



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, 1 Corinthians 2:6

"Illumination, or Truth Made Clear"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity to open the Scriptures again. We thank Thee for the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. Help us, Lord, to understand it better as a result of our time together tonight. We pray particularly that the things that have to do with the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ may become very plain and clear to us, and enable us to, Lord, to be motivated by our study to further study of the Scriptures in order that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Accept our thanks for this time together. We pray Thy blessing upon the classes that follow too. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Our subject tonight is "Illumination, or God's Truth Made Clear" as we continue our series of studies in basic Bible doctrine. Now what we have been saying is that there are three important words in biblical study: revelation, inspiration and illumination. Revelation has to do with the unveiling of God's truth to men. We said that revelation is in two parts, General Revelation and Special Revelation. The Special Revelation is addressed to men as sinners. General Revelation is addressed to men as created men. Inspiration is the means by which God secured an infallible communication

of his revelation to men. So that inspiration has to do with the manner in which God gave us the Scriptures.

Now we said with reference to inspiration that inspiration extended to all of the Scripture and to every word of the original writings of Scripture so that we speak of the theory of inspiration taught in the Scriptures as the Verbal Plenary Theory of Inspiration. As a corollary of that, as an inference from it, we also affirm that the Scriptures are inerrant, that is that they do not have error. Now we really probably should put that a little more accurately and say the Scriptures do not teach error because, of course, the Scriptures do have errors in them in the sense that they record the statements of men who made errors. So in that sense, the Bible contains errors, but it does not teach error. The Bible is inerrant.

Now, tonight we are studying Illumination, and that is the work of the spirit in granting understanding to us as we study the inspired revelation, so that illumination has to do with understanding the Bible. In fact, this is the secret to the understanding of the word of God. P. T. Forsyth was a man who was a very famous theologian in the earlier part of the twentieth century, and he once made a statement that we can use as a kind of motto for our study tonight. He said, "The truth that we see depends upon the men that we are." "The truth that we see depends upon the men that we are." And I think that we're going to see that that is taught by the Apostle Paul in the passage to which we shall look in just a moment. To put it in a popular way, the divine side of the understanding of the Bible is illumination. From the human standpoint, looking at it from the standpoint of human effort, we speak of interpretation. So, interpretation is the human effort expended in the understanding of the Bible. Illumination is the divine activity by which the Holy Spirit enables us to understand.

Now the most important passage dealing with illumination is the passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 6 through chapter 3 verse 4. This is the normative passage. So when we think of illumination, we should think of 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 6

through chapter 3 verse 4, and in this passage Paul discusses God's wisdom and its perception in contrast to man's wisdom, and the key phrase, if we were to single out some phrase in this section as the key phrase, it would be the phrase that opens the 6th verse of 1 Corinthians chapter 2. "However," Paul says, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." And that's kind of the topical phrase or clause for this section, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." Now the apostle speaks of that wisdom in verses 6 through 12, and then he will speak of the speaking of it in verse 13, and then he will define more carefully what it is to be perfect or mature in the remainder of the section. So that's the key clause, "However, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."

Now he's just said when he preached to the Corinthians, he didn't bother to speak with enticing words of man's wisdom, and someone might say, "Well the apostle, Apostle Paul, you are saying in effect that Christian truth is not really to be classed as wisdom." And the apostle would say, "Yes it's not to be classed as human wisdom, but it is a wisdom." "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." The truth that we give you is the truth of God, but it is a truth that is designed ultimately for those who are mature. And so now he will unfold what he means by that.

Let's look first now at Roman one in the outline, "Revelation or the Divine Wisdom Unveiled," verses 6 through 12 of 1 Corinthians chapter 2. And will you listen now as I read beginning at verse 6,

"However 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, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this age knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into 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 the man which is in him? 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 which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Now the apostle, as I say, is explaining that God's wisdom is not some special esoteric wisdom. What it essentially is, is the gospel. He had said in chapter 1 and verse 18 that, "The word of the cross," or the preaching of the cross, that is literally the word, "The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." So God's wisdom is the word of the cross. In verse 24, he says, "But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." That is the truth of the gospel also, Christ the power of God and Christ the wisdom of God. Then also in verse 30, the apostle wrote, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

And then in chapter 2 verse 2 he said, "For I determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That is really the wisdom of God, and when we define what is the milk of the word and what is the meat of the word, both evidently have to do with this one theme, Jesus Christ and him crucified. Jesus Christ and him crucified, the gospel being the milk of the word, the deeper implications of this being the meat of the word. Jesus Christ and him crucified is the message that the apostles preached. It's rather interesting, I think, that the early church fathers, when they spoke of Christian truth, they spoke of it as the gospel. And they did not mean simply Christ died. Christ was buried. Christ was raised. And Christ appeared. They use the term the gospel or the Good News to refer to the whole of the Christian truth. So when we think about God's wisdom, we think about gospel, Good News concerning Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now the apostle's description of this wisdom we want to hurriedly make note of. Notice he says, first of all, it is hidden from the world. He says in the 7th verse, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," that is, in a secret. Now it is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages unto our glory. It is for our glory. But nevertheless, it is the hidden wisdom. It's a secret. It's something that is not known unless revealed. He states in the 9th verse that it is something that has been prepared for us, "The things which God hath prepared for them that love him." So it is something that is hidden from the age. It is something that is hidden for those that love him. And it is unknowable apart from Divine Revelation.

So the first thing the apostle states about the wisdom of God is that it is hidden from this age. The five senses are the ways by which we empirically know things, the eye, the ear, the nose, the mouth, the hand. So if we can see, we think we come to know. If we can hear, we think we have information. If we smell or if we are able to taste or touch, we gain certain information. But the apostle says the five senses are insufficient in divine truth. He said, "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." So, divine truth is not attained to by means of the senses. It is something that is revealed in another way.

Now, the second thing that he says is that it is known and revealed by the spirit. Look at verse 10 and 11, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This is the locus classicus, incidentally, what do we mean by that is the classical location, the classical location for the deity and personality of the spirit of God. He says, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And the spirit also, he says in the 11th verse, "knows." So here is a text that has to do with the deity of the Holy Spirit and also the personality of the Holy Spirit. So he says that these things that are not

known by the five senses are things that are known by the spirit and revealed to us by the spirit. It is only in this way, the apostle says, that we come to know divine truth.

Now, I want to make reference to the 11th verse because this verse has sometimes been misunderstood. Particularly if you are reading from an Authorized Version, the apostle says, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him?" Now that might suggest that what Paul is saying is that we do not know human things unless we are human beings. We would not know truths concerning animals if we were not animals. We would not know truths concerning lions if we were not a lion. But that is really not what the apostle is saying. He's not saying that we have to be something in order to understand something. That may be true.

I'm sure that if I were a lion, I would understand a great deal more about lions than I understand about them now. But that is not what he is saying. What he is really saying is that no man knows the man of an individual man except the spirit of the individual man that is in him. So that text should be rendered, "What man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of the man which is in him?" And what he means is only I know the things of myself. Only you know the things of yourself. Only your spirit knows the things within you, in your mind, in your heart. Only my spirit knows the things within me. And in the same way, the Holy Spirit knows the things of God. "Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." So the spirit of God knows the inmost things of God.

Now, capital "C", Paul says, "It is revealed to believers," that is, this divine wisdom. Notice the 10th verse and the 12th verse, "But God hath revealed them," that is, these things that God had prepared, "unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And 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." So, believers then are those who have received the spirit and have the teacher. Notice the use of the first person, "God hath revealed them unto us," verse 10.

And then in 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 by God."

Therefore, what Paul is affirming is that it is only through the Holy Spirit that we are able to understand divine truth. I think Phillips has rendered this something like this, "But God has through the spirit let us share his secret." So illumination then is the means by which we come to understand things that we could not possibly understand about divine truth.

Therefore, if that's truth, that divine truth is not understood except through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, and then to understand the Bible is not a question of brains or intellect. To understand the Bible is not a question, therefore, of the degrees that we may have from institutions of human learning. It is a matter of desire and subjection to the Holy Spirit. Fundamentally, as we shall see in just a few moments, it is a matter of our relationship to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For it is only through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and personal salvation that we come into possession of the Holy Spirit. And if he is the teacher of the word of God, then it's clear that we cannot understand anything in the Bible until we possess the teaching. One of the reasons that people do not understand the Bible is, simply, they have not been born again. It's not necessarily that the teacher is dull. That's possible. It's not necessarily that the teacher is abstruse. That also is very possible. Frequently, a message is given in plainness and in clarity and with interest and interesting, and an individual goes out and says, "I didn't understand a thing."

Now we should not think of the teacher being at fault. The fault lies in the individual because they have not been born again and do not have the teacher so that they can understand divine truth. That is the reason why the Bible for a lot of people is very dull and very difficult. It is because they have not been born again. It's not because God's trying to test our patience by writing the Bible in a very difficult way. The Bible is a very plain book. It's a very pellucid book. It is lucid and clear. The difficulty lies with

us, not with the Lord God. He's given us his truth in the most suitable way for us to understand it, to grasp it and to learn it. And when we find difficulty in reading the Scripture, we should not look for fault in the translations or in other things about biblical truth. I hear people often say, "Well the Authorized Version is very difficult to understand." It's not difficult to understand at all. Now true there may be some translation that's a little clearer. But it's not difficult for the person who's really seeking to know truth. It's served many, many generations of individuals. It's very good.

Now there are others also who say, "But it's written in out of an ancient culture." Well, of course, the Bible is, but it's not difficult for that reason. The difficulty in understanding Scripture almost always lies with the individual. And fundamentally, it frequently is they have not been born again. They have sat in the audience. They have listened to teachers, but not having been born again, they do not have the teacher. And not having the teacher, the Bible is a difficult book. It is foolishness. It is stupidity, and if some of those people were really honest, that's what they would really say, "It's stupid as far as I'm concerned. I get nothing out of it whatsoever." That's very revealing. That's very revealing of the spiritual condition of an individual. So when we think about understanding the Scripture then, we should not think about brains and degrees. I often have people say to me, "Well, Dr. Johnson you've been studying the Bible for many years. That's why you understand it." Well, there is something that people gain by studying the Bible for many years. It's not enough. But the understanding of the Bible does not depend upon the intellect or the brains or degrees. It depends upon the new birth and then a measure of subjection to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. That's what the Scripture says. The Bible says that the teacher is the Holy Spirit.

Many of you have heard me say this a number of times, but I say it again for the benefit of those of you who are new here, and there are some in the audience who are new, and also since we are redoing this series on Basic Bible Doctrines, I'd like for it to



be in the series. So I'm speaking not simply to you but to others who will be listening to these tapes.

When I went to Dallas Theological Seminary, the first class that I remember was the class in chapel. And we had chapel four mornings a week from 10:00 to 11:00. Now the chapel hour was really from 10:00 to 10:30, but the first four chapels of every year were lengthened chapels, and they usually went about forty-five minutes. Dr. Chafer, the founder of the seminary, was still active as the President and teacher of systematic theology, and he took those first four mornings of every year, I heard these lectures every year for many years, and one of the lectures had to do with the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, two or three of them did, but one of them had to do with this passage particularly.

Now in those days, the chapel at Dallas Seminary contained a seating capacity for about one hundred men, and the faculty sat on the platform, something like this and there were about twelve seats across the back. And I remember sitting down front and looking up at Dr. Chafer who stood behind a little lectern, which was a music lectern from which our choir was directed, and, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ashkelon lest some hear," but I have that lectern in my hand. It was given to me by Dr. Lincoln of the Seminary, so I have it, the one that was used at Dallas Seminary for many, many years. Dr. Chafer came in, and he would tap the side of this music lectern, like this, and the chapel would come to order. And in this message on illumination, he stood up and the first thing that he said was, "At Dallas Theological Seminary we have a faculty of one." Well I was very greatly impressed by that because I saw the ten or twelve faculty members on the platform, and I wondered which one of them was really the one [laughter] that we were to listen to, and I knew from the way he said it, it was not Dr. Chafer. It must be somebody else.

Well, of course, he went on to say that the one faculty member at Dallas Theological Seminary was the Holy Spirit, that he was the teacher of the word of God,

and all of the other teachers were simply instruments in his hand. And every year he would say, "At Dallas Theological Seminary we have a faculty of one." Well that is true. When we study the Bible, we study the Bible under a faculty of one. Now this faculty member has a lot of little flunkies that he uses, and I happen to be one of them, but The Faculty Member is the Holy Spirit. And our responsibility is to him, to be subject to him, to be amenable to his teaching, to be the kind of person who is responsive to the teaching of the word of God.

Now let's move on because we don't have a whole lot of time. Let's move on to Roman two, "Communication or the Divine Wisdom Preached," chapter 2 verse 13. This verse is a rather interesting verse, but for our purposes, it's not quite as important as some of the other things that I want to say. So I'll try to handle it rather quickly. The apostle says, "Which things also we speak," that is the things that are revealed by God, "Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This, in a sense, is a personal application of these foregoing words, and Paul is saying simply, this wisdom that is given by God and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit is something that he preaches, and he preaches this truth in words that the Holy Spirit teaches. He tries to wed the truth to words that are also compatible with the Holy Spirit.

Now that last clause has been translated in three different ways, and I say for the sake of time, I'm just going to mention the three ways, and tell you which one I prefer, although I cannot assure you that it is the way to render that clause. It has been rendered in the Authorized Version, "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Now that, of course, is a true thought that when we study the Bible we compare the texts of holy Scripture with one another. It's called the analogy of faith. And it's by the comparing of things that the Bible says with one another that we come to understand all that the Bible teaches and, and specifically, what it teaches on one particular doctrine. It's possible to render it that way.

It has been rendered in the American Standard Version and in the New American Standard Bible with slight differences, something like this, "Combining spiritual things with spiritual words." So what Paul means is he's taking the spiritual truth that has been revealed to him, and he's combining that spiritual truth with words that are spiritual. So he takes the revealed truth and puts it in spiritual language, language approved by the Holy Spirit. Now it's possible that it should be rendered in that way because the key word does mean combine in classical Greek literature.

It has also been rendered in the Revised Standard Version and in some other versions, this, in the New International Version, in the margin, this rendering is given as a possibility, "Interpreting spiritual things to those who possess the spirit." Now it seems to me that that makes very good sense, interpreting or explaining spiritual things to those who possess the spirit because he's going on to say, "But the natural man doesn't receive the things of the spirit." It's the spiritual man who does. So I prefer this rendering, but I don't want to be dogmatic about it because it is one of those cases where we don't quite have enough information at this point on the Greek text to be certain of the rendering. I rather think that what Paul means is that we speak these things that God is revealed to us not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches. And we explain spiritual truths to those who possess the spirit. That's my understanding of it.

But let's move on, "Illumination," Roman three, "Illumination or the Divine Wisdom Perceived," chapter 2 verse 14 through chapter 3 verse 4. And capital "A" in the outline, "The Theology of Illumination," and we want to say now a word about the natural man, verse 14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In the original text at this point, this natural man is, literally, soulish man; that is, he's a man that is dominated by the soul. There are Bible teachers, and they may be right, who say that the spirit is that part of man in which we have God-consciousness.

The soul is that part of man in which we have self-consciousness. And the body is that part of the man in which we have world-consciousness. That is, by the body we know about one another in the world, so that God-consciousness is identified with the spirit, self-consciousness with the soul, world-consciousness with the body. Now Paul calls this man who doesn't understand things, "A soulish man;" that is, he's a man that is dominated by the soul, not by the spirit.

Now fortunately, in the Bible we have other ways of identifying this man because if we just heard the word "soulish," we might not understand exactly what the apostle means. But in Jude verse 19, the one chapter, we have a definition of what a natural man is. Here Jude, the brother of the Lord, writes concerning some false individuals, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual," and it's the very same word that is used back in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 14, "natural," and then he defines what that means. He adds, "Having not the Spirit." And then Paul, in Romans chapter 8, verse 9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So, if we identify the soulish man by virtue of the reference in Jude 19 and in Romans 8:9 with the man who does not possess the Holy Spirit, then it's clear that the natural man is the man who is the unsaved man. He does not possess the Holy Spirit. And consequently, being natural, being soulish, being dominated by his self-consciousness, he does not understand the truth of the word of God.

Now the limitation of this man is very plain. He says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Now when he says receiveth not, he says he does not welcome them. There are some things that unsaved people understand. They read the Bible, and they can read these words just as well as we can read these words. They can know objectively certain things that are spoken of in the Bible. They may even know that Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. They may know things about the creation. They may know things about the Second Coming. There are many things about the Bible that the unsaved man may know. What does he mean when he says the natural

man, or the man without the spirit, does not receive the things of the spirit of God? He says he does not welcome them. He may know them because the Holy Spirit reveals truth even to unsaved people to a point so that they are convicted, and yet lost. All truth is by the illumination of the spirit, but these men, though they know certain things, do not receive them. They do not welcome them. The truths come home to them, but they respond with antipathy toward them.

Now there is a sense in which the unsaved man cannot understand anything. That is because he's blinded, but he also has some things to a point before salvation revealed to him. That's how we can read a commentary written by a man who is not a Christian, and learn some things from that commentary. Students are often puzzled by that if you say, "Well you cannot understand a thing apart from the Holy Spirit. Well why is it that Dr. so in so, who's clearly not a believer, has a very helpful commentary on 1 Corinthians, in which a number of things are said that are useful." Well it's because the Holy Spirit does reveal some things to the unsaved. He does not know them however, by his own understanding, by his own powers of understanding. He knows them because God has, to a point, revealed certain things to them. The natural man, however, does not welcome any of the things that have to do with the oral relationship Old Testament the Lord God.

I have a friend, Miss Audrey Wetherell Johnson, who has been the founder of a Bible teaching movement among women all over this country. She was a teacher for some years in Shanghai, China. And at one point, I was going to Shanghai to teach in the China Bible Seminary, and Miss Johnson taught in that Seminary, and many years ago she came to Dallas and we had some conversations about my going there just before the Chinese Communists came in and took over Shanghai. A few years later, I was in California just after she had founded this Bible study movement, and we were talking in Berkeley, California at the First Presbyterian Church there, and she told me an interesting story of a young boy from Cal Tech who had attended one of the classes there.

And she said this young man came up to her after the class and said, "Miss Johnson, I've been listening very intently to you." He said, "You know I don't have problems with Einstein" -he went to Cal Tech and he was evidently a very brilliant young student, and that school is, of course, a school that has a great reputation in scientific learning- He said, "I understand Einstein but I cannot understand anything about the Bible at all. What's the problem?" And she went on to speak about how she had the opportunity to speak to him about his personal salvation. He did not have the faculty for understanding spiritual truth, though he had the faculty for understanding Einstein.

Some years ago, I read in *National Geographic* an article on the bats of Carlsbad Caverns. It was very interesting because I had just been to Carlsbad Caverns, and those of you who have been there know in the older days, I've not been there in twenty years or so, the bats of Carlsbad Caverns use to winter in Mexico. And then in May, they returned about five to eight million strong. And each evening, they would stream out of the caverns and go out hunting for water and food. Now if you've been down in Carlsbad Caverns or any similar caverns, you know that they are filled with stalactites and stalagmites, and one wonders how it would be possible for anything to fly in that pitch black darkness in those caverns. For when they turn off the light, you have one of the most vivid illustrations of the biblical phrase, "The blackness of darkness forever."

But bats are able to fly in and out among the stalactites and stalagmites and never hit a single one of them because as this article went on to point out, they fly by a kind of natural sonar, and they send out little squeaks. Now you can hear a bat when he squeaks because of pain or rage, but these little squeaks that are sent out by the mouth of the bat are at a certain frequency that the human ear cannot hear them. And these little squeaks are used by the bat to bounce off of the stalactites and stalagmites and let them know where they are. So they fly in and out among them, not seeing anything other than you or I see, but they do it by a kind of natural sonar.

There are some things that our ears can hear that animals hear, and then there are some things that animals hear that we do not hear. That's why your dog gets up and goes to the window before you hear any sounds at all. His ears hear sounds at different frequencies. You can hear, I think, frequencies as low as twenty, but when it gets beyond ten or whatever, you cannot hear. You don't have the capacity. And so the unsaved person does not have the capacity to hear, just like you cannot hear those squeaks that the bats utter, so you cannot hear, understand divine truth. It's on a different frequency. What you need is the Holy Spirit to come and indwell you, and then having the teacher who does hear the things the Lord Jesus Christ teaches, he is able then to instruct you.

It's like radio waves. There are all kinds of sounds in this room right now. News casts are going on at the present time, a lot of music that might be nice to hear, might be nicer to hear than the message you're hearing tonight. Who can tell? Some of it, however, wouldn't be very nice, and then there would be all kinds of advertising going on, advertising, well, what, Wisk, Joy, Duz, Glory Hallelujah, [laughter] whatever kind of soap [laughter] might be being advertised. It's all here, but we just do not have the capacity to hear those sounds. What we need is a radio, and then by means of the radio which is able to tune in certain frequencies by transferring them to frequencies that our ears can hear, we are able to understand. Biblical truth is like that. You cannot understand apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. So Paul says, "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," understood or, "discerned." That is, one must have the Holy Spirit.

It's like the shining of ultraviolet rays upon rocks. You can look at the rocks. They look just like ordinary rocks. But shine ultraviolet rays on those rocks, and they flash and fluoresce with all kinds of beauties that are there all along. But it is the work of the ultraviolet ray to bring them into florescence. So the work of the Holy Spirit is to take the Bible which seems like a very plain, difficult, hard, uninteresting book, it is the Holy

Spirit, when he shines light upon the word of God, it fluoresces with beauty, and all of those wonderful marvelous truths that thrill a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Bible study should be the most interesting thrilling thing as the Holy Spirit illumines the pages of the word of God.

Now the spiritual man the apostle speaks about in verse 15 and 16, let me just say a word about this. He says, "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." Now the spiritual man that the apostle refers to here is the mature believer who is rightly related to the Holy Spirit. He has said back in chapter 2 verse 6, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." And so the spiritual man is the man who is the mature, or perfect, believer rightly related to the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3 verse 1 he says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." So a spiritual man cannot be a babe in Christ. A spiritual man is a mature believer.

I've occasionally heard people say that the spiritual man is just a healthy Christian, whether he's a babe or an adult. That's not true. An infant cannot be spiritual. Notice chapter 3 verse 1, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." "Babes in Christ," are not spiritual. Just like babies are not very spiritual naturally. They make a mess everywhere. They are constantly trouble. And in spiritual things, babies are trouble. They are trouble makers in the local church if you allow them to be anything other than what they are. They ought to be babes. Every one of us as a Christian has to pass through the babyhood stage. The worst thing you can do in a Christian church is to take a new born believer and have him teach a class or carry on spiritual ministry. He needs to sit in his bassinet for a while or whatever it is that a baby sits in, [laughter] and to learn the things of the word of God. He ought not to be given responsibility in the church. That is one of the reasons churches have difficulties. They take babes and give them positions, thinking that if they are in this position that will bring out what is in them. It will. [Laughter] But it's not the kind of thing that they expect.



Now the Christian, then, is one who is rightly related to Jesus Christ. The spiritual man is a mature believer rightly related to the Holy Spirit. He is a healthy adult. Now Paul makes the application to the Corinthians in chapter 3 verse 1 through verse 4. He says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." This is the application to them, and he speaks of their former state in verse 1 and verse 2. He says he couldn't speak them as unto spiritual, he had to speak unto them as carnal, as babes in Christ.

Now there's nothing wrong in being a baby. And the expression the apostle uses, which is translated carnal here means simply, that they are fleshly, but they are weak. They are weak because they are babies. They are newly born believers. There is nothing wrong with that at all. So that particular stage of the Christian life is a stage in which the individual should be fed the milk of the word, just like you take a bottle and give it to a little baby, and so you take the simple things of the word of God and give them to new Christians so they can grow. They need time.

But now, of course, if a person stays in that state, then, that's cause for alarm. And we generally think of a person who has been in the state of babyhood for a long time as being a retarded individual physically, and the particular problem needs the attention of a physician. And if a person has sat in the Christian church and for a long period of time is only what he was when he came into the Christian church, something is the matter. It's just as serious, in fact more so, than if we have an infant who has remained in a retarded state. And our churches, of course, are filled with Christians, who have been born again and have become babes, but they have stayed babes, and after twenty years of sitting in the pews, they are really still babes. They need attention.

Paul says in verse 3, well he said, "I fed you with milk," in verse 2, "and not with solid food, for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." They are still carnal. Now it's a blamable thing, and they are not simply carnal weak, they are carnal willful. "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife,

and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" That is, you cannot tell the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian because of the willfulness of the believers in which they have persisted to this time. And often that is true, one cannot tell the difference outwardly between the believer in the Christian church and the non believer, the believer who has been born again but has not grown in grace characterized by these particular sins. Now we know from other teaching of the word of God that there has to be a difference. But that difference is something that only God sees in cases of the carnal believer.

Well, our time is really up. I wanted to conclude, I think I will, in spite of it, take just a minute or two more to sum up what I've been saying. What the Bible then says is that there are four types of men. There is first of all the natural man. He is the unsaved man. He's the man who is not a Christian. Well, of course, no spiritual truth is open to him. He has every kind of limitation so far as biblical things are concerned. The remedy for this man is the new birth. He needs to be born again, to believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and receive as a free gift the Holy Spirit, who will become the teacher of the word of God.

There is a second kind of man. This man is a Christian. He is carnal, but he is weak. He is a new believer. His limitation is the milk of the word. He needs the milk of the word because he is an infant. He's a babe in Christ, and the remedy for his condition is growth. That takes time. There's nothing wrong with being a babe. What you need is to listen to the milk of the word and grow. Incidentally, what is the milk of the word? Well we know this. Paul said that the Corinthians were still not able to receive meat. The sixteen chapters of 1 Corinthians then is milk. That's interesting, isn't it? 1 Corinthians has some interesting things in it, some things that one might consider to be a little difficult. Paul calls them milk.

Well then there is the Christian who has been born again and was in the infant stage, but has persisted in it. He's carnal willful. His limitation is the milk of the word,

even after this lengthy period of time, he still can only receive the milk of the word. What he needs is to repent of his sin and confess it and receive the forgiveness, which will bring him to a healthy state, and then to begin to grow.

And finally, there is the spiritual Christian. He's the one who examines all things, yet he himself is examined by no man only the Lord or by spiritual individuals. For him, well, he has only the limitation of the meat of the word of God. He's the man who is growing in grace, steadily, and has become mature and useful in the things of the Lord. It is really true, as Forsyth said, "The truth we see depends upon the men we are." If we are unsaved, we need to be born again. If we are babes, we need to study the word of God, feed upon the milk of the word, grow strong and mature. If, however, we have been born again and we have never grown in the knowledge of the word of God and have persisted in our infant state, in willfulness, we need to repent and confess, and as the Holy Spirit teaches, experience healthy growth. And for those of you in this audience who are spiritual Christians, congratulations. You're a happy Christian and continue in your happiness, in the study of the word of God, and you will be useful in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am so grateful that we have a number of spiritual Christians in Believers Chapel, and the work of the chapel is dependent upon those who are spiritual. That is those who are born again who have experienced healthy growth and have come to a state of maturity. May the Lord give us more of them.

Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the truths of the word of God. We thank Thee for the challenge of the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. And O Father, open our hearts to divine truth. Enable us to grow into maturity and usefulness that the Lord Jesus Christ may be honored and glorified through us. We work ...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**