

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

What Is True Spirituality?

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-62

Now we come to the next in our series that we've been studying on the Charismatic movement. Tonight we want to talk about the subject, What is True Spirituality? What is True Spirituality? In Romans 12:2 we find a good starting point for our thinking tonight, and that is this statement by the Apostle Paul, "Do not be conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Transformed by the renewing of your mind, transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Many Charismatics believe that you can renew your mind and achieve holiness without any conscious effort. They would say, some of them, that sanctification can come to you through an experience, effortlessly; sometimes even through subliminal conditioning. My first exposure to the notion of subliminal spirituality came a few years ago when I received a flyer advertising subliminal neckties. They were fairly stylish paisley ties; normal looking at a casual glance, but the ad copy informed the prospective buyer, "Hidden in the fabric, almost totally undetectable to the human eye are the words Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves." The ties are made from anointed cloth offered by a Charismatic enterprise, can be yours for a tax deductible love gift of \$30. You could also buy seven for a tax deductible gift of \$200 to help us feed the hungry. We're not sure who the hungry are, but I'm sure that would help.

Quoting the ad further, "For years Russian and Communist scientists have experimented with subliminal advertising designed to influence unsuspecting consumers to their ideology and propaganda, now, the Lord has revealed to His people how to use it for His glory. A magnified picture of one of the ties revealed that indeed the words, "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves," were over and over again woven through the fabric. When worn, the leaflet promised the words "Jesus Saves" are actually being planted in the subconscious minds of everyone who sees it.

In other words, you can do your witnessing without ever having to say a word to anybody. At the time it frankly struck me as a bizarre, somewhat atypical oddity, but in retrospect I see that it was something of a harbinger of one of the latest fads in the Charismatic movement, this idea of subliminal messaging. Despite having some occult overtones and some New Age involvement, and for all intents and purposes being absolutely useless, it's quickly become a popular means of addressing spiritual, emotional, and health problems among Charismatics.

I mentioned earlier in our study the subliminal word therapy tapes offered by the Raffa Ranch as a means of healing cancer patients. Raffa offers the subliminal messaging cassette tapes for \$14.95

each, and although the price seems high, thousands of people desperately seeking cure for cancer have evidently been willing to pay the price. Linda Fell explains how the tapes were born, she says, "In 1983, God healed me of breast cancer and called me to raise up a place where cancer victims can come and be healed. In obedience to that call, our family of four moved to 70 acres of land in a small rural community in northwest Florida, and there we began construction on the 5,000 square foot RaffaRanch lodge. After almost two years we received our first cancer patients and quickly realized our commission would not be an easy one. Over the next two years we learned much, but continued to see the majority of our guests die. We continually cried out to God to show us how to get the Word in His precious people in their crisis situation, and one day we stumbled on to a television program describing how the subliminal process was helping masses of people use positive affirmation."

The idea came. Could the pure Word of God be used in a similar fashion? After two months of some research and much prayer we knew we had not only a creative idea but a mandate from God to produce a tool that would help heal the sick. The Lord said that I was to be the voice since He could trust my spirit, and use Christian musicians, engineers and studios to create this tape. In June of '88, "The Word Therapy Healing" tape was released and healing reports were immediate; within two weeks a woman was healed of cancer.

To those who, by the way, might have fears that subliminal therapy is of the Devil, Mrs. Fell writes, "Your cautions are justified as you approach subliminal tapes; be assured of this, there is no need to fear our tapes. They are Holy and have the blessing of the Lord on them; we use no hypnosis, no relaxation technique, no New Age, or deceptive practices, simply a modern technological method of multi-track duplication of the pure Word of God. Your first tape will convince you as the anointing will destroy the yoke. If the Apostles were alive today, they would consider word Therapy a scroll of the 90's."

Several Charismatic ministries offer these subliminal tapes; one group called "Renew Ministries" offers continuous play tapes for \$20. A continuous play means you don't have to rewind them; they promise you freedom from doubt, fear, failure, fear of death, guilt, grief, depression, temper, pride, lust, temptation, pornography, procrastination, unforgiveness, rejection, drugs, alcohol, smoking, anger, rebellion, anxiety, panic, judging, homosexuality, scars from child abuse, and molestation, all for \$19.95.

Other Renew tapes promise to speak into being. They will speak into being in your life prosperity, weight loss, peace, healing, self esteem, salvation, marital harmony, surrender to God, acceptance of God's Love, and a closer walk with God. According to Renew, "Bible based subliminal messages hit controlling spirits where they live and command them to leave in Jesus' name and then the void is filled with the Word of God."

Now you might be asking, what are the mechanics of such tapes? Renew puts multiple voices on different tracks, simultaneously chanting a message aimed at indwelling demons. For example, one tape designed for people struggling with homosexuality includes this message, "I speak to you spirits of homosexuality, I curse you and cast you down in the name of Jesus." That message is followed by Scripture verses relating to moral purity and so it goes.

Other companies use variations of that approach. "Life Source," an El Paso based ministry, uses an audible track of ocean waves. Inaudible, subliminal background tracks carry Scripture verses, you can hear the waves, you can't hear the verses. Healing evangelist Vicky Jamison-Peterson of Tulsa, Oklahoma, plays a reading of the entire King James Version New Testament, at a rapid speed on a 60 minute cassette. Imagine, the entire New Testament in 60 minutes. Her brochures promise that positive suggestions are being stored in your belief system at a rate of 100,000 suggestions an hour. You wrap this all up and it's all so easy and it's all so effortless; you put on a tape and you get 100,000 suggestions for your spiritual life, you get cured of every problem you have, you get all the demons chased away, and if you put it on your tie the people who see your tie are going to get saved. This is all so painless, it's all so easy. Supposedly you can absorb Scripture without ever paying attention to it. You can get involved in spiritual development, spiritual growth, miracles, and so forth without ever opening your Bible. Things like fervent prayer and diligent holiness, and earnest devotion, and careful study, and conscientious meditation on the things of God are rendered unnecessary by this approach.

It used to be that losing weight required self control and some discipline. Now we're told a continuous play tape can exercise demons of fat and gluttony for you and there's absolutely nothing to it; pay the money and you're delivered. More important, it used to be that faith and spiritual understanding and righteousness were pursued through disciplined lives of devotion and study and prayer, and now the proponents of subliminal therapy promise holiness can happen to you even while sleep.

Subliminal sanctification and the Charismatic movement seem to be good partners; they fit together perfectly. From the very beginning Charismatic movements, whichever of them have promised primarily shortcuts to spiritual maturity. One of the greatest attractions of the Charismatic movement has always been that it offers believers power, understanding, and spirituality immediately through some kind of experience; and if you just have the experience you've got it, without the time, without the pain, without the progress, without the struggle that's natural to any growth process.

The question is, is this really a shortcut to sanctification? Can a believer receive subliminal messages, a divine jolt, or some other kind of quick, immediate power boost and be instantly brought out of infancy into maturity? The answer is, not according to Scripture. For the typical Charismatic the gateway to spirituality is through an experience, and that experience is usually defined as the baptism of the Spirit with speaking in Tongues. They tell us that if you have that experience you're zapped. It accurately describes the way most Charismatics view sanctification; they think you go along in your

Christian life until you get the baptism of the Spirit, speak in tongues, you've got the zap and then you've been elevated to sanctification. Some would go so far as to say you've reached the second level of grace.

There are many Charismatics who will even use the word zap and say, "Well, may Jesus zap you." I had the occasion; it was a strange and bizarre one, to be invited to speak at the Full Gospel Businessmen's Luncheon, that is a Charismatic group. They were having their Southern California luncheon and somebody in the group thought that I had had the gift of tongues, that somewhere along the line I had gotten the baptism of the Spirit and had spoken in tongues; and they invited me to be the speaker.

They asked me to speak on "Speaking in Tongues." This is true and this was when Jay Letty was still on our church staff and he went with me. I thought they were just open and wanted to hear the other side. They thought I had the gift, and so I went and they had a nice lunch and after lunch I got up, and I launched into my Biblical discussion on the reality of what the Bible says about tongues. I could note there was a severe amount of nervousness and movement in the crowd, and I didn't know why because I thought these gracious people just wanted to know what the other side believes.

So I continued to wax eloquent about what I believed the Bible was teaching about the cessation of the gift of tongues, and that it had no part for today and that it was a false standard of spirituality and things like that. It was the only time that I can remember in my ministry that I was literally, physically, pulled out of the pulpit. A man grabbed my arm and pulled me out and pulled me down in a chair before I was finished, and he got up and he said, "We've got to stop and have prayer for this brother because he's deceived and he's confused," and then I was really confused because I thought that I was doing what they expected me to do. I'll never forget his prayer. He started out by saying, "We want to pray for this brother, that sometime soon, in the middle of the night, the Holy Spirit will zap him." That's exactly what he said and that's what he prayed, so I have heard that term used.

Charismatic evangelist, Norvel Hayes, explained what happened when he got his zap, "God came on me so strong and started blessing me so much, I just fell on my knees and began crying and weeping and getting blessed. I found out God loves me and He was petting me because I obeyed the Holy Spirit."

That's somewhat like the experience of many. Unfortunately, the Charismatic movement has divided Christianity into two levels, the zapped and the unzapped, and the zapped believe they are at least a bit more spiritual than the unzapped. Like it or not, the effect has been severely schismatic. Some of the unzapped wonder why they don't have the experiences that their Charismatic friends describe. Charismatics argue that unless you have the baptism of the Holy Spirit with tongues, you can't function the way God really wants you to; you're missing something. If, on the other hand, you do have the baptism of the Spirit with tongues, you've been elevated to a level of spirituality and

sanctification.

A good example of this particular kind of viewpoint is Melvin Hodges' book called "Spiritual Gifts" and I quote, "While the full manifestation of a person's gift and 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. We must not lose sight of the fact that in the New Testament, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, with the Charismatic experience, is considered an essential and primary requisite for a fully developed spiritual life and ministry."

He is doing deference to people like me and others who have some kind of a ministry, because you can't just flatly deny that people have a ministry, but it is a second class ministry, it is a partial measure of spiritual ministry, an incomplete manifestation of spiritual gifts and endowments because we have never had the culminating Pentecostal gift of the baptism of the Spirit and that zap.

Now are these people correct when they say this? Is there a gap between Christians? Are there two levels? Do the Charismatics have some other level of Spirituality they have attained? Are non-Charismatic Christians somehow mired in the muck of a second classed Christianity? We want to answer that question by considering the Scripture. I think we need to be very direct in going to the Word of God, so that we can understand it. A foundational place to go, and you can turn there in your Bible, and we're going to go through these fairly rapidly, because I know these are truths with which you are familiar, but it's 1 Corinthians 2, and I want to just kind of give you a little bit of a feeling here for some of the terminology that is important to the issue.

1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man."

Paul spent most of 1 Corinthians 2 discussing the difference between the natural man and the spiritual man, and that's the difference between the unsaved and the saved. The unregenerate is the natural man and the regenerate is the spiritual man. The natural man doesn't know God, he is unsaved, isolated in his humanness and sin, and headed for hell. He cannot understand the things of the Spirit. In contrast the spiritual man knows God, understands spiritual things.

Now that is very basic, and what I want you to understand is that according to 1 Corinthians 2, all Christians are what? Spiritual, it's basic; it's basic terminology, that's our position in Christ. We are spiritual, we are alive in the Spirit, we have the life of God within our souls, we possess the Holy Spirit, as Romans 8:6-9 clearly indicates. Again in Romans 8, if we look at that, and I would just draw you there for a brief moment, chapter 8 of Romans to affirm that same thought.

Romans 8:6, "The mind set on the flesh is death, the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, same contrast, the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, it doesn't subject itself to the law of God, it's not even able to do so; those who are in the flesh cannot please God, however you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit."

Then he goes on to say the Spirit of God dwells in you, only two kinds of people, those in the flesh and those in the Spirit. Those in the Spirit are spiritual, and those who are natural are also fleshly. So in the purest, truest, simplest sense, there are only two kinds of people, spiritual people, and natural people, who are also carnal people. The first understanding that I want you to have is that unregenerate people are natural. That is, they live according to human nature and they are carnal or fleshly, they operate out of the flesh, the impulse of the flesh. Christian people are spiritual, the Holy Spirit dwells within them, their inner man has been made alive, they are new creations, they are sensitive to God and alive to spiritual reality. Now that's basic.

Now to be spiritual simply means to be alive to God, to possess the Holy Spirit, and all Christians are spiritual and all non-believers are carnal and natural, but let me take it a step further. It is possible for a spiritual believer to act in a carnal way. In other words, it is possible for us to behave like our old self. We understand that don't we? We still have the remaining flesh, that carnal reality is there and it is very possible that that carnal reality that unredeemed human flesh, can still exercise and exert its power. So I want you to look for a moment at 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Christians are spiritual they just don't always act spiritual. Now that's really contrary to our own new nature.

But Paul says, interesting way he words his words in 1 Corinthians 3:1, "I brethren, couldn't speak to you as to spiritual men, I should have been able to talk to you as spiritual men, but I couldn't, and I had to speak to you as men of flesh. I had to talk to you like you were still unregenerate, as if you were just infantile in Christ."

Obviously, one who is new in Christ, one who is an infant in Christ is going to have a greater struggle with the flesh, right? Then one who is mature in Christ. So he says, "You're acting as if you're brand new baby Christians struggling with the flesh that's continually gaining the victory over you, and I can't even talk to you as spiritual because you have succumbed so frequently to the flesh."

In verse 2, he says, "I can't even give you meat, solid food, I have to give you milk because you can't handle the meat," verse 3, "Because you're still fleshly, since there is a jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshy? 'Fleshly' it says, but 'fleshy' is a good way to translate that and are you not walking like mere men?"

There's the key! He says, "You're walking like natural men; you're acting like you used to act. You're spiritual but you are acting like a natural man, and that is, you are succumbing to the flesh." He should have been able to talk to them as spiritual because they were Christians, but they weren't

acting spiritual; they were not receiving the Word, there was unholiness in their lives; they were behaving carnally, and they had to be dealt with as if they were brand new baby Christians who were still being victimized by the things that used to be a part of their life.

Now all Christians face the same problem, all Christians are spiritual positionally, but we're not always spiritually practically, right? We're alive to God, we sense God, the Spirit lives in us, the life of Christ has manifested itself in us and we're a new creation, but we don't always act like that because we're incarcerated in the unredeemed flesh and it rears its ugly head. I think a good illustration of this is the Apostle Peter, borrowing a little bit from a pre-Church text, but he fits the picture so well. In Matthew 16, Peter recognized Christ as the Son of the Living God, you remember that, and Jesus immediately responded and said, "Blessed are you Simon, and now I am going to change your name to Peter, which meant rock. You are going to be a new person; you are going to be solid like a rock."

But in John 21, a lot later, Jesus met Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and Peter had denied Christ, you know all about that, but Peter, even after the resurrection, was still weak. Before the resurrection he was in a denial state, after the resurrection he was in a disobedient state and he had gone back to fishing and the Lord confronts him and calls him to task and asks him if he loves Him, and if he'll feed His sheep and goes through all of that, and when the Lord talked to him, remember those three times He said, "Do you love Me?" He didn't call him Peter; what did He call him? "Simon! Simon, Simon, Simon!" Why did He do that? After all he had been given a new name, "Rock." I'll tell you why He did it, because he wasn't acting like a rock; he was acting like a Simon. He wasn't acting like a transformed man; he was acting like the guy he used to be. Whenever he acted like the guy he used to be Jesus called him by his old name, which is a pretty vivid reminder.

What Peter had done and what all of us do, from time to time, is temporarily cease from following closely after Christ, even after Pentecost Peter continued to struggle. Do you realize that if you go back to Galatians chapter 2, you read one of the most devastating accounts Galatians 2:11-12; the Apostle Paul had to go nose to nose with Peter and confront him because he was acting in a carnal way and he did that publicly before all those Jews up there, and confronted Peter in Antioch, and that whole thing was so embarrassing to Peter, and it got written in the Bible, as if Peter didn't have enough bad press in the Gospels, he has to show up in the epistles? There he is again getting labeled as this guy who can't seem to get his act together, and he says, "You're acting in a fleshy way."

There is some measure of comfort in that for all of us, to find out that one of the choicest Apostles of all stumbles and bumbles his way around, both before and after Pentecost. We'd like to relegate him to some other dispensation and make ourselves feel more guilty, I guess for our failures, but it's fortunate that he failed after the resurrection and Pentecost just so that we know that this is reality. So it is that we do the same thing; we are new creations and we have been transformed, but very often we act in a fleshy way.

I think the Apostle Paul fully understood this, don't you? In Romans 6-7 he says, "With my mind I served the law of God; with my redeemed nature, but also with my flesh I serve the law of sin or the principle of sin operating in me," and he said, "I can't stand this struggle because I don't want to do what I do and I don't do what I want to do, and I am a wretched man and how am I going to get out of this mess?"

Spirituality, beloved, is not some permanent state that you enter into the minute you get zapped. You are spiritual positionally, but practically you never enter into a permanent state of spirituality. You don't have some zap and become spiritual, spirituality is simply receiving the Living Word daily from God and letting it dwell in you richly and then living it out in the fullness of obedience. It is walking by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. It doesn't say, have one zap and you're set for life, or five zaps, or wait for the next zap, or go to the meeting where they zap you. It just says, "Walk in the Spirit and you'll overcome the flesh."

The word walk is a very important word in the New Testament; it means moment by moment conduct. It's a choice word; you walk one foot at a time, one step at a time. Paul said in Galatians 5:25, "If we live by the Spirit," and we do better to translate, "Since we live by the Spirit, since we're spiritual, then let's just take one step at a time in the power of the Spirit, obedient to the Word which dwells in us richly." Walking speaks about a measured pace, one step at a time, and that's how true spirituality functions, one step at a time, one moment at a time.

A basic mark, just kind of help you follow this through a little bit more, a basic mark of true spirituality is a deep awareness of sin. You know I hear people who say they reach a certain level of being zapped, and now they feel they reached a certain level of holiness. That is a dead giveaway that there is no sense of an understanding of spirituality.

You show me a truly spiritual man and I'll show you a man who is overwhelmed, not with his holiness but with his sinfulness; even though it may appear to everybody else to be less than the rest, it is monumental to a spiritual man. It is not that he now feels himself to have arrived; it is that when he is spiritual he knows full well that he is far from where he ought to be. The spiritual man is aware of his sin.

In Scripture, those who most despise their sinfulness were often those who were the most spiritual. Paul didn't say, "I have arrived at a very high level of spirituality." Paul said, "I am", not was, 1 Timothy 1:1, "The chief sinner." Peter said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," Luke 5:8. Isaiah, the godliest man in his nation said, "Woe is me! Damn me! Curse me! Sentence me to judgment for I am a man with a dirty mouth," Isaiah 6:5. The spiritual man realizes he is in a death struggle with sin, and Paul said, "Look," 1 Corinthians 15:31, "I have to die." How often? "Daily, this war goes on every day and I have to slay this guy name Paul, this fleshly man, who though spiritual in

the inner man is still victimized by his remaining humanness."

The ultimate objective of the spiritual man is to be like Christ and nobody gets there. Paul writes, "Not that I have already obtained it, in this life, not until glory." Paul writes, "Not that I have already obtained it, or have already have become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," Philippians 3:12-14.

What was the goal? Christlikeness and the goal is the prize. The prize is Christlikeness and the goal is Christlikeness. Paul said, "I'm not there, I haven't attained it, I'm pressing toward it." Many Charismatics, however, insist that once you get the baptism of the Spirit, spirituality is yours, but unfortunately it doesn't work that way, so you know what happens? They live under a false assumption of their true spiritual condition.

When the glow of one experience fades they're forced to find another experience, and then another experience, and they find that a second work of grace is not enough, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and so on, and they seem to have diminishing returns, and in their effort to seek something more they often unwittingly abandon the Bible, they unwittingly abandon prayer and the true path of spirituality and they run errantly and wildly down a road of experience that leads to an inevitable increasing carnality.

Charismatic books and pamphlets and articles are filled with testimonies, also of how a certain special experience brought a new degree of spirituality. The testimonies follow something like this, when I was baptized by the Spirit, when I spoke in tongues, then I began to live a more holy life, you've heard that. I had more power, I had more freedom, I had more joy, I had effective witness, more love, more fulfillment as a Christian, I've heard that many, many times.

Although not all Charismatics are consistent on this point, most would strongly connect that with speaking in tongues as a means of obtaining that spirituality, but Scripture just doesn't support that idea. In 1 Corinthians 1:7, Paul commended the Church at Corinth and this is what he said, he said, "You're not lacking in any gift, you are not lacking in any gift." They had all the gifts, they had the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretations of tongues, they had them all in the Corinthian Church, they also had every imaginable spiritual problem. They were spiritual in terms of their gifts, they had spiritual gifts. The true Christians were spiritual in terms of their position, but their actions were carnal and the church was in carnal chaos. You see spirituality isn't related to your gifts or to even some supernatural kind of manifestation through those gifts of miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation.

The Corinthian believers of the first century were not unique; Christians today face similar problems. We are saved, we have the Holy Spirit, we have certain spiritual gifts but we still struggle with the flesh. Your spiritual gift doesn't change your struggle with the flesh at all. If tongues is a spiritual gift then why in the world would tongues change your spiritual struggle? It certainly didn't do anything for the Corinthians; they were still fleshly carnal.

He said that to them in chapter 3, as I read a little bit ago, "You have all the gifts and you're carnal." So even having the gift of tongues has no relationship to your spirituality. Do you see that? It doesn't have any relationship to it. No spiritual gift will guarantee that you're going to win the struggle and live on a supernatural spiritual plain. The only way you can win the spiritual battle and live according to your position as a spiritual being, having been transformed, is to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill," what? "The lusts of the flesh."

You overcome the flesh by a daily, step by step obedience to the Spirit of God, and I have to say that any discerning Charismatic will, and perhaps some do, admit that he or she has just as much trouble with the flesh and the appetites and lusts and desires of the flesh as anybody else. Enthusiasm, euphoria, fervor, excitement, emotion, all of that stuff, all the things Charismatics tend to equate with spiritual intensity, have no power to restrain lusts, no power to conquer pride, no power to overcome selfishness, no power to deal with greed; none at all.

Charismatics, whose only strength is drawn from the last high, the last experience, in fact, are more likely to be spiritually weak and spiritually immature. Dr. Charles Smith, who is now with the Lord, was the Dean of our seminary points out, and I quote, "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. Amy Simple McPherson started the Four Square Church, 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 of the serious problems of the Pentecostal movement has been the fact that many of its leaders have fallen into immorality. One well known Pentecostal preacher, a woman widowed for three years, professed to be with child by the Holy Ghost. Parham, father of the modern Pentecostal movement was arrested for the grossest of immoralities."

Now what he is pointing out is something we continue to see played out on the scene today, right? This problem of gross immorality, this problem of lifestyle totally inconsistent with spirituality; what you've got here are people who are getting zapped all the time but on the contrary are not only not spiritual, but tend to give manifestations of unspiritual lives, carnal fleshly lives that are preoccupied with lust, pride, selfishness, and greed. To compound the difficulty, when they stumble they're not even likely to take the responsibility for it. They're going to blame demonic power, rather than examining their theology or their fleshly will or their Biblical ignorance.

With all their claims of new power and a new level of spirituality the Charismatics have no guarantee that any of their ecstatic experiences will put them in any kind of lasting spiritual condition. Now please understand I'm not saying there aren't people in the Charismatic movement who are spiritual, there are, there are people who are in those churches who walk in the Spirit because they love Christ truly, they study His word, but the upper echelon propagation, the stuff they're telling people and the party line, if you will, about spirituality is not legitimate.

No matter what kind of experience they think they've had, no matter how often they speak in tongues, and no matter how frequently they get slain in the Spirit. One of their leaders said, "If you're not slain in the Spirit every week, you're never going to be able to live the Christian life." No matter how many times they fall over backwards they still face the same challenge given to every Christian, they have to walk in the power of the Spirit and obedience to the Word which they understand, die to self and sin everyday.

There isn't any shortcut, and I want to submit to you that begins with the mind and not the emotion. That begins with an understanding of truth, an understanding of Scripture, an understanding of God, and Christ, and man, and sin, and the Holy Spirit. It starts with the mind. Unfortunately there's so much doctrinal ignorance in the movement that the people are trying to function without an understanding of who God is, who Christ is, what the Bible teaches about the Spirit and spiritual life. How many people join that movement because they've been promised an easy answer to problems and a quick and easy path to instant godliness? It's sad; sometimes I look at it and I think it's more giddy than godly. You can turn on almost any night on Charismatic television and see it.

It's emphasizing amusement and frivolity, and there is a lot of laughing and sort of breathless gushing and time for silliness, bafoonery, and shallow talk. You look at the expensive lavish clothing and the whole scene that goes with it, the behavior, so many women who seem, to me at least, to violate most everything that is taught in 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2, and I get embarrassed because I know the watching world is looking at this and assuming that this is Christianity. I mean, this has got to be Christianity, it says it is. There's nothing wrong with being happy, I am a happy person. I mean I'm always happy. In fact, I've always said that, "I think God has taken happiness from a whole lot of people just to give it to me because I have more than anyone could imagine."

There's nothing wrong with praising God and laughing and feeling self fulfilled, and enjoying your Christian life and enjoying life in general. But, it seems to me that many in the Charismatic movement seem so determined to pursue the emotional high, the quick thrill, the exciting event, the electrifying moment, the exhilarating conference, that they don't know anything about the serious part of spiritual life. They don't know about the consistent walk with God that deals with the reality of your life, and therefore, they've given up the rich rewards of that walk, and they've settled for a superficial frivolity, sort of a cheap substitute, and gaiety is no substitute for godliness.

Real godliness doesn't carry with it some kind of silly emotional high. Again I say, that the truly spiritual and truly godly person pursues righteousness with a burning sense of conviction, with a deep awareness of his own sin, and when the Spirit of God is at work there's deep joy, but there's also a sort of corresponding profound sorrow.

Walter Chantry has aptly written and I quote from him, "When the Holy Spirit comes to sinful men, He initially brings sorrow, but in Charismatic circles there's only the boast of rapid transport to joy and peace. Any religious experiences which bring immediate rejoicing and uninterrupted cheerfulness are not to be trusted. There is much more to spirituality than a lifting of the spirits and the entering into the exuberant life and in extending one's succession of thrilling experiences. Yet, in many of the popular neo-Pentecostal societies, you'll look in vain for anything else. No one who has God's spirit can walk through our world without deep groanings of sorrow and distress when the stench of immorality feels his nostrils. The spirit filled man cannot be happy, happy, happy, all the day. If the Spirit were to come powerfully today, it would not be to make men clap their hands for joy but to make them smite their breasts in sorrow."

Chantry adds, "He's not the jolly spirit, He's the Holy Spirit." Charismatics usually give the impression however, that it's more jolly than holy, and I don't want to be ungracious to those in the movement who are genuine, and there are many but the face of Charismaticism that we see cast before us projects so much of this. Meanwhile, the self indulgence in moderation gets louder, gaudier, flashier, and more eccentric, the trend I don't see as the fruit of genuine godliness.

One of the most unfortunate characteristics of this movement is the continual emphasis also on the astonishing, and the dramatic, and the sensational, and the idea that that's got to be the part of everyday life. The effect really is to intimidate anybody who is not getting the same kind of results, tongues and prophecies and spiritual pyrotechnics and whatever else is going on, miraculously filled fuel tanks and audible voices from God and all that. There are people; you've got to know that those churches are filled with people who don't quite have that spectacular list of events on their weekly schedule. They're getting, frankly, not any spectacular things at all and they live through a dry spell. You've got to wonder what they think and how unfulfilling; sad of heart they find themselves.

The Apostle Paul knew what it was to be scorned, and he knew what it was to be intimidated by people who felt they had attained a higher level than he. Did you know that? 2 Corinthians, you don't have to turn to it, we don't have time, but in 2 Corinthians you read chapter 9 to the end, and Paul talks about the super Apostles. Remember he had poured out 18 months of his life and love establishing the Corinthian Church and when he wrote back two letters, obviously there were so many problems. The worst of it, from his viewpoint, was that some guys had risen in the church who wanted to destroy Paul. Their whole view was that Paul was not an honorable man and that they had reached a higher level of spirituality than he and they were the super Apostles. By the way, the leader of that group, I believe, was the thorn in the flesh, the messenger from Satan that really tore him up.

They came to town while he was gone, or they rose from the congregation while he was gone, they were the new guys. They love to extol themselves and elevate themselves, they had the power, they had the experience, they had the ecstasies. They had swept the Corinthian believers off their feet and it broke the heart of Paul because people in the church were believing them and following them and turning their back on Paul, and it all came back to Paul that his spirituality was in question. He didn't measure up to the superstars; he didn't measure up to these new guys, they were saying that Paul couldn't play in their league. How did Paul respond? He didn't rattle off a list of healings or other miracles he had performed, instead he presented his credentials. He didn't say, well I've raised five and you know, healed 1,000. I've cast demons out of 1,500 and here's a few illustrations.

You know what he said? He said, "I want to present my credentials. Five times I received 39 lashes. Three times I've been beaten with rods, once I had been stoned and left for dead, three times I've been shipwrecked, I've spent a night and a day in the sea. I've been hungry and sleepless; I've been in danger from robbers and Gentiles and even my own countrymen. I've been run out of town more times than I can even remember. I've got a thorn in the flesh that the Lord won't even take away and I've asked Him three times. Well you know what? Do you want to know my credentials? I am well content with weakness, insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties for Christ's sake, for when I'm weak then I'm strong. I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually, I should have been commended by you for in no respect was I inferior to the most imminent Apostles, even though I am a nobody.

Wow, what an amazing list of credentials. It seems to me very doubtful that Paul would have made much of a guest on a Charismatic television show. Instead of being slain in the Spirit he was almost slain in the body over and over again. He couldn't even remember his visions; he couldn't even get on to tell them. 2Corinthians 12:1-4 he mentioned being caught up to the third heaven 14 years before, but he couldn't remember the details. Now how are you going to make a career out of that if you can't even remember what happened? Instead of emphasizing his miraculous trip to the third heaven and back, he wanted to talk about his weakness, and he wanted to talk about his pain, because all of that weakness and all of that pain put all the glory in the place it should be, gave it to God. That's the kind of true spirituality that is missing in the movement, and that's the kind of true spirituality that doesn't make it on the best seller chart.

According to Paul, his life was weak, his life was wretched, his life was desperate, he was humble, he was the chief sinner, he was in a constant state of stress, tension, fear, even misery from the time he came to Christ until his head got cut off. The same is true of the other Apostles; Peter, James, John. You never find anywhere some kind of catalog of all their escapades. See, they learned that true spirituality was walking humbly before God in the power of the Holy Spirit, that's where spirituality is.

Well, there's much more to be said, but I just remind you that perhaps the best and clearest definition of true spirituality comes in the simple statement of Ephesians 5, which says, "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." I wish we had time to go into all that that means but allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life is the essential issue, and that comes when you submit yourself to the Word of God. The path to true spirituality is through the Word, prayer, daily step by step commitment to the Holy Spirit.

Aesop told about a dog who was crossing a bridge with a bone in his mouth. He looked over the edge; saw the reflection in the clear stream. The bone in the water looked better than the one in his mouth, so he gave up the reality for the reflection.

My great fear is that there are many Christians who with great zeal and lacking knowledge are doing the very same thing. A false standard of spirituality will not restrain your flesh; witnesses are abundant to prove that. The only way to restrain your flesh and gain victory is true spirituality. Again I say, the path is through the Word and prayer to a daily walk with the Spirit. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, just touching these things tonight reminds us that even while we're endeavoring to understand a movement that we feel doesn't honor You we don't want to leave it at that, we want to bring this into our own hearts and ask if we're on the path of true spirituality to the place of true obedience, if we're walking in the Spirit so that we don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Since we are spiritual and the Spirit dwells within us we must walk according to His will. So Father, may the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, and may that Word become the controlling principle that moves through our mind to our volition and yields our body and our mind to the controlling Spirit. May we know true spirituality, we who are spiritual, and give no occasion to the flesh, that we might live to Your glory for Jesus sake, Amen.

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