



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Timothy 1:12-20

"The Unforgotten Shame and the Overflowing Mercy"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Again Father, we turn to Thee with thanksgiving and praise for the study of the Scriptures. We are grateful to Thee that we can turn to Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ and know that Thou dost hear us and that Thou will teach us and give us enlightenment. And we pray for each one present that we may not only understand the word but also be able to put it into practice. We pray that through the study of the Scriptures we may be strengthened and edified and built up for the service that Thou dost desire each of us to render to the glory of Jesus Christ. We pray that Thou will give us understanding now and enable us to respond to the truth. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We are studying 1 Timothy, so if you have your New Testaments, and I hope you have, will you turn with me to 1 Timothy chapter 1, and we're going to read verse 12 through the end of the chapter tonight. 1 Timothy chapter 1, and verse 12; the apostle writes,

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and

injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Nevertheless for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, (incorruptible is really the force of the Greek text instead of immortal) incorruptible, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Now, we have in our last three studies really just made an introduction to the study of 1 Timothy and we may have commented, you may remember, upon the heresies that were prominent and that the apostle is asking Timothy to fight. Then we spoke about the purpose of the Law last time, and sought to show, as Paul does, that the Law is not made for righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for holy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, and for manslayers and other sinners whom the apostle mentions here.

Now, we are not turning to a different subject when we turn to this section which begins verse 12, which is called in some of our Bible's Paul's personal witness and charge to Timothy. What Paul is doing is simply pointing out in his own case the results of the right use of the Law. Of all the people who were the recipients of the Law of Moses, probably the apostle was preeminent. And what he is simply saying here is that as a result of the application of the Law to himself, he came to understand himself as one of,

as he says, the chief of sinners. So that what we are doing is looking at this passage and seeing that the Law in Paul's case performed its office of showing us that we stand condemned by it.

Now, the apostle then says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." There is a clause in verse 12 that I think we should hesitate over, because it is sometimes misunderstood. Perhaps in one of your modern language editions you have a different rendering from the Authorized Version. But the Authorized Version has, "putting me into the ministry," and that would seem to suggest that the ministry is some kind of official position in which a person holds a kind of office as minister or as a reverend or as preacher, or something like that. This text really doesn't mean "putting me into the ministry" it means simply appointing me to his service. This clause has no distinct Ecclesiastical associations at all. He is not saying that there is a such thing as the clergy, a group of men who hold special office that is different from other simple Christians who are members of the body of Christ.

Now, in the church of Jesus Christ there are differing gifts. Every Christian has a spiritual gift. Some of us have utterance gifts and gifts that are non-utterance, but all of these gifts are equally important. And all of these gifts are intended to be used for the building up of the whole body of Jesus Christ. Some of you sitting in this audience have gifts of utterance. Some of you are teachers in the Sunday School. Some of you may carry on other ministries. Some of you are preachers. Some of you are evangelists, perhaps. There are utterance gifts that are referred to in the word of God. You know the list of them in Ephesians chapter 4, and 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And then there are gifts that are non-utterance gifts, and both of these in the passage particularly in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans chapter 12, we have a number of non-utterance gifts that are given, gifts of administration, gifts of service, gifts of faith, gifts of giving.

Now, these are unusual gifts. Everybody of course has faith who is a Christian, but there is a such a thing as a gift of faith, an unusual ability, capacity, for believing God

given to certain men. And then there is the gift of giving. All Christians of course, generally speaking, give of their substance, but there are some who have unusual capacity for giving. I made reference the other night to John Wesley, who in the later years of his life, used to give along this pattern. At the beginning of the year he would determine how much money it took for him to live that year. He would in a sense make up a budget for the year that was to come. And then he would give every dollar, or every pound in his case that came in over that amount and he was given in the later years of his life relatively large sums of money. And so he, evidently, had the gift of giving.

Then there is the office of priesthood, and every Christian is a priest. Every one of us has the right to approach God directly through the Lord Jesus our great high priest. Now, with reference to such functions as, I should mention that there are also some offices. There are elders and there are deacons. Elders are those that have the oversight in the assembly. And deacons are those that serve under the elders are their helpers. They too have specific tasks.

Now, when the apostle says here, "appointing me to his service," he is not saying the he has some official position. He had the gift of apostleship. That was an utterance gift and also a gift of authority, in that it was the chief of the gifts, because the church was formed through the gift of apostleship. All that Paul is saying is that he appointed him to his service. Now you should, for example, not think of a person such as myself as a person who has, by virtue of the fact that people call me a preacher or others a preacher, that he has a special office. He does not have, there is no such thing as a special office of the Reverend Dr. So and So, or such and such a person who is minister. This particular concept is a concept that has grown up in the Christian but is really not true to the teaching of the New Testament. Ministry is given by gifted men, and these gifted men may be any particular man in the local assembly.

For example, a lawyer who meets with the saints may have been given gifts of ministry and the gift of teaching, and it is his privilege in the church meeting to stand up

and give teaching. In the case of other businessmen, they may be given gifts of evangelism. They may be given the pastor-teacher. The very term pastor-teacher, I think, is really a double term according to Ephesians chapter 4. That term itself is not a term that is necessarily applied to a man who is full time in the Lord's work. A man might be a pastor-teacher and also a plumber, a pastor-teacher and also a doctor. We know that all of the elders who are men who hold office, if we may use that term for a moment we'll talk about that later when we get to chapter 3, an elder may have the gift of pastor-teacher. All of them do shepherd the flock. All of them do pastor. All elders are supposed to do that. So when Paul writes here that he "put me into the ministry" he means simply he "appointed me to his service." And he thought always of his apostolic function as simply that, a function.

It's rather striking that in the New Testament the term "office" is frequently given as a rendering of the term apostle. But so far as we know, that is in every case a misrendering of the original text. "Appointing me to his service" the American Standard Version has. "Appointing me to his service" I think the proper way to render it. So Paul is not talking about being put into the ministry by some unusual, outstanding call. Now, in his case he did have an unusual call, but in the general sense this term refers simply to service.

Often people come to me and ask, particularly if they are young people thinking about the Lord's service, whether it's preaching or missionary work or other types of Christian endeavor, should I have a call? Should I be called to the work of the Lord? As far as I can tell, there is nothing in the New Testament that supports that idea. Now, we do have this with reference to the Apostle Paul, but in his case he had an unusual experience of the Lord, and on the road to Damascus he had that supernatural experience, which is different from the experiences that men have had ever since. What we are talking about when we talk about giving oneself to ministry, is simply the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And if it should be the Holy Spirit that you, as a

businessman, should give yourself full time to Christian service, that's all it is, guidance. You do not have to look for some unusual experience which might be called a call, it's simple the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So that may happen to you who are in the insurance business. It happened to me when I was in the insurance business. God led me to Dallas Theological Seminary, and I do believe that it has been his will that I come here. But I did not have any call such as the Apostle Paul had, but it was a sense of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So Paul then simply is saying that he "appointed me to his service."

Now, he expresses in the 13th verse what he was beforehand. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." We might think that this statement, "Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief," gives him the claim upon God's mercy. Does he not say "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief?" Now, he is not saying in this statement that his ignorance gave him claim on God's mercy, but simply that his ignorance put him within the pail of the operation of God's mercy. What he is saying is that it was not willful sin against light that I was committing, though of course I was sinning. I thought that I was doing God's service in my fighting against the Christian faith, but I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And by virtue of the fact that I was not willfully disobedient to light that had been given to me, I obtained mercy. I think immediately of the statement made by the Lord Jesus, when he was hanging upon the cross, in which he, speaking with reference to the people who were about the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them," or let them go," because they do not know what they are doing."

Now, we've talked about that before, and what the Lord Jesus meant by that was not that ignorance is an excuse, but simply that ignorance is reason for the delay of the execution of judgment. And so, his prayer was "Father, let them go." Release them. Give them opportunity to respond, because they do not know what they are doing. Paul is

saying much the same thing here. "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

Now, will you notice very carefully that the apostle says, "I obtained mercy." I have the Greek text here before me. And the Greek text says essentially the same thing, that he receive mercy from God. It was an act of God, and not the act of the apostle in any way. He was merced, we might translate it. So he received mercy, and this of course is the thing that he will stress now in the verses that follow. He is the object of the work of God. All insight into salvation that does not see that the work of salvation is a work of grace is not truly the salvation that the apostles and our Lord proclaimed. He goes on to say in the 14th verse, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

And then we come to the first of the faithful sayings. There are five faithful sayings in the Pastoral Epistles. I think it would be good for us to look at them, this one is "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Now will you turn over to the 1st verse of the 3rd chapter, here we read, "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." And then in the 4th chapter and the 9th verse we read, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance," evidently a reference to the preceding verse. Then in 2 Timothy chapter 2, and verse 11, the apostle writes there, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." And the fifth of the faithful saying is found in Titus chapter 3, and verse 8 where the apostle says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

Guy King has written a little book on 1 Timothy and he calls the first of these faithful sayings a "statement concerning life' salvation." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptances, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom

I am chief." And the second one he says has to do with "life's service." In chapter 3, verse 1, "This is a faithful saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." He says the third one, in the 4th chapter and the 9th verse is a "statement that concerns life suffering," because we just read of suffering in the verses that follow. And then in the 4th he takes as concerning "life's secret" in 2 Timothy chapter, verse 11 and the final one having to do with "life's sanctification."

Well, whether we follow Mr. King or not, we notice these five sayings and this is the first one. And perhaps the reason that the apostle gives these sayings is because they represented some sayings that were common among the Christians at that time. I would not be surprised if that were true, because of course Christians do tend to have their own little clichés and it's not long before a person who comes from outside the world into the family of God and begins to meet with the saints, and pretty soon he begins to talk like the saints. He begins to go around talking about "I found it" and things like that.

[Laughter] Those are things that characterize the saints, the language of the saints. You notice it particularly in the prayers, and especially when men get up and pray the same thing in a meeting over and over again, and soon somebody else will get up and start praying the same phrases and the same clauses. "This is a faithful saying," perhaps this was one of the things that they frequently said. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and then a person would say, "I was a great sinner."

Now, Paul wants to take the claim for being the chief of the sinners. I do not think that this is to be watered down. There are people who think it is to be watered down. I think this word means simply "chief," and it is an expression of the apostle's humility and an expression of what he thought of himself in the light of the grace of God. He had been a persecutor of the church Jesus Christ, and when the Lord Jesus encountered him on the Road to Damascus he was transformed almost immediately from being a persecutor of the church to a preacher of the faith that he had once destroyed. And this left its mark upon this deep-hearted apostle. So when he says here that he is the

chief of sinners, he's not talking about the fact that he was the first sinner, but he means he's chief or first in point of degree. One of the little stanzas has it "Jesus what didst Thou find in me, that Thou hast dealt so lovingly?" The apostle surely speaks in that spirit when he says that he is the chief of sinners.

Then in the 16th verse he goes on to say "Nevertheless for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering." Now, here he expresses the reason why he has obtained mercy. Will you notice again that the apostle says he "obtained mercy." Notice in all of the salvation texts of the New Testament, the great stress rests upon what has been done for us, not what we do for the Lord. So it is what has been done for us. We have obtained mercy. Now he says that he's obtained mercy that in him, as a chief person, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering. This word which is used here and translated pattern, "For a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," is a very interesting word. It is not the same as the word translated "type." It rather means an active display, a kind of pattern in which we see something going on, and the reference is to the longsuffering of the Lord Jesus and it's not a reference to the apostle at all, but to the longsuffering of Jesus Christ in connecting with the apostle. "Nevertheless for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering." So that as we look at the Apostle Paul and see how God dealt with him so lovingly and so tenderly and with such patience through the apostle's rebellion against the truth, we have an idea of the longsuffering of the Lord Jesus. And that is a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

With that the apostle breaks into one of his doxologies. "Now unto the King eternal," the king of the ages, "incorruptible." Now that statement, incorruptible, reminds me again of the fact that it is impossible for us to represent properly God or the Lord Jesus by anything that is corruptible. Notice, "Now to the King of the ages incorruptible." What does that say to us about the idol? Why it says to us that it is impossible for us to

represent God properly by an idol. The moment that we represent God by an idol we have, in effect, in the minds of those who observe it, caused them to think of a corruptible God, for the idols are corruptible. Often when people who have idols have this pointed out to them they will say, "Well, I'm not worshipping the idol. The idol is just a means by which I worship. The idol simply reminds me of God. It's something by which I think of God, and it's a help to me." That's not valid. That's not valid, because the idol itself is not representative of God. And it cannot do anything but distort the picture of God. And that's why in the New Testament and in the Old Testament, so much is made over doing away with idols, keeping ourselves from idols. One of the last statements the Apostle John makes, almost, is "Little children keep yourselves from idols." And in the beginning, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shall have no other gods before me." We cannot represent God by anything, even those pictures that we have on our walls. They are somewhat suspect in my mind.

Now, I'm sure that there is a way for you to respond to me. If you have a picture of the praying Christ, or if you have a picture of the Lord Jesus, if you want to reply to me you will say, "This is just a representation of his human nature." But when we think of our Lord as a divine person, any kind of representation of him is falsifying, and that's why you won't find any pictures of the Lord Jesus in my house. You don't have to go home and tear yours up. You just go home and say, "I'm representing only the human nature of the Lord Jesus." But if we are thinking of the person Christ, the God man, any representation of him, it seems to me, is inadequate. But I don't want to fight that battle or make too many enemies over something that is perhaps not all that important. But it is extremely important that we realize that we cannot represent God by any corruptible thing, such as an idol. He is the incorruptible God.

He is "invisible," he cannot be seen. And that is why the Lord Jesus Christ has come. That is why an incarnation is necessary, also, because we could never be certain that God really has spoken to us and made it possible for us to have salvation if Jesus

Christ had not ultimately come. We are sometimes, again, not too aware of that fact. We tend to read the Old Testament, and we read the accounts of the prophets, and the others of the Old Testament who had some contact with God, and we are inclined to think that it is not really necessary that there be an incarnation for us to certainly know God.

Because we are, I say, inclined to believe since we have the word of God, those statements concerning the prophets of the Old Testament. But one might reasonably raise the question, if we had not had an incarnation, one might raise the question, how can we really be sure that God is as the prophets say he is. And so finally, it was necessary for the God man to come, and by the incarnation, God has given us the ultimate assurance that he is what the prophets said he was, what the apostles said he is, and what he is in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The incarnation is a necessity if we are to have a true understanding of God.

He says, "Now unto the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible," whom we know through the visible image of God, the Lord Jesus, "the only wise God." Now, in the Greek text here it has simply "to the only God." What does that mean? Well, that means that all of these statements that people make such as "We are all going to the same place, to the same God, we're just going in different ways." Or "There really is only one God and the Christians, and the Mohammedans, and the Hindus, and the Christian Scientists, and the Unitarians, and the Armstrongites and the others really all worship the same God." All of that language is utterly false. There is only one God, and he is the Father of Jesus Christ. And if the God that we worship is not the Father of Jesus Christ, we are not worshipping the scriptural God. Doesn't that make God awfully exclusive? Yes it does. It makes him awfully exclusive. Doesn't that make Christianity very narrow? Yes, it is just as narrow as the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Now Paul would not have had any question whatsoever about all of these other gods. They are not gods. There is only one God. That is why the Lord Jesus said, of course, "I am the way, the truth, the life, no man cometh unto the Father except by me,"

only God. Christians are narrow; they have to be narrow, because the Lord Jesus is narrow. So when people say, "I believe in God." You must say, "Which God, the Christian God or the so-called gods of the heathen?" There is just one, the only God. "Be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Well now, with the 18th verse we come to something that pertains to the local church very directly, and that's what I want to come to tonight. "This charge I commit unto thee, child Timothy." Now, when he says, "this charge" he is referring to that which follows. "This charge I commit unto thee, child Timothy, according to the prophecies which pointed to thee," my text has. Now, your text may have, "which went before on thee." And then some of you might have other things like, "which led the way to thee." Now, let's stop over that for a moment, because that gives us a little insight into the life of the early church. And that's one of the things that we want to stress in this series of studies. The title that I've given to the whole series is "Paul and Timothy and the Doctrine of the Local Church." And here we have something that's very interesting. "This charge I commit unto thee, child Timothy, according to the prophecies which pointed to thee," or "which were made long ago." Now, I prefer that rendering, "which were made long ago." I think that the reference is to the predictions that were given to Paul by the prophets when Timothy was in the beginning given guidance with reference to his future service in connection with the apostle.

Now, what does that mean? There are several things this suggests. In the first place, it lets us know that in the early church there were prophets. Now, just as I came in tonight, Dr. Woods who's here tonight, called me aside, showed me a letter from a friend of his who had listened to one of the tapes from Believers Chapel. It's just Providence that I had something to say about this tonight. This man listened to the tape and I made the statement, "There are no prophets today." And he, on the basis of this, accused me, I'm sure it was in a friendly way, but he accused me of giving a naturalistic, a natural explanation of the word of God rather than a spiritual. And the reason he did was

because he said, "If you'll look in the New Testament you will find that prophets are referred to there." And for my friend's sake I grant that that is true. We do find the term prophets there. Now, my statement, however, still holds, there are no prophets today. I know that there are people who say, "What we need today are prophets." Usually what they mean are strong preachers who will preach with fire and vigor and zeal the Scriptures and that men might be converted through the vigor and zeal with which they preach the word. That's normally what is meant.

But now, what was a prophet? Well, a prophet was a person who gave new revelation. He was not a person who opened up the Scriptures and taught them, explained them. He was a person who gave new revelation. That's why we do not have prophets today, because we do not have new revelation. Now, I know there are people who claim to be prophets today, but all you have to do is to listen to their prophecies and know that they are not prophets. The only thing they can say are foolish, stupid, insignificant, meaningless little statements such as "The Lord is going to give us a great blessing on the following Sunday," or something like that. They cannot prophesy anything that is a true prophecy. Prophets give new revelation, and we do not have any prophets today. Now, that doesn't suffice for my friend, because he looks in the New Testament and he sees that it says, "prophets" in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, and he sees here the word prophecies, and therefore because it's in the New Testament, it's a valid thing for us today.

Now, the reasoning that lies back of that, if my friend were here I would like to say to him, the reasoning with which you have just reasoned that since a word is found in the New Testament, it is valid for us today, is natural reasoning and not spiritual reasoning. Now, the reason is simply this, that the fact that something has occurred in New Testament times is no justification whatsoever that it should be occurring again today. Let me give you an illustration or two just to show you that. The Son of God came, the divine Son of God, the God-man. He was born in a manger in Bethlehem.

God became incarnate, nineteen hundred plus years ago. That's in the New Testament.

The fact that that is in the New Testament does not mean that that is to happen again, and should be happening all the time.

Now, that same God-man, thirty plus years later, hung upon a cross. He was crucified and he was buried. And he rose again the third day from the grave. Now, the fact that there was a resurrection at that time does not mean that we are to look for resurrections today. The fact that the apostles raised men from the dead who went back to their normal life does not mean that that is to happen today. The fact that something happened in New Testament times is no justification whatsoever for claiming that that is normative for the whole period of the Christian church. We have to recognize things that are historical and things that are normative, by virtue of the fact that they are taught as in hortatory or didactic language. So my friend who says that because I say that there are no prophets today I am taking a natural interpretation is himself guilty of natural reasoning and not spiritual reasoning.

Now, he does say here, however, that there were prophecies then. So we know that in the early church there were prophets. Now, we didn't have to be told that, of course, but his is a reference to it. Now, furthermore the apostle says, "According to the prophecies which were made long ago." Now notice he is talking about Timothy and he is calling upon him to carry out some form of service that is in accordance with those prophecies. Now, what were those prophecies and how did they come about? Well you know that in the early church they did not have church meetings that were quite like the average church meeting today. They did not meet on Sunday morning and have the worship service. The worship service being a service in which you sing the doxology, and then you sing the Gloria, and then you recite the Lord's Prayer, then you give the announcements, you take up a collection, and the choir sings a number, and then you have twenty minutes of exhortation, really, in the form of a sermon, which often doesn't have a great deal to do with the text that has been read for the Scripture reading and then

a closing hymn and a benediction and a postlude. Now, they did not have that in the early church. When the early church met, they gathered together and there was freedom of utterance. There were gifts, now of course; there was one limitation, freedom of male utterance. Sorry ladies, but that just happens to be what the apostle has taught us in the New Testament. Later on we'll have some more to say about the place of women, because that has become a very vital and vigorous issue today, of course. But in the early church the men were able to participate.

Now, there are different types of participation. Every one is a priest, both the ladies and the men are priests, and the ladies can enter into their priesthood by prayer, by participating in the meeting in the singing, by participation in the prayer in the sense that a man leads the whole congregation. We do participate in that sense. But then there are gifted men. Now, these gifted men are men who have gifts of utterance, non-utterance gifts, of course, these gifts are both for women and men and are carried out in different ways. But in the church meeting, gifts of utterance were given to certain men. Some were prophets, some were evangelists, some were pastor-teachers. Some were teachers. In Acts chapter 13 there were five of the pastors and teachers who were in the church at Antioch.

Now, when they gathered, there was a great sense of the presence of God the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus was the head of that local church body. No one man was the head. There was no one person who was presiding over the meeting that one could see, but the Holy Spirit for the Lord Jesus presided over the church meeting. Now, those men who had spiritual gifts of utterance were to be responsive to the Holy Spirit's guidance for participation in the meeting. Now, those who were priests were to be responsive to the Spirit's guidance also, and as the Holy Spirit led the individual to call out a hymn, to sing a hymn, to read a passage of Scripture, to offer a word of prayer, they did. And then as the Holy Spirit led the men who had gifts, prophesy, evangelist, pastor-teacher, teacher, so forth, they rose up and participated.

Now, evidently, in one of these early meetings of the church, in which there was this freedom of utterance in the Spirit led meeting, incidentally it seems to me that if this is the way in which the early church and it surely seems to be that. I don't think that there is a great deal of debate over that point, that they had this kind of meeting, then in the meetings of the local church, we should have a meeting such as this in which there is freedom for God the Holy Spirit to lead the entire congregation, teaching us, instructing us, encouraging us, guiding us in ways that truly reflect the great head of the church, the Lord Jesus. Other more stereotyped forms and fixed forms of worship quench the Holy Spirit, and that's what Paul meant in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 when said, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." So we should be open to the guidance of the Spirit for the gifted men. Now evidently in this meeting, there was a meeting one time in which Paul was there and Timothy was there, or at least Timothy was there and Paul heard about it. I think Paul was probably there from what we know. Others were there, too. There were some prophets who stood up in the meeting and who confirmed the guidance of God in the heart of young Timothy, and spoke about the fact that the Lord had spoken to them and that he was going to use Timothy in Christian service. And that is what Paul is speaking about here when he says, "According to the prophecies which were made long ago."

Now, in the Church at Antioch, if you'll turn over to Acts chapter 13, we have something that is very similar in Acts chapter 13. And I think you can see here how this operated in the local church. Acts chapter 13 and verse 1, " Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers." Notice, not one, but certain prophets and teachers, "as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." So Paul's just one of the crowd. And they ministered to the Lord and they fasted. "As they ministered to the Lord, and as they fasted, the Holy Spirit said," now how did he say that? Do you think that some voice came down like was out of a loud speaker? No, I dare say,

if something like that happened, some might leave the room in a hurry. No, the Holy Spirit spoke through the gifted men. The Holy Spirit said, one of those prophets rose up and said, "God has been speaking to me, and he has been giving me inspiration, and he has told me that Barnabas and Saul should be separated from us for the work to which God is calling them." "And they fasted and they prayed, and they laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit," that's the way, incidentally, men should be sent out of the local church. Sent by the Holy Spirit and sent by the local church in token of identification with them in that to which God has called them or guided them. So this is what happened. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy," or child Timothy, "according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare." So Timothy had been marked out as a man of God by prophets who uttered prophecies with reference to his future ministry.

Incidentally, there are eight prophets referred to in the book of the Acts. And they were men who had this function in the early days of the church. Now, of course, that we have the Scriptures, and God's revelation has been completed, we do not need men giving new revelation. We need instruction and illumination with reference to this revelation, so teachers and pastor-teachers have been given.

Now, we go on. Paul says, "I want you Timothy to war a good warfare in these prophecies." By the way, that expression, "by them" is really "in them." You might "war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience." Now, that faith that he speaks about as holding faith is the faith with which we rely on the promises. It's the personal exercise of faith. All of us who are Christians have faith. That is, we have relied upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus. But now he goes on to say, "Which some having put away concerning the faith." In the original text the article is there in the second occurrence of the word faith, and there the reference is to the body of truth, which we hold as the Christian faith. Incidentally, there are always people who want to say it's not so important that we hold a body of truth as it is that we have a personal relationship to

the Lord. Why must we distinguish these two things and mark them out as either-or's. Because the truth is that there is such a thing as the faith, the great doctrines of the faith. And no one will ever be an effective Christian who doesn't develop a knowledge of the doctrines of the Christian faith. But if it is only a knowledge of a code, a system of truth, a series of propositions, and we have never entered into a personal relationship with the Lord, concerning whom these propositions speak, then of course, we have not entered into the full experience of Christianity. We should have the personal relationship, but the personal relationship should be illuminated. Dr. Waltke likes to say "informed" by the doctrines which we hold.

Now, you cannot really know Christ in a personal way, intimately, if you don't know those doctrines about him. That's what you learn about him. Now, if you were to come to know me intimately, some of you do know me relatively intimately, once you get to know me fairly intimately, sometimes you don't want to know me anymore, of course. [Laughter] But if you do get to know me intimately, you know certain things about me. Now, we don't have to a conversation at our home more than fifteen or thirty minutes before one of the women in my house, since my daughter's still visiting me, either my daughter or my wife will make some comment, usually derogatory [Laughter], about certain characteristics that I have. They know the doctrines concerning me. And so they know me that much better, because they know these doctrines. The same thing is true of the Lord Jesus. If you are going to have an intimate relationship with him, you've got to know the doctrines so you get to know him. You know the things that characterize him. That's the faith.

Now, Paul says that there are some who have thrust away faith from themselves, concerning the faith, and they have made shipwreck "of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander." Now, we are told always, if you're going to say something about people, don't name names. But the apostle never heard that advice. He names names. He says, "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander." These are not typical names. Nobody would

ever be given a typical name like Hymanaeus. [Laughter] Hymanaeus and Alexander, evidently they were supreme sinners of some kind who have made shipwreck concerning the faith. And Paul says that he has delivered them to Satan "that they may learn not to blaspheme." Now you see, they were evidently guilty of some blasphemous speech, and the apostle finds it necessary as an apostle possessed with the authority that belongs to that function to deliver them to Satan.

Now, what is he talking about when he says here that he has delivered them to Satan? Well, let's turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, so that we might at least notice the other place that this expression is found in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul speaks about some immorality that was taking place in the Corinthian church. And he's very disturbed with the Corinthians because instead of being in mourning over the fact that sin had arisen in the local church, they are puffed up over the things that they know about the truth and the gifts that they have. They are probably saying, "We are the outstanding evangelical church on the entire mainland of Greece." And Paul says in verse 3, "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed." What you should have done is to have called a meeting of the elders to carry out the principles of discipline in their proper steps. And you have not done that, so I have had to do it in spirit. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Now, what does he mean? Why, he means that there is such a thing as church discipline. And church discipline is one of the most important things for the health of a local church. The sin had taken place. The church knew about it. They were doing nothing about it. The apostle says, "I have already acted. You should have acted. But it

is necessary that such a person be delivered to Satan." Why to Satan? Why because Satan, according to the New Testament, had the power of death and evidently that pertained to his office, that under God he had limited power to inflict physical punishment. Now Paul says that this is for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And over here in 1 Timothy it is, "Of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." What he is talking about is church discipline.

Incidentally, church discipline is not excommunication of the brother. We often think that that's the way that we should exercise discipline. Kick him out of the church. No, that's not the way to exercise biblical discipline. Do you know why? Because if he is a brother, ideally, he's a member of the body of Christ, is he not? Now, if he is a brother, and he's made profession of faith and brethren can fall, David is a witness to that. If brethren can fall, and we know they can, he doesn't lose his salvation when he falls into sin, he's still one of the brethren, but he needs to be dealt with in biblical discipline. Therefore, you do not excommunicate them from the church; because that in effect says you are no longer part of us. What do you do? Why, the elders stand up in the Lord's Supper and say, "The elders have after carrying out scriptural counsel and exhortation, have found it necessary now to exercise biblical discipline with respect to brother so and so or sister so an so." And the announcement is made that discipline is being enforced, and the discipline that is enforced is that they not be permitted to partake of the bread and the wine. For the bread and wine are the symbols of our participation, each one of us, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, they as we partake of the bread and the wine Sunday after Sunday, and we in effect say all that we are depends on our relationship to the Lord Jesus and the whole company stands on that ground, but the Apostle Paul said that we should be very careful about our eating and drinking. If we eat and drink unworthily, we eat and drink judgment to ourselves. Therefore, we should examine ourselves in order that we might

not be judged. So in the case of biblical discipline, they are prevented from exercising their privilege, the right of partaking of the bread and wine until confession is made and restoration is recognized by the elders. Now, in this way the church walks softly and carefully, because not any of us, I am sure, would like to be called up before the whole of the family of God, before the whole of the household of faith, and marked out for having been disobedient to our Lord. That's what Paul means when he says here he's "delivered them unto Satan."

Now, the steps of discipline are, of course, that so far as the body is concerned they be not allowed to partake of the elements. As far as they are concerned personally, discipline is in the hands of God ultimately through Satan and the steps are as 1 Corinthians 11 puts it, "Some are weak, some are sickly, and some sleep." So that the steps of discipline increase in degree, and God disciplines in the physical body, and the ultimate discipline is to be taken physically. That's what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 when he said that "For the destruction of the body that the spirit may be preserved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Well, these are very serious things. It's a very serious thing to be a member of the family of God, of the household of faith. And in the early church they took very seriously the fact that they were related to one another through Jesus Christ. I am sure that the health of this congregation will depend to a great extent on the way in which the elders and the members remember that biblical discipline is scriptural and it must be carried out. That's the reason that so many of our great denominations have become ineffective and fruitless today, because they failed to carry out discipline at the proper time. And now, the churches are, in many cases, in the hands of the unbelieving element. May God help us to be faithful in discipline. It's time to stop. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for these great teaching from holy Scripture that are so practical, so important for the life of the local church. We pray that Thou wilt through

“The Unforgotten Shame and Overflowing Mercy” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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them speak to each one of us and help us to come the realization that it is a solemn thing to be related to Jesus Christ, a glorious thing as well, and...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**