

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

### **Proper Biblical Interpretation**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-55

#### Proper Biblical Interpretation

Tonight we have the great privilege I think of looking at a subject that is important to all of us. I'm not gonna be dealing with the specific text, although we'll cover a number of texts before we're through tonight. But I wanna carry on our special study of Charismatic chaos looking and evaluating the Charismatic movement from the Word of God by focusing on the issue of interpreting the Bible. One of the things that allows for the Charismatic movement to continue to move ahead is that it is engaged in misinterpretation of Scripture. I know that's a strong thing to say, but it's true. The movement continues really at an amazing pace, not only in America but around the world. And as it moves and catapults itself along, it does so at the expense of Scripture. There is in my judgment, very little understanding in the Charismatic movement a proper Bible interpretation. Much of what exists in the Charismatic movement could be eliminated with just some very simple, straightforward, basic understanding of how to properly interpret the Bible. It falls technically under the title hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a theologian's word to explain the science of Bible interpretation, and hermeneutics is a crucial building block in discerning theology. In fact, the absence of hermeneutics or misunderstanding of it feeds the Charismatic movement. Pentecostals and Charismatics tend to base much of their teaching on poor principles of Bible interpretation.

One of their own, a Pentecostal by the name of Gordon Fee has written this, "Pentecostals, in spite of some of their excesses, are frequently praised for recapturing for the church, her joyful radiance, missionary enthusiasm and life in the Spirit. But they are at the same time, noted for bad hermeneutics. First, their attitude toward Scripture regularly has included a general disregard for a scientific exegesis and carefully thought out hermeneutics. In fact, hermeneutics has simply not been a Pentecostal thing. Scripture is the Word of God and is to be obeyed. In place of scientific hermeneutics, there developed a kind of pragmatic hermeneutics. Obey what should be taken literally. Spiritualize, allegorize, or devotionalize the rest.

Secondly, it is probably fair and important to note that in general, the Pentecostal's experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends to exegete his experience." This is not as I said, the appraisal of someone hostile to the movement, but the appraisal of one who is himself a Pentecostal. His assessment is right on. You only have to watch the typical Charismatic television program to see exactly what he's talking about. You might of watched along with some of us in horror. Sometime back if you happened to be watching the Trinity Broadcasting Network, they

were interviewing a guest on one of their talk shows, and he was explaining the Biblical basis of his ministry of possibility thinking. This is a quote, "My ministry is based entirely on my life verse, Matthew 19:26, 'With God, all things are possible.' God gave me that verse, Matthew 19:26, because I was born in 1926."

Obviously intrigued by that method of obtaining a life verse, the host grabbed a Bible and began thumbing through it excitedly. "I was born in 1934," he said. "My life verse must Matthew 19:34. What does it say?" Then he discovered that Matthew 19 has only 30 verses. Undeterred, he flipped to Luke and read Luke 19:34, and they said, "The Lord hath need of him." Thrilled, he exclaimed, "The Lord has need of me, the Lord has need of me. What a wonderful life verse. I've never had a life verse before, but now the Lord has given me one. Thank you, Jesus, Hallelujah," and the studio audience began to applaud. At that moment, however, the talk show host's wife who had also turned to Luke 19 said, "Wait a minute, you can't use this. This verse is talking about a donkey."

That incident, while being absolutely ludicrous and bizarre, gives you some idea of the willy-nilly way that some Charismatics approach Scripture. Some of them, looking for a word from the Lord, play a sort of Bible roulette. They spin the Bible at random looking for something that might seem applicable to whatever trial or need they are facing and they find a verse and say, "Well, the Lord gave me that verse." And then the Lord supposedly gave them the interpretation of it.

These are silly and foolish ways to approach the study of the Bible. Perhaps you've heard the familiar story of the man who wanted guidance about a major decision. Started to close his eyes and not knowing where to look, wanted God to answer him. In the dilemma, he opened his Bible, put his finger down to get guidance from whatever verse his finger happened to land on. His first try brought him to Matthew 27:5, "Judas went out and hanged himself." Thinking that verse was really not much help, he determined to try again. This time his finger landed on Luke 10:37, "Go thou and do likewise." Still undeterred and not ready to give up, he tried it a third time and his finger landed on John 13:27, "What thou doest, do quickly."

Now, I certainly don't wanna vouch for the authenticity of that particular account, but it does make an important point. Looking for meaning in Scripture through some mystical process is a way to get an ill-gotten theology. Looking for meaning in Scripture beyond the historical, grammatical, logical understanding of the context is unwise and dangerous. It's possible, of course, to substantiate almost any idea or any teaching from Scripture if you take it out of its context and twist it around. I remember hearing about the preacher who didn't think women should have their hair up on their head because a woman's hair should be down, so he preached against what used to be called bobbed hair, women having their hair up on their heads. His text was top not come down, taken from Matthew 24 where it says, "Let those on the housetop not come down." So, if you just pull out, if you just pull out exactly what you want, you can probably get it. We laugh at that because it sounds so bizarre, but that is precisely the process that many are using to substantiate their experiences or to invent their theology.

Now the task of hermeneutics is to realize, first of all, that there is a God given meaning in Scripture, apart from you or me or anybody else. Scripture means something if means nothing to me, understood? It means something if it means nothing to you. It means something if it means nothing to anybody. It means something in itself, and that meaning is determined by God, the Author, not by one who is going through some kind of mystical experience. The interpreter's task then is to discern that meaning. To discover the meaning of the text in its proper setting, to draw the meaning out of the Scripture, rather than to read one's meaning into it. The importance of careful, Biblical interpretation can hardly be overstated. We spend three or four years at the master seminary trying to teach men how to do this because it is the heart and soul of effective ministry. In fact, I would go so far as to say misinterpreting the Bible is ultimately no better than disbelieving it. So what do you mean by that?

Well, what good does it do to believe that the Bible is God's final and complete word if you misinterpret it? Either way you miss the truth, right? It is equally serious along with disbelieving the Bible to misinterpret it. Interpreting Scripture to make it say what it was never intended to say is a sure road to division, to error, to heresy and to apostasy. In spite of all of the dangers of misinterpreting the Scripture, today we have these casual people who approach the Scripture whimsically without any understanding of the science of interpretation and make it say whatever they would like it to say. Perhaps you've been in one those Bible studies where you go around the room and everybody tells you what they think the verse means? Or worse than that, "Well, to me this verse means," so-and-so. In the end, what you get is a pooling of ignorance, unless somebody knows what it means apart from them. The truth is it doesn't matter what a verse means to me, it doesn't matter what it means to you, it doesn't matter what it means to anybody else, it doesn't matter if it means anything to anybody else. All that matters is what does it mean? What did God intend to say? Every verse has intrinsic meaning apart from any of us and the task of Bible study is to discern the true meaning of Scripture. That's why I can come to you week after week, month after month, year after year and explain to you the meaning of the Word of God, apart from any personal experience I'm having. That's irrelevant.

The task of the interpreter is to discern the meaning of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:15 it says, "Be diligent," or study, "present yourself approved to God as a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed because he's handling accurately the Word of Truth." If you don't handle it accurately, you oughta be ashamed of yourself. And if you're gonna handle it accurately, you have to be diligent, you have to work hard at it. Clearly handling Scripture involves both of those things, hard work and diligence. It must be interpreted accurately, and those who fail to do that have reason to be ashamed.

Now, there's so much to say about this that I can't give you a whole course on hermeneutics. I teach some of that in the seminary as well as other professors and I'm not intending to give you a seminary course, but let me just suggest three errors that need to be avoided that are not always avoided in

contemporary interpretation. One, and they're very simple, do not make a point at the price of a proper interpretation. It's like the preacher who said, "I have a good sermon, if I could just find a verse to go with it." Do not prescribe your theology and then try to make the Bible fit it. You might have a good thought, good idea. It even might be that the principle that you have in mind is true, but do not allow yourself to make the point at the price of a proper interpretation.

Remember reading years ago, a good illustration of this found in the Jewish Talmud. One Rabbi was trying to convince his people that the primary issue in life is concern for other human beings. That's good, good point. We oughta be concerned about other human beings, but he wanted to illustrate it and so he took 'em to the Tower of Babel and he told them that the stones of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, the building of that through the carrying of those stones illustrated his point. He said that the builders of the tower were frustrated because they put material things first and people last. Now where is that in Genesis? "Well," he said, "as the tower grew taller, it took a hod carrier or a stone carrier many hours to carry a load of stones up. The higher it got, the longer the walk." And he said, "If a man fell off the tower on the way down, nobody cared because you only lost a man, not the bricks. But if he fell off on the way up, they mourned because the bricks were lost. And that," said the Rabbi, "is why God confused their language, because they failed to give priority to human beings over bricks." Now, none of that can be found in Genesis 11, none of that can be found in the Bible. In fact, it totally skews the meaning of Genesis 11. It is true, people are more important than bricks, but that is not the point of the Tower of Babel. Genesis 11 says absolutely nothing about the importance of people or bricks. The point is God is more important than idols, and God will judge idolatry.

I remember being at a Bible conference in Wisconsin one time. And I got into the Bible conference with another well known preacher, and we were preaching every night, and one day we were eating lunch, and I said, "What are you gonna preach on tonight?" He said, "I'm gonna preach on the rapture of the church." I said, "Really? The rapture of the church, great. What's your text?" He said, "John 11." I said, "What?" He said, "John 11." I said, "John 11, the rapture of the church isn't in John 11." He said, "You wait and see tonight." I said, "Fine, fine." That night he preached on the rapture from John 11. That's the resurrection of Lazarus. He allegorized it, Lazarus was the church, Martha was the Old Testament saints and Mary was the tribulation saints and he got this thing goin'. And the people were just sitting there saying, "Deep, deep." You know, they were just thinkin' this is the profoundest thing. They couldn't find it anywhere. They thought he was goin' deeper than they had capability to go. And afterwards he said to me, "Have you ever seen that in John 11?" To which I replied as kindly as I could, "No one has ever see that in John 11." And he took it as a compliment. The next night he said, "John MacArthur told me that no one but me had ever seen that in John 11."

Now, I don't wanna argue with the rapture of the church, but I will argue that the rapture of the church is not in John 11, and if you're gonna make John 11 say something that is true, then you're just as likely to make John 11 say something that what? That isn't true. That is not the way you approach

Scripture.

God has not hidden His truth from us, but its meaning is not always instantly clear. It demands hard work. That's why in 1 Timothy 5:17 it says that, "Those elders who labor in the Word and doctrine are worth of double honor," because it's hard work. That's why God has given teachers to the church so that we can work hard and understanding God's Word correctly, instructing people in the Scriptures through persistent, conscientious labor in the Word.

Now, today we have, frankly, a lack of respect for the work of gifted theologians, a lack of respect for the hard work of gifted expositors who have spent years studying and interpreting Scripture. In fact, that lack of respect tends to be somewhat charismatically characteristic. They tend to sort of look at all of us that way. I think I read you of the letter from the lady who said, "Your problem is you're too much into the Bible. Throw away your Bible," remember that, "and stop studying." You see, Charismatics place more emphasis on letting people in the congregation say whatever they think Jesus is telling them the verse means, and to listen to what one writer calls, "Airy fairy theologians." There's a vast difference, by the way, between the whimsical kitchen table interpretations of laymen, the teaching of skilled men who work very hard to rightly divide the Word.

I heard a radio interview with a Charismatic woman pastor. She was asked how she got her sermons up? She replied, "I don't get 'em up, I get 'em down. God delivers them to me." That's an all too familiar thing. I can promise you that God has never delivered one to me. I haven't gotten them down. I've had to 'em up. Some people even believe it's unspiritual to study. After all, some say, taking another verse out of context, didn't Jesus say, "For the Holy Spirit will teach you and that very hour what you want to say," so you just go into the pulpit and whatever comes into your mind, you say? And that's why they invent their theology as they speak because they have no idea what's going to be said until they hear it. We should be greatly concerned about this ad lib approach. You never ever make a point true or false at the price of a proper interpretation. Otherwise, you are the final authority and not the Word of God.

Secondly, don't spiritualize or allegorize the text. Some people think the Bible is a fable to teach whatever you wanna get across. A myriad of illustrations of this. I remember back when Jerry Mitchell was on our staff and a young couple came into him for counseling, marriage counseling. He began to talk with them and after about 30 minutes, he said he'd been married only six months and you're already on the edge of a divorce? Why did you ever get married? You're miles apart. "Oh," said the husband, "it was a sermon the pastor preached in our church." "What was the sermon?" "Well, he preached on the walls of Jericho." "Jericho? What does that have to do with marriage?" "Well," he said, "God's people claimed the city marched around it seven times and the walls fell down." And he said, "If a young man believed God had given him a certain girl, he could claim her, march around her seven times and the walls of her hear would fall down. That's what I did and we got married." "That can't be true," he said. "You're kidding, aren't you?" I remember him sayin' that.

"You gotta be kidding." "No, it's true. And there were many other couples that got married because of the same sermon." Some people believe their marriages were made in Heaven. That was made in an allegory and a bad one at that. That's the kind of interpretation that has gone on since the early days of the church, continues today, especially in the Charismatic movement.

Remember listening to a series on the book of Nehemiah. The whole purpose of the book of Nehemiah by this Charismatic preacher was to teach Charismatic doctrine. Jerusalem's walls were in ruin and that was representative of the broken down walls of human personality. Nehemiah was the Holy Spirit, the king's pool was the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the mortar between the bricks was tongues. And what Nehemiah's teaching is the Holy Spirit wants to come rebuild your broken walls through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. I had an opportunity to talk to that preacher about that and we had an interesting conversation. I tried to show him that that was nothing but the invention of his own imagination, read from the New Testament back into the Old, but never the intention of Nehemiah, to which he agreed. That kind of preaching is a form of hucksterism, and as I said, "You may come up with the truth that you teach, but if you spiritualize the text to do it, then you legitimize spiritualization of any text which leaves you with any fanciful conclusion."

Well, the correct approach you probably need to go to Jesus and remember that when He was walking on the road to Emmaus, He said, Luke did, the beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures. The Word explained is hermeneutical from which we get hermeneutics. He carefully interpreted the Old Testament. He used hermeneutics. He's a model of a teacher, used sound interpretive methods.

So, when we teach the Word of God, when we come to the conclusions that we come to, we wanna be certain that we don't make severe errors, one, by making points at the price of proper interpretation, two, by somehow concocting or spiritualizing something that isn't there, and three, and I've already talked about this, by superficial study. Superficial study is equally disastrous. But I've said enough about that not to have to say more.

Now, if that's the case, if we are to avoid doing that, how do we then interpret the Scripture? Let me give ya five sound principles, alright? If you work through these, you'll be on the way to rightly dividing the Word. Principle number one we'll call the literal principle, the literal one. When we go to the Bible, this is so basic, we assume that God is talking to us in normal speech, k? Normal language, normal, common, everyday communication. In fact, the theologians used to call it *usisloquindi* in the Latin, meaning the words of Scripture are to be interpreted the same way words are understood in ordinary daily use. If it says horse, it means horse, if it says he went somewhere, he went somewhere. If it says house, it means house, if it says man, it means man, and not everything is to be extrapolated off into some mystical spiritualization, allegorization or whatever. He is literal.

We understand Scripture then in the literal sense of language. Now there are figures of speech, there are simile, metaphor, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, whatever else, ellipses. All of the figures of speech will be there. There may even be sarcasm. There may even be exaggeration as a device. There may be symbolism such as the symbolism in the prophetic literature which is obviously symbolic, clearly symbolic. But it is in the normal language of speech. We use symbols in our language. We say, "That man is as straight as a pine tree," or "that man is as strong as an ox." Well, we're using a symbol to make a literal point or statement. So then, when we interpret the Bible, we're not hunting for some extrapolated, mystical experience.

Now the Rabbis really got into this. They started to look for this long centuries ago. In fact, they used to say, some of them said that Abraham had 318 servants. Nothing in the Bible says that, but they said the secret meaning of the word Abraham is in the Hebrew there's only three consonants in Abraham's name: ba, ra, m. All the rest are vowels or breathing points. So, if you take ba, ra, m, in his name, they had numerical equivalents in the Hebrew language and add 'em up you get 318, so the secret meaning is he had 318 servants. Now they were into all that kind of stuff and even got more bizarre than that.

There was occasionally of course, figurative language in Scripture as I said, but they're quite evident to us in the normal course of understanding language. Scripture was not written to puzzle people. It was not written to confuse them. It was written to make things clear to them. Even parables are nothing more than illustrations. They're not riddles. They're illustrations, and in most cases, Jesus explained their meaning. And in all cases, He said that the meaning would be revealed to those who belong to Him by the Holy Spirit. So, we can't abandon literal interpretation and favor of mystical, allegorical, metaphorical kinds of interpretation to discard all hope of achieving accuracy and coherence, and throw us into some imaginary field. I would venture to say that most Charismatic preaching is imagination run wild, proof texted. They have, at least the popular part of it. I don't know whether most is a fair thing to say, but the popular part of it that I hear has much imagination and very little hermeneutics. When you do not take the time to discern the literal meaning, you are not serving Scripture by trying to understand it, then you are making Scripture your slave by molding it into whatever you want it to say. So, we start with a literal principle. It's literal language.

Secondly, an historical principle. Now, when the Scripture was written, they understood what was said, clearly. Just like the Constitution, when it was written everybody understood what they meant. Here we are a few hundred years later tryin' to figure out what they meant. Why? Because history's different. Time has past, culture has changes, circumstances have changed, and even language has changed, modes of expressions have changed, patterns of life have changed. And so we're trying to get in touch with an old document and reconstruct what it must have meant to them when it was written. Same is true of the Bible, only it's much older than the Constitution. Any ancient document demands interpretation. And so what do we have to do then to interpret it? We have to reset it in its

historical context.

I'm always amazed when I hear someone say, "John 3 must be goin' to the water and the Spirit means must be born physically, and you must be born spiritually." Have you heard that? When a woman has a baby, there's water, we say, "The water breaks and the baby's born, that's born of the water, and spiritually, you're born of the Spirit." The problem is that in the Jewish context, that wouldn't have been said because the Jews didn't say, "The water breaks." So, what you've done is taken an American colloquialism and read it into an ancient book that would mean absolutely nothing to those people. The question is when He said, "You must be born of the water and the Spirit," what water would they think about, right? What water was in the historical setting? The only water and spirit they would think about in their Jewish context, particularly Nicodemus, would be that of Ezekiel who said, "The day is coming when God's gonna wash you with clean water and put His Spirit within you," and he would have put it that context, the context of the new covenant, not some colloquial American expression for human birth.

We must then understand the need for the historical principle. When Jesus walks in, for example, to the temple courtyard and said, "I am the Light of the world." Why did he say that? Did He just go around saying strange things at strange moments? "I'm the Light of the world," and somebody would say, "What did He say that for?" Well, why would He say, "I am the Water of Life. Whoever drinks of this water, out of his belly shall flow rivers of \_\_\_\_\_?" What is He talking about? Why does He outburst with these obtuse remarks? No, when He said in John 8, "I am the Light of the world," He was standing in the temple courtyard and there was a huge candelabra that had been lit for eight straight days in the feast of lights, and it had just gone out the day before, and He walks in to that very setting and says in effect, this thing has gone out, but I'm the Light of the world and I never go out. And when He said, "I'm the Water of Life," they were going to the hallel's and they were celebrating the water that came out of the rock in the wilderness, and He said, "There was water then, but it was temporary, I am the Water, and you drink this water, you'll never thirst, but you'll be a gushing well of water." Always the context gives the meaning.

We've got to go back, what are the historical features? What is the characteristic of the city in which the believers lived who heard this? What was going on there? What were the politics? Who was ruling? What were the social pressures? What were the tensions, problems and crises that they were going through? What was the culture of the day? What was life like? What were customs like? I spend a great amount of my time researching all of that information so that when I get in the pulpit, I can make something clearer, and I'm always amazed, in fact, it happened a couple times this morning. People came to me and said, "You know, that passage is so clear. It's so clear. I wonder why I've never seen it before?" The reason it was clear, the reason you understood it is because I fed you the context in which it had its significance. It seemed simple and clear to you, a lot simpler than you know. It is simple to the one who was there and heard it the first time, but it is more complex to me as I have to discern what they heard and how they heard it. That's part of the



process. To answer the cultural, historical question, you use Bible dictionaries and books on history and Bible handbooks, and commentaries, and books about Bible customs and so forth and so on.

Third principle, grammatical principle. You go to a text of Scripture and you have to approach it grammatically. This is called syntax, S-Y-N-T-A-X. Lexicography is the study of words, syntax is the study of the relationship of words. You have to learn about verbs and adverbs and adjectives, and you have to learn about infinitives and participles, and you have to learn about prepositions. You have to learn about conjugating verbs and you have to learn about cases for nouns and substantives, ablative and genitive and all of that and accusative, nominative. You learn all the structure of language. You have to learn about antecedents about relationships. You have to learn about conditional and non conditional clauses.

You know what makes this really difficult now in seminary? The latest statistics that I've seen regarding our seminary, we get the cream of the crop, we get the finest young men coming out of the universities of our nation. One out of four of the men coming into the master seminary, one out of four can pass the basic English exam, one out of four. They can all talk English, they can all read English, they just don't understand the structure of language, and because they don't understand the structure of language, you can't teach them a foreign language until they do. We have people today who will never be able to understand the structure of the foreign languages Hebrew and Greek because they don't even understand the structure of English trying to interpret the Bible. Now, grammar's not anybody's favorite subject. Sorry, those of you who teach English. Grammar is just grammar, it's just there and you have to learn it. But it is essential in interpreting the Word of God.

People say to me, "What's the first thing you do when you prepare a message?" The first thing I do is study the Biblical text in the original language and learn the grammar and understand all the word relationships, go over sentence structure and grammar so I know exactly what is being said, what modifies what and how it all fits together. In fact, more often than not, when I preach to you, the main idea that I'm trying to get across to you is contained in the main verb and the supporting ideas are contained in the participles that modify the main verb. Now, you can do this for yourself by reading commentaries which will help you in the process, by doing inductive Bible study, breaking down into diagramming sentences. Remember that terrible thing you used to have to do that nobody does anymore? But that's all a part of discerning grammatical construction.

And another principle, let's call it the synthesis principle, the synthesis principle. The old reformers use the expression *scriptura scripturum interpretator*. What that means is Scripture is its own interpreter, and you use the synthesis principle. What does that mean? That I always interpret a given passage in the Bible in the light of the rest of the Bible, right? I don't come across a passage and say, "Wow, this is a new doctrine taught nowhere else in the Bible." Wait a minute. If you think that passage is teaching a doctrine that is taught nowhere else in the Bible and appears contradictory to other things taught in the Bible, you've misinterpreted it, right? Because Scripture will be

consistent with itself, why? One perfect author wrote it all. Who's that? God. Scripture will interpret Scripture. The Holy Spirit won't disagree with Himself, and you can interpret the Word of God by the Word of God. That is a very, very essential thing.

And then, one more principle, fifthly, the practical principle, the practical principle. The final question you ask, you go through this whole process starting out, alright, what's the literal meaning here? Then you move to what's the historical background, the context. What are all the grammatical components here? How does this synthesize with the rest of Scripture. You hear me do that, don't you? I make a point and then I show you other verses where that point exists in order to see that this is the Scripture teaching and elucidating on its own truth. And then, the last question you ask is so what? What does it mean to me? What does it have to do with me? How does it apply to my life? But you never ask that question until you've gone through all the other steps, right? Most people today read the Bible and then say, "Alright, what does this mean to me," and they skip all the stuff in the middle. By the way, I would recommend to you a helpful little book. If you wanna good tool that's excellent for you, that's Dick Mahew's book, *How to Interpret the Bible*. It's a paperback, it'll be a tremendous tool for you. I know we have it in our bookstore and you can go in and buy 'em all out tonight.

Now, in the process of this, one more thing I need to say. And these five principles of interpreting Scripture, there's another component and that's the principle of the Holy Spirit and illumination. Even when I have taken it literally and worked through the grammar and reconstructed the history, and when I have delved into all the terms and the words and synthesized it with all of Scripture, all of that effort would come up empty if it weren't for the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit because He alone knows the things that are coming from God, 1 Corinthians 2 says. And He is the One who teaches them to us. He is the anointing, in 1 John 2:27, that teaches us all things. Remember that verse, 1 John 2:27? John says, "The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you. You have no need for anyone to teach you, but as His anointing teaches you about all things and is true and not a lie, just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." It's not telling us we don't need teachers and it's not telling us we don't need those who guide us because He's given to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, teaching pastors, and even teachers to teach us. And he's given us some the gifts of teaching and preaching so that we can be taught. But it is an assurance that we can know the difference between the heresy that is being discussed in 1 John 2, and the truth regarding the Gospel of Christ because we possess the Spirit. It doesn't guarantee that we're gonna have the correct interpretation of every verse in the Bible even though we do nothing. It doesn't mean we don't need human teachers. It just means, regarding the Gospel, regarding the basic truth of Christ, we can discern by the Holy Spirit's leading truth from error.

Now, in closing, just a suggestion, four texts are commonly misinterpreted by Charismatics. And I'll just apply what we've learned tonight to those four very briefly to help you understand how easily they could be rightly understood. The first one, I want you to turn to it. We're not gonna do all that we

could do because you can buy my commentary or get the tape on the passage and go through it in detail, but Matthew 12 is a good starting point because they use this quite often to intimidate Christians. In Matthew 12, you have the record of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and you'll remember that Jesus said, "Anything could be forgiven you, anything said against the Son of Man, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven you." If we had the time, we could read from verse 22 all the way on, but just go down to verse 31. Jesus says, "Therefore, I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven." Now, what is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Well, if you listen to two very, very popular Charismatics by the name of Charles and Francis Hunter, well known husband and wife team who've written numbers of books and speak on the road all the time, this is what they say. They say that anyone who questions tongues, and this is pretty much what you hear from the Charismatic movement, anyone who questions tongues or any other aspect of the Charismatic movement is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They imply that any critics of the Charismatic movement are perilously close to being condemned by Christ for such blasphemy. Is that what this is teaching? They use this verse to support that. Does a challenge to Charismatic error equal blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? When someone denies that tongues are for today or that the baptism of the Spirit is a post salvation experience, has that person committed the unpardonable sin? Not according to this passage. In this text, remember, a demon possessed man was born blind and dumb, brought to Jesus and He healed him? The Pharisees heard it, they said Jesus cast out demons by Satan, remember that? By Beelzebub, which was their name for the lord of the flies, the Philistine satan, the prince of evil spirits, they were saying Jesus does what He does by the power of Satan.

Now, according to the principles and interpretation which we've just learned, the first thing to do would be to look at the literal meaning of the passage. The Pharisees were literally saying Jesus Christ got His power from Satan, alright? We understand that. Let's move to the historical principle. Jesus' ministry had been going on for two years, and during that time He performed numerous miracles that proved to everyone really, should have proved to everyone, that He was God, He was the Messiah. The conclusion should have been He is God. Their conclusion was He functions under the power of Satan. They concluded the exact opposite.

Using the synthesis principle, we'll go a step further. We check other parts of the Bible and we find that at His baptism, Jesus received the Holy Spirit, and after being baptized, the Spirit of God descended as a dove, came upon Him. And then we learned that when Jesus went out and performed His miracles, it was the Spirit working through Him. He had yielded Himself up to the Holy Spirit. And so, it was the Holy Spirit working in Him, casting out demons by the Spirit's power. They were coming along and saying He did by Satan's power. Blasphemy then against the Holy Spirit was attributing the works of Christ done by the Spirit of God to Satan. That's what blasphemed the Holy Spirit. It was being exposed to the full revelation of Christ's deity, seeing His miracles, hearing His teaching and concluding He's satanic. For that you can't be forgiven. Why? Because if you have seen it all and heard it all and you conclude that He's satanic, you can't get saved, right? Because

you've concluded exactly the opposite about Christ. That's the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12, doesn't say anything about tongues, doesn't say anything about the contemporary Charismatic movement.

We know that all of us, as sinners, resist the Holy Spirit. All of us who are convicted by the Holy Spirit and fight back at that conviction are resisting and in one way or another, blaspheming Him, but still we can be saved. The only way you can blaspheme to the degree where you couldn't be saved is if you had had all the revelation and you concluded the opposite of the truth. You're unsavable because in order to be saved, you have to acknowledge Jesus as God, right? First of all, the sin against the Holy Spirit referred to there as an historical event. And secondly, if there was some application to us, it would simply be rejecting Christ when you have full knowledge.

Look at another one, Hebrews 13:8. This is a very brief one, but again, it's a classic illustration of the way they work. Almost every Pentecostal church you'll go into, certainly in the past this was true, will have a verse in the front of the church, the back of the church on a plaque somewhere. It'll be Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today forever." Have you ever been into a Pentecostal church and seen that? It is in most all of them or was. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever." Now, why is that important? This is what they say. If Jesus baptized with the evidence of speaking in tongues yesterday, then surely He's doing it today and He'll be doing it tomorrow. And so they use that to say whatever Jesus did in the past, He's doing now, He'll be doing in the future. The silliness of that interpretation is the tongues never started until Acts 2, so though Jesus is the same yesterday, throughout all the yesterday of His eternal existence, He didn't do that. You see how obvious that is? Then you say, "Now, wait a minute. In the yesterday He did miracles." No, no, no, not in the yesterday of His eternal existence. Before the world began, He wasn't doing miracles, and before the world He wasn't sending the Spirit in clove and tongues of fire. You see, what you have here is a statement about the eternal, immutable essence of Christ. That He is eternal yesterday, today and forever and unchanging in His essence, not that He has always is and will always do everything the same way.

Well, we don't have time to look at the other Scriptures. One favorite they like says that these signs will follow those that believe. They'll cast out demons, speak with new tongues. They love to emphasize that. They're not so hot on picking up snakes and drinking deadly poison. And then it says it'll not hurt them if they drink it and they'll lay hands on the sick and they'll recover. They say, "See, we can heal the sick," and "See, we can speak in tongues," and "See, we can cast out demons." But they don't advocate picking up poisonous snakes and drinking deadly poison. It's just, in fact, how they handle that is, I need to just tell ya how they handle it. The hunters, for example, say, "Well, that only counts if you pick up the snake accidentally." Is that what it says in Mark's gospel, if you happen to pick up a snake accidentally? Or it only matters if you drink the poison accidentally. In fact, they write do you notice the Bible says, "If we drink anything poisonous," it means, "Accidentally it won't hurt us. Hallelujah, best insurance policy we know of."

The problem with their interpretation is it's not literal. There's no accidentally there. Furthermore, historically he's talking about the apostolic age and those who responded to the ministry of the apostles. They even go so far as to make the silly remark, and of course, we all know that the biggest snake is Satan, and when he bites us, God delivers us from his deadly poison which just allegorizes the thing, spiritualizes it. They play fast and loose.

The concern that I have is to share with you just the sense that there's an awful lot of irresponsibility in dealing with these texts and for your sake and mine, we need not, listen carefully to me, we need not just to criticize the movement. We need to be able to go beneath and to show where the critical flaws lie.

One text in closing, and you know it very well, 2 Timothy 2:15, just to remind you so you're armed if you get into any conversation with folks like this. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed," then the last phrase, "handling accurately the Word of Truth." Beloved, this is where we must lay down the law. We must protect the integrity of Scripture by demanding a proper interpretation. That phrase, "handling accurately," means cutting it straight. Paul was a tentmaker, in order to make a tent, he had to cut a lot of pieces of material, either hide or woven hair. If he didn't cut the parts right, like making a dress or a shirt, that the hole didn't fit together. You cut the parts right, you sew 'em together, it works. And he's saying if you don't cut the pieces right, the whole theology doesn't fit together, and what you've got is people hackin' up the pieces and putting together an obtuse bizarre theology that does not make sense, is not coherent. We must know how to rightly divide the Word of Truth because if we don't, mishandling the Scripture and not interpreting it properly just feeds endless confusion. And that is why there is so much Charismatic chaos.

Father, thank you for our time tonight and looking over these sayings and considering some of the basics of Bible interpretation, make us faithful, and Lord, help us again to realize that many people in this movement love You and are victimized. They're victimized by these foolish interpretations that are given to them very authoritatively by people who sound convincing. We pray that Your Spirit will give them great discernment. We know that Your Spirit will grant them to discern if they're true believers, between heresy about the Gospel and the truth of the Gospel, and we can only ask that somehow Your Spirit will lead them to true teachers who will teach them the right interpretation of Scripture so that they will not be confused, and thus, miss the privilege and opportunity of spiritual growth and giving You glory You deserve. Lord, thank You for giving us exposure to those who rightly divided the Word so that we can follow in their stead. Make us faithful to that Word which rightly understood must be applied, and all for Your glory, in Christ's Name, Amen.

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