

**The Issue of Spirituality, Part 1**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1373

For our study this morning, I want to deal with the last in the area of discussions that we've been having on the theme of the charismatic movement. We'll discuss this last area today and next Lord's Day morning, and then we'll go right on into 1 Corinthians chapter 14. But we do want to bring to a conclusion what has been, I think, a very helpful study that we've been making on this subject.

And I would just say to those of you who might be visiting with us, some of the things we say you may not understand, and I apologize that insofar as I am unable to take you back over all the ground we've covered to here. I hope you'll understand that what we're saying for today has continuity in the past, and we would invite you, if you'd like, to get all the parts of the series to stop by the tape table out there.

But we've been discussing what's wrong in the charismatic movement, and I'd like to share with you, today, on the subject of the issue of true spirituality. We have covered many issues in the charismatic movement: the issue of revelation, interpretation, apostolic uniqueness, and so forth. And today, we want to discuss – and next week – the issue of true spirituality.

The prophets of God have always spoken to the contemporary issues of their time, and the calling of the prophets of God has particularly been directed to proclamations related to the people of God. In other words, the prophets both of the Old Testament and the New Testament and those who exercised, in any way, the prophetic office, were primarily called to speak to the people of God, not to the world.

Now, there were times when they spoke to the world, the lost people, the unregenerate, those who were not God's people, but primarily the Bible is written, and the prophets of God have always spoken to the people of God because it is, as the people of God are right and hold pure doctrine and live pure lives, that the gospel of God will be made manifest through their lifestyle, as well as through their proclamation so that the prophetic office is directed primarily at the people of God.

And that, in a measure, has been what we have been doing in this series, is calling the people of God back to a position of pure doctrine and pure behavior based upon that pure doctrine. And when you go into the Old Testament, you find that this is, indeed, the case. The prophets were speaking to the people of God about fidelity to God's truth.

There was Isaiah, for example, who cried out to Judah and said, “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger...” And there was Jeremiah, the young priest who warned God’s people that their continued disobedience would result in a terrible judgment, and he said to them, “Return thou backsliding Israel.”

And there was Ezekiel who was told by God, “Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel – “ God’s people “ – and speak my words to them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel.”

And whether it was Hosea who indicted and condemned Israel for swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery, or whether it was Joel saying to God’s children, “Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord. Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”

And there was the shepherd of Tekoa whose name was Amos who said, “Thus saith the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments, and I will send a fire.’”

And there was Micah who called God to witness against his own people, and there was Habakkuk who reported that the Chaldeans were to judge God’s people for their failure to judge themselves. And there was Zephaniah who promised a wailing in Israel and Judah when God judged His wayward people, and there was Malachi who said, “God will judge you for the seven deadly sins that have destroyed your nation.” And there was John the Baptist who was sent to the people of Israel to sanctify them and prepare them by repentance for the reception of the Messiah.

And as you move into the New Testament, the prophetic office is still directed to the people of God, and you find that the apostle Paul is writing letter after letter after letter, calling the people of God to fidelity to God’s Word, calling the people of God to an obedient lifestyle that they may be rebuked to the system. And there is Peter who writes and calls the church to judge itself and to adhere to pure doctrine, taught by true teachers, and to set themselves to live holy lives.

And there is James who demands obedience to the Word, and there is John who demands that we test everything by the word of truth. And so it is that from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament, the messengers of God spoke primarily to the people of God, and the prophetic voice can’t be silent today. We must speak to the church. We must speak to the people of God.

And in the church, it isn't all hearts and flowers and sweetness and light. It isn't all positives. It isn't all, "Oh, aren't we all happy? Isn't it all great? Isn't all glorious?" There are some deeply, deeply serious things in the church that need to be brought to the light of the Word of God, and that's what we've been attempting to do.

There have always been, in the church, the Savanna Rollas and the John Husses and the Calvins and Luthers and the Wesleys and the Billy Sundays and whoever else. There have always been these people who have called people to God and to have called the church to the purity of its life and doctrine, and it can't be any different today.

And people say, "Well, John, why do you do this? Why don't you just talk about the Bible? And why don't you just teach us the Bible? Why do you have to deal with issues in the church?" Because that is the historic significance of the prophetic office within God's economy. God has always had His leadership speak to His people about purity of doctrine and purity of life.

You know, it'd be wonderful if we didn't have to do that, wouldn't it? If there was never any doctrinal error and everybody lived, totally, a holy life, we wouldn't have to do that. In fact, we wouldn't have to do anything because it would be heaven, and we could just play our harps, you know? But it isn't.

You know, there are many things in the church that aren't right. There are many things in Christianity "that aren't right," and the man of God must speak to these things. We can't just ignore them, and we're all aware of some of the major issues, like liberalism or modernism – neo-orthodoxy, the church buying the spirit of the age. We're aware of the denial of biblical authority. People don't want to allow for the inspiration and the inherency of the Word of God, and there's a real fight at that point.

And we know about the problems of compromise of the Roman Catholic Church. We know about the problems of ecumenism – people getting together without true doctrine, and one of the other problems facing the church today that we must speak to is the issue of the charismatic movement because it is a dominant force in Christianity today.

And as we have seen in our study, we are not saying that the whole movement is wrong. We are saying that there are some things in it that are not right. We thank God for those in it who know Jesus Christ and who proclaim Christ and who preach the Word of God and who endeavor to lead people to His Son, and that's marvelous, but there are some things there that must be brought to the test of Scripture, and we have considered many of them.

And today, we want to consider another: the issue of spirituality, true spirituality. Now, let me say that this that I speak about this morning may not be true of every single charismatic because I'm not sure they all have the same view, but this is a dominant view of the charismatic movement in dealing with

the subject of spirituality.

Now, let's talk about it for a moment. What is true spirituality? Now, unfortunately, in a system like the charismatic system, where the total preoccupation of the individual is to attain an experience, it is easy to conclude that the attainment of the experience is the equivalent of spirituality, that when you get a certain gift or when you speak in tongues or when you reach a certain level or when you have a certain ecstatic experience or when you get your "divine zap" – and that's a term they use, I've had charismatics say.

And someone came to me this morning, after the first service, and said that they had someone say the same thing to them, that when they talked about this, and they said, "Well, we have never had this experience," and they would go away saying, "May Jesus zap you." That's a phrase they use.

So if you're looking for a "zap" or something like that, and that's your whole orientation, as we saw at last Lord's Day, and your pursuing the zap kind of thing, then it's easy in your mind to make the zap the equivalent of spirituality, so that when you get your "zap" or your ecstasy or your tongue or whatever your experience is, you feel you have arrived, and you create two levels of Christians: the zapped and the un-zapped. And the zapped are more spiritual than the zap-less ones, and I'm afraid that that's what happens as you get that kind of dichotomy and you create a whole system of super saints.

In fact, it is clear to me that the charismatic viewpoint says, in effect, that unless you have had that experience – which they call the baptism of the Spirit, with tongues and so forth – unless you've had some ecstatic experience, unless you've had some miracle or miracle gift, you have not reached the place where you can really function in the way God wants you to function. You are eight cylinders firing on four, and you're not there.

And to show you why I say that, in a book called *Spiritual Gifts*, written by a Pentecostal charismatic by the name of Melvin Hodges, and this is what he says: "While the full manifestation of a person's gift in ministry must await the fullness of the Spirit, there may be a partial measure of spiritual ministry and incomplete manifestation of spiritual gifts or endowments before the culmination of the Pentecostal gift is experienced."

In other words, you can't ever have it in full until you get that, but we will agree that you can have a partial and incomplete ministry, but you can't have the full-blown power of the Spirit to really function until you've reached that Pentecostal experience. Hodges also says, "We must not lose sight of the fact that in the New Testament, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is considered an essential and primary requisite – "listen" – for a fully developed spiritual life and ministry."

The conclusion is, without it, you can never have a fully developed life and ministry. So you have two levels of Christians, and that is the problem because in the thinking of the charismatic, to reach that level is to have attained a certain kind of spirituality that other people don't have, and you create a gap. Is that true? Is it true, biblically, that spirituality can be defined by outward experience? Is that true? Is that really what spirituality is?

You know, we say to people you ought to be spiritual, and the word "spiritual," when you hear the word, you kind of have a funny, little taste in your mouth – eh, spiritual – doesn't – because you know why? For so many years, the church used to use "spiritual" kind of like a word you give to people who are overly pious: "Well, you know, they're so heavenly minded. There are no earthly good," you know, the kind of person who we used to say, "They're looking for a vacancy in the Trinity," you know, the kind of a person who has exalted himself so much in his own thinking.

"Holy, Joe!" Remember that phrase? "Oh, he's a really Holy Joe, see," and so we use the "spiritual." They were the kind of people who used to carry the great, big Bible and had 14 things hanging out of the back of it and marking all the verses they were studying and so forth. And those were the kinds of the people that used to be the "spiritual," and so the word got a bad kind of connotation. It was almost equated with Pharisee, unfortunately, because the word is a great word, you see? A spiritual person is somebody who functions under the power of the Spirit. It's a good word. It's a good word.

Now, what does it mean to be spiritual? Does it mean to get zapped? Does it mean to reach a certain level? Does it mean to have a certain experience? Does it mean that when you speak in tongues – bang – your spiritual, and that's it? I am now spiritual. Well, we need to look at the Bible to find out. You're going to be kind of happy with what I tell you, I think.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 2:15 – 1 Corinthians 2:15. You know, it's amazing. If I give a message here and I don't use about 20 Bible verses, people come to me and say, "How come you didn't use the Bible today?" And people come say, "When are we going to get back to studying the Bible?" And I say, "We are studying the Bible." "Yeah, but you don't read us all the verses like you used to."

Well, two weeks from today, we'll read all the verses, okay? We'll go from 1 Corinthians 14:1 right straight through, and we'll get back to our study of Corinthians that we began 2 years ago and finish – 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 15. Now, back up to verse 14, and I'll show you something interesting: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Now, notice, people, you have a certain kind of man in verse 14. What's he called? Natural. Now, a natural man is a man who has no adjustment on his natural state. He is just human. This would be the equivalent of an unregenerated person – person who doesn't know God, never been born again, never been saved, never met Christ. He is just the natural man. He is living in the way of man without

intervention by God. He is isolated in his humanness – natural. Notice he cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

Verse 15, now: “But – “ and here’s the contrast “ – he that is – “ what? “ – spiritual judges all things...” While the natural man understands nothing, the spiritual man understands everything. Now, notice this – very interesting – the difference here is this: The natural man is the unregenerated man. The spiritual man is the regenerated man, saved man. That’s the difference.

Well, I’m going to tell you some good news this morning: You are all spiritual according to 1 Corinthians 2:15. I can see some husbands poke their wife and say, “See. I’ve been trying to tell you thing for ten years,” you know? You are all spiritual positionally. That’s right.

You are all spiritual insofar as you possess the Holy Spirit. You are connected to the life of God. You have the resident truth Teacher. You have the Spirit who can teach you all things, the deep things of God. You are all spiritual if you love Christ, if you’ve been saved. You are all spiritual. In the purest sense – now mark this – there is no such thing as a “natural Christian,” and there’s no such thing as a “carnal Christian,” really, in its positional sense because you’re all spiritual. “Spiritual” simply means to possess the Holy Spirit.

Now, to support that thought, there’s another verse. I’ll just read it to you – two verses – Romans 8 verse 6: “For to be carnally minded is death. To be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind – “ verse 7 says “ – is enmity against God...”

Now, in Romans 8, you have another contrast between the carnal and the spiritual. The carnal, there, represents the unsaved, and the spiritual the saved. So in 1 Corinthians 2 and in Romans 8, spiritual people are people who possess the Spirit who are Christians. That’s all. All Christian are spiritual.

On the other hand, in 1 Corinthians 2, the natural man refers to the unregenerate, and in Romans 8, the carnal man is the unregenerate. So unsaved people, then, are either natural or carnal. “Natural” simply speaks of their state without God. “Carnal” speaks of the fact that they function according to their human impulses.

So, as I said, positionally speaking, insofar as who you are before God, you are not carnal, and you are not natural. You are what? Spiritual. Because you possess the Holy Spirit. You don't have to have a great, big Bible with 14 things hanging out of it. You don't have to be a graduate of the Bible college. You don't have to wear a skinny, black tie. You don't have to have a pious look on your face to be spiritual. If you're saved, you're spiritual. Just want you to know that.

If you're not saved, you are natural. That is, you’re in a state of humanness without any intervention on God’s part, and you express that through the operation of the carnal mind or the function of the

flesh.

Now, however, while you are all spiritual – ready for this? And me too – we don't always act like it. True? True. Thank you, both of you. This is a very honest group. We don't always act like it, is that right?

Now, look at 1 Corinthians 3:1. We'll show you how this works – 1 Corinthians 3:1. Now notice, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you – “ now watch “ – as unto spiritual...”

In other words, “I should've been able to speak to you as unto spiritual.” Why? “Because you are spiritual, but I had to speak unto you as if you were – “ what? Carnal. “I had to speak to you as if you were carnal.” Why? Because of two things – one, you didn't receive the Word, and you couldn't receive it, and, two, there was unholiness in your life.

The word is in verse 2: “I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for this time you were not able to handle it,” and verse 3, there is division and envy and strife, et cetera. Notice all Christians are spiritual. You ready for that? All Christians do not act spiritual. Sometimes we act very fleshly, don't we? Very carnally. We act like the natural.

You remember when Peter was converted, and Jesus said to him, “Simon, Simon used to be your name, but from here on, your name is Peter. I'm going to change your name because you're different. Your new self is Peter.”

And then, in John 21, after Jesus had met Peter, and Peter had just disobeyed Jesus, Jesus said to him, “Simon...” Why did Jesus call him by his old name? Because he was acting like his old self. See?

In other words, he was Peter, but he was acting like Simon, and so Jesus called him Simon just to reinforce the point, and all believers are spiritual, but Paul says, “Sometimes, I have to talk to you as if you were carnal or as if you were natural because of two things – one, you're not receive the Word, and, two, you're acting in a sinful fashion.”

Listen. The two things that guarantee spirituality are the receptivity to the Word and obedience to its principles. Now, that's spirituality. If the Corinthians had heard the Word of God in its deepest truths and had obeyed it, then he could've said, “I write unto you as spiritual brothers because you have received the meat, and because there is no division, you are living holy lives.”

Now, notice, people, true spirituality, then, is a position of every believer, but the actual practice of that spirituality is dependent upon two things – the presence of the Word and the absence of sin. Very basic. That's true spirituality, and it is that kind of person that the church so desperately needs. I

mean this is the heart of everything.

Do you realize that the church will literally crumble into sin if there is an absence of spiritual people who receive the Word and live it out in a holy life? Let me show you why. Look in Galatians 6, and this wasn't even the sermon that I was supposed to give, but I trust the Spirit of God will use it.

Galatians 6: "Brethren – " Paul, again, writing to Galatians " – if a man be overtaken in a *paraptma* – " or a fall, if he falls into sin, falls into temptation " – if a man be overtaken in a fall – " this is a Christian who sins, right? Watch this: "...ye who are – " what? " – spiritual, restore him..."

You know why the church spiritual people? The church has to have spiritual people to hold up the rest. You got to have them. Paul wanted a whole church full of people who were spiritual people, whose lives were characterized by receptivity to the Word and the living of obedience to it. But the Corinthians wouldn't receive the Word, and so they couldn't live the Word. That's spirituality.

Spirituality is not something that happens to you when you get zapped. It is simply receiving the Word and living it out, and it is a moment-by-moment thing, and to show that to you, let me point out something that's very basic, Galatians 5:16. You're already in Galatians 6. Let's look at 5:16: "This I say then – " now watch " – Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

You know how to avoid being carnal? You know how to avoid being natural? Walk in the what? Spirit. Then, notice the word "walk." "Walk" is a very important word in the New Testament because it speaks of moment-by-moment conduct. Walking is a picture of one step at a time. That's how spirituality functions – one moment at a time.

Now, spirituality is an absolute that is either true or not true of you at any given point. You could say to me, "John, are you spiritual?" And sometimes I would say, "Well, I believe so," and other times, I would say, "No, I think I'm probably actin a little carnal," at any given point because it's a moment-by-moment walk. It's a moment-by-moment commitment.

Now, listen. Do you know that the apostle Paul, in the entire writings that he gave us, only said four things about our relationship to the Holy Spirit that he required of us? He only asked four things of us in relation to the Holy Spirit. He didn't say, "Seek an experience of the Spirit." He didn't say, "Seek a gift of the Spirit." He didn't say, "Seek some super spiritual-powered thing."

He simply said four things in all of his letters: one, "Walk in the Spirit"; two, "Pray in the Spirit"; three, "Don't quench Spirit"; four, "Don't grieve the Spirit." Two are positive; two are negative. And he simply laid that out and said, "That's the key to spirituality. The Spirit is there. Walk one step at a time in His power and will. Pray consistent with His will, and don't quench Him, and don't grieve Him, and that's the essence of spirituality.



It has nothing to do with any spiritual gift. It has nothing to do with any divine zap. It has nothing to do with any second work of grace. It is simply a matter of walking – walking one step at a time. That's the only way you can live the Christian life.

You can't say, "Well, I have arrived spiritually. I had my experience. From here on out, it's gravy. From here on out it's just floating, man. I'm sailing," you see. Oh, no. Do you know something? The man in the Scripture who most despises his sinfulness is the most spiritual man. Did you understand that? Spirituality doesn't just say, "Whoa, this is great, man. No more sin. No more –"

Listen. Paul says, "I am the chief of sinners." Isaiah says, "Woe is unto me for I am a sinful man, and I dwell in the midst of a sinful people," see. Spirituality is a moment-by-moment walk, and you can't project it over a lifetime.

You know, there are some people who, in what we call the "holiness tradition," who have taught that if you reach a certain level, instant spirituality, and it stays with you forever, but you can't find that in the Bible. It's a struggle. Paul says, "I die to myself – how often? – daily," and that's the basis.

And Paul wanted the believer to walk in the Spirit one step at a time, and over in verse 25, he says, "If we live in the Spirit – Galatians 5:25. "If we live in the Spirit, then let us also walk in the Spirit." The spiritual man walks in the Spirit. Now watch this, "...and as he walks in the Spirit, he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh." He doesn't fall.

So since he's walking in the Spirit and doesn't fall into sin, he can pick up the guy who does, you see, and be a strength to him. That's a spiritual man. There's no divine zap for that.

Now, watch. The ultimate objective of spirituality is that we would be like whom? Christ. Paul says, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ," 1 Corinthians 11:1. Paul says, "For to me to live is Christ..." Philippians 1:21. Paul says, "...nevertheless, not I but Christ lives in me..." Galatians 2:20. Paul says that, "We might all come to the fullness of the stature of the measure of Christ," Ephesians 4:13.

Paul says that we should gaze on the glory of the Lord Christ, and be changed into His image from level of glory to the next. Paul says, in Philippians 3, that, "I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering and be made conformable to His death. I want to apprehend Christ by whom I have been apprehended." In other words, I want to be like Christ.

We all know that spirituality is to be like Jesus, and that, beloved is not something that you attain once, and it's good for the rest of your life. That's a moment-by-moment walk, and, at any given point in your life, you are either Christlike, walking in the Spirit, or you are not, and the level of maturity can be different. You can take a brand-new Christian who's been saved four hours, and he can be

spiritual if he's obeying the Spirit, right? Walking in the Spirit.

Now, you can take a guy who's been a Christian for 50 years, and he's taught the Bible, and he knows everything, and he's very mature. But he can operate, sometimes, in his flesh, can't he? So you see, that doesn't have anything to do with growth. That has to do with any given moment in my life, and it's foolish to think that I could reach a certain experience, and then I'd be instantly spiritual for good. It just doesn't happen that way. It doesn't work like that.

But along come the charismatics, you see, and this is where they confuse the issue. They say when you get the baptism, or when you get this certain zap, you get spirituality with it. They seek to attain that "thing," and they equate that in their thinking with spirituality, like a second work of grace.

In their effort to seek something more, this second work, this instant spirituality, you know what they do? They unwittingly, I believe, subordinate the Bible, and they subordinate the true path to spirituality, and they start running down the wrong road of experience.

And you know what happens? They get that experience, and then they don't attain the spirituality they thought was there, and so they continue down the same road to pursue the greater experience, the greater experience, and the greater experience to end the delusion. Now, that's tragic because they just run further and further and further from the biblical standard of true spirituality, which is to receive the Word and to live it out in holiness in the energy of the Spirit and, consequently, to be like Christ.

Now, so many charismatics search for this supernatural manifestation that will just "shove" them into spirituality, and you'll hear people say, "Well, when I had that experience, when I was baptized in the Spirit, when I spoke in tongues, then I began to live more of a holy life, and then I began to have more power and more joy and more intimate fellowship and more love and more fulfillment, and it was all related to that experience."

But you want to know something? In spite of what they say, the Scripture never ever teaches such a thing. Paul never says, "Have this experience, and you'll have everything. Paul just says, "Hey, walk in the Spirit." It's a daily thing. It's like any other relationship in life. It's a daily thing. God just wants us to bow to the Spirit one day at a time. It's the only way to live.

You want to hear something interesting? God doesn't even care about your future. Did you know that? You say, "Oh, that's heresy. You'll have to preach on yourself next week. You're the next heretic if you say that – God doesn't care about the future."

Well, I don't mean that in the ultimate sense, but I mean it in this sense: There are so many people who are always promising God tomorrow, right? "Oh, Lord..." just like your diet, you know? It's always tomorrow, see – or next week.

You're going to say, "Oh, Lord, I'm going as soon as I get – then, I'm –" and, you know, the Lord does not want your future. He wants now, you see. I've always said that, you know, we're always talking about the "sweet by and by," and He's always begging for the "nasty now and now." You know, this is the time, see. Now. Not tomorrow, not next week, not next month. He doesn't want future Christians. He wants, now, people to walk in the Spirit. That's all. It's just a moment-by-moment.

And I remember when I got married, and, you know, the wedding is kind of a nervous thing, you know, and, of course, I mean it was wonderful. I don't regret it. I want you to understand that. I always say about my wife, she's an angel, and I know it because she's always up in the air harping on something. No, I shouldn't say that, but, you know – and never has any earthly thing to wear, right?

But anyway, Patricia's great. Believe me. But I remember when we were getting married, and I was thinking, in my mind, about these things – you know, that I will promise to love you till death do us part; I will love you forever. Well, how do I know that, right? I've never lived forever. I don't know. I just live for the moment, so I figured I'll give it a couple of weeks and see what happens, you know? But anyway, that's the best you can do, right?

And I'll tell you something else. When Patricia comes to me and says, "Honey, do you love me?" and she doesn't want to hear, "Well, yes, out there in the future, I see it. I see it. Yeah, love is out there. It's coming, honey. Just hang on." She doesn't want to be loved in the future. She'd liked to be loved right now, right?

Same with the Christian life. The Holy Spirit doesn't want your commitment tomorrow, next week, or next year. It's now because it's only now that you'll ever live. That's all. Someday, when you get to the end of your life and you look back, and you realize you lived your whole life in the present tense – you never lived any of it in the past tense, and you never lived any of it in the future, and the walk of the Spirit is just what Paul wants us to know, that it is one day and one moment and one step in receiving the Word and living it out in Christlikeness that he's after, and that's true spirituality.

And whether or not you have had some experience or another experience is unrelated to that because there is no guaranteed continuum of spirituality – certainly, not on the basis of some gift or experience. Let me show you why. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:7 as an illustration.

In 1 Corinthians 1:7, it says this – and Paul here, as his custom was, is commending the Corinthians, and he says, as he always did at the beginning of a letter – with a couple of exceptions – he says, "So that ye come behind in no gift..." In other words, he says, "You Corinthians lack no gift. You have had all the gifts."

And you know, if you read later on in 12, 13, and 14, I mean they had them, didn't they? Boy, they had the prophecies and the tongues and the wonders, and the stuff was going on there was incredible stuff. I mean they didn't lack for any experiences, and they didn't lack for any gifts.

And in chapter 3 verse 1, says, "I cannot write unto you as unto – " what? " – spiritual..." so make a connection, will you? Spirituality is not consequent to any gift. It has no relationship. You could have the gift of tongues, the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy, the gift of teaching, the gift of whatever. It has absolutely no relationship to whether, at any given point in time, you are spiritual or fleshly. None.

I can prove that, too, in my life because I have certain spiritual gifts, and that doesn't guarantee me any true spirituality as a continuum. All believers receive spiritual gifts when? The moment you're saved, though you still have to struggle – flesh, as Romans 7 tells us.

Listen to this, Matthew 7. They come to Jesus, and they say, "Lord, Lord, we've done so many wondrous works in Your name and miracles and casting out of demons – " and whatever " – and all the wonders in your name," and he says, "Depart from me – " what? "I never knew you." Not only does it not prove spirituality to have certain abilities, but it doesn't even prove salvation, so you never equate true spirituality with some kind of zap or some kind of miracle or some kind of experience.

And further, we learn another thing from the Corinthians, and that is this – that their gifts had absolutely no preventative power against the lust of the flesh, right? Listen to this: If having the baptism and the gift of tongues or some other ecstatic experience was spirituality, then, immediately, if you were spiritual, you would not fulfill what? The lust of the flesh. Right? Because if you walk in the Spirit, you don't fulfill the lust of the flesh.

So a spiritual person doesn't fulfill the lust of the flesh. He doesn't fall into temptation. That's why he can help the guy who does. Spiritual people do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. You want to hear something? There are plenty of charismatic people who've had the gifts and the experiences and the signs and the wonders who do fulfill the lust of the flesh just like the rest of us do, you see, because it has no relationship.

And if a person thinks, "Boy, if I could just get that, if I could attain to that level, then I'll reach it," it isn't so. Listen. The Corinthians, did they have all the gifts? Yes. Did they see all the wonders and the things that were going on and the experiences and the ecstasies? Yes. And did they fulfill the lust of flesh? Oh, yes. In their case, the gifts had no relationship to spirituality at all or they would not have fulfilled the lust of the flesh. But they did, and it's recorded in chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14. Yes, they had at least 13 chapters of good fulfilling of the lust of the flesh. It had no bearing at all that they possessed certain gifts and had certain ecstatic experience.

So that's all I'm trying to say. True spirituality is unrelated to that. In fact, when you really look at the movement, for example, in history, the Cevenols who were tongue speakers, the Irvingites, both of them were very immoral.

Charles Smith, in his book, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, says, "The doctrines of free love and spiritual marriages have too often appeared in association with tongues. Perversion of the Biblical teaching relating to sex and marriage can be seen in the Mormons and the Shakers, both of whom were tongue-speakers, incidentally. Amy Semple McPherson was not the only tongues leader to receive a revelation that her marriage was not in the Lord, and that she should enter another union. One well-known Pentecostal preacher, a woman widowed for three years, professed, when she was found pregnant, to be with child of the Holy Ghost. Charles Parham, father of the modern Pentecostal movement, was arrested for the grossest of immoralities."

"Now, what are you saying, that all are charismatics are immoral?" No. No, they don't have any more problem with the flesh than I do and you do, but what I'm saying is this: That proves the point that spirituality has nothing to do with the experience because they all have the experience, but they also have the same, old problem with the flesh. And if you equate the experience with spirituality, true spirituality eliminates the flesh. Therefore, you see, true spirituality can't be a one-time zap. It's got to be just a moment-by-moment yielding.

One young tongue speaker confessed, "To my surprise, I found that those blessed emotions in my soul seemed to be accompanied by sexual passion in my body." When Paul Sailhamer and I were at Dallas Seminary this year, we had a rather long interview with a young man who'd come out of the charismatic movement who had spoken in tongues on many, many occasions and had been repeatedly slain in the Spirit and gone through a series of ecstatic experiences, and he had come out and was now a student at Dallas Seminary. He said to us that one of the things that amazed him was that he was told, basically, that when you are slain in the Spirit, and you reach the level of these experiences in tongues, that this has a purifying effect, that this is a cleansing thing, but he said, "I found out that I had just as much trouble and just as much failure with the flesh as ever after those experiences."

And you see, the point is that true spirituality has absolutely nothing to do with any gift or any experience, and I think that's one of the sad things in the charismatic movement, that people think that's the way to true spirituality. And when they get to one experience and it isn't there, they keep pursuing it down the same track, looking for the experience that finally will end the delusion of where true spirituality is, and the whole time they're running away from the fact that it's right back here in the simplicity of walk in the Spirit, see. Receive the Word and live it.

There's no guarantee that because you've had that experience, you'll be any better off than any other Christian. In fact, Walter Chantry in his book *Signs of the Apostles* says, "Pentecostals are involved in

as much confusion as are other branches of Christianity. Their sober and wise spiritual leaders call attention to the same appalling ignorance, immorality, coldness of heart, and impotence within their ranks that many have sought to escape by their experiences.”

You can't escape those things by experience, beloved. You can't escape those things by some divine zap. Getting some kind of tongues experience will have absolutely no effect on your spirituality at all, except maybe to chase you down the wrong trail to where true spirituality really is, and that's sad.

And so I say to you, God wants us to be what we are, and we are spiritual, aren't we? That's right – positionally, and God wants to live it out in us, and to live it out in us is to walk in the Spirit one step at a time. And the practicality of that is to hear and receive the Word and trigger the will to act positive toward the Word in obedience. And, in so doing, we become like Jesus Christ, and that's true spirituality, and don't be fooled by a counterfeit. God's standard hasn't changed. Now, let's pray.

Now, Father, we really never got into the things that we had prepared our heart to say, but we trust that You prepared the Word today that You wanted emphasized by the promptings of Your Spirit in His gentle way, and so I thank You, Father, for the joy of being sensitive to You and how Your Spirit works, and trusting that this is right. I have such a deep, deep concern in my heart for this people and, beyond this, for Your church, which You purchased with Your own blood.

And I feel in my heart the pulsating beat of the heart of the apostle Paul whose heart literally pounded that the people of God would be spiritually minded, and I can hear it from Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and all the others. I can hear it from Peter and James and John and Jude. I can feel it from even Jesus Himself that we would walk in the Spirit.

And, Father, we know how that the devil would want to delude us into believing that there was something that was going to give us instant spirituality and chase us all down the wrong trail so that we miss the whole point of just moment-by-moment loving and leaning on You and walking one step at a time, one moment at a time in obedience to the Holy Spirit, receiving the Word and acting out in obedience to it. Oh, Father, make us truly spiritual people, living our position so that the world might see that we are Christlike and seeing Him in us, be drawn into the family of the redeemed. Thank You, Father. We'll praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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