphasis of much of what he has said in 1 Peter and 2 Peter is the coming of Jesus Christ. As the choir sang this morning, "the wonder of it all, Christ is coming for me." Christ is coming again, and that was a great part of Peter's preaching, that Christ was going to return, that Christ was going to come, and he wanted people to really believe that. He wanted people to be convinced that that was true, that that was not just some kind of fantasy, or some kind of fairy tale, or some kind of fable, but that Christ was going to come.

And so he makes a strong emphasis on this in chapter 1, verse 16. Notice it there. "For we have not followed cleverly devised fantasies when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” In other words, Peter says, “Look, when I have proclaimed the coming of Christ, this is not a fantasy. This is not a clever scheme. Listen, I was an eyewitness of Second Coming majesty.” And you might say, “Well, now wait a minute, Peter, how in the world could that have happened? You’re living way back then, and He hasn’t come yet. How could you ever have been an eyewitness to His Second Coming glory, to His Second Coming majesty?” Read on in verse 17: “For He received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” Now Peter says, “Here’s when I got that glimpse of Second Coming glory. It was when the Father said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” “Well, when did He say that, Peter?” Verse 18: “And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount.”

Now, you say, “Well, when was this, Peter?” Do you remember in Matthew chapter 16, and Matthew chapter 17, how that Jesus took His disciples, James, John, and Peter, and they went up on a mountain, and there, Jesus was transfigured before them. You remember that? The Bible says that He pulled aside His flesh and revealed His glory, and they saw Him in His Second Coming glory. Christ in glory, and it’s a total picture of the Second Coming right there on that mountain. For example, Moses was there, and Moses is a symbol of the redeemed who died. And Elijah is there, and he is a symbol of the redeemed who have been glorified or translated. And Peter, James, and John were there in the flesh, and they are symbols of Israel on earth when Jesus comes. And the multitude of unregenerate were at the foot of the mountain. They weren’t there, and they picture the unsaved who never enter into His Second Coming glory.

So, the whole picture is there. The whole scene is there, and Jesus was giving Peter a glimpse of His Second Coming glory. So, Peter says, “When I talk about Christ’s coming, and when I talk about His Second Coming glory, this is not some fantasy. I saw that Second Coming glory.” You say, “But Peter, John MacArthur says you shouldn’t base theology on experience.” And he says, “I know that.” Read verse 19: “We also have a more sure word.” More sure word than what? Experience. “Listen, my experience was fantastic. My experience was great, but we have a more sure word, and it is the word of” - What? - “prophecy. To speak forth. It is the speaking of God that is the more sure word.” Now, jump to verse 21 and let me define prophecy. “For the prophecy came not in any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter says, “Listen, my experience is fine, but a more sure word is the revelation of God, which was spoken through the holy men moved by the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the revelation of the writers of Scripture is more sure than anybody’s experience, even Peter. That’s the point. And Peter is saying, “You never predicate truth on experience unless that experience is validated by the Scripture.” That’s his point, and it’s a basic point. “A more sure word.” This is conclusive. This is vital. It is an essential point that all experience must be validated on a more sure word, which is the divine revelation of the Scripture. And so when we go to find truth for Christian life, when we go to find truth about Christian

doctrine, we don't want just somebody's experience telling us what the truth is. We want to make sure that the Word tells us.

There is no valid experience unless it agrees with the already revealed Scripture. That's what we've been trying to say all through this series.

Now this brings us to the heart of a major flaw in the charismatic movement, and even beyond that. And I'm not just picking on these people; many are our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. But I want to call the whole church to the position of commitment to what is the truth. And, before God, I must do that. And the major flaw that I see in the charismatic movement is that they allow experience to tell them what is true rather than the Word of God. Now, in our last study, we talked about this feature of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement: the problem of basing doctrine on personal experience, subjective experience rather than objective, historical revelation. And I suggested to you that the Pentecostal-charismatic movement flows toward a theology of experience rather than flowing toward a theology of the Word. And, you see, the reason is because it all begins with one particular miss-emphasis. The single identifying mark of the charismatic movement is that, after you're saved, you are to seek the experience of the baptism of the Spirit.

And when you get people to think that the one big thing they've got to have is this experience, and you make them pursue this experience, then you open the floodgates, which causes people to believe that the whole of life is just chasing experience, that the only way to live the Christian life is to just have something more, something bigger, something better, another experience. And they say that the baptism of the Spirit will be accompanied by physical experience, and emotion, and sensation, and feeling. And the people chase that. And once they've had that experience, I've some of them even say to me: you spend the rest of your life trying to find another experience. And they have the whole wrong orientation. They begin to think that Christian life is pursuing emotional, subjective feelings, and physical phenomena, and miracles, and experiences, instead of pursuing the knowledge of the Word of God, which alone can change life.

And the sad thing is that out of these experiences, they begin to form their doctrine. For example, a man says, "I saw Jesus." He said this on television. "I was driving in my car and Jesus, I looked over, and Jesus was sitting next to me on the seat. Jesus in physical form was right there, just as real as you are." And he said, "It was so wonderful, I drove along, and I just talked with Jesus sitting beside me." And he said, "If you have enough faith, you all can talk with Jesus, and Jesus will appear to you." And so the conclusion is, Christians can have a physical appearance of Jesus if they have enough faith. That's the theology that they make out of it.

The Bible says, "Whom having not seen, you love." You see what happens? Bang. Experience runs right into Scripture. Or they say, "I came back from the dead." Now, we have a lot of them who say, "I died, and I went to heaven, and I checked heaven out." We talked about that. "And I came back. And

if you have enough faith, when you're ill, no matter how ill you are, even if you die, if you really believe God's healing power, He'll bring you back. Therefore, Christians can come back from the dead." And the Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die," you see? So, what happens is that Scripture runs into experience again. But, you see, where you make experience the criteria, then you just take the Scripture. You say, "Well, let's see, we'll just fix it this way so it'll fit." And that's not right, because you wind up framing a system of doctrine based on everybody's experience. And man, is it ever getting complex. There's lots of people having lots of experience.

Now, in our last study, I tried to point out to you that this is not the way of historic Christian orthodoxy. This is not the historic Christian approach to life. This is not the historic approach to truth, and theology, and the Word of God. It is not. We're not denying experience. My word, I tell you, I'm like Peter. Sometimes I have joy unspeakable, and full of glory, don't you? I'm not knocking experience. Man, nobody gets more hepped up about stuff than me. I enjoy my joy, and I hate my misery, but I experience it all, and everything in between. I'm not denying true experience. Historic Christianity never denies true experience, but it always validates experience on the authority of the Word of God. It never makes the Bible fit experience. In fact, this is not historic Christianity at all; this is the approach that has been traditionally taken by the Roman Catholic Church, by liberalism, by neo-orthodoxy, and by Christian mysticism. But it's never the historic Christian faith. Never.

You say, "Well, John, what are the roots of this approach?" Let me give you a little study here. Hang in there. This is going to be good. You'll find it interesting. The roots of this methodology, or this approach to truth, out of experience, are not found in Christian doctrine. They're not found in the history of the Christian church, but they are found in false religions and philosophies. They come right out of the false systems of men.

I want to add a note at this point. I'm not denying the sincerity of charismatics at all. They're sincere. I think most of them really believe in their approach. But they're like the Jews, of whom Paul said, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to," - What? - "to knowledge." They have zeal without knowledge. They have enthusiasm without enlightenment. John Stott says in more modern jargon: "They are keen, but clueless." Pentecostal Christians who make experience the major criterion for truth reveal what Stott calls, "an avowed anti-intellectualism." They are approaching the Christian life without their minds, without their thinking, without really using their understanding. And, as far back as Isaiah, God says, "Come now, let us reason together." The whole revelation of God is predicated on a thinking man who will receive and reason it.

Some of these charismatics have even said that God is deliberately giving people unintelligible utterance in order to bypass and, thus, humble their proud intellects. But the glorious truth is that God has revealed Himself in a rational revelation that demands that man think. That demands that man reason; that demands that man understand historic, objective truth. The Christian faith has always been founded on a clear mind, going to the revealed Word, not on some hyper-emoting, extrapolating

out of fantasy, supposedly, the truth of God.

The late minister, Dr. Rufus Jones, said, quote, “Whenever I go to church, I feel like unscrewing my head and placing it under the seat, because I never have any use for anything above my collar button.” End quote. Well, I’m afraid that that’s often true, that even us evangelical, non-charismatic, non-Pentecostals, in many cases in our churches, we have opted out for emotional things. How did the church ever get into this emotional experiential mentality? Harry Blamires, who wrote a book called *The Christian Mind*, says this: “The Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the 20th century church. One cannot characterize it without having recourse to language which will sound hysterical and melodramatic. As a thinking being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization.” End quote. Boy, he’s right. He’s right.

We have put our minds in the ground like the proverbial ostrich. And we’re just trying to, you know, emote, and determine God’s truth out of our feeling and experience. Listen, the Christian life is not built on the emotion; it is built on the mind, acquiring the understanding of God’s truth. Let me illustrate. Don’t try to follow me, but write some of these down if you’d like. Ephesians 1:17. Here is Paul’s prayer for you as Christians. This is what he said: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know.” Did you hear that? Now, listen, let me repeat some of these words. “That you may have wisdom, revelation, knowledge, understanding, enlightenment, and that you may know.” Now, every one of those things has to do with the mind. Wisdom, and knowledge, and enlightenment, and understanding, that you may know. That’s Paul’s prayer for the believer.

In chapter 3 of Ephesians, and verse 18: “That you may be able to comprehend.” Verse 19: “To know.” That’s God’s plan. You must understand. You must know what He has revealed as historic fact and truth. In Romans chapter 12 Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable worship, and that you be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your” - What? - “your mind. That you may know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” You must know. And in Ephesians, again, in chapter 4, in verse 23, he says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” And in Colossians 3:10, “Put on the new man that is renewed in the mind.” And in Philipians 4:8, “If there be any virtue and there be any praise” - Do what? - “think.”

The whole of God’s revelation is geared to the understanding. And, of course, there is a moral condition in which that understanding can take place, and that is when we know God and know Christ. But we are to use our minds to apprehend what God has already penned as the truth, not our emotions to run around and try to discover fantasies and experience, and extrapolate truth out of them. Or, we’ll come to conclusions that are wrong.

James Orr, in his book *The Christian View of God and the World*, says this: "If there is a religion in the world which exalts the office of teaching, it is safe to say that it is the religion of Jesus Christ. It has been frequently remarked that in pagan religions the doctrinal element is at a minimum. The chief thing there is the performance of a ritual. But this is precisely where Christianity distinguishes itself from other religions. It does contain doctrine. It comes to men with definite, positive teaching. It claims to be the truth. It bases religion on knowledge, though a knowledge which is only attainable under moral conditions. A religion divorced from earnest and lofty thought has always, down the whole history of the church, tended to become weak and unwholesome." End quote.

This is not the approach that is historic. We have never, in Christianity, in the mainstream of the great Christian faith, tried to determine a theology out of everybody's experience. And yet, within the charismatic movement, we have all these people having all these experiences, and drawing conclusions about what is true and what isn't true out of their experience, rather than systematically learning the Word of God. You say, "How did this get in the church, John? How did this happen?" Several elements contributed to it. I'm going to give you three.

Now get your - don't - if you've got your head unscrewed under the seat, take it out now. I want you to get these three. The three things, philosophical things existing in our world that have been the soil in which things like experiential theology has grown, are: existentialism, humanism, and paganism. Not Christianity.

Let me go over the first one, existentialism. You say, "Existentialism, what's that?" Sounds like some kind of an omelet, but it isn't. Existentialism is not an omelet. It is a definition of a theological view, or a philosophical view. Let me tell you what it means. Very simply, existential, from the word *existence*, simply means that the only thing that matters is you, baby. That's it. Grab your thing and go. You only go around once in life. Get all the gusto you can get. That's it. Eat, drink, and be merry. Tomorrow we die. Live it up, guy. And the existentialist says, "Look, what matters is not some kind of information, but what matters is what you feel. And the only way to know truth is to find the greatest feeling, and the greatest experience. And the truth about God is what you think about God, and the truth about God is what you feel about God, and there isn't any Bible authority at all." That's existentialism. "Just whatever you feel is the truth, man. Whatever you want, whatever grabs you; that's it." Now, you see that in our society, don't you? That kind of high and lofty philosophy has filtered down to our commercials.

The famous Scottish philosopher, David Hume, who had nothing to do with Hume Lake, incidentally; the famous Scottish philosopher, David Hume, who lived from 1711 to 1776, really kind of started the ball rolling. This man said that, "Reason is to be criticized, because you can never know the truth with reason. The only way to find the truth is just to experience the ultimate experience." Now, there's a frustrated man, see. I mean, he spent a lot of his life trying to find the truth with his own mind, and he

didn't make it, so he just jumped his mind and said, "Just live it up." And existentialism was born, and Hume had a profound effect on the following generations. He had a profound effect on the man that you might remember by the name of Aldous Huxley. Huxley lived till 1963. And Huxley said, "Listen, I'm with Hume. Experience is all that matters. And listen, I'll tell you the way to really have the experience, and that's through drugs." And so Huxley, in 1894, started when he was born and not long after that in the early 1900s, began to advocate drugs. And you know the legacy of Huxley today, don't you?

But, you see, that's all a part of the philosophy of live for the moment. Grab the experience, baby. And if drugs heighten your sensitivity and give you a wilder experience, that's super. In fact, Huxley made his wife promise to give him LSD when he was dying so he could die in the midst of an existential trip. Now, drugs are still around as a vehicle to get the ultimate experience. And even the occult is based on this. People who get into the occult, and this life after death, and all these weird things, are trying to get out of the rational world and have some supernatural experience, aren't they? And so, you see, existentialism was the right soil to spawn a theology of experience. And, unfortunately, the church has bought this; but it's never been historic Christianity, never.

Second one is humanism. You know what humanism is. It's just a, it's a twin sister to existentialism. Humanism just says, "Hey, man, you know, self-authenticate, you know? I mean you gotta be somebody. Don't get hung up in the mass. You don't want to be just a part of the human glob. Stick out. Do your thing. Write your graffiti on the walls of humanity. You know, be somebody. Sign your name somewhere." You know, and people in a computer age with mass concepts are fighting like gangbusters for personal recognition. I mean, there are more books being written today by people who shouldn't write books just 'cause they want to say something. There are people who publish their own books. Just, they gotta be heard. They gotta be heard. And this is the day of the talk show, when everybody has something to say, because they just don't want to be a piece of the flotsam and the jetsam. They want to stick out. You know, they want to be somebody that matters. And so what it is, is people trying to get a worthwhile self-image, and self-authenticate with their own thing. So they come along and say, "Hey, you know what happened to me? I had my experience," and all of a sudden they become somebody like nobody else, 'cause nobody else ever had that experience.

And so we got all these people doing what Francis Schaeffer calls, "leaping into non-reason," saying, "I had my experience, and I had my experience," and they jump out of the rational. "Forget that, man, we just gotta experience, man, I don't care what you say." I've even heard people say, "I don't care what the Bible says," and like I told you, that one man had written in his Bible, "I don't care what the Bible says. I had an experience." And you see it in art. You used to see a picture - Francis Schaeffer points this out - and there was a tree and there was a mountain, and there was a horse, and there was a lady. And now you see a picture, and you say, "What's that?" See? And they'll say, "That's a tree and that's a mountain. That's a horse. That's a lady." You can't see any of them. In fact, you don't know which way it's supposed to hang. And you don't ask him, because you would dishonor him

to ask him. That's his experience. Leave him alone. It's non-rational.

It happened in art. It happened in music. Some music sounds like a collision of two dump trucks. You don't argue with it. It's dissonant, discordant, non-harmonious, and it's okay, man, you don't hassle with that. That's somebody's experience. See? We've got people in the philosophical end jumping all over the place in the non-rational experience. And somehow, the church has bailed out and bought the bag of existentialism. Live for the moment. Be somebody. Stand up and tell your thing, and that's one of the reasons we have trouble in the church today in convincing people that the church is to be ruled by godly men, because everybody wants his say. That's the spirit of the age.

So, in existentialism and in humanism, these things have slid into the church. They came into theology in the writing of two men in particular, Soren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth. These two men kind of Christianized existentialism and humanism, and the legacy of it was liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. And liberalism today is basically humanistic existentialism, and so is neo-orthodoxy. They don't believe in the Bible. They don't believe the Bible is an authority. The liberal churches, they don't believe that this has actual truth, historic, objective truth. They simply say, "Hey, if you read the Bible, and you get your experience out of it, that's neat, man. That's your zap, and that's where the Bible becomes truth to you." There is no historic, objective, biblical content, and you come up with a meaningless Christianity. This is the legacy of existentialism and humanism that comes through liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. Everything is based on experience, and that's the spirit of the age.

Now, this program that some of you might watch this week, and it is on Friday, or late Friday, you'll notice an interesting thing. There are several people on this panel, and they're discussing life after death. There's a Mr. Wheeler, who wrote a book about when he died and came back from the dead. And then there is a Scientology, occultist, kind of strange metaphysical teacher from Hollywood. And then there is a medical doctor from London. And then there is me. And then there is the moderator. And so, the man who came back from the dead is kinda the key, because he's written a book. He and some of the other folks along that line. And I don't know what'll be on the program. I don't know all the conversation that they'll keep. I don't know what they'll cut out or edit out. I have an idea or two what they're going to edit out. It's probably me, but, anyway, I'll just give you a little of the drift.

Now, when I first met the man in the makeup room, Mr. Wheeler, and he asked what I was, and I told him I was a minister, and he said, "Well, you know," he said, "I want you to understand right from the beginning that I'm a Christian and that I'm a very religious man." And so I said, "Well, that's good to know." And then he went on to tell his testimony, how he had supposedly died and come back from the dead. And he told his experience, and it was an experience like all those other kind of experiences that are in the book *Life After Life*, or Kubler-Ross' writing. The moderator said to him, "Well, now, when you were dead, were you pronounced clinically dead in the hospital?" He says, "No, no, I was not pronounced clinically dead." "Well," he said, "then how do we know you were dead?" He said, "Oh, I know I was dead. The only way I know is because I experienced it. It's like love. You can't

prove it. You can only experience it, so I know I was dead.” Well, that was interesting.

The moderator’s response was this, and I don’t know whether this was in a break or whatever, ‘cause we just kept going through the whole thing, discussing things. But he said, “You know, this is wonderful.” He had a knowledge of Christianity, a rather adequate knowledge of Christianity, the moderator did. He said, “You know, this is wonderful, because do you realize what great hope this is for the world? Because when you died, you see,” - and, in the first place, he didn’t know anything about the gospel or anything about that at all, the man who died. So his idea of Christianity was the liberal view. He really had no biblical authority at all. But he said, “You know, do you realize that the fact that you died, and that all these people have died, and in every case, they had a good experience, and it was a warm feeling, and they had peace and love, and they saw a bright light, and this one guy says in the book that he met the Christ figure, and the Christ figure was so warm and so wonderful, and somebody mentioned something about sin, and the Christ figure just laughed and said, ‘Oh, we don’t worry about that stuff up here. That’s not important.’ There was no judgment. There was all happiness and light, and everything was wonderful, and great.” And the man says, “Do you realize the great hope you’ve just given all of us? Because now we don’t have to fear any of that old Christian scare stuff about judgment, because you people have been there and come back, and you know what it is over there. See? It doesn’t matter what this says. See, it’s the experience.”

Well, the medical doctor then responded and debunked the whole thing from a medical viewpoint. He says, “Well, in the first place, one percent of the population of America is paranoid.” “So,” he said, “I think that this whole hysteria about everybody coming back from death can be explained by this: if one man thought he saw a green flying saucer and called up the paper and reported it, and it was in the paper the next day, they’d get a hundred other calls from people who saw the same green flying saucer, even though there wasn’t one. Because that’s just how suggestion goes, and certain people don’t have the psychological makeup to deal with it any other way than to think they saw it.” He also said, “It’s just a matter of the current trend,” and so forth, “and it’s a matter of selling books, you know.” He suggested, too, that the fact that everybody always goes down a dark tunnel and sees this white figure doesn’t necessarily suggest that that’s what’s there, but, rather, that that is what occurs at the sparking of the nervous system when the body goes into trauma that is next to death.

And I suggested that you could probably get the same effect by hitting a guy in the back of the head with a baseball bat. And the doctor agreed, and he also went on to say, “That the greatest human anxiety is caused over death, and it’s only natural for people to want to fantasize that life after death is a happy, positive experience, and once somebody makes that suggestion, there’ll be piles and piles of people who’ll jump on the bandwagon.” And I suggested to the doctor that he was right as far as he went, but that he didn’t go far enough. That the thing that he stopped short of was this: that the whole thing is a satanic ploy to convince people that they don’t have to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, and anesthetize the whole of society against the consequence of sin. And the moderator said to me, “You know, if you’re right, that answers the whole thing.” And I said, “I am, and it does.”

Now, you see what happens is: here is a guy just waiting to say, "Isn't this great news?" And it's all based because this guy had an experience. See? Now, you see the danger of that? Satan would love to have everybody go around and draw their theology out of experience. Do you see why? 'Cause he can counterfeit experience so easily. But one thing Satan can't counterfeit, right here.

This is where we have to stand, people. We can't succumb to the spirit of the age. The attitude of experiential theology that you see in the charismatic movement is not the legacy of historic Christianity; it is the legacy of existentialism and humanism. And Clark Pinnock says, quote, "The mere fact that a psychological event has taken place in one's brain cannot establish the truthfulness of the Gospel. Religious sensation, by itself, can only prove itself." And he goes on to say, "The reason some theologians favor the use of drugs to heighten religious perception is obvious. Whenever the existential cart is put before the historical horse, theology becomes a synthesis of human superstitions, and putting LSD into the communion wine is fair play." End quote. Why not, right? If it's all only experience, let's really have some experiences. And frequently in charismatic meetings, there is an intensified emotion, hyped up people, getting them ecstatic with music, or rhythms, or whatever way it's done to induce a drug-like experience, and generate some kind of feeling and emotion, and then certain things happen in their minds, and they draw theological conclusions about them that are inadequate, because they don't match the Scripture. And we have fallen prey to the secularism of the day: humanism and existentialism.

And you know something, beloved? Whenever this happens, Bible doctrine fades into the background. It really does, and that's why charismatics can get along with everybody from the extreme end of Roman Catholicism to the other ends of Protestantism, the far outs, and everybody in between, because doctrine isn't the issue, see? The authority of the Word of God isn't the issue. It's experience, and if you haven't experienced, that's okay, and that's why you'll hear some of these charismatic people say, "Well, you know, isn't it wonderful that ever since I had these wonderful experiences, I have a greater devotion to Mary." Did the Holy Spirit make that happen? Does the Holy Spirit want us to have a devotion to Mary? Well, you see, doctrine isn't the issue. The Word of God ceases to rule in the church, and experience becomes the king, and emotion is its prince. And Walter Chantry says in the book *The Signs of the Apostles*, quote, "As the gifts increase, exposition of God's Word decreases. Meetings are filled with sharing experiences, but with only an occasional reference to the holy Word of God. Many who have been drawn after this movement are woefully untaught in the first things of the faith through a neglect of the Word. They live on visible, emotional experiences and not upon the truth. Even some who spend hours perusing the Bible do so, not for the purpose of grasping truth, but in the hope of inducing a new thrill in their truth-parched souls." End quote. He also says that "Pentecostal practice is a de facto denial of the sufficiency of Scripture."

I read one writer this week who said, "We do not want to think that Scripture is sufficient." Now, that denies the testimony of the Word of God. And I say to the charismatics, bless their hearts, and they're

in the family, many of them, but I say that they have a low view of Scripture, and they have a low view of doctrine, and that's the thing that the whole of Christianity's based on. And more excitement is generated in their fellowship over a prophecy, or a tongue, or an ecstatic message from God, or a clever emotional manipulating, appealing preacher, than from a clear, reasonable, thinking instruction of the Word of God. And the supposed revelations often given against the pulsating of organ rhythm are more thrilling than the very revealed words of Christ passed on by the apostles.

In fact, recently, some people told me that they left Grace Church to go to a charismatic church, and they wanted me to understand that they did realize that the teaching was better at Grace, but they liked the feeling at the other church. Well, bless their hearts, that's just really the difference. I would hope that true teaching would bring true feeling, true emotion, true excitement, but some people are falling into the spirit of the age. It's the feeling they want. Because they have an experience, they're satisfied.

So, it's existentialism, humanism. Thirdly, it's paganism. Really, this is the legacy of paganism. Did you know that the false religions of the world are based on feeling, and emotion, and experience, and ritual? Not on teaching doctrine. The mystery religions were the false religions spawned in Babel. They had grown to tremendous proportions by the time of Christ, so that all over the Greek and Roman world, people worshiped multiple gods, all kinds of gods that made up the mystery religions, these false, evil, orgiastic, sex-oriented, idolatrous things. And some of the historians who have written about those mystery religions have told us how amazing it is that the people in those religions had peace, and joy, and happiness, and experiences, and felt fulfilled, and felt ecstasies. All of those things were a part of the mystery religions.

Let me read you just one quote from Angus, his book *The Mystery Religions*. "The mystery religions produced saints, and ascetics, and martyrs." People literally died for those things, even though they were lies of Satan. "Further," he says, "in those personal cults, true worshippers were united by the ties of fellowship with the deity of their choice, by the obligation of common vows, by the duty of personal propaganda, and by revivalistic enthusiasm."

Now, I'll stop there for a minute. He says, listen, they had tremendous fellowship. They had a common objective. They went out and propagandized or evangelized. They had fantastic revivalistic enthusiasm to whip themselves up, boy, to get that commitment hot again. They did it just filling up all their emotional needs. "Further," says Angus, "the pious could, in ecstasy, feel himself lifted above his ordinary limitations to behold the beatific vision," which is a term for God, "or in enthusiasm, believe himself to be God-inspired or God-filled. Phenomena in some respects akin to the experiences of the early Christians on the outpouring of the Spirit." End quote. See? Satan can falsify the same feelings that were the true feelings that came out of true understanding of God's doctrine. You can't go from experience to the Word, and try to make the Bible fit your experience. That's the pagan way. Satan is always busy providing false experience, trying to lead people into unbiblical conclusions, or to lead

them to deemphasize the Word and emphasize feeling, and then Satan can counterfeit their feelings and lead them down the primrose path to error.

You know, transcendental meditation, Moslems, Roy Masters, Scientology, whoever. It's all the feeling, the emotion, the experience. Listen to this, from *The Transcendental Meditation* by David Haddon. It's a little book. He says this, "Reason is abandoned in favor of mystical paradox, not only as a matter of abstract principle, but because of the subjective effect of perception of the conditioning process of TM." In other words, if you're going to get into TM, you gotta wipe your brain out. "At this point," now, here, this is good, "the interference of meditation with logical thought is total, in the sense that reason is rejected in favor of mystical experience as a means for discerning the ultimate truth." Did you get that? In other words, transcendental meditation says: you get the ultimate truth through experience. Set your mind aside, and, sadly, that's the legacy of paganism, and it's found its way into Christianity.

We have been victimized by the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age is existentialism, humanism, paganism. Contrast this with Jesus' words. Jesus said, "Father, sanctify them by Thy truth," and then He said, "Thy Word is truth." See? That's it. I don't know about you, but I'm not looking for an experience. Pinnock says, "A subjective, man-centered experience is indistinguishable from gastric upset." An experience may be psychological. It may be physiological. It may be theological, or it may be demonic, but it is no way to evaluate truth. And, religious experience is not subject to testing procedures from the Word of God are used to prove every false system. We can't go that way. Beloved, we're going to have to hold this Book up, aren't we? Lindsell had it right. He not only named a book; he named an age, "The Battle for the Bible." Well, let's pray.

One of the issues that the charismatic movement has introduced to us is the issue of experience. We talked this morning about how they seem to want to form their theology on the basis of their experiences, and we suggested to you that this is not the normal historic Christian approach to truth, that the church has always taken its truth from the revealed Word of God. Not from human experience, not having extrapolated a theology out of feeling or emotion or subjectivity. And I suggested to you that the place that this comes from, or the methodology that this particular movement is using today, finds its roots in existentialism and humanism and paganism.

To give you an illustration of that, let me read you, from an article contrasting Baalamism with the worship of Jehovah. I think it's very interesting. "Baalamism was the worship of the Canaanites when Israel occupied the land under Joshua. It continued as a competitive threat to the worship of Israel until the time of the exile." And you all know, if you know the Old Testament, about the worship of Baal. "The emphasis of Baalamism was on psycho-physical relatedness and subjective experience. The transcendence of the deity was overcome in an ecstasy of feeling. Sensory participation was featured; images were necessary. The bolder and the more colorful, the more sensational, the better. Music and dance became the means for drawing persons out of their private diversities and merging

them into a mass response. Sexual activity in the cult was frequent, since it achieved the primary Baalistic goal so completely: the ecstatic plunge of the whole sensory person into the passion of the religious moment. Sacred prostitution thus became the supreme expression of Baalamism.” And that’s true, because, of course, that would be a great experience for the people who participated.

He says further, “Baalamism is worship reduced to the spiritual stature of the worshipper. Its canons or its rules are that it should be interesting, relevant, and exciting. Yahwism, or the worship of Jehovah, established a form of worship which was centered in the proclamation of the word of the covenant God. The appeal was made to the will, and man’s rational intelligence was roused to attention as he was called upon to respond as a person to the will of God. In Yahwism, or the worship of Jehovah, something was said, words which called men to serve, to love, obey, act responsibly, to decide. In contrast to Baalamism, Yahwism exerted continuous pressure to elevate worship into the sphere of conscious intelligence and clearly defined concepts. Israel, in its maturity, had a worship dominated by the prophetic Word of God. Nothing was done simply for the sake of the sensory experience involved. The distinction between the worship of Baal and the worship of Yahweh is a distinction between approaching the will of the covenant god, which could be understood and known and obeyed, and the blind life-force in nature which could only be felt. Today, we have neo-Baalism,” says this writer, “and the phrases are, ‘Let’s have a worship experience,’ or, ‘I don’t get anything out of it.’ The phrase, ‘Let’s have a worship experience,’ is the recent substitute for the old, ‘Let us worship God.’ The difference is between cultivating something which makes sense to an individual and acting in response to what makes sense to God. In a worship experience, a person sees something which excites his interest and tries to put religious wrappings around it. Subjectivity is encouraged. Baalism is worship trimmed to the emotional and spiritual specifications of the worshiper.”

That’s kind of what we’re seeing today, isn’t it? I think he’s right. He says, “In the Old Testament time, the one place where we know that worship experience was encouraged, was in Baalism. Israel and the Christian church insisted that worship was the proclamation of the will of God, and the call for human response to it. Worship was the act of attending to that revelation and engaging in obedience to it.” End quote.

Now, I took a few minutes to read you that, because I wanted you to understand that what I said this morning is true. The roots of the methodology used in the charismatic movement to build an experiential theology are in existentialism, and humanism, and paganism that goes as far back as the worship of Baal. That’s exactly the way they approached worship. That’s exactly the way they approached their religious system. Instead of receiving valid data from the Bible and making a decision on the basis of that, they want to make the decision on the basis of a feeling and an experience, and faith is the word they use. They say, “Well, we have faith,” and their non-reason, or their leap into the experiential is called “faith,” and faith is taken away from being something based on truth in the Word, and made into a kind of an existential magic wand.

But, if you go back into the Bible, for example, and you study Abraham, and it says that Abraham really was the father of faith, that Abraham was the one who began the approach to God through faith, really, in terms of a national commitment. He was the father of a nation of faithful people. And we, as the church, are the seed of Abraham in the sense that we, too, are people of faith in God. But Abraham's faith was not a magic wand, and it was not a mystical experience; Abraham's faith was founded in the Word of God. When God came to Abraham and said, "This is so, and this is so, and this is so," and Abraham believed God. That was faith. Abraham, the father of faith, acted on specific divine promises.

Take, for example, another illustration in the New Testament, the apostle Paul. On the Damascus Road, Paul had an amazing experience. There's no question about it. He heard a voice from heaven. He saw a light from heaven, which was so bright that, what did it do? It blinded him. Ananias had a vision from heaven. So, you've got a vision, and a blinding light, and a voice from heaven, and physical phenomena. Paul was knocked to the ground. But when Paul went on to preach, when Paul went on to declare the truth about Jesus Christ, it wasn't his experience that was the heart of his preaching. He never rested his case in his experience.

In chapter 9 of Acts, we have Paul's experience, the amazing event on the Damascus Road. But that's only the beginning, because when he began to preach, immediately after that, verse 20 says, "He preached Christ." And what did he say? "Listen, I know Christ is who He claimed, because I saw Him on the Damascus Road, and this happened, and this happened, and this happened." No, that wasn't it. Verse 22: "But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded" - or confuted, or refuted, or won an argument over - "the Jews who dwelled at Damascus by proving that this is the Messiah." You see? In other words, it wasn't enough to state the experience. Somewhere between the experience in chapter 9, and the preaching in chapter 9, Paul did some homework in the Word of God and was able to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Later on, in the 17th chapter, the Book of Acts verse 2, "Paul as his manner was, went into the synagogue. Three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." And the way that he proved this Jesus was their Messiah was by opening the Scriptures. Again, we see the apostle Paul did not depend upon his experience as the validation of the truth.

In Acts 28:23, when Paul arrived in Rome, there came to him to his lodging some Jews, and it says, "He expounded and testified the kingdom of God." Now listen: "Persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening." Where did Paul go for his proof? To the Word of God. He never predicated it on his experience. And he tells us, in effect, to do the very same, where in 1 Corinthians 10:15, he says what is literally paraphrased: "Use your

heads.”

Now, I'm afraid that this is the biblical approach, but not what we see today so often in the charismatic movement. And though the charismatics follow the road that is made by the liberals, and the neo-orthodox, and the philosophic existentialists, and the humanists, and the pagans, they want to tie into the Bible. Believe me, they do, because it's their heritage, and because they would say, if you ask them, "We believe in the Bible, and we don't want to contradict the Bible." And so they want to hold to the Bible. But, you see, there's a terrible, terrible experience of pulling there, two ways when you try to hold onto this as the only authority and also let your experience be your authority.

Charles Farah, who is a professor at Oral Roberts University, has written an article in *Christian Life Magazine* in which he attempts to harmonize those two in this way. He says, "There is a tension between the revelation of God and what zaps you," and he says it this way. He says, "The *logos*," - and he uses the Greek word for *word* there, common word - "the *logos* is the objective, historic word." "But," he says, "the *rhma*" - which is another Greek word - "is the personal, subjective word." In other words, the *logos* or the Scripture is objective, historical fact; but the *rhma* is subjective. Now, listen, he says, "What you want is for the *logos* to become the *rhma* when it speaks to you." Let me say it another way. He says, "The *logos* is legal, but the *rhma* is experiential." In other words, there is this historic word, the *logos*, but it doesn't really do anything until it hits you, and then it becomes the *rhma* or your personal word from God.

And you know something? That's a scary approach. You know why? Because it says that the Word of God, to you, is something different than the Word of God, period. Listen, the Word of God to you is not any different from the Word of God period, and that is exactly what the neo-orthodox have been saying. That is no resolution for the problem at all. I don't need to read the Bible until I create an experience. I don't need to read the Bible until I get some feeling or ecstasy. Listen, if I pick it up and read one word of it, that applies to me because God says it applies to me; I don't need to wait for some zap.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3, in verse 15, there is a statement that I think is worth our thought. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, Paul writing to Timothy, he says, "And that from a child, Timothy, from a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures." Now listen, "which are able to make you wise unto salvation." Listen, Paul says, "This Book is able to make you wise unto salvation. You don't need any other thing. You don't need it to become something else. You don't need it to have a sort of an ecstatic attachment. The Word is enough to save you." Then in verse 16, he says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable." All Scripture is profitable. All of it is profitable. You don't have to wait for it to be made profitable. It is profitable. "For doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect." Listen, this Word can make you wise unto salvation, and it can make you mature unto every good work. It's all you need, and you don't need to wait for some subjective experience.

Now, this is a battle we must fight. We must fight for the truth, and the authority, and the sufficiency of Scripture, and not fall into the spirit of the age that wants us to wait for some ecstatic or experiential feeling. Listen, if the Word of God speaks to my life, I don't have to wait until I get a feeling about it. I'm to obey it. This is a battle. Those who lived two generations ahead of us fought the same battle on a different front. Some of you remember the early days of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. Some of you remember the early days when there was a set of books published called "The Fundamentals." And some of those people were trying to fight against liberalism.

And the first attack came at that time, and that attack was a front, head-on, right-up-front attack. Front door, they came in, and blasted the authenticity of the Bible. And you know who they were? They were the theological liberals, and they came right into the church, and they just started blasting and whacking away at the authenticity of the Bible, and it was directed at those who emphasized the intellect. They got into the seminaries, and they got to the scholars, and they got to the denominational leaders, and they got to all of the schools in those denominations, and we saw the denominations crumble as a result, didn't we?

Well, you know, we're still fighting that battle, even. We're still fighting against liberalism. But a second attack has come on the Bible, and it isn't front door. It's back door. It's not nearly as obvious. It's very subtle. It's coming in the back door and attacking the authority and sufficiency of the Scripture. And I'm afraid the charismatics are leading this attack, and it's directed at the people who emphasize experience, and it's coming even through evangelicalism, and they are undermining the authority of the Bible by trying to substitute experience for authority, and insidiously attacking the validity of the Bible. So, we're trying to fight the front, and we're trying to fight the back at the same time. Both are following the spirit of the age, which is to attack the authority of God's revelation.

Listen, Scripture is enough, and Scripture demands that all experience be tested by it. No doctrine can be made outside the revealed Word. You hear people say, "Well, but the Word is just the Word, and the Spirit, the spiritual experience is what we seek." Want to know something? In the Bible, the Word and the Spirit are synonymous. John 6:63, don't look at it. Just let me read it to you. John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that gives life. It is the Spirit that gives life." And people say, "Oh, yeah, boy, we've got to have the Spirit, the spiritual experience." "The flesh profits nothing." But then, listen to what Jesus said. "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." You see? Jesus never saw any dichotomy between the Spirit, the spiritual experience, and the words that He spoke. They're sufficient.

In John 4:24, Jesus says, "They that worship must worship in spirit and in" - What? - "truth." You can't worship God in an experience that violates the truth of God. Now, let me show you 1 Samuel 15. 1 Samuel 15. And I shared this with you a long time ago, about Saul, but I want to point it out, because it's such a fascinating story. First Samuel 15. Here was a man who tried to worship God in spirit, but

not in truth, and we see what happened. In verse 3 of 1 Samuel 15, “Now, go,’ the Lord says to Saul, King of Israel, ‘Go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, and slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.’” Wipe that entire godless, pagan, corrupting influence out. Verse 7, “And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.” He just wiped out the whole nation. But, verse 8, “He took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed the people with the edge of the sword.” The reason he took the king was: it was an act of pride. He wanted to show off this king that he had conquered. But God said to destroy it all. “Saul and the people spared Agag,” and listen, “and the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. But everything that was vile and refuse, they utterly destroyed.” They destroyed only the thing they didn’t want. They kept what they wanted. They disobeyed God. Now watch what happens. “And God says, ‘It repents Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following Me and hath not performed My commandments.’ And it grieved Samuel, and he cried to the Lord all night.”

You know what the Lord did? He took away the throne from the household of Saul. “And Samuel came to Saul,” in verse 13, “and Saul said to him, ‘Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord’” - Which is a big lie. - “And Samuel said, ‘What meaneth then bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?’ And Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord thy God.’” You see, I just want to worship God. This is just my way of worshiping God. And verse 17, “Samuel said, ‘When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed thee a king over Israel, and the Lord sent thee on a journey and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them till they be consumed.’ Why then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?’ And Saul said unto Samuel, ‘Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord and have gone the way which the Lord sent me.’”

Then verse 21, “But the people took the spoil.” Then he wants to blame the people. First, he said he was going to worship God, but look at verse 22: “And Samuel said, ‘Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king.’”

Listen, you can’t ever worship God on your own terms. You must worship Him in spirit and in” - What? – “truth.” And people who say, “Well, it’s my way of worship. Well, it’s my experience. Well, I’m seeking my own feeling,” are violating a basic biblical truth. Second Samuel chapter 6; 2 Samuel chapter 6. I want to show you one other illustration very quickly. In 2 Samuel chapter 6, they were bringing the ark. And verse 3 says, “They set the ark of God on a new cart.” Now, they were going to

transport the ark of God here. "They set the ark on a new cart." In verse 5, jumping down: "David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, and harps, and psalteries, and timbrels, and cornets, and cymbals." So here they are, bringing the ark along. Now, God had made a rule about the ark, and the rule was: number one, that the ark was to be transported, how? Not on a cart, on the shoulders of the Levites on poles. And God had another rule about the ark, and that is that under no condition did any man ever touch it. "When they came to Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it."

Dear Uzzah, must have been a nice guy. He's walking along. Maybe he was part of the cart committee. And, you know, the ark of God is so important to Uzzah because this is a very sacred thing. And the oxen hit a bump, and, boy, that ark starts to fall. And Uzzah reaches out, and what an act of worship it was. What an act of honor. Why should God, that which symbolizes God, fall into the dust and the dirt of the road, and he stopped it with his hand, and the Bible says in verse, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died by the ark of God." Say, wait a minute, what's the deal? That was an act of worship on his part. You don't ever worship God in violation of God's standards, you see? There's only one way to worship God, and that's in Spirit and in truth. And that's the way it's always been, and that's the way it'll always be, and you can't say that you have your own approach, or your own way, or you feel you ought to do it this way, or you feel this is right. The worship of Baal was: "What do I get out of it?" Experience. But the worship of God has always been, "How can I respond to the truth of God?" John Stott says, quote, "All Christian worship, public and private, should be an intelligent response to God's self-revelation in His words and works recorded in Scripture." There's no difference between worshiping in the spirit and in the Word.

In Ephesians 5:18, it says, "Be filled with the Spirit," right? And in Colossians 3:16, the parallel passage says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, are synonyms. It's the same thing. There is no Spirit without the Word, because you are not in obedience to God, and God's Spirit is only energized in those who obey. In Psalm 32, let me show you an interesting passage, verse 8. Psalm 32:8 says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with Mine eye." What a great promise. God says, "Look, I'm going to take you the way you ought to go. I'm going to teach you, and I'm going to instruct you, and I'm going to guide you." Now watch what he says, verse 9, "But be ye not like the horse, or like the mule that has no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." Now, what's he saying? I want to lead you, and I want to guide you, and I want to direct you into the truth, and I want to direct you into proper worship, and I want to direct you into my will, and the one way that I'm able to do that is if you have understanding.

See? Don't be like the horse and the mule that has no understanding. How does God lead us, then? Through our understanding, through our reason. And that's His plan, that's His design, and that's why

Paul told Timothy to take heed to the doctrine.

In the book *Miraculous Healing*, written by Henry W. Frost, he said this, and I hinted at it this morning. He says, quote, "It may confidently be anticipated as the present apostasy increases, that Christ will manifest His deity and lordship in increasing measure through miracle signs. We are not to say, therefore, that the Word is sufficient." End quote. That's a statement by a charismatic. The Word is not sufficient?

Turn with me to John chapter 14. You remember this wonderful, wonderful chapter. John chapter 14, verse 7. Jesus with His disciples in the upper room. He says this: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also. And from now on, you know Him, and have seen Him." Oh, that's so great. Jesus had just crystallized in their mind that He was going to leave them. And to console them, He says, "Hey guys, you don't really need to worry, because you've seen the Father in Me, and you know God through Me, and everything's okay." But Philip was not satisfied. It wasn't enough to have heard the words of Jesus. It wasn't enough to have had what he had. He has to have something more. He wants another experience, and so in verse 8, "Philip said unto Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and that will suffice it.'" In other words, "What You have done to now is not sufficient. Do one more thing. Just give us a vision of God. Give us a wonder, an experience." He begged for a glorious glimpse of the Father, an ecstasy, an experience.

And Jesus was hurt. In verse 9, "Jesus said him, 'Have I been such a long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, how sayest thou then, 'Show us the Father?'" That's heartbreaking. He's saying, "Hey, Philip, I'm not enough? I'm, I'm not enough? Having seen Me, My works, heard My words, you gotta have more?" Maybe he wanted to see the glory of God like Moses, but I'll tell you something, Moses would've eagerly exchanged that brief glimpse of the glory of God for three years with God in human flesh, don't you think? But Philip wanted something more, and it really is an insult to the Son of God, and I'm afraid that many people today are doing the same thing. They're insulting God, and they are insulting Jesus Christ - who has fully revealed Himself in this Book - by always wanting something more. Did Philip feel that a vision of God would be more satisfying than the presence of Jesus? Did Philip feel that some kind of great experience was greater than hearing the words of God on the lips of His Son?

We seek no experience. We seek to know God, and we seek to know His Word. And, listen to me, when we have found those two things, God and His Word to be true, the flood of wondrous experiences follows, doesn't it? I'm not saying we don't have experiences. Listen, on the road to Emmaus were two lonely disciples in Luke 24; brokenhearted. I think they were weeping, and all of a sudden as they're walking on the road to Emmaus, crying because their Messiah is dead, their Savior is gone, Jesus walks alongside. They didn't know Him. They walk a little while. And, all of a sudden, He starts to open the Scripture, and beginning at Moses and the prophets, He taught at them the

things concerning Himself. Remember that? That's the truth. That's the revelation. That's the Word. And later on, Jesus vanished, and they said to each other, "Were not our hearts strangely warmed while He talked with us in the way?" Hey listen, they had an experience. Their hearts were warmed. There was a joy and a thrill and an excitement. Listen, Peter said, "That sometimes the believer will have joy unspeakable, beyond words." That's right.

Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit." And, every Christian who's really lived the truth, knows that joy and that peace that comes into his experience. In Matthew 22:37, "We are to love God, and we are to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, with the will, the intellect, and the emotion." The Psalmist said in Psalm 34:8, "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." Experience God. And Malachi said, "Try me and see if I don't open the windows of heaven, and pour out blessing so you can receive it." So many places where there is such joy and such experience. It comes in response to the study and the obedience of the Word of God.

Beloved, I'm not denying experience. I'm just saying experience will follow when we know the truth. But if we chase the experience, then the Adversary will falsify the experience, and we draw wrong conclusions about what is true, and we miss God's truth. So many of our charismatic brothers are saying, "These experiences are what all of us have to have, but they really aren't in the Bible." They miss the point.

First Corinthians 15:14 is paraphrased by Clark Pinnock this way, and I think it's a good paraphrase. He says: "Do not crow about spiritual resurrections, and do not boast in religious experiences unless Christ has actually been raised in space-time history." In other words, if there isn't any historical Christianity, there isn't any valid experience. And if there is a historical Christianity, then that's the one we have to adhere to.

Here's what I want you to be like. Turn to Acts 17. I'm going to close with this. Verse 10, Acts 17: "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming there, went into the synagogue of the Jews." They had to run from Thessalonica because they tried to kill them. So, the brethren scoot Paul and Silas out of town, and they run down to Berea. "And these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word" - watch this, this is so good. These are Jews now, not Christian. "They received the Word with all" - What? - "readiness of mind and searched" - What? - "the Scriptures" - How often? - "daily, whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them" - What? - "believed." Boy, I tell you, that's great. That's the kind of people you want to be, isn't it? Listen, God doesn't expect you to have to figure out what isn't written in here. All you need to do is commit yourself to search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so. I can promise you, because it's true as the Word of God says it again and again, you feed on this, and you will experience the greatest joy and blessing imaginable, and it will be rooted and grounded in divine truth.

Dear Father, we do tonight thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the family at Grace. It's so beyond us that You would ever do this here, build this family. I thank You for all the people who are here tonight, who are at different places in their life in maturing. And Father, for all this family, I just pray one prayer. Make us noble like the Bereans who searched the Scripture to see that the things are so. And help us to hold our convictions with love and tenderness. Gently, to instruct others, not contentiously, and make of us a people who will stand out in this part of the Valley, and all over the world as a light, of whom it can be said, "They're people of the Book." May we be obedient and worship You in spirit and in truth, knowing that the words that You speak, they are Spirit, and they are life. Really living is hearing Your Words. And so that's our prayer. That's our commitment. And all God's people said, Amen.

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