



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

“The Issue of Spiritual Gifts”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the privilege of coming together to study the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the confidence that they do give us as we reflect upon the promises of the word of God. And we thank Thee, Lord, that, to our knowledge and to our experience, Thou hast stood behind all of the promises that are in that book. We count upon them. And down through the centuries, the Christian believers have made the same testimony that the word of God has been proven to be the word of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and through the experiences of the saints of our Lord.

We thank Thee for all that [name redacted] and her family have meant to this church. We thank Thee for [name redacted]. We pray for her family. We ask thy blessing upon them. We pray that thou will sustain them in these days. And we pray that the testimony given at the memorial service may glorify our Lord.

We pray for [name redacted]’s mother and ask Thy blessing upon her, and we pray for the doctors who minister to her. We pray that if it be Thy will thou wily minister in a very favorable way and restore her to health. [Name redacted], we pray may by Thy grace, live in a way that will be very, very pleasing to her and to her family. We pray that Thou will sustain [name redacted], and we ask for thy blessing upon their whole family. We commit them to Thee.

We pray now Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word this evening.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Returning to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And tonight, because of the difficulty of this subject, I’m not going to do what I thought I would do, which I had done previously, take the first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 12. But I am going to rather concentrate on the first three verses, which are something of an introduction to this important subject which is taken up here. And then again the spiritual gifts are taken up in the next chapter and the 14th chapter. And so we hope by Thy help, we may be able to do justice to them.

While I was vacationing, I was reading a book by Peter Masters, who is the pastor of The Tabernacle in London called *The Healing Epidemic*. And Dr. Masters’s comments on several things that I think might be of interest to you as you think about spiritual gifts. One of the things he points out, which I think is true, at least from my experience, is there is a radical difference in the ecclesiastical scene today from the way in which evangelicalism appeared to be twenty to twenty-five years ago.

He comments on the fact that noncharismatic evangelicals, twenty-five years ago, were able to have some fairly close fellowship with old-fashioned Pentecostals. They held the same general doctrines. The old-fashioned Pentecostals believed the Bible, sought to follow the Bible. Their Pentecostalism was a very mild kind of Pentecostalism. And consequently, the old-fashioned Pentecostals and evangelicals often had a great deal of common views on many points and enjoyed fellowship together to that extent.

But today he says it’s quite a bit different as a result of the changes that have taken place in Pentecostalism. And today, the kind of Pentecostalism is a much more radical kind, and consequently, it’s very difficult for evangelicals to have the kind of fellowship that they had with Pentecostals twenty-five years ago. Today the difference is very, very significant. The new type or new brand of Pentecostalism could be called

the Charismatic renewal movement and great stress is resting upon things with which most evangelicals would not be in harmony.

Dr. Masters points out that, so far as he is concerned, Satan has several aims, at least as he sees it, in this movement, this Charismatic renewal movement. And first of all, he says, in his opinion, that one of the aims that he perceives is to take away any serious respect for Scripture.

Now, there is no question about the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture so far as the use of the term is concerned, but it’s really the authority of Scripture that has become the issue, because there are individuals who say, Yes, we believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but the authority of the teaching of the word of God does not grip them as divine authority should grip them.

We know, of course, that that exists in other areas. Mormons will frequently say we believe in the Bible, but the authority of the Bible is another matter. Dr. Masters goes on to say that he feels that Satan’s goal at the present time is also to greatly increase the credulousness of Christian people.

Now, I don’t know whether that is Satan’s goal or not, but it appears to me that that has taken place. In evangelicalism, it’s much easier today for evangelicals to be led astray by false doctrine. I personally think -- and this is only my personal viewpoint -- I personally believe that the reason is that evangelicals are not reading the Bible much these days. They are not really studying the Bible much. Sometimes they are reading books about the Bible, but a lot of times they are just attending evangelical services. And they are -- therefore are not themselves involved in the study of the Scriptures and pondering the words that are found in the Scriptures. I think I can prove that if we had plenty of time to do it and certainly experientially.

I know that in my own life I have more difficulty reading the Bible than I did twenty-five years ago. I don’t know whether that’s what Dr. Masters is talking about, but it certainly seems to me that Christian people today are much more reliable -- I mean,

evangelical people today are much more liable to go off into weird doctrines and hold strange ideas than they were twenty-five years ago.

He also says that one of the aims, in his opinion, is to destroy all true worship. That is, “Worship full of intelligent appreciation and adoration of our glorious God,” as he puts it. He underlines that fact “intelligent worship;” that is, worship in which we understand why we are worshipping as we do and understand the things that make up our worship. The doctrines that we hold to, the doctrines that we seek to see exhibited in the meetings of the church and in the preaching of the word of God. I think that that is also true that the kind of worship that exists today is not the kind or worship that the Scriptures set forth. We all know there are many ways in which the church meets today that one wonders if, at the individuals who meet in that way, can still say that they do believe the Bible, and they do believe in Jesus Christ because their worship does not appear to have a great deal of relationship to the worship that is set forth in Scripture. And, furthermore, a great deal of relationship to the worship of the Christian church as we have known it historically down through the centuries.

He also comments, interestingly to me at least -- perhaps you know all of these things -- upon the influence of Paul Yonggi-Cho, the pastor of the largest church in the world, the Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, Korea, which at the latest report is supposed to have now about five hundred thousand members, maybe more than that now because the book is a few years old. One of the things that he’s known for is for his views concerning visualizing the answers to our prayer. One of the sections in it is a description of how he learned how to pray. When he began to pastor his church in Seoul, he was very poor and living in one room. Then he wondered what he was doing, trying to work without a bed, a desk, and chair, or any means of transport. And he began to pray to God for these things to be supplied. He prayed very much for a desk, a chair, and a bicycle. And after six months, he was still lacking all three and became very discouraged. He tells us -- and these are Mr. Cho’s words, “Then I sat down and began to

cry, suddenly I felt a serenity, a feeling of tranquility came into my soul. Whenever I have had that kind of feeling, a sense of the presence of God, he always speaks, so I waited.

“Then that still small voice welled up in my soul and the Spirit said, ‘My son, I heard your prayer a long time ago.’

“Right away I blurted out, ‘Then where are my desk, chair, and bicycle?’”

The Spirit then said -- now this is a man having a conversation with the Spirit of God. That’s rather unusual. And the Spirit speaks and he speaks back. “The Spirit said, ‘Yes, that is the trouble with you and with all my children. They beg me, demanding every kind of request, but they ask in such vague terms that I can’t answer. Don’t you know that there are dozens of kinds of desks, chairs, and bicycles? But you’ve simply asked me for a desk, a chair, and a bicycle. You never ordered a specific desk, chair, and bicycle.’” He said that was the turning point in his life. It’s almost as if the Lord really didn’t know what he wanted until he was specific enough to tell him exactly what he wanted.

There is another illustration in which he, I believe, chose to answer himself a request from an individual who was looking for a husband. And he said, “That’s your mistake. God never works by himself but only through you. God is the eternal source, but he only works through your requests. Do you really want me to pray for you?” Calling her to sit down with paper -- she wants the husband -- calling her to sit down with paper and pencil he proceeded to ask series of questions. “If you write down the answers to my questions, then I will pray for you. Number one now; you really want a husband, but what kind of a husband do you want? Asian, Caucasian, or black?”

“Caucasian.”

“Okay. Write it down. Number two; do you want your husband to be as tall as six feet or as small as five feet?”

“Oh, I want to have a tall husband.”

“Write that down. Number three; do you want your husband to be slim and nice looking or just pleasantly plump?”

“I want to have him skinny.”

“Write down skinny.”

“Number four; what kind of hobby do you want your husband to have?”

“Well, musical.”

“Okay. Write down musical.”

“Number five; what kind of job do you want your husband to have?”

“School teacher.”

“Close your eyes, can you see your husband now?”

“Yes, I see him clearly.”

“Okay. Let’s order him now.” [Laughter] Notice that language, let’s order him now. Until you see your husband clearly in your imagination, you can’t order because God will never answer. You must see him clearly before you begin to pray. Pastor Cho then laid hands on the young woman and prayed saying, “O, Lord, O, God, now she knows her husband. I see her husband. You know her husband. We order him in the name of Jesus Christ.” That kind of prayer is quite a bit different from evangelicalism for nineteen hundred plus years.

This is some of the change that is taking place in evangelicalism. Some of the heretical teaching -- and I call that heretical teaching, too, because that is contrary to the word of God. We don’t order God to do things for us. He is not our servant. He is our Lord in heaven. But some of the things that are being said, now by those who appear as representative of the Charismatic renewal movement, are things that are clearly contrary to the word of God.

Anyone listening to Paul Crouch and his stream of listeners on the Trinity Broadcasting Network will constantly be subjected to heresy. For example, here is one of them. One of the teachers saying every man who has been born again is an incarnation

and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much of an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth.

Again, God has been reproduced on the inside of you. It is, in reality, God imparting his very nature, substance and being to one human spirit. Zoe -- the Greek word for life is *zoe*. This is *zoe*. Then means eternal life or God’s life, this new kind of life is God’s nature.

Casey Treat, the pastor of Seattle’s Christian Faith Center, tells us to claim our Godhood. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost had a conference, and they said, Let us make man an exact duplicate of us. Oh, this is the kind of thing that I’m sure is impressive to a lot of people. Oh, I don’t know about you, he said, but that does turn my crank. An exact duplicate of God, say it out loud, say it out loud, “I am an exact duplicate of God.” The congregation is invited to say, “I am an exact duplicate of God.”

Kenneth Aiken is well known. Jesus is the first person ever to be born again. Why did his Spirit need to be born again? Because it was estranged from God. These are not strange things that accidentally appear on the TV screen or over the radio. These are the things that you may listen to day after day and read in their books. They write them down as well.

So I think I can understand Masters saying that the atmosphere today in and among those who say they believe the Scriptures is quite a bit different from what it was twenty-five years ago. Some of those things were happening then, but today there is an avalanche of that kind of thinking. What we have is a fundamental lack of knowledge of the word of God. Ignorance results in heresy because our thoughts, if they are not true to the word of God, they easily run off into that which is contrary to the word of God. And then if they don’t run off into heresy, they run off into fanaticism, and we over-emphasize the things that should not be overemphasized with the result that the word of God is distorted. Ignorance is one of the great dangers of the Christian church. And of course

one of the dangers that goes along with it is the pride that we often develop because we think we have knowledge. That’s something to avoid as well.

Well, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 3, the apostle begins his discussion of spiritual gifts. And around this topic lies a great deal of the confusion of our day. “Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led, (or as often as you were led, that could be rendered.) Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”

Now, for those of you who have been listening to the series of expositions on 1 Corinthians, you know that several times, particularly in the beginning -- I called attention to something that all teachers of 1 Corinthians call attention to -- and that is that this epistle is largely a response of the apostle to questions that were asked him. He had been in Corinth. He was there when the church was formed. It was natural for them to write him and ask for help and ask for answers to questions, and they have done that. And a number of the sections begin with the little expression *peri de*, which means “now concerning.” And New Testament scholars believe that those expressions “now concerning” are Paul’s way of introducing answers to specific questions that were written to him. And we have one right here: now concerning spiritual gifts. Strictly speaking, what the Greek text says very literally, now concerning spiritual things. So we have to ask ourselves the question, Is he talking about persons or is he talking about things? Because the ending of the word can be both masculine and neuter. So it is possible to render this, now concerning spiritual persons, but the spiritual persons would be the persons who have the gifts that are referred to here in the context.

However, probably more individuals believe that the rendering of the Authorized Version and other versions is correct, and we are to understand this as spiritual gifts. The reason being that in verse 4, he says “Now there are diversities of gifts,” and there it’s

clearly the gift. And then in chapter 14 in verse 1, we have a statement that also supports that idea, “Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” So we’re going to take it as spiritual gifts, “Now concerning spiritual gifts,” not spiritual persons.

The preeminent problem as you read 12, 13, and 14 appears to have been the gift of tongues. But included are the gifts of healings and other gifts. Today one might say probably the preeminent problem in evangelicalism is not the gift of tongues but the gift of healing. And the texts of course, deal with both of these gifts. And I think that probably, if we were to sum up 12, 13, and 14, these three chapters that deal with that problem, it would be something like this, that the gifts are very important, but even more important than the gifts is Christian love. And that’s the point of chapter 13. But now it’s Christian love, Christian love, not the kind of love that frequently the world knows as love but Christian love, love that’s grounded in the sacrifice that was made by Jesus Christ in his blood on Calvary’s cross.

Remember John defines love by the sacrifice of Christ. If you want to know what Christian love is, it’s the Son of God coming and giving his life a propitiation for our sins. This is divine love. It’s not the sentimentality that is so characteristic of our day, which goes by the same four-lettered word, love. It’s not the kind of love that one person has for another person as a young person -- what we call romantic love. It’s not that. But Christian love, love grounded in what Christ did and characterized by what Christ did, that kind of self-sacrifice for others that the cross represents. That’s Christian love. And chapter 13, of course, underlines all of that.

Now Paul says, “Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, (I think we can include the sisters, the brethren and the sisters) I do not want you to be ignorant.” Now, I think that’s very important. I think it’s so important. I know what people are going to say, Dr. Johnson’s off on the subject of theology again. No, I’m not really. I haven’t mentioned it until then. I thought about it, but I haven’t mentioned it. And I just want you to note that

it is Paul who says, “I don’t want you to be ignorant.” In a moment, I will say a little bit more about that. But ignorance has, as its need, knowledge of the word of God. Obviously he’s talking about that. He’s not asking about how the NFL race is going to turn out this year or anything like that. It’s ignorance of spiritual things. And it’s very fitting for spiritual gifts because there are many who feel that one of the reasons we do not experience the kind of experience that these individuals have in their meetings in the exercise of spiritual gifts as they think they ought to be exercised, this new brand of Charismatic renewal, is that we fear losing control of ourselves, and so we lay stress upon rationality.

In fact, John Wimber, of the signs and wonders movement has said, “Fear of losing control is threatening to most Western Christians.” Well, Mr. Wimber, I want you to know it’s very threatening to me. I do fear losing control. I don’t think there is any spirituality in losing control of one’s self. “Rational control prevents tongue speaking and soaring ecstatic sensations,” so he and others believed. But if that is the means for those things, I do not want them. I do not want to lose control. Why? Because the Bible, I think, tells me not to. The Scriptures, it seems, makes it plain to me that there is what might be called a law of the sound mind.

Let me just look at a few passages, 1 Timothy chapter 3 in verse 2 -- and after all, we all I think should agree that the leaders in our assemblies or our churches are those who have the oversight over us. We read in 1 Timothy 3, verse 1, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop (that is an elder) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded,” - - sound minded is the sense of the word, sound minded. 1 Timothy 3:2.

Turn over to Titus, chapter 1, verse -- I’m just picking a few there are many of these references. This word so, [indistinct], and other words that go along with it. Verse 8 of Titus chapter 1, “The elder should be hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled.”

Then in Titus chapter 2 in verse 2, “That the older men be sober, (ah, that speaks to me) sober, reverent, temperate.

Verse 4, “That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good obedient to their own husbands,” and so on throughout this passage. And I think you will see something of the same thing,

Titus chapter 2, verse 2 and verse 4, verse 6, “Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded.

Verse 12, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly.” That’s all of us. We should live with a sound mind.

1 Corinthians chapter 9 in verse 25, back a few pages, makes reference to a different word but with something of the same idea. We read in verse 25, “And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.” And Galatians chapter 5, verse 20 - there are many of these passages, I’ll just mention some of them. In other words, one of the things the Scriptures set forth for us as being characteristic of a spiritual man or woman is to be sound minded. To lose control of ourselves is nothing that the apostles would have us do. Sound minded characterized by submission to the word of God.

You may remember that when our Lord Jesus, when he was speaking to the disciples on the Emmaus Road in that Luke passage, chapter 24 in verse 45, we read these words -- Luke 24 in verse 45, “Then he said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me.’ And he opened their mind” their understanding, their mind. It’s the word *nous* which means mind -- he opened their mind that they might comprehend the Scriptures. He did not close their mind so that they might have ecstatic experiences, but he opened their mind to understand truth by which they may respond in the kind of life that God wishes them to have.

Peter Masters has an interesting comment or two with reference to what might happen if we do not follow this particular information that the apostle is setting forth. And he talks about how what we are often encouraged to yield ourselves to by Charismatic renewal people is for something that has almost the aim and purpose of drunkenness. His paragraph, a short one is, “The very aim and purpose of drunkenness is unwittingly shared by Charismatics when they renounce their rational self-control and launch themselves like surfers on to the waves of emotions, ecstasies involuntary speech, random impressions, visions, hallucinations, messages in the head, fictional, fantasizing, and so on.”

He even goes on to point out some other things with reference to that in connection with the kind of music that we expose ourselves to, “The rhythmic pattern of music and dancing, the hand clapping, the jolly informality, the uninhibited antics of some, together with the very low demands made on the mind are all features of conduct which delight the very young and tend to embarrass the mature person.”

He has an interesting statement that I had never heard anybody put it quite this way, but Masters ,who is the pastor of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle says that, “After saying that the mind is the residence or palace of faith and that faith is what we have when the mind becomes fully convinced about God’s words.” He says, “If we extinguish discernment and open our minds to unbiblical stories and dubious tales of daily miracles, what will be the furniture in the palace of faith?” What will occupy the rooms of the mind? And of course, what follows is the mind is occupied by all of these so-called experiences rather than with the truths of God’s divine inspired word.

Now, Paul says in the 2nd verse the reason for this is related to their past condition. He says in verse 2, “You know that you were Gentiles carried away by these dumb idols, however, or as you were being led.” The idols are dumb incidentally and, of course, in their society that was very significant, because they now have a God who is speaking from heaven. And the contrast between the dumb idols that people were bowing down

to could not speak, could not move. And the God in heaven who fills everything and who speaks constantly through his word is radical. What a difference it is to worship the genuine God who is not like a dumb idol. So, “You know that you were Gentiles carried away to those dumb idols, however you were led.”

It was characteristic of that age to have some of that, and you probably know of Apollo the Greek god and the things that were said with reference to Apollo. Apollo was particularly renowned as the source of ecstatic utterances as on the lips of Cassandra of Troy, the Priestess of Delphi or the Sibyl of Cumae whose friends, as she prophesized under the god’s control is vividly described by Virgil. And then, of course, there is the fortunetelling slave girl that the Apostle Paul had contact with in Acts chapter 16 when he visited Philippi dominated by some kind of pythonic spirit. Paul doesn’t suggest that any prophecy or glossolalia at Corinth proceeded from such a source. He simply reminds his readers that there are inspired utterances other than those produced by the Spirit of God, inspired in the sense that they arise out of the experiences and sensations of the human being apart from the word of God.

Paul says that, “They were carried away to these dumb idols, however, they were led.” I suppose that what he means by that is that they were led away or seduced by Satan. It’s possible this word was usually used of forceful leading away. It’s possible, of course, that he refers to more than that, but probably the seduction of Satan is upon his mind. It does not specifically mean to lead astray, but it has that general idea and may have that sense, but there may be some element of force in it since that’s the normal use of the term.

Now, the apostle says that the Corinthians were individuals who were individuals who were carried away to those dumb idols, led astray to them. But something has happened to them. And what has happened to them of course is not that they’ve come to understand something from those idols, that they had enabled them now to be what they are, but it is obvious that since they were that, since they were being carried away

constantly to the dumb idols, what can account for what they are now, worshippers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, except it is the gratuitous kindness of the divine grace which has worked in their hearts and has delivered them from the kind of sin that caused them to run after dumb idols. The same kind of thing that happens today when a person is delivered from the kinds of worship that are contrary to the worship set forth in the word of God as we know it.

Not only delivered from the Charismatic renewal kind of worship, contrary to the word of God, but the kind of worship that exists in many of our well-known churches, which maybe a century or so ago even in the last century, were bastions in the truth of God but now are not. But people are still sitting in those congregations and not enjoying the ministry of the word of God being dead in their sins and impervious to the things said in the word of God until the Holy Spirit works in their hearts in efficacious grace. I love that expression. It was Calvin’s expression. I launched it toward you. But it was Calvin’s. He said, Therefore it was plain that it was not nature that provided them with these gifts, but God in his gratuitous kindness.

Now, verse 3 may be called the fundamental test of genuine utterance. “Therefore, wherefore,” that’s one of those strong inferential particles introducing the inference from verse 1, “Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant, therefore I make known to you,” and now he makes known to them certain things because of his perception that they lack knowledge. “Wherefore, enthusiasm, ecstasy, being carried away with the light kind of frivolity, so characteristic of so many of our evangelicals today is no criterion of spirituality.” Please remember that. “That is no criterion of spirituality.” Not suggesting we be glum. I’m not suggesting that we be critical. I’m not suggesting that we be sour. I’m suggesting that we be deeply, happily, pleased, worshipful, devoted to our Lord and Savior for what he has done for us in the greatest of all work for men, the cross of Calvary. The kind of thing that goes deeper and is more permanent and more lasting than any kind of frivolity that characterizes some of

our churches, too. Happy, yes, but the kind of happiness that is deep and grounded in truth, that’s what we were looking for, all of us, I think would like to have.

Now, he says, “I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed.” A question you might ask was, Was this ever said in the Corinthian assembly? Did someone stand up in the assembly because they had freedom to stand up in their meetings? That’s evident from chapter 14. They stood up in their meetings and read the word of God and prayed and gave ministry from the word of God.

Did someone stand up in the Corinthian church and say, Jesus is cursed? Well, I doubt that. But it was done about them because our Lord was the object of curses. And so it’s unlikely -- I think most people believe -- that this was ever done in the Corinthian assembly, but it could if there was ecstatic speech and someone came in who did not know our Lord. We’ve had some strange things happen in this very room. We had one brother one time stand up in a meeting and give a lecture to his other brother who had become angry with him and left and come to church because he was not ready to come, so we sat and we listened to this one brother standing up and denouncing his brother in our presence. So things can happen, strange things can happen.

I remember one time in our meeting -- these are confessions. One time in our meeting, one young man stood up. It was a young man. He was not out of high school. He was giving a lecture to the congregation on how to raise their children. And it finally got under the skin of one our older brethren, a very loveable man and respected man with some theological training, too, as a matter of fact -- and, in fact, pretty good training because I was one of his teachers. [Laughter] But anyway, he finally stood up, couldn’t take the young student giving lectures on how to raise children and said, “Let’s sing hymn number so and so.” So strange things can happen in a meeting which has the freedom of the Holy Spirit.

Well, it’s possible someone stood up and said Jesus is cursed. So I cannot deny that. Later on, it was one of the means by which a person became a part of the Ophite

sect. He had to pronounce a curse upon Jesus as part of his initiation. Gordon Clark makes some comments with reference to this that are very interesting. Mr. Clark says that, so far as he knows, down through the years from about 400 A.D. to the present time about 1500 years until the rise of Marxism, hardly anyone ever called Jesus accursed. Even violently, antichristians like Spinoza and Rinon didn’t attack Jesus personally. Even Edwin A. Burt only goes so far as to call Jesus stupid and immoral. He wrote the book, *Types of Religious Philosophy*. And that’s less than calling him accursed, for he also goes on to say Jesus was a man of remarkable human sympathy. His teaching contains the best moral insights and social attitudes preached by his predecessors. “At least if this is damning,” Dr. Clark says, “It is anathematizing by faint praise.”

It is interesting, isn’t it, that people don’t hardly ever dare to curse Jesus Christ today. That’s rather striking. At any rate, he says, “I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed. If he is calling our Lord accursed, he’s not speaking from the Spirit of God. We know that of course. We know that in Believers Chapel. We know that the Holy Spirit will not curse Jesus Christ. Such a conflict between the Trinity is unthinkable, of course, and, of course, would be exceedingly wrong.

He goes on to say, “And no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” And I’d like to devote just a few minutes before we close to this because I think this is rather important. No one can call Jesus Lord. Now, the statement, Jesus is Lord, is very interesting because Lord -- *kurios* is the New Testament word that is used to translate the tetragrammaton, the Yahweh of the Old Testament. When we say Jesus is Lord, we are saying Jesus is the Yahweh of the Old Testament, the covenant-keeping God. The God who made the covenant with Israel and drew them out of Egypt into the land and into the promises. And if we say Jesus is Lord, then we are saying Jesus is Jehovah. Now, we have -- remember our studies on Hebrews, we know that the term “Jehovah” is a term that is applicable to all three persons of the Trinity. That’s one of the reasons -- many reasons why we know our God is a Trinity. There is Jehovah the Father, Jehovah

the Son, Jehovah the Spirit. So no one can say that Jesus is Jehovah. That very fact lets us know that when we call our Lord “Lord” we are talking about the one true God in the case of our Lord Jesus God the Son, the one God who subsists in three persons.

Now, the Christians frequently, later on, were called to acknowledge that Nero was god. That caused a great deal of problems, the Roman Emperor god. They were required to say Nero is god. Or to put it in that language, *Nero kurios* or whoever it might be. And the Christians who were faithful would say no, *Jesus kurios*, and they would lose their lives for that. That was the way Polycarp lost his life. He was called upon to respond, and he responded by faith in our Lord. He was the Bishop of Smyrna. He was arrested. The demand of the proconsul, Statius Quadratus was, “Say away with the Atheists, swear by the godhood of Caesar and blaspheme Christ.” And it was the great answer of the aged bishop who said, “Eighty and six years have I served Christ and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?” And so they would say to him, say, “*Trajan kurios*, he would say, *Jesus kurios*. Say *Jesus kurios*. He would say, say and he would repeat *Jesus kurios*. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

I have often thought -- it is so interesting around the table of the Lord, the Last Supper, it is so interesting to listen to those individuals. Matthew chapter 26, verse 22 and verse 25 we have these words. This I think is a little bit of a commentary on these verses. Chapter 26, verse 22 through verse 25, we read these words,

“When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you shall betray Me.’ And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, ‘Lord, is it I?’ He answered and said, ‘He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.’ So around the

circle each of them began, ‘Lord, (Peter) is it I?’ John, is it I? And so on around the circle until we come to Judas.

And then we read that Judas said, Rabbi, is it I? Rabbi, is it I? How interesting. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The Eleven called him Lord, and they meant, Lord. They weren’t just calling out the name. Anybody can call the name. People say Lord, Lord, but that’s a different kind of thing. Saying it and meaning it, no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit, and Judas couldn’t say it for he didn’t have the Holy Spirit of course.

I would think that what this indicates is incidentally that a true confession and belief is expressed when a person says and means, Jesus is Lord. But now there is a proviso here. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Now, what does that mean? That means that if there is an expression of faith on the part of an individual, from what or whom does it arise? Does it arise from our free will? Many people think that it does. It arises from our free will. No, it doesn’t arise from our free will. If our free will were the cause, then we would have to say God cannot act until man acts. Man acts of his free will, then God is able to act. No, no. The reason an individual is able to say Jesus is Lord is because the Holy Spirit has already acted in his heart and drawn him to Christ. That’s what we mean when we talk about sovereign grace. Grace that is truly ruling in our salvation, not sharing with the human free will, but ruling, moving our wills, changing our wills, transforming our wills, bringing our wills to truly be exercised positively in faith in Christ. No utterance inspired by him can be against Christ, every word for Christ ultimately comes from him. The will freed by the regenerating Spirit, not traceable to impulses of our own. Paul has made that plain back in chapter 2 where he talks in verse 10, “But God has revealed them to us these good things through his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.”

I know that sometimes it’s difficult for us to understand these things. The reason I lay great stress on these things is because it was a long time for me to understand some of these things that I talk about now and consider so important because they meant so much to me at one time in my life.

“But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life,” our Lord said. Doesn’t that seem to say that our will is really the determining matter? You will not come to me, could we not say, they could come if they would. They could come if they would. But our Lord says, You are not willing to come. As a matter of fact the “would”ing is not there at all. The “would”ing is the problem. They could come if they would, of course. But the problem is they don’t “would.” [Laughter] They don’t “would.” And the very text that Arminians like to turn to John 5:40. That’s our text. That’s not their text. That’s our text. It says, But you are not willing. That’s it. You are not willing. If you are willing, are you willing, you willing out in the audience, you willing? Why are you willing? Because God worked in your will. That’s why. He worked in your will. And as a result you’ve come to rest yourself upon the bloodshed on Calvary’s cross now and forever. What [name redacted] is enjoying at the present moment, the blessedness of the relationship with our Lord. May God in his grace work in our hearts so that all of us rest only upon him.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee for these marvelous promises that are found in the Scriptures. We read them often so many times, and they just do not strike home. But then the Spirit speaks in our hearts and the truth appears so plain. Help us, Lord, in our study to grow in grace and in the knowledge in our Lord and to be faithful in our Christian service. We pray for this congregation. We ask Thy blessing upon each one represented here and their families and their friends. We pray for the [name redacted] family. We pray for [names redacted] family, others who have illness and sickness. We pray for all of them. We ask Thy blessing upon them.

“The Issue of Spiritual Gifts” by S. Lewis Johnson
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For Jesus’ sake. Amen.