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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Illumination, or How Can I Understand the Bible?”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Heavenly Father we thank Thee that we're able to come together again with the open Bible before us. We thank Thee for its message concerning Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for the fact that it is clear and plain to the Holy Spirit and may Lord he be our teacher as he instructs us in the things for which he is responsible. May our hearts also be open to him and may we be able to not only apprehend and comprehend, but apply the truth that we study and may they become our own.

This we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject as we continue our series in Systematic Theology is “Illumination or How Can I Understand the Bible?” Let's turn, for a Scripture reference, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and let's read beginning with the sixth verse through the fourth verse of the third chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 6.

Now just one word of introduction before we read, as you know 1 Corinthians was written primarily to allow the apostle to express his opinion on certain problems which were troubling the church at Corinth. And one of the things that was troubling them had to do with the gospel message itself. And in the course of these opening chapters the apostle points out that his message is not a human philosophy. That it really

is a divine revelation of salvation. And in the course of outlining this he talks about the wisdom of God, contrasting it with the wisdom of man. For you see if you were speaking to a very intellectual kind of man and you said to him, "The gospel is not a philosophy as human philosophies, it is a divine revelation of salvation," he might wonder if there was really any challenge to the intellect in the gospel at all.

And so the apostle points out that while the gospel is the salvation and not a philosophy, it does contain a wisdom, it is really a philosophy but it is a different kind of philosophy. It is the wisdom of God. It is divine philosophy. And in the course of setting this forth he gives us a great deal of help, perhaps the greatest help that we have in all the Bible, and how to understand this divine philosophy, this divine wisdom which is revealed to us by God.

So now let's begin with the sixth verse because the apostle is now pointing out to them that the gospel, while it is not wisdom in the human sense, it does contain one -- verse 6;

"However we speak wisdom among them that are perfect. Yet thou the wisdom of this age nor of the princes' of this age -- that come to nothing -- but we speak the wisdom of God and a mystery. Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages unto our glory which none of the princes' of this age new for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, I have not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit. For the spirit searcheth all things yea the deep things of God; for what man knoweth the things of a man except the spirit of man, which is any, even so the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God. Now we have received not the Spirit of the world but the Spirit who is of God. That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God which things also we speak, not in words which man wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit

teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. For 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. But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord that we instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal. Even as unto babes in Christ, I have fed you with milk and not with solid food, for to this time you were not able to bare it, neither yet now are ye able. For you are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are you not carnal and walk as men?”

We’ve been talking about revelation, inspiration and illumination. And we must keep these three important words straight in our mind. Revelation remember, has to do with God’s truth to man. Inspiration has to do with the means whereby God secured an infallible communication of his revelation to man. Illumination has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to understand the inspired revelation. To put it in a popular way, Illumination is the divine side of the understanding of the Bible. Interpretation is the human effort. Illumination is the divine activity. So what we’ve been trying to say is this; that God has given to us divine revelation. Next that is divine revelation has come to us by inspiration.

Now we approach this divine revelation given to us by inspiration in two ways -- from the human standpoint we seek to interpret it; we read it, we look at the words, we notice the grammatical relationship one to another, we may use our dictionaries, our concordances, we may even use our Greek or Hebrew if we have such capacities and we seek to interpret the words of Scripture. That is the human effort.

However, that is insufficient in itself. We need divine illumination. That is, the divine activity, and that is preeminent, as a matter of fact it take precedence over interpretation insofar as the findings of the mind of God is concerned. But both are

necessary, and we cannot exclude either one. We cannot have illumination without interpretation, and we can hardly have interpretation without illumination. They go hand in hand. They are the human side and the divine side of the understanding of the Bible.

The important passage on the subject of illumination in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14 through chapter 3, verse 4. But since these verses are part of the larger section, I’ve put on the board the outline, 1 Corinthians 2:6 through 3 and 4 and in this -- this is a simple outline of this passage -- we have first of all the description of God’s wisdom in verses 6 through 12. We have the communication of this wisdom described in verse 13. We have the apostle’s -- what shall I say? -- his expression of how we perceive it in verses 14 through 16 and then in verses 1 through 4 in chapter of chapter 3 he applies this truth to the Corinthians. You will notice he says, “And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual.”

So let’s take a look at the verses now and we’re just going to meander through them tonight. And I’m going to stop here and there and I’m going to talk about certain things that come up and then we’re going to take a look at the diagram. And I’m going to try to explain it to you so that when you leave you’ll understand what a natural man is. What a carnal, weak man is. What a carnal, willful man is and what a spiritual man is. There are limitations and the remedy for the limitations where they exist. So now let’s begin with verse 6 and here the apostle describes the divine wisdom, “How be it or however we speak wisdom among them that are perfect.”

Now I want you to notice that the apostle begins by using the word “perfect” and he never uses it again in this section. However, in the fifteenth verse he says, “That he who is spiritual judges all things.” And it is evident from this that for the apostle the word “perfect” or “mature” is a synonym for spiritual. Now this will come out further as we go along. But you’ll notice right here in the beginning he’s giving us a clue so that we’ll be able to understand.

Now we must bear this in mind in spite of what we may have been told in our Bible classes elsewhere, what you get here of course is the truth, what you get elsewhere is human interpretation. [Laughter] No, seriously now I just want you to bare this in mind and as we go along pay attention. I'm sorry that's on the tape, but that'll go out all over the country now -- it's a joke. [More laughter]

Now be it we speak wisdom among them that are perfect yet not the wisdom of this age nor of the princes' of this age that come to nothing but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery -- in a secret, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages unto our glory, which none of the princes' of this age knew. It means that Pilate didn't know it. It means that Herod didn't know it, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but as it is written and now the apostle produces, as he fragrantly does an Old Testament passage -- remember it's the Bible for him -- a biblical passage.

It's just as he were to say, as Billy Graham says, "The Bible says." And now the apostle says, "But as the Bible says, I have not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Now notice, what he said about his wisdom is this, "God's wisdom is not some special esoteric wisdom." It is the good news for the perfect that is for the spiritual. It is unto our glory, (verse 7) it is God prepared in verse 9. And it is unknowable by man apart from revelation. I have not seen nor ear heard neither have evident of a heart of man the thing which God hath prepared for those that love him."

Now let's stop for a moment. The way that we perceive truth in the Bible is therefore different from the way that we perceive truth of other types. For example, we use our senses to perceive truth of other types. We perceive with our eyes. We perceive with our ear -- we hear -- with our nose, with our mouth, with our hand; but all of this is insufficient in so far as the understanding of God is concerned. God is spirit and they that

worship him. Worship him in spirit and in truth. Therefore we cannot understand divine truth apart from divine revelation.

Now that is extremely important and that is at the base of the failure often of the scientific man to realize that the scientific approach to Scripture is to approach it as a divine revelation. We cannot understand Scripture as we understand other types of truth. Now I've already commented upon this in so far as it affects revelation. So I think we can move on.

Now in verses 10 and 11 something else is stated. And that is, that it is knowable by the Spirit -- look, "But God hath revealed them unto us by the spirit for the spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God." In other words this truth that is not known by means of the five senses is known by means of divine revelation through the Spirit. Look at the tense, "God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit."

Now this is a *locus classicus* -- if I may use a Latin term -- for the deity and personality of the spirit of God. You will notice it is the Spirit who knows the things of God. Men do not know the things of God. Only God knows the things of God and the spirit of God knows the things of God and therefore he is God. And from this passage we would have to conclude that whatever we might think of the Holy Spirit, we must say, at least, that he is God.

Furthermore, you will notice that the Spirit knows. He is not a divine influence; he is not a thing. I have heard many a Christian through the years think of the Holy Spirit as "it". The Holy Spirit is a person. He knows there are many other attributes that he has and later on we shall look at some of these, but he knows and in sees a person. So we have here some theological information, which Paul throws in, so to speak. The Holy Spirit is God. He is also a person. But also in verse 11 we have his illustration, which is the most important thing for us here. He says, "In order to illustrate this point, that the

Holy Spirit alone knows God, let’s reflect on human experience, for what man knoweth the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him?”

I’ve often heard people give illustrations of this verse like this, “only ants know what transpires in the ant world, only lions know what transpires in the lion world, only tigers know what transpires in the tiger world and therefore only men know what transpires in the human world,” but that isn’t what Paul is talking about. You look at this text carefully and I’m going to make a slight change, “For what man knoweth the things of man except the spirit of the man?” Now, if you just put that little “the” in and it should be from the Greek text, “What man knoweth the things of man except the spirit of the man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.”

Now what he means is this; that no man knows what is transpiring in Lewis Johnson’s heart except the spirit of Lewis Johnson. No man knows what is going on in the mind of “the” man as he listens to me speak except the spirit of “the” man. In other words no one of us really knows what goes on in our hearts but ourselves or as Paul puts it, in our spirit. So he’s talking about the individual and that no one really understands the individual except that individual.

Now then let’s move on, it is revealed to believers though, “But God has revealed unto us by his spirit, for the spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God.” In other words, you cannot know God by the five senses. You can know God only by revelation. No man can know God except the spirit of God. Just as no man can know a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him. But God has given to us the Holy Spirit and by means of the Holy Spirit we have had revealed to us, the things of God. As a matter of fact, the deep things of God. Now notice, he doesn’t say the Spirit will be given to us, he says that God has revealed these things to us because he has already given to us the Holy Spirit. Verse 12, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the spirit who is of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

Now let’s stop for just a moment and try to comprehend what Paul is really saying. What he’s saying is this, that when we have the Holy Spirit, we have “the” teacher of the word of God. Many years ago, when I was at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Chafer used to begin each fall by giving us a series of messages for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, of the opening week, on the subject of the “Ministry of The Holy Spirit” and “The Understanding of the Word of God.” And among the passages that he referred to were passages such as, John 16, he usually had two messages on John 16, verse 8 through verse 11 and then verse 12 through verse 16 and then he gave a message on 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and usually two messages on this particular passage.

And he use to begin on Tuesday morning, and I can still remember the shock that I received when I heard him say this, and he would begin on Tuesday morning with his new students in front of him and he would begin with this statement, after it had been announced that Dr. Chafer’s going to speak to us for the four sessions of the week. He would stand up -- and by the way this was the lecture that Dr. Chafer used, this very one right here. We have borrowed it from the seminary in Believers Chapel and that’s why the preaching is so good, by the way. [Laughter] But anyway, I’m really -- really getting way out on a limb tonight, I know. [Laughter] But anyway, Dr. Chafer, he was just a little fella, and he use to come up to this pulpit right here and he would put his Bible down and then he would very calmly look out on his audience and the faculty was seated behind the lectern and he would say, “Men, we have a faculty of one at Dallas Theological Seminary,” and I could still remember the shock that I received when I heard that, “We have a faculty of one.”

I don’t know whether I thought this, I guess I should have thought this; why you conceited fellow. But then he would go on to say that it was the Holy Spirit who was the teacher of the word of God. And then throughout the week he would point out that the teacher is Holy Spirit and the important thing in the understanding of the word of God is to be in right relationship to that teacher and allow him to teach us.

Now let me tell you this, too. What this means really is that the issue between the believer and the Lord in so far as the understanding of the Bible is concerned is not how much intelligence you have, not how many degrees you may have, not how much brains you possess, but the issue is desire and subjection to the Holy Spirit who dwells within.

Now that is the issue in the understanding of the word of God. That is why that often men with great intellectual abilities and capacities do not understand the Bible nearly so well as someone who has very little intellectual capacity but who has set at the feet of the Holy Spirit and listened as God taught the Scripture. Now that is extremely important and I hope we’ll never forget that in our study of the word of God.

Now the apostle in the thirteenth verse speaks about the communication of this truth. He says, “Which things also we speak, not in words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Now this is the personal application of this great fact in the apostolic preaching. Now this thirteenth verse is capable of being understood in several ways. For example that last clause, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual,” may be also translated, “combining spiritual things with spiritual words.” That is really the classical meaning of the word, translated comparing. And what Paul may be saying, if that is the interpretation, is that he takes spiritual concepts and he puts them in spiritual words. Now that may be what he’s saying, I’m not really sure.

There is a third interpretation besides comparing spiritual things with spiritual and that is to take this word to mean interpreting. And this is a meaning that it has in the Septuagint or the Greek translation of the Old Testament and this is really the one I prefer. And if it means interpreting then what he really is saying is this, “Which things also we speak not in words which mans wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Spirit teacheth.” Interpreting spiritual concepts to those who possess the spirit or to the spiritual, to those who are under his direction, and that seems to make sense, for that

launches an end to a discussion of how you perceive it. So I like to take -- translate that myself, interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men-- or but the natural man.

Now let's take a look at our diagram here. You'll notice I have put in the first column; description and I've listed the four types of men that we're going to see in this passage from 1 Corinthians. Then I have here, the limitation that each one of these men have in so far as the Scripture is concerned and then the remedy of their spiritual condition.

Now notice in verse 14 the apostle states, "But the natural man," (now what kind of a man is a natural man?) If we were to use the term "natural" in the sense in which it is used today it would be the fella who is very loose. That is he's well adjusted, he's very natural, he's not put on and of course the word doesn't mean that in the biblical sense. My standard version is guilty of one of its greivences here it renders that, "The unspiritual man," and of course there's several types of unspiritual man. "The natural man," what kind of man is the natural man? The Greek term is the word "sukekoss," which means soulish -- soulish man -- soulish -- S- O- U- L -- soulish, not like the sole on your shoe, like the soul of man.

Now will you take your Bibles and turn to Jude verse 19 -- Jude verse 19? That's the next to the last book of the Bible and verse 19. Now speaking of men who are false to the truth; Jude writes, these are they who separate themselves; sensual (you notice) sensual. Now that is the same Greek word that is found in 1 Corinthians 2:14, let's just put it; natural, let's translate it that way just for the moment, these be they who separate themselves; natural; soulish. Then notice the next clause; having not the spirit. So I think we can say that the natural man then is the man who does not have the spirit.

Well now, does that tell us anything? If you are a Pentecostal you would say, "Well, he might be a Christian but he just hasn't had -- hasn't had the second blessing." And it's when we yield ourselves to the Lord that the Holy Spirit comes to in dwell us and that occurs after we are converted, often. It is then that we receive the Spirit.

But now the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 8, verse 9 gives us a clue which I think is beyond question, let’s us know that the man who does not have the spirit is not a Christian at all. Romans chapter 8, verse 9, just take a look at it. The last part of that verse reads like this, “But he that hath not the spirit of Christ is (what?) none of his -- He that has not the spirit of Christ is none of his.” In other words the man who does not have the spirit does not belong to Jesus Christ. It’s not a question of an unspiritual man. A Christian man, who is not yielded, is not a Christian at all. So if the natural man is a man who doesn’t have the spirit then the natural man is an unsaved man. He’s not a Christian at all; he’s the non-Christian.

Well now that man, Paul says, does not receive the things of the spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. It’s a wonder that he can’t understand spiritual truth but he doesn’t have the capacity. He doesn’t have the Holy Spirit. And if divine revelation is understood by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, and he doesn’t have the spirit, how can he understand spiritual things?

Have you ever looked at stones under ultraviolet rays? Some years ago I was in Seattle Washington and while there we went up one of the mountains nearby and up near one of the ski lifts there was a man who had a collection of interesting stones and you went up to a little room and they were just ordinary stones when you looked at them they just looked like the types of stones that you could pick up anywhere. But then the lights were turned off and ultraviolet rays were shined on those stones, and those stones fluoresced with the most beautiful color.

Now that is a perfect illustration of the operation of the Holy Spirit and understanding the Bible. The average man who does not have the Holy Spirit when he looks at the Bible; what does he see? Just some old stones, they don’t mean anything to him. I can still remember when I first became interested in spiritual things but was not yet a Christian. Someone told me, Lewis you know you have a kind of logical mind and

also you were -- wanted to study to be a Lawyer perhaps you’d like to understand Romans. And so I thought perhaps Romans is the book for me. And so I opened it up and began to read Romans and when I got to the sixth or seventh chapter I put it down because it meant absolutely nothing to me. It was just like a collection of stones. But then when I put my trust in Jesus Christ, oh what a different book the epistle for the Romans became. It fluoresced and now the beauties that are at Romans are just beyond imagination for me. And just as the ultraviolet rays are the unseen part of the spectral band of lights so the Holy Spirit is the unseen invisible person. But when we look at the Bible under the light of the Holy Spirit, it fluoresces, and it becomes a tremendous rock.

Now I often wonder about people who do not understand anything about the Bible but they say they are believers in Jesus Christ. Is it possible really for a man to be a believer in Jesus Christ and open up the word of God and see nothing in it? It’s very difficult to see how it is possible. “The natural man does not welcome the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” And sometimes I shock people who talk to me. And they say to me when I try to bring them to the word of God and they say, “I don’t understand anything about the Bible; I’ve tried it,” and I usually say, “Well I understand exactly why that’s so, it’s because your dead, because you don’t have the Holy Spirit.” For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, it’s good to do that you know.

Many a person has been converted by having to face up to the truth. This man of course has no limitation because he doesn’t understand anything. What he needs is a new birth. It is by the new birth he receives the Holy Spirit and thus becomes qualified to begin a study of the word of God. Have you ever been to Carlsbad Cavern? You know that Carlsbad in the summer time, I think it’s from about May on, many millions -- I understand that there are from 5 to 8 million bats reside in Carlsbad Cavern. In the afternoon near dusk they go out. They fly out of the opening of that cave and make quite and interesting sound and then they fly out and forage for food and they fly back in.

And if you’ve been down to Carlsbad Caverns you know that when you get about half way down they guide will turn off the lights and you’ll learn the meaning of that scriptural expression, the blackness of darkness forever, because you cannot see your hand before your face but bats are able to fly in and out of all the stalagmites and stalactites with un-airing accuracy. Why? Well, because they have a kind of built in radar, a natural sonar system. They are sounds that you and I cannot hear because we do not have the capacity. They hear vibrations that our ears cannot pick up. And the reason we know this is because if you just tie a bat’s mouth and have him fly, he’ll fly right into the stalagmite or stalactite. He utters sounds, which bounce off of the material within the cave and thus he’s able to guide himself by means of this natural sonar.

Now those little squeaks or those little sounds that the bats utter we cannot hear. You can hear a bat when it squeals with rage but you cannot hear these sounds, which it emits and the Bible is just like that to the man who doesn’t have the Holy Spirit. The truth is there right before his eyes but he doesn’t have the Holy Spirit, he doesn’t have the capacity for understanding it. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God they are foolishness unto him, stupidified to him because they are spiritually discerned. Understood, I remember Dr. Chafer used to say, “Understood by the Spirit.”

Now, let’s skip to verse 1 of chapter 3, “And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal even as unto babes in Christ.” Now here the word is different. This word is the word for flesh. It is -- well let me erase the outline, I can do that I think -- it is the word *sarx*. Now this word means “Flesh” -- “Flesh.” So he says, “And I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto men of the flesh, carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.”

Now notice, he’s talking about believers. He says, “And I brethren, babes in Christ.” Now I think we can see this without going into a great deal of detail, that this second class of person is a man who is dominated by his flesh and he is weak because he is a babe. So let’s just call him “carnal-weak.” In some of the Greek manuscripts by the

way a different word is used in verse 1 from the word carnal in verse 3. And if that is the true text then we can say there are two kinds of carnality one is -- this one word means fleshend and the other means flesh labored. We don’t have to use a different reading here. I just want to mention that. This first word fleshend is a word that stresses the material of the flesh and so if that’s the meaning in verse 1, it means and I brethren could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto fleshened. Men characterized by the material of flesh. The essence of flesh of course is its weakness. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. But we don’t need that because Paul says they are babes and they are weak.

Now, what is their capacity? Paul says, “I could not speak unto spiritual but as unto carnal even as unto babes of Christ, I have fed you with milk and not with solid food for to this time you are not able to bear it neither yet now are you able.” So this man is a Christian because he is a brother and he’s a babe in Christ but he cannot understand -- he cannot receive the solid food of the Bible. He cannot understand the meat of the word. He is limited to milk, like a little baby on a bottle.

Our churches are full of Christians who are sitting in our pews with little bottles. Like Mr. Tidbottom’s spectacles -- remember Mr. Tidbottom’s spectacles? When you put on Mr. Tidbottoms’ spectacles you could see who could see people as they really were. And if you looked at one person you’d see the bank book because that was the thing that dominated him, and if you looked at another person you’d see a golf ball because that’s the thing that dominated him -- his golf and so on. And so if you had Mr. Tidbottom’s spectacles and you were able to look at many of our evangelical congregations you know what you’d see? A lot of little infants with a bottle in their mouth just like this; they cannot understand anything more than that. WHAA! That’s what would be going on. Carnal, weak -- milk.

Now of course what does a babe need? Well, a babe needs milk to grow. Milk is a very proper diet for a baby -- for a healthy baby. They have to pass through that stage.

So there's nothing wrong with being carnal weak if it's a recent birth. That's perfectly all right. To tell you the truth, I really like to have in the congregation a lot like this because it's a good healthy congregation when there are lots of infants freshly born, yelling for the milk of the word.

Now I want to say something here to help you a little bit. You know, a lot of people think that the milk of the word is the, well what would you say, something like Psalm 23 or maybe the first chapter of the gospel of John or the signs of the Gospel of John and so forth. But you know what is Paul's definition of the milk? Well if we had Paul here with us he would tell us a lot more perhaps but we can learn one thing from his epistle. You know what it is? 1 Corinthians' milk, he says neither yet now are you able to take solid food. And so he gives them 1 Corinthians.

So what do we have in 1 Corinthians? Well, we have these four chapters on the wisdom of God and how you understand it. Then we have a chapter on biblical discipline in the church. Then we have a chapter on going to law with believers. Then we have a chapter on divorce; questions like this. Then we have a few chapters on meat sacrifice to idols. Then we have a chapter on the Lord's Supper and how you ought to observe it. Then we have a chapter on spiritual gifts -- spiritual gifts; the milk of the word -- the milk of the word; spiritual gifts. What is your spiritual gift? You know what it is? The first thing that you need to know; Christian faith, what is my spiritual gift and it's use in the local church? And then the doctrine of the resurrection, the rapture of the church, that's milk -- milk, all that's milk. What classification are you? But we have to hurry, verse 3 -- if we don't get through we'll finish it next time, -- "For ye are yet carnal (notice) I have fed you with milk and not with solid food to this time you were not able to bare it neither yet now are ye able for ye are still carnal."

Now you know what this means? Pure lapse of time does not make us mature. You knew that, but you need it called to your attention. You can be in the church fifty years and not grow. A few years ago I talked to a Baptist deacon, fine Christian man

now, he was a Christian then. But do you know that until Billy Graham came to town and he happened to mention in one of his messages, in 1952, that it was not necessary to go down front in the church in order to be saved. Until Billy Graham made that statement, this fella believed that it was necessary to that in order to be saved.

And he told me afterwards, he said, "You know Lewis I was forty years -- and I said fifty -- I was forty years a deacon in the Baptist Church and I was shocked out of my wits when I heard him say that," and that was one of the things that began to open his eyes to the study of the word of God. For forty years a deacon in the church and didn't know the simplest little thing like that. Well, Paul said in verse 3, "For you are still carnal, for whereas there is among you envying, strife, division, are yee not carnal and walk as men?"

Now here is a group, which are carnal, but they're not carnal because they've recently been born again, they're carnal because they've persisted in a state of in subjection to God. They are carnal willful. The other word that is used in the Greek text here is a word that means fleshly, in verse 3. Dominated by the flesh, dominated by its appetites, by its lusts, carnal willful, what can they take? They cannot take anything but the will either but for them it's unnatural. They are retarded children.

Now it's good to have a congregation of infants who've just been born again -- babes. But when babyhood stretches on into time, months -- years, then it's very sad isn't it? Nothing is sadder than a retarded child. Someone in the audience may have a retarded child; you know how sad it is. I have some friends that have retarded children. I don't know of any trial that is harder than this to bear. Retardation is a very terrible thing.

Now that is what the carnal willful Christian is. The Christian whose born again, an infant, but now has lapsed into sin and that sin has persisted and persisted and persisted, so now he's carnal willful. But what is the need? Well his need is to confess his sin. God says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now that is the equivalent of going to the doctor naturally and taking some medicine. Treatment, and the treatment spiritually is confession, then health returns and growth is possible.

Now in verse 15 of chapter 2 Paul has stated, “But he that is spiritual judges all things, he discerns all things yet he himself is judged of no man,” that is who is not spiritual, so the spiritual man is the man who judges all things. He is able to understand all of the word of God, its milk and its meat. He is not limited, he is able to take the meat consequently he’s healthy, there is no remedy needed for him. Now you can see then that there are four types of men -- natural, carnal weak, carnal willful and spiritual, for the mature man.

Now sometimes it is stated that a babe can be spiritual. That is not true to the word of God. A baby may be healthy, but spirituality has to do with growth. It’s just like natural life. The person who is not born at all doesn’t exist and so in the sight of God the man who is not born again doesn’t exist. The man who is born again is born again as an infant, he may be a healthy infant and that’s what he should be, but he’s still an infant. And he always is an infant for a time and he must pass through that state. Then by taking the food, he grew from infancy to maturity. And so in the spiritual realm no baby is ever spiritual, just as no natural baby is ever what you want a baby to be ultimately. Babies are dirty, come on now admit it; babies are messy aren’t they? They are just as messy as they can be. Do you know why? They don’t understand the word of God, that’s why. They have not yet learned the Scriptures and because they have not yet learned the Scriptures they make all kinds of horrible, spiritual errors.

When I went in the insurance business, I was a college graduate; I went in my father’s business, I’d heard insurance all of my life. My grandfather was an insurance man, my father was an insurance man and when I went in, I was an insurance infant. And for the first six months of my work in the insurance business I was utterly useless to the company, they paid me a salary but I wasn’t worth anything, I didn’t know anything.

Every time I picked up a daily report I filed it in the wrong place or did something you know that -- I imagine in the office over there they might still be looking for some of the things that I filed twenty five years ago. And it's the same thing in the spiritual life and that's why you should never be carried away by young Christians. They have a lot of vitality, a lot of health, so what kind of man are you? Natural -- I don't suppose any of you are in this room, carnal, weak, new, Christian -- wonderful, what you need is milk. Take your bottle and grow, stay healthy, -- carnal, willful, persisting in sin -- then you need to confess your sin and get back on the bottle and grow -- and if you're spiritual, of course, the meat of the word is yours and as you grow you become more and more useful to the Lord.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for these wonderful words concerning the types of men in the word of God. And we thank Thee Lord that through these means that Thou hast set forth in the word, we may approach the word of God with the hope of understanding, help us Lord to be spiritual again, by growth, and may as we reach maturity we become useful to Thee.

For Jesus' sake. Amen [End tape]