



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 12:4–11

1 Corinthians

“The Unity and the Variety of the Spiritual Gifts”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's time for us to begin. Let's open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee with thanksgiving for the Scriptures, the inspired Word of God. We thank Thee for the marvelous way in which they reveal the truth to us, point us to the way in which we should walk and point us also to the glorious future the saints of God have. We thank Thee especially for the light of the Word of God and the day in which we live because this day seems so dark. There seem to be so few ways by which we might walk in a way that would be pleasing to Thee, and so we are thankful for the Word of God that gives us a sure guidance through the Holy Spirit.

We pray, Lord, that our recognition of the Bible as the Word of God may not be simply just something that is a sham or a farce to us. Enable us by Thy grace, Lord, to truly appreciate what the Word of God is and then to give us a true submission to it. We know that there are many who belong to the body of Christ who speak about the Word of God as being a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path. And yet in the life that is lived, there seems to be so much of the Word of God that is not a part of our lives.

We pray that Thou wilt deliver us from hypocrisy. Enable us, Lord, to truly believe and live by the Scriptures. We look to Thee now for Thy blessing upon us as we study Thy Word. Give us

enlightenment and understanding, and may the result be that our lives are more pleasing to Thee. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

[Message] Returning again to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and our text for this particular time is verse 4 through verse 11. And I’m going to read those verses now, and then we’ll look at “The Unity and Variety of the Spiritual Gifts.” Paul writes in verse 4 of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians,

“There are diversities of gifts but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There diversities of activities, (that word means something like operations) “But it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another to gifts of healings by the same spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as he wills.”

The question that we are going to try to answer in the next of our studies of 1 Corinthians, because it extends over three chapters is this: are the gifts of signs, wonders, and miracles available today, limited only by the unbelief of believers? The issue, as you probably know if you read Christian magazines, is a hot one. The church ought not to neglect the question because, as we have been saying, ignorance leads to heresy or fanaticism in spiritual things. There may be other things that ignorance leads to, but at least it leads to these two things. It leads to ignorance, and of course I am speaking of spiritual things, and it leads to fanaticism in spiritual things. For example, the failure to understand Rome’s sacramental system, as I mentioned in our last study, is one of the reasons why we have evangelical Christians meeting with Roman Catholics, signing a document in which they affirm that they each are genuine Christians. That’s a most astonishing thing because in Roman

Catholicism, as I mentioned and I think probably Rob Zinns did the night that he was here, we have a system of salvation by works.

Now, I know that some of the Romans Catholics today are saying we believe in salvation by grace and we believe in salvation by faith, but then they do not say that they believe that the salvation by grace through faith is received only by those who submit to the ordinances. And if the doctrines of the church are really read, such as the Council of Trent, not modified very much by Vatican II, salvation is based upon the performance of those rights.

Now, Paul in Galatians lets us know that to submit to a right, a sacrament like, as he says in Galatians, circumcision is to transform grace into works. In fact, it is so bad that the person who believes that we are saved by grace through faith plus circumcision is preaching another gospel. And the apostle has some very sharp words to say in Galatians 1 about that. As a matter of fact, he said an individual how preaches that is the kind of curt person that ought to be assigned to eternal hell because it's a different gospel. What makes it so bad is the fact that so many people fall for it. Therefore, heresy is the result of the ignorance of biblical truth, and we do have that.

I'd like to illustrate that further by this, that we have signing that document some unusual men. James Packer, for one, whose theology I would have thought would have prevented him from having anything to do with it. He later has said through some friends of mine that he really didn't realize it was a doctrinal statement and intended to be that. Another person who signed it, an evangelical who was here with the Ligonier Ministries signed it. And then when he was approached by R. C. Sproul and asked, “Why in the world did you attach your name to that?” He said, “Well I looked at it and saw Jim Packer signed it, so I signed it too without reading it.” [Laughter] That is really foolish. That is really foolish. Now, I understand, in support of what Jim has stood for, Jim Packer stood for through the years, that he's making a statement now in which he denies that he believes what the signing of that statement seems to suggest that he did believe.

Well, there, of course, are other kinds of errors. There are errors concerning the doctrine of the Word of God as it pertains to prophecy. And we have in the charismatic movement, in my

opinion, errors concerning biblical prophecy, which I understand to be infallible prophecy, that we cannot speak of something being a prophecy if it's not infallible; that is, a prophecy in which God is a part. We have false prophecy, but we cannot have false prophecy in the Word of God as if it were a prophecy. There are evangelicals who affirm that it is possible for believers to give out false prophecy and that the Bible supports that idea. I don't think that that is true.

One of our elders, one of our older elders, Mr. Howard Prier—my birthday was yesterday, I'm rather sensitive about that age matter—but one of our elders wrote a review of Jackie Deere's *Surprised by the Spirit*, and he has some very, very good things to say in it. If you could persuade him to give you a copy of his review, it would be well worth your time. He makes the point that even if miracles and signs of the New Testament were not meant to confirm the authority of the apostle, it's certainly true that failures of attempts to perform signs and wonders, which are attempted, discredit and should discredit those who make the attempts. Further, such failures affect adversely the credibility of the message being proclaimed. We do have people who say yes we—we attempt to perform the sign and wonders. Sometimes we fail; sometimes we don't. What does that say about the credibility of those who are talking about signs and wonders? It lets us know immediately, they're not reliable, but more than that it discredits the Lord Jesus Christ because these supposed signs and miracles are performed in his name and yet they don't come to pass. And they acknowledge that some of them don't come to pass.

Now, Mr. Prier goes on to say an example—as an example pertinent to the point, consider Pat Robertson's failure to predict correctly the outcome of the presidential election of 1992. In September 1993, almost a year after the election, during a 700 Club telecast, Pat Robertson confessed that he did not understand why God had told him that Bush would win the election. Well, that immediately would tell me that God didn't tell him that, but he is insistent God told him.

Robertson said that God had told him several months before the Persian Gulf War that the United States would be in a major war but that we would win quickly through the use of superior technology. After this revelation proved to be true, Robertson said he did not doubt a subsequent

revelation. God told me, he said, that Bush would win the election in 1992. When he told this on the television broadcast in September 1993, Robertson said—these are his words, Mr. Prier says—I don’t know what happened maybe something happened. Maybe something happened during the campaign that changed God’s mind. What kind of theology is this? What kind of theology is it that a man can say he could have received—he received a message from God he believes, but he also believes that God might have changed his mind? He doesn’t understand some of the fundamental facts of Christian theology, that our God is an immutable God. He is an unchangeable God. He doesn’t have to change his mind. He doesn’t have to look down and say, “Well, things are going pretty bad. I think maybe what I intended to do was wrong, so I’ll change my mind.” What kind of a little God is that? He’s just like a human being. So it is true that lack of knowledge of Holy Scripture may lead to heresy as it did in that case, a changeable God, or it may lead to fanaticism, over emphasis on many of the things that pertain to the Scriptures.

Well, now, we’re going to look at the church. And I’d like to say a few general things tonight, primarily. The church is composed of a head who is Jesus Christ. We don’t have a head in Believers Chapel. Our head, the head of the church, is our Lord Jesus Christ. Scriptures make that very plain. He is the head of the church. Now, the church is also composed of those whom we call officers. In Believers Chapel, we believe that there are two offices. There are elders and there are deacons. Elders are those who have the oversight of the assembly. The deacons are those who minister in temporal affairs, and who, in one sense, at least not the major sense, I mean, not the only sense, there are those who help the elders in the oversight of the church. So we have a head, we have offices, we have members.

Now, in the church there are further distinctions. There are not only offices, but there are also gifts, spiritual gifts, so the Bible teaches. And in one sense we can also talk of graces; that is, spiritual virtues produced by the Holy Spirit in the church. That of course is a product of these gifts in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The offices are spiritual positions or functions in the local church, elders, deacons, and priests for oversight, service, and worship. Now, everyone is a priest. So we

really have three offices. We have the elder, we have the deacon, we have the priests. The elders, some in the congregation upon whom the Holy Spirit has laid his hand to exercise the office of supervision of us, oversight of us; the deacons, whom the Holy Spirit has set aside for temporal service; and then everyone of us, a priest, a believer-priest we like to say. That is, an individual who has the right to lift his heart to the Lord God and address him out of his office of priesthood. That's what Martin Luther discovered in his studies that led to the Protestant Reformation. That all believers are: priests. That priesthood is not something that only a special class has the right to. Every believer. Incidentally, every believer male or female, we are all priests. When we get down upon our knees, we lift our hearts to the Lord in prayer, and we pray for others, we're acting as priests in the office that God has given to us. So there are three offices, elders, deacons, and priests; for oversight, for service, for worship.

Now, there are also gifts, spiritual gifts. There are four passages in the New Testament that specifically unfold this. Two 12s, two 4s; that is, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, those four chapters contain almost all of the material of significance that have to do with spiritual gifts in the church. If you are interested in that subject, those are the four chapters, the sections within them that have to do with it that you should read and study. Spiritual gifts, are they abilities? Well, some call them abilities. Or are they functions? Well, of course, most of them are functions as well. We can say abilities or functions. They are one of the reasons why some churches are successful and why others are not. That is, there are individuals who have spiritual gifts but they are not exercising them. And then there are assemblies of believers in which the believers are active and exercising their gift, and thus the church is in a healthy situation.

Many years ago, I was in some meetings out in California, and there was a young Chinese man, James Thai. He's probably a middle-aged man now because this was a long time ago. He may even be fifty-five, life's about gone. He's long past middle-aged now, this must be twenty-five years ago. James Thai said as a young college student to me, “The church is often a loud mouth with a paralyzed body.” What he meant by that was simply that the people who have the spiritual gifts are

not exercising them. Every one of you in this audience has a spiritual gift. It is your responsibility to come to know that gift. It's your responsibility to exercise that gift within the other things that are set forth in the Word of God. Spiritual graces are spiritual virtues that are produced by the spirit in the body. Individuals manifest the grace of God in their life in various ways and these are ways by which the Holy Spirit produces fruit within us.

Now, turning to our passage, and just commenting a bit further on the definition of spiritual gifts. The giver of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit. In verse 11 we read, “But one in the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills.” Now, I don't want to overemphasize that because actually these verses, verse 4 through verse 7, underline the fact that there is a Trinitarian character to the gifts, too. We are not surprised by that because our God is a Trinitarian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so all of the persons of the Trinity work together in all of the works that they do.

Creation is sometimes referred to the Father, rarely referred to the Spirit, but it is, and then it is referred to our Lord Jesus Christ. For example in John chapter 1, “All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.” There is a Trinitarian character to this. In Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 6 before the reference to spiritual gifts, which comes up just after that, the apostle again sets forth things in a Trinitarian way. There is one body and one spirit just as you recalled in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all,” Ephesians 4, verse 4 through 6.

So in chapter 12, and probably it's fair to say that in the New Testament, in the matter of spiritual gifts, because the Spirit is the one who exercises in the saints, enabling them to function and produce the kind of life that is pleasing to God, it's probably correct to say when we talk about spiritual gifts that the Spirit takes the lead in the giving of the spiritual gifts. But, there is no one-sided emphasis as these verses suggest. The gift itself is said to be in verse 7: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” In verse 8 through verse 10, “To the one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, another the word of knowledge,” and so on. So these are

evidently spiritual abilities, spiritual functions that are represented by spiritual gifts. There are, it may surprise you to know this, about twenty-five of them listed in the New Testament. There is some overlapping and perhaps some of the words are simply different words for the same gift, but, as you can see, there are a large number of spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament.

Now, I said earlier that everybody has a spiritual gift. Notice verse 7, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” And verse 11, “But one in the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as he wills.” Everyone has a gift then. Everyone has an office. That is, everyone is a priest of God. But only a limited number have the office of elder and a limited number serve in the office of deacon.

The spiritual gifts are not given in accordance with our spirituality. In other words, the better gifts given to the more spiritual, the gifts that seem to be not so significant giving to the less spiritual. There isn't any indication of that at all. There is no indication that they are given according to spirituality at all. They are given sovereignly, sovereignly. What that means is that your spiritual gift was known in eternity past. As a matter of fact, God had already looked forward to the time when you would come on the scene and serve him in the way in which he had determined from eternity. They are given sovereignly. Notice the 11th verse, “But one in the same spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as he wills.” So sovereignly. Every believer sovereignly gifted.

Now, what does that mean? Well, it means that there is not self-merit for the more gifted nor less important for the less gifted. Maybe some have more opportunity as a result of the gift they have. I don't know about that. But these gifts are given sovereignly. That may help us to explain some things. How can you explain the Christian—perhaps you've seen such—who is an outstanding minister of the Word of God, who plainly teaches the Word of God and seems to preach it with authority? And yet at the same time we learn that he has had a mistress, secret mistress for some years.

Many years ago when I was a young person, I remember this incident. It's not in my notes, but it just comes to my mind immediately. I was at a conference out from Houston, and the subject



of a particular preacher came up. And a lady who was a veteran Christian in one of the congregations that was holding this particular conference, and the name of a particular preacher came up, and she just said, “Whenever he preaches I cut out a new dress.” She was a seamstress at home, and so what she meant by that was she felt that he did not live up to the Word of God as he ought to. And so when he got up to talk she said I didn’t pay any attention to him. I cut out a new dress. She had that going on in her mind. You’ve never done that have you? You’ve never sat in an audience, and you have been thinking about something entirely different. You men who play golf, you’ve never sat in the audience and begun to think about the shot you hit yesterday or the one you hope to hit tomorrow. Never done that. Some of you are smiling already. You are smiling because you know it’s true.

Now, the individual that she was speaking about may have been a very gifted person. She felt he was a very gifted person. But she knew something about him that made her unhappy. I happen to know a number of people. I imagine I may fall in the class of illustrations for some, too, because people talk a lot, but I’m talking about serious sins. I know several men who are gifted preachers of the Word of God but who have been guilty of adultery in their ministry and their service. How is it that a person can be an effective preacher and at the same time be committing adultery or some other sin?

Well, it’s very helpful to read this because it helps to explain. It doesn’t approve what we are talking about, but it helps us to understand. There are individuals who have been given sovereignly certain gifts, and they may have fallen down in their Christian lives, may have fallen down seriously. As you know, if you know anything about evangelicalism—and I am speaking broadly; I’m not talking just about the charismatics who’ve managed to distinguish themselves in recent years by this kind of thing. I’m talking about people who are within evangelicalism who have good reputations, members of mainline churches and large and effective evangelical churches who have been guilty of serious sins. It’s very helpful to understand that for the gifts that God is given us, there is no self-merit whatsoever.

A person who serves in a particular place does not serve there because he's more gifted than someone else, and the person who serves in a little place and doesn't seem to have much importance in the Christian life is not necessarily less gifted. Some may have more opportunity than others, but our gifts are given to us sovereignly, and we are responsible to the Lord, all of us. And when the time for the, well done good and faithful servant comes, we are no doubt going to be greatly surprised. Those that we think will have the large rewards will not have the large rewards and some that we might even wonder why they even have much of a reward at all, they may have the big rewards. That's just the way the Scriptures put it.

Now, I want to say a few things about the description of these gifts, and we're going to be involved in this for a while so I'm not going to say everything that I know. I know you may think I can say everything that I know in sixty minutes, well, maybe sixty-five or seventy but not sixty. The spiritual gifts fall into, in my opinion, two categories. There are those that we can call temporary gifts, and there are those that we can call permanent gifts.

Now, the temporary gifts are the gifts that were given by God for a specific period of time but which are not available for us today. Perhaps the easiest way to support that would be to ask you to think of apostles. We have in the beginning of the history of the Christian church in the New Testament, the apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They were individuals who are ones who have seen the Lord and his resurrection. That's one of the qualifications. And so apostleship is something we don't have today, because we don't have the privilege of seeing the Lord and his resurrection. Read Acts chapter 1, for example. Read 1 Corinthians chapter 9—well, we read that. Remember? The apostle says in verse 1 of chapter 9, “Am I not an apostle, am I not free, have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord. Are you not my work in the Lord?” I am not an apostle. I have not seen the Lord. The Twelve and then one to take the place of Judas who fell and the Apostle Paul, these are the apostles. I know the term “apostle” is used elsewhere in the New Testament of others because it has a twofold usage. It's used of people who are sent as messengers of churches, because that's

essentially what the word apostle means, one who has sent. Apostles of the churches, but they are different from apostles of Jesus Christ, so apostleship.

Now, the principle of a temporary gift is established by that. In my opinion, prophecy is also a temporary gift. We do not have any prophets today. I saw one person leave a minute ago. It may be because I've already said something to offend them, but I hope not. But anyway, there are people who think that we have prophets today. But so far as I can tell, the Bible does not support that because prophecy in the New Testament, as I understand it, is infallible prophecy.

Now, I have a very good friend that I have served on the faculty with, and I've served on some other occasions with him in some ministries, and he believes that it is possible to have prophecies that are fallible. That is prophecies, all prophecies are to be tested, and we are to hold fast that which is good, that which we feel is a true prophecy. But you can still have a prophet, who from time to time, gives false prophecies and biblically you can call him a prophet. I don't really think that is true. That's a debatable point. I may be wrong. I don't think I am. If they're going to convince me, they have to hurry because I won't be here too much longer.

So anyway apostles and prophets, people like Agabus, who is mentioned a couple of times in the New Testament, Acts chapter 11, chapter 21. Agabus prophesied and that gift was given. So, prophet, a person who speaks for the Lord. I am going to talk more about this later on about what a prophet is.

But we have miracles, healings. Now, let me say just this about it because we are going to spend more time on this. The Bible lets us know that healing is possible at any time through prayer. Furthermore, there is a specific provision for healing, call for the elders of the church and have them pray. Those are ministries that are set out in the Word of God. It's always puzzled me that those who talk so much about healing rarely ever exercise what James says in chapter 5, “That right to call for the elders of the church and have them pray and ask God to heal. We know that healings take place as a result of prayer. So when I say that healing is a temporary gift, I am talking primarily about

healing in the sense of a person, a healer, who goes around exercising this gift as a healer. Healing takes place, but healers, so far as I can tell, are not set forth in the Word of God.

We do believe that God is able to heal at all times, of course. And he has set forth provisions for that, prayer, and then for those who are sick, call the elders and have them pray for you. We do that in Believers Chapel, incidentally. Some of you may not know that, but through the years that has been done. When individuals are sick, call for the elders, the elders have come, they've laid hands upon them, anointed them with oil. There is some question whether that's literal or figurative. We have used literal oil, but think also what oil meant in the Word of God, and have prayed over people who were sick: the elders gathering around and laying hands upon the individual together and praying for them. As James says in chapter 5, that's one of the things that we have as a blessing from the Lord.

Now, also we have such things as tongues. Now, tongues comes up in chapter 14, so I am just going to pass by that and chapter 13 as well. But, 14, I'll pass that by except to say that I believe that that is a temporary gift, and I will try to support that. In other words, the gift of tongues that we see today, in my opinion, are not usually biblical gifts of tongues.

We have an unusual couple of gifts here. We have the gift of wisdom, and the gift of knowledge. We have in verse 8, word of wisdom through the spirit, word of knowledge through the same Spirit. It's very interesting the usage that has come in recent times of word of wisdom and word of knowledge. It's come to mean something that the Holy Spirit tells me about you or about a situation. That is, he's given me some personal insight, and now I'm free to speak that personal insight, particularly with prophets who may speak of the fact that God is given me a word of wisdom. And so in the light of the word of wisdom, then a certain prophecy is made, like Bush will win the 1992 election. That was a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge. Wisdom being the more theoretical, knowledge the more practical of the two gifts. Word of wisdom. Word of knowledge.

Now, this is the interesting thing about it. There isn't anything in the Bible to define what that gift is. There isn't anything in the Bible to give you an idea specifically of what a word of wisdom

is or a word of knowledge. And yet it's spoken as if everybody ought to know what a word of wisdom is, word of knowledge.

Now I want to tell you what I think it is, think. In the early days of the Christian church, there was no New Testament. They had the Old Testament, but it was very difficult to get their hands on and not everybody had a copy of the manuscripts of the Old Testament. And so far as the New Testament was concerned, some may have had a copy of something that Paul wrote but not all of them and the other writers as well. So what provision might be given for the church which has been meeting now for a considerable period of time—as a matter of fact, it's not until the 4th century when there comes a final conviction concerning the books of the New Testament. That is, their recognition throughout the Christian world. So that would be useful in the early days of the Christian church when we didn't have the New Testament as we have it, and particularly when apostles weren't at hand all the time. That's why they wrote letters to them.

Well, if an individual had a word of wisdom, if there was a gift that was temporarily a word of wisdom, he might be given the answer to questions that arose in the earlier days of the church. Word of wisdom, more theoretical things, maybe some theological point that the apostles, to their knowledge, had not spoken on, and then some practical point. And, incidentally, what I just said to you is not inspired. What I have just said to you is my suggestion regarding that. That's what a word of wisdom is and a word of knowledge. And I think in the light of the early churches that met as we do in Believers Chapel on Sunday night, at least something like that, it would have been marvelous to have somebody when the apostles were not present who would be given—who would be known as having a gift of knowledge or wisdom who could answer some questions by referring to the Holy Spirit in the meetings of the churches. So I just suggest that.

Now, what's the basis of this view that there are temporary gifts? What I'd like to suggest to you is the reasons why I do believe that there are temporary and permanent gifts. To give you a kind of analysis of why I think that is true, of course we know, so far as the apostles were concerned that

was a temporary gift. The nature of the gifts themselves suggest this, particularly those identified with the apostolic age, such as apostleship, prophecy, and tongues as we’ve mentioned.

If you will notice in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 3 and verse 4, the writer of that epistle writing later on in the New Testament speaks as if the gifts are no longer given. Notice what he says in chapter 2, verse 3 and verse 4. He says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, (this is not present time)—by those who heard him was confirmed to us God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will.” And so the Word of God was spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. It moved in transition from our Lord to them, and then the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says it came to you and to us. There is a progression here and a progression in time, and it’s in the past, according to his understanding. He didn’t know, so far as we know, anything more about that.

Third, so—I should have mentioned this. Second on the purpose of the gifts reflected in the relation of apostleship to the canon of Scripture in the purpose of the gift of tongues as set out in 1 Corinthians 14. That is, apostleship, which these men were equipped to do, among other things, write Scripture for us, such as Paul and Peter and others. That suggests, of course, that we would have temporary gifts. Tongues were a message to the Jews of the transition of the ages pointing out, of course, that God was turning from the Jewish people to the Gentiles because of the apostasy of Israel.

The tenure of the gifts was suggested in the New Testament by 1 Corinthians 13:8 through 13. We’ll talk about that later.

And then fourth on the tenure of the gifts in the history of the church, that suggests temporary gifts. Beyond the time of the apostles there is no clear indication of the persistence of the assigned gifts in both number and character. There are some incidental things that are stated here and there, and we do not deny that miracles may exist, remember, because Christians pray. James 5

may have been used, so you may expect here and there miracles to take place. But in the sense that they took place in the times of the apostles, we have no indication of that in later history.

Now, if we grant the truth of the sovereignty of God, do we grant that truth? I’m not going to call for a vote. Don’t want to embarrass some of you. But if we believe in the sovereignty of God and if we can show from history that the gifts were not given in later centuries as they were in those earlier centuries, what does that tell us? That tells us God did not intend that those gifts be given later in the sense in which they were given in the earlier centuries.

*Time* magazine, many years ago, reporting on the international congress of parapsychology said, “In answering the question, Does it really work, faith healing? Dr. Lewis Rose, a Harley Street specialist—incidentally Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones was a Harley Street physician, this in London is the tops in the medical world. Dr. Lewis Rose a Harley Street specialist who had studied this matter for twenty years answered no, healing that is the kind of healing that faith healers give, does not work. *Time* related he had checked hundreds of cures claimed by British faith healers and could find no evidence that they had any paranormal powers. Admittedly some patients felt better, but this was a psychological reaction, Dr. Rose insisted, and there were no organic changes.

In 1988, the book *The Healing Epidemic*, that I referred to in our last time together written by Peter Masters, professor Verna Wright also a British physician, a member of the Royal College of Physicians, an MD reporting on the observation of five Christian doctors of John Wimber’s meetings and leads who traced the healings. These five Christian physicians traced the healings that they had seen in the meetings to hypnotic trance with suggestion of psychosomatic disorders and physical symptoms related to neurosis. All five physicians collaborated on a report that said, among other things, that to describe what happened as the work of the Holy Spirit was simply deception.

The British Medical Association has also issued a report, a survey of faith healing, and concluded, we can find no evidence that organic diseases are cured solely by such means, that is by spiritual healing. Such cases claim to be healings are likely, so they say, to be either instances of wrong diagnosis, wrong prognosis, remission, or possibly a spontaneous cure. Although the report

acknowledged that religious ministrations may have “an important bearing upon the emotional and spiritual life of the patient and so contribute to recovering.”

I think you can see that if a person claims to be healing—a healer and doesn’t heal—what do we say when the healings don’t take place? Well, if he says that he is healing in the name of Jesus Christ, he really is discrediting our Lord. And over and over again our Lord is discredited by those who do not heal. The reason being, of course, that in our Lord’s case, He always healed. And so what many are really doing is being a discredit to our Lord reflecting upon his person and work.

Dr. Verna, that’s her first name. I had her name here. I’ve forgotten what it was now, but anyway she is a female medical doctor who has been there for some time. Anyway, she said, “I cannot, for the life of me, understand how there can be a platform exercising a healing ministry when many of those who occupy it wear glasses. Smith Wigglesworth, the great healer of a bygone day,” she goes on to say, “called them eye crutches.” And so they are.

That reminded me of a story of Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, and I have to tell you this. He said in his early ministry, a leading businessman who believed these doctrines of healing, invited him to a luncheon and attempted to persuade him to add this so-called doctrine to his preaching.

Dr. Barnhouse said, I asked him why he didn’t believe in divine healing himself. He insisted that he did, but I pointed out that he was wearing glasses, had a gold tooth, and that there were wrinkles in this face and hands which showed his age, and that his hair was white and falling out. He exclaimed, “But six years ago my kidney?”—Dr. Barnhouse said, I stopped him short. I said, “If you’re divine healing doesn’t affect the teeth, the eyes, the skin, the hair, I don’t want anything of it.” When God healed Naaman, his flesh became like the flesh of a little—which was not the flesh of a fifty-year-old man, but as the flesh of a little child. Divine healing is that kind of healing.

Now, I’d like to say just a few words in our closing minutes about one or two of the other gifts. There are permanent gifts. Some of these are utterance gifts; some are not. For example, pastor-teacher, teaching, exhortation, administration—permanent gifts. Some of them are utterance gifts like the pastor-teacher, or teaching, exhortation others are not, administration. These gifts



belong to men and women. Even the utterance gifts belong to women, but they must be used outside the meetings of the church in the teaching of women. It’s interesting, too, that the gift of giving is listed as one of the spiritual gifts, giving. Now, I would assume that that means unusual giving. That does not mean the kind of giving that everybody gives, but the kind of giving that some give. “He dropped a dollar in the plate, then heaved some gentle sighs and thanked the Lord the rent was paid for mansions in the skies,” someone had said. Not that kind of giving, but the kind of giving that is large giving. That’s a spiritual gift. What a great thing it would be in the churches of the believers there should be people like that, and there are many Christians just like that who have that gift of giving.

Now, finally, what’s the purpose of the spiritual gifts? Well, Paul says in verse 7, “But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” In other places spiritual gifts are said to be given for the salvation of the saints.

1 Peter chapter 4 in verse 10 and verse 11. Peter writes with reference to spiritual gifts and he says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belonged to glory and dominion for ever and ever.” There are individuals who minister the manifold grace of God.

The Apostle Paul gives the truth, the evangelists give out the truth, and people like Phillip are individuals who have the gift of evangelism. In chapter 8 of the book of Acts in verse 35 in that marvelous story of Phillip and the Ethiopian. You know, we read in the 35th verse these words: “Then Phillip opened his mouth and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.” That word “preached” is a word that means to evangelize. He preached the gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ to the eunuch. And in verse 40 we read, “And Philip was found in his Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

So one of the reasons that the gifts are given is for evangelization. Secondly, for the attestation of truth. We read about Hebrews 2 in verse 4, and how the ministry of our Lord was confirmed to those to whom Hebrews was addressed, and it was done by those who had received the ministry from our Lord Jesus Christ, and they were the means of giving attestation to the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think it's very interesting—I think I've got time to mention this—in Matthew chapter 11. John the Baptist asks a question concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. He sent his disciples, and they came to him, and they said, “Are you the coming one or do we look for another? And our Lord answered, in effect what he said is this: The Scriptures tell us the things that mark out the Messiah. Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. These are the signs of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And those signs are the means, one of the means by which he was recognized as he himself said. Tell John, Isaiah chapter 35, verse 5 and 6 is coming to pass, Isaiah chapter 29, verse 18 and 19, these texts are coming to pass, and they identify me and answer your question John.

They are given, of course, for the edification of the church. We'll talk about that later. And ultimately, spiritual gifts are given for the glory of God. Ultimately that is the purpose of those gifts.

There is a statement that someone has made about great preachers. A man after he heard it, Alexander McLaren said, “What an orator.” After he heard Spurgeon he said, “What a preacher.” And after he heard F. B. Meyer he said, “What a great savior we have.” I think he was intending to say that Meyer was the greatest of them all. I rather look at it differently, that all three of those men serve the Lord in a way that honored our Lord, that glorified him.

One last question, how may I know my gift? Let me give you three clues how you may know your gift. First of all, you should have a desire along its line. If you desire to teach, the fact that you have a desire to teach may be—not necessarily, may be a sign that will point you on to the identification of your gift. If you think you have a particular gift, there should, first of all, be a desire

to carry out that function. And secondly, others should feel that you have that gift, too. Suppose, for example, it is the gift of teaching that you think maybe you have. And so you feel that you have that desire and that God is leading you into that, and you have opportunity to teach and others come up and say to you meaningfully, honestly—you always have to ask yourself that question, I was blessed by what you said. You made some things clear to me that had not been clear before. That may support the idea that God has given you the gift of teaching; that is, you’ve been a blessing to others.

Now, if you think you have the gift of teaching and you are the only one who thinks you have the gift of teaching and no one ever comes really, other than those polite little things that everybody says, good message or something like that, then the chances are you don’t have that gift and your gift lies in a another direction, just as important but another direction. And thirdly, there should be some definite evidence of the reception of blessing from its exercise.

If you’re an evangelist and you evangelize, and there are people who are converted, that supports the idea that perhaps you have the gift of evangelism. But if you preach the gospel thinking you have the gift of an evangelist and no one is ever converted, then perhaps you should rethink your thought that you have such a gift. “Who so boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain,” the Proverb says. For others listen to Paul, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” Those words were directed to Timothy and how he received his gift. But it’s proper for us to ask ourselves, “What is my gift? O God, enable me to carry out my gift in such a way that our great God in heaven is glorified, and the saints, perhaps unbelievers, are helped.”

Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words that have come from the Apostle Paul. We pray that since we all have gifts, that we may come to know our gifts and then by Thy grace exercise our gifts for the good of the church of Jesus Christ, and for the glorification of our triune God in heaven. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.