



Pentecost: Birthday of the Church

by Ronald L. Dart

Well this is, kind of I guess, today (if you'll pardon the expression) a birthday party. Because, really, 1,948 years ago was the beginning (or the birthday, I suppose) of the New Testament church. And 1,948 years ago, there was a *small* group of people who had gathered together to observe Pentecost. There was the grand sum total of 120 of them—about a third less, approximately, than are probably here this afternoon (because I imagine there are a few more here this afternoon than were here this morning). Just a little group of 120 people was all there was.

Now, they were not the only people who were observing Pentecost, though, I must hasten to add. Because, really, practically everybody *in* Jerusalem on this day was there to observe Pentecost, with the exception of the Roman soldiers. And there were even some Romans who were proselytes of Judaism and who did observe the Jewish festivals—Cornelius being a notable example. He was not resident in Jerusalem, as far as we know, at this time. But nevertheless, there were a number of Romans, and Roman citizens even, that observed the Jewish festivals. Some of them had even been circumcised and become proselytes of the Jewish religion. So Pentecost was being observed by a large number of people.

But there was 120 people there—a small group—of Jesus' disciples who were of the beginnings of the New Testament church. They had been told to *wait*, in Jerusalem. They had not been told how *long* they would have to wait. It wasn't even clear to them what they were waiting for. They had been told:

Luke 24

AKJV

⁴⁹ [...] but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high.

Now, as thick as some of them had proved to be over the past weeks and months and years, I am reasonably sure that a lot of them (if any of them, really)...I mean, most of them, I think, did not have the faintest idea of what he even *meant* by the expression “endued with power from on high.” Because Christ had plainly told them things about his death, his burial, his resurrection his ascension, before they took place, and they still stood there in open-mouth amazement when the event actually happened. I think sometimes we look back on our people and say, “Those poor boobs; didn't they understand *anything*?”, not realizing that we have an advantage that they did not have. We're looking back over 2,000 years of history. We have four gospel accounts. And, if we are converted, we have a Spirit of God. We have all sorts of explanations that they didn't have. We have that good 20/20 hindsight, whereas they were being asked to look forward to something that was totally foreign to them, that they did not understand, that didn't make any sense to them. Resurrected from the dead? They weren't even willing to admit that Christ was going to die; they didn't get around to *thinking* about the question of resurrection. Peter was not willing to even allow Jesus to suffer if there was any way that he could possibly avoid it.

So they were waiting, in Jerusalem, just like they had been told, to be endued with power from on high (whatever that meant), and I don't think they *really* understood it. They had seen Jesus alive after his resurrection. They had stood in open-mouthed amazement and watched him be caught up into the

heavens, after they had just been asking him if he was going to, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel. And then an angel said:

Acts 1

AKJV

¹¹ Which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.

And so they went their way after they had seen him. They took care of a few items of business, such as selecting a replacement for Judas. Peter at least realized that something had to be done about that—that there were supposed to be 12, who were to be witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, in order for the body of original apostles to be complete. That was not necessarily to be the *end* of all apostles, because Paul was later an apostle. Barnabas was an apostle. There’s evidence that Trophimus was an apostle. There’s evidence that Timothy was an apostle. I think there are about 22 men, I think, named in the New Testament when the indications are that they were apostles. But there were to be the original 12 who were actually going to carry the responsibility of being *the* original 12 witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. (12 being the number of beginnings, and I think that was important.)

So they selected Matthias to replace Judas, and they waited. There was nothing, really, for them to do. They prayed, of course, and they fasted, I’m sure, and they wondered, and they talked, and they looked, and they watched, and they waited. But there was *absolutely nothing* that any of them could do to *bring about* the event that was about to take place. And nothing that they did had anything to do with it. It was a part of God’s plan. He even, I think, had selected that number (because there were 12 apostles, but there were 120—which is 10 times 12—altogether). And he was determined that upon this group he was going to perform a miracle—a symbolic act, if you will—and make a beginning with that group of people. His mind was made up. And all they had to do was wait, and watch, and wonder, and say to themselves, “Reckon what this is all about? I wonder what he meant? How will it take place? What could possibly happen?”

Now, down through the years, many people have attempted to duplicate what they call the “Pentecostal experience”. It’s an interesting thing, you know, Christ said, “Tarry at Jerusalem.” (In the King James version, it’s “tarry”. All it means is “wait”.) But from that word, “tarry”, has come an approach or an attitude on people’s part that it is a “way of doing things”—of praying, and praying aloud, of saying certain words and repeating certain phrases, and holding up hands for a long period of time. And the whole idea is that *these things we do* will bring down the Holy Spirit of God, or will create an atmosphere, or will actually bring to pass the Pentecostal experience. And there is something in people that they have a need, I suppose—a desire—for the emotional reaction, for the physical manifestation, for a feeling. A pins and needles thing, perhaps? A shiver up and down the spine, perhaps? Hair standing on end, perhaps? Speaking in tongues, perhaps? Seeing some sort of hallucinatory vision, perhaps? And people have tried, they have reached out for it, they have worked at it, and some have succeeded in creating, in a way, some sort of manifestation which *they think* represents the Pentecostal experience.

And yet, the original Pentecostal experience was *not created* by human efforts. And I submit that any kind of an experience that *is* created by human efforts is a counterfeit of the original experience and is not the true thing, at all. But there is an emotionalism that some people find satisfying or gratifying, and they reach out to it. And it’s not the same... I mean, there is a genuine emotion that is a part of our relationship with God, and a part of our relationship with one another. It is good. But emotionalism... and the way I would define the difference between the two of them is that emotionalism is something that people *work at* or *work up*.

The Greeks had a word for it that’s interesting. Because, while I don’t know the Greeks were necessarily the *creators* of theatre, they nevertheless were the ones that brought the art of theater to its highest state

for the time and, of course, the tradition of the theatre that exists down to this day. But their word for “actor” [*hupokrités*, ὑποκριτής, Strong’s G5273] is the word from which we get the word “hypocrite” or “hypocrisy”. And well and truly so. For I’m afraid that much of the religion that masquerades under the name of love or emotion or the Pentecostal experience is an *acting* situation—where people have played out a rôle to the place, and have *pretended* to be something, or have *tried* to feel something; that they finally, perhaps, even kid themselves that they *do* feel it. Or they create some type of a human relationship or a human reaction.

But the one thing, I think, sometimes we forget, is that the shiver up and down the spine is a physical thing; that even the emotion that we experience—the *warmth* toward another human being, for example—is a *physical* thing. Whereas the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—is not physical. And its reactions, and the way in which it reacts in the human spirit, is *not* a physical reaction. It is kind of interesting. And it’s a matter of some concern to me, because I find myself in some situations where I find people who are reaching out or are trying to create that situation. I find myself experiencing a strange apprehension or a withdrawing from that type of an approach. And I’ve often wondered: Why do I feel that way? Why do I react that way?

And the answer, I think, comes back to my awareness of what happened in the New Testament, and the fact that it was *not* something that was *brought about* by their own efforts, or their reaching out, or by their grasping, or by their trying to create it. Because they *didn’t know* what they were trying to create if they did. People today look back at what happened on Pentecost in AD 31 and try to recreate that. *They* couldn’t have done it, because they didn’t know what was coming. They waited and waited and they wondered and, in fact, there was no way that they could know until the experience actually took place.

Now, what happened 1,948 years ago, really? What took place where these disciples were gathered together? I want you to turn back to the second chapter of the Book of Acts—a scripture of particularly poignant meaning on this day, the Feast of Pentecost. It starts off by saying:

Acts 2

AKJV

¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And by “they all”, he is essentially talking about the 120 disciples. They had all gathered together, on the day of Pentecost, of one accord.

It is amazing to me, when I think back on all of the arguments, and all of the wrestling people go through related to the Holy Days. And right off the bat, the very beginning of the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the New Testament church took place *on the day of Pentecost*. The church was assembled and the church was observing the feast. It is a striking thing, and yet there are people who will try to argue with that. They will try to argue with 1 Corinthians 5, where the Corinthian church—a Gentile church—was keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread; where Protestant scholars look at it and *know* they were keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, and try to say the church of God today should not.

But it’s an interesting thing, to me, when you look at that one verse, right there—chapter two and verse one of Acts—you find the church keeping *Pentecost*, of all days. Suddenly..This wasn’t something they *worked up to*. It wasn’t anything that took place *gradually*. They were sitting. At one moment everything was normal, and the next *instant* there was a sound where they were. It was a sound like a rushing, mighty wind.

Now, I don’t know if you’ve ever been close to a tornado. But the power of the winds connected with one of those things creates a roar that many people have likened to a freight train. It’s a *deeper* roar than just having the wind blown through the trees. There’s a deep-throated, growling type of a roar connected with it. These men say a rushing mighty wind—tornadic, perhaps—but I don’t think anything was

blowing. I doubt if a paper moved. There was a noise—a sound—in the room, and then suddenly there was an appearance of tongues in the room.

Now, a tongue is not a particularly-attractive thing, and one wonders why it was so. And, by the way, the term “cloven” [*diamerizó*, διαμερίζω, G1266] means “distributed”. It doesn’t necessarily mean a forked tongue. I don’t think that’s the image that you should picture. It means tongues—many of them—and they were distributed over about 120 people who were in this room at this time. It (a tongue) sat—sort of descended upon—each one of these people in a visual manifestation.

Acts 2

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⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now, what’s going on here? It’s a strange thing to happen. You have a rather *wild* manifestation with the sound, and in the visual apparition that descends on them, and then suddenly a whole group of people—who are not educated people, who are Galileans, in fact, almost to a man—and there they are, all of a sudden, beginning to speak in other languages. And they were, indeed, languages. They were not something that nobody knew what they were talking about, because the context makes that very clear.

Acts 2

AKJV

⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Notice “every nation”; they were all over the place.

Acts 2

AKJV

⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Now, there have been all sorts of arguments about what this miracle was and how the miracle worked: Was the miracle in the speaking, or was the miracle in the hearing? And the truth of the matter is, is that Luke doesn’t say. All he tells us is that a group of people came in there, who came from nations from all over the world, and as they saw these people talking and as they milled around among them, they heard these people speak in languages that *they understand*.

I think that’s a very important thing to grasp, because there are some people that seek after a tongues experience, and *they* do not know what they have said. Nor does *anyone else* know what they have said in the experience. That is *not the same* as this. I will not, for the moment, discuss whether it’s from God or not, all I will say is it is not the same experience that took place on the original day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God was poured out. Because the *purpose* of the gift was to enable these people to speak to people *in their own language*. So that they could be understood, not so that they would have some sort of a manifestation of a rolling of the tongue and speaking of words where everybody says, “What was that?”

I used to be vastly entertained...I would listen on the radio, sometimes, back in the old days when I first began to hear Mr. Armstrong. And I remember my wife and I were driving down from Abilene, Texas, to Lowake one night because there was a place across the county line where you could get a beer and a *good* steak. It was our anniversary, and we drove down. And on the way back that night, we were listening to preachers. We listened to Garner Ted Armstrong, and then we heard A.A. Allen who, at that time...A.A. Allen, I think, was a real old wildfire, healing type of a guy. I used to like to listen to him,

but every once in a while he would break over into these tongues. He would speak in tongues, right in the middle of a sentence. And I'd listen *very carefully* to see: Is this a language, or is this nothing more than a loosening of the tongue, and a polysyllabic type of utterance that's meaningless babble? And my conclusion about him was it was a meaningless babble.

And, of course, after him came Maurice Johnson, who advertised "An Open Letter to Herbert W. Armstrong". (Which was kind of interesting, back in those days. I wrote off and got it. He called him "Herbie boy" and talked about his two "'yes' men": Herman Hoeh and Rod Meredith. And we all laughed at that. Because the last thing in the world Rod Meredith was was a "yes" man; he was as much of a "no" man as anything else back in those days—arguing with about everything Mr. Armstrong brought up.) But he was very vicious, or vehement against Herbert W. Armstrong. And I'd listen. But the one thing that I kept going back for... I kept liking to see if I could find these fellows who would speak in tongues. Because I wanted to examine this phenomena. Well, I look in the Book of Acts, though, and I find people who have languages (and they come from different places like Parthia, and Media, and Arabia, and Crete) who have a language in the country where they come from. Now, some of these people were Jews, correct, right enough. But the everyday language which they spoke was the language of Crete, or the language of Arabia, and some of them probably did not speak the language of the Hebrews *at all*, may not have spoken Greek, and may not have spoken Aramaic. So here they were in Jerusalem, though, as Jews, to observe the Feast of Pentecost.

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⁷ And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

Their accent, I suppose, may have told them. But their clothing, also, was definitely an identifying factor for these men. Galilee was kind of a backwoods-y place, if you will, as far as the Middle East was concerned. These men were either agriculturalists or they were a fisherman, but they were not your uptown, city-slicker types. And it was an easy matter to spot, apparently, a Galilean back in these times. And they looked at them, and they said:

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⁸ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

⁹ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues [*languages*] the wonderful works of God.

¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What means this?

There were 16 nations, actually—16 nationalities—that are mentioned here. Of different languages that they heard as they walked around. Some commentators have speculated, from the wording of this, that two or three different men could be standing listening to one man, and all three hearing a different language as the man spoke—saying that the miracle was in the hearing. Others say, no, that the wording doesn't admit to that. And a big argument has raged over that among theologians for centuries—as to just what was the miracle. And as I said before, Luke really doesn't specify one way or the other. Luke just simply says a miracle took place. But because of the way in which it was worded, I would have *assumed* that what happened was these men were given the gift to speak in a foreign language. And they stood up there speaking this foreign language, and these people heard them. And then perhaps the same man shifted gears and began to speak in *another* language, and the people heard him.

I am a little bit dubious about the “miracle of the hearing” side of the theory, but I wouldn’t argue it one way or the other. I *do* know a great miracle took place. And it was a miracle of *communication*. That’s *very important* to understand. It was not a random manifestation of power just for the sake of tickling someone’s fancy, or convincing somebody that there was power, or that somehow we could say these people are of God, or anything of the sort. It was a meaningful miracle of communication to enable a work to be done. God is, generally speaking, not interested in just entertainment of people, or diversions, or putting on a show or a spectacular display just for the sake of people standing by and watching it. (Perhaps one exception or two to that might be God’s artistic spirit, as expressed in the sunset from time to time. But nevertheless, as far as miracles are concerned, random miracles or things of that nature are a little bit, I think, out of character with what we understand God to be.)

So there was a miracle—a *fantastic* thing—but there is no indication at this point that this was a merely an emotional experience. It was a purposeful giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit for the sake of doing the job that needed to be done: preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Now, we go on to say in verse 13:

Acts 2

AKJV

¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Which, I think, was probably more than just drunk. I think there was probably a little bit of craziness that came about from the drinking of new wine.

Acts 2

AKJV

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said to them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known to you, and listen to my words:

¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

And Peter now begins to quote, right out of one of the Old Testament prophets, a statement. Now, Peter quotes it all. He doesn’t cut it off short in the middle. And so you can be quite sure that Peter isn’t trying to pull the wool over anyone’s eyes. What is interesting about this quotation is that the prophecy, in its context in Joel, is talking about the *very end time*. There isn’t any way of escaping it, as a matter of fact, and Peter know it. Because Peter quotes all of that section relevant to that, including a section which shows you that he understands it talking about the end time. And yet he says, “*This is that* which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

Now, what are we to conclude by that? Was Peter mistaken? Was Peter thinking this *is* the end time? Just how did Peter understand what was taking place? Let’s read it and see if we can understand it ourselves.

Acts 2

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¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh:
[...]

Now, that did not happen on this day. All that God’s Spirit was poured out upon was 120 people (plus those who were baptized later on that day in them number of about 3,000 people) and so on it goes. That’s all. There were just an *awful lot* of people upon whom God’s Spirit was *not* poured out then—or the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year, or the next century—as a matter of fact.

Acts 2

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¹⁷ [...] and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:

²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

The prophecy is directed at “the day of the Lord”. Peter reaches in, and takes it out, and *applies* it to what took place on that day. Was he wrong? No, he wasn’t wrong. He wasn’t any more wrong than Isaiah was when Isaiah had a son born to him, and he named that son “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” instead of naming the son “Immanuel” **[Isaiah 8]**. But, you see, Isaiah’s son—with that jaw-breaker of a name: Maher-shalal-hash-baz—was a *type* of Christ. And if you read very carefully that whole section of prophecy (beginning, I believe, with Isaiah 6 or 7...7, it is) and read on through chapter 12, you will see a prophecy that spans centuries and centuries of time, in which Isaiah has a son to be born as a type and a sign to the people who lived *then*. But out of that section of prophecy come many prophecies that you and I ascribe to the birth of Jesus Christ. And we do so quite correctly. And Isaiah was quite correct in assigning it to his own son, because his own son was a *type* of Christ. And what happened on the day of Pentecost was a *type* of what is to happen at the return of Jesus Christ.

Now, yesterday [in *The Harvests of God*], I talked a great deal about the 49 days leading up to the Feast of Pentecost, and the symbolism of those days. We have tended to look at today as symbolic of the spring harvest, and of the time of the calling out of the firstfruits, and the salvation of *us right now*; and that it symbolizes, again, the salvation of many people during *this* age of time. And then the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the millennium and the salvation of many, many *more* people during that period of time. Whereas, in actual fact, the 49 days leading up to Pentecost picture the time of *our* salvation, and *Pentecost* pictures the time of God pouring out his Spirit upon *all flesh*—mankind as a whole. It also pictures, as we pointed out yesterday, and ties in with the Jubilee—which also pictures the return of Christ.

And so we begin to see that Pentecost is actually looking ahead to the return of Christ, and the millennium, and the making available of the Holy Spirit *to the whole world*. What happened on Pentecost in AD 31 was the earnest money. It was a beginning. It was the start. It was a sign. It was a type of what was later to come. Peter knew that. He understood that. Because he went right on to cite the entirety of the prophet, saying that there had to be heavenly signs—and he knew full well that, as of that moment of time, there had been none.

Now, perhaps he thought that there were going to be. Perhaps he thought that this is the start, and in the days that follow we’ll see heavenly signs, we’ll see the whole thing, and Christ returning. And he may have been mistaken about the time of Christ’s return. But he was not in error when he said “this is that spoken by the prophet Joel.” Because, indeed, what Joel was talking about was is the ultimate fulfillment of the meaning of the Day of Pentecost—and that is the making of salvation available to *all flesh*, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh in the time to come. He says in verse 21:

Acts 2

AKJV

²¹ And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

It’s a fantastic thing, when you really understand it all. And here were these men, standing around, suddenly gifted—in a way that they had never been before—with the ability to speak in a foreign

language. And also, I think, with more than that—with a depth of message and a power to preach that, up until this time, they had not experienced. We find in the chapters that follow this, interestingly enough, men who previously had been somewhat lacking in courage (to put it mildly) were as *bold* as a lion. Men who really seemed almost tongue-tied, in the way, found themselves able to speak—eloquently. The gifts, the power, the faith, the strength. Weak men were made strong. These things took place because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, without measure, that took place on that day.

I think, in some cases, whenever we find ourselves wishing, maybe, that we were able to walk down the street, and take somebody by the hand, and raise him up, and say, “Be healed.” Or we wish that we were able to speak in tongues. Or we wish we were able to do any number of things that involve spiritual gifts. I don’t think we realize that what God was doing here was not the initial begetting of a young Christian with the Holy Spirit of God. But it was the *empowering* of a group of trained servants to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This manifestation did not happen to *everyone* in New Testament times; it did to some. And there were times when God did it as an overt manifestation, with very good reasons. And I could go into that in a case of Cornelius and others—Cornelius...where he received those outward manifestations even *before his baptism*. Of course, what God was doing there was demonstrating to Peter that it was permissible to baptize a Gentile—something Peter *would not have done* if it had not been for the outward manifestation of the pouring out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But that did not happen to everyone. It happened when God chose, and for the reasons that he chose. And those to whom it happened were not spiritually superior to those to whom it did *not* happen. And this is a mistake, I think, that some people make when they assume that outward manifestations of miracles, or signs, or speaking in tongues, or what have you, is a sign of some sort of spiritual approval. “Bang!”, you know, “God approves of me.” I’ve encountered situations in the past where people could not understand how I could I think that maybe God was not really approving what they were doing in a particular case because they said, “Look, back here in this situation, I was sick. And I was in the hospital. And I was going to die. And the doctors pronounced me as a terminal case. And God intervened and healed me. And this happened to me...” And so on. And I listen, and I listen, and I think to myself...I try not to be impolite, but I say to myself, “So what?” I think that’s wonderful. It’s marvelous. But it says *nothing* about what you’re doing now. It doesn’t mean that you are any more special to God than *anyone else*. The fact that God, at one time, in his love and in his mercy, reached down and touched your life, and changed you, and made you different from what you were before...It doesn’t happen because you’re *good*. It doesn’t happen because you’re *righteous*. It doesn’t take place because you make it happen. Paul tried *so hard* to help us to understand that. He wrote to Titus, and he said, “I want you to put these people in mind”:

Titus 3

KJ2000

² To speak evil of no man [...]

³ For we ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures[....]

They need to *understand* that it was not their works of righteousness that caused God to reach down and pull them out of the world. It was his mercy. It was his love. It was his choosing. It was *his decision*. And, you know, you *cannot earn* the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be done. And they are not given because one man is more righteous than another man. It doesn’t happen that way. As a matter of fact, God in heaven *decides* whom he wishes to use, for reasons that are sometimes very obscure to us. And sometimes almost, I think, in order to *confound* us, God chooses what he will choose. Paul himself was confounded by God’s choice of him. He said:

1 Corinthians 9

KJ2000

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

He understood that by any line of reasoning, any logic, any way he could approach it—with Greek logic, with Roman force, with the intellect of whatever he could put together of his Jewish mind—there wasn't *any way* that he was fit to be an apostle. He proceeds to say:

1 Corinthians 9

KJ2000

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am[...]

Now, can we understand that? Can we get a grip on that, somehow, and realize that the so-called “charismatic movements”—the emotional approach to religion; of the attempt to create an emotional environment—is *false*? That it is not the gift of God's Holy Spirit? Because you *cannot* create those gifts by *your* works. Otherwise, they are not gifts. And love is a *gift* of God. Tongues are a *gift* of God. Healing is a *magnificent gift*. It is *free*; it *cannot* be earned. Nor can tongues. Nor can love. Nor can compassion. These things are emotions of God, which God gives to us as a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our life. And it is sad to me; and I find myself almost a little afraid, sometimes, of the attempts of people to whip up an emotional reaction. Because I say to myself: It is of men. That human, or that man, cannot gain for himself—nor can he give to me—the love of God. It is a gift. God—in his mercy, his love, his compassion, and (if you will) his capriciousness—*he* decides who will receive it and who will not. He says [**Romans 9; 2 Timothy 2**], “I choose my vessels. I choose one vessel to honor; I choose another vessel to dishonor. Who are *you* that will reply against God? Who are *you* to decide where my gifts are going to be given?”

I often thought it was kind of interesting; over a period of long years, I began to wonder about the question of ordaining men to be evangelists. Because I looked at some of the men who were evangelists, and they *weren't*. (It sound like double-talk, doesn't it.) The word evangelist [*euaggelistés*, εὐαγγελιστής, Strong's G2099] simply means “a bearer of the glad tidings”—a preacher of glad tidings, or a taker of the good news to the world. And we had men we had ordained as evangelists that never did that in their whole life. And I thought to myself: Why are they evangelists? They may be good pastors, as far as working with a local congregation. They may be fine elders. They may be fine preachers. But they're not evangelists.

And I got to thinking about it, and I thought: How come it is that we don't have any prophets in the church? Because along with evangelists and pastors and teachers and apostles, the office of prophet is listed [**Ephesians 4:11**], is it not? Now, how come—if we can ordain people as local elders, local church elders, or preaching elders, or pastors, or evangelists—how come we don't ordain anyone as a prophet? Well, I don't know about any other minister (I can only speak for myself) but I thought to myself: How can I decide...pick some guy out, clap hands on him and say, “You are a prophet”, and thereby determine that God in heaven is going to help this man to foretell the future? When I looked on it that way, I begin to realize that it was sort of absurd for me to assume that *I* could decide what gifts God was going to give to another man.

Now, I *do* know (based upon Paul) that I have a responsibility to *discern* whether or not a man is *qualified* to receive the laying on of hands *at all*, and whether or not he is qualified to carry certain responsibilities over other people's lives—as in the case of the deacon, or as in the case of a bishop—as the qualifications are laid out in 1 Timothy 3. That's one thing. But having made the decision that he measure up to that, and realizing that God used a man in a certain case...and here I am, knowing that I *am* an evangelist, with the awareness that I *am* a minister of Jesus Christ, that the fruits are there (there's a whole trail of them behind me—of baptized and converted people), and that I can lay hands on this

man, and I can convey, through myself, to him the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I felt, myself, that it was folly for *me* to think that I could decide *which* of the gifts of God would be given to this man through the laying on of my hands. Rather, it was *my* responsibility to lay hands on the man, and to pray *for* him, and to ask God to give him the gifts of the Holy Spirit as *he* would see fit, and then *get out of God's way* and let God do whatever he decided he wanted to do in giving this man the gift of prophecy or of healing or of preaching or of whatever it may be. Perhaps even, somewhere down the line, the gift of tongues. After all, it is not for *me* to say what God will give. Nor is it for me to say what God will give *me*.

But I was very new in the church. I never sort of wondering and pondering over some of the gifts of tongues and things like that. And I thought to myself: My, it would be exciting to have, all of a sudden, the gift of tongues come upon you and be able to speak another language like French or German or Spanish or what have you. I sort of thought about that for a while back in those days. I thought it would be good. Then, as I matured, I began to realize: What I really wanted from that was, sort of, a spiritual pat on the back—some sort of a *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval, in God's good housekeeping method; some sort of an overt manifestation that I really was a man of God, and that God was there, and I was here, and there was a pipeline in between us. And I particularly was interested to notice in myself that I was especially interested in those gifts that somebody else could see and admire.

It takes a while, but in the process of time some of these lessons do soak in on us; it may take sometimes a *long* time, but sooner or later, if God's Spirit is with us, we do learn—sometimes with a few scars and bumps and bruises and a few painful memories—but sooner or later we do learn that it is God who decides. And I think, sometimes, that our own desire for some of these things stands as a barrier in the way, because we are concerned a little too much about what people think about us, and how people look at us, and about certain issues that might be more ego or vanity than they are the *real use* of the gifts of the Spirit of God.

Peter, in this whole section, has gone through this and told them, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet”, and he laid it out for them. Then, in verse 22, he said:

Acts 2

AKJV

²² You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the middle of you, as you yourselves also know:

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, [...]

Now, that's interesting, because it says *categorically* that Christ was delivered into their hands for death “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge”—God knew, and intended to do, what he did.

Acts 2

AKJV

²³ [...] you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

What a mouthful that is. What a *pregnant* sentence that is. Because he says so much in there—about the fact they did it, they were responsible, they killed the eternal Lord of glory. But God delivered him up, and it was with God's permission that it was done. He goes on to say:

Acts 2

AKJV

²⁴ Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be held of it.

²⁵ For David speaks concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my

right hand, that I should not be moved:

²⁶ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

²⁷ Because you will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; you shall make me full of joy with your countenance.

That was all David speaking.

Acts 2

AKJV

²⁹ Men and brothers, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us to this day.

He is trying to tell them that David, in saying these things, was not saying concerning *himself*—that he would not be left in hell, or that he *himself* would not see corruption. David understood and reached out and went further than that in seeing himself...speaking, really, in the place of Christ.

Acts 2

AKJV

³⁰ Therefore being a prophet [*So David was a prophet.*], and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

³¹ He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, [...]

Because, you see, Christ *was* a literal, physical descendant of David—in the flesh.

Acts 2

AKJV

³¹ He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh [*that's Christ's*] did see corruption.

³² This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

³³ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.

[*Tape break.*]

“...here today, Jesus Christ, whom *you* crucified, is bringing to pass. David is *not* ascended to heaven. He has *not* ascended to heaven. He's *not* gone to heaven. David is *dead*, he's *buried*, his sepulcher is right over there and we could dig up his bones”, he says. So there we understand.

Acts 2

AKJV

³⁴ For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he said himself, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit you on my right hand,

³⁵ Until I make your foes your footstool.

³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made the same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brothers, what shall we do?

What a *marvelous* thing. There were who knows how many hundreds of those at this moment of time—apparently, how many thousands—were actually in the position to hear this as Peter stood up, and with a loud voice (no doubt strengthened by the Spirit of God) spoke over the heads of these people so they could hear what he had to say. And as he spoke to them, and they were *burned*, and they were *pricked* (and, no doubt, the Spirit of God moving *them* as well as the speaker); as they realized, for the first time in their lives, they had reached out and—as much as any Roman soldier who had driven a nail in him, or as much as the one who drove the spear into his side—*they had crucified the son of God*. No wonder they were pricked in their hearts! An experience many of *you* have finally come to, when—nearly 20 centuries later—you finally one day come to realize that, as much as these men—who were not necessarily there saying, “Let him be crucified!” (Some of them may have still been in *Cappadocia* at the time of the crucifixion.)—these men realized that they, as much as the Romans who did it, were guilty of the blood of the son of God. And they said, “What shall we do?” Peter’s answer is as clean, and as straightforward, as simple—almost unemotional—as anything you could read:

Acts 2

AKJV

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

³⁹ For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call.

⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

⁴¹ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls.

Man, that’s something to think about it! It just boggles the mind. It leaves you breathless when you try to really understand what took place that day. Do you realize the problems of getting 3,000 bodies under the water in one day? When you’ve only got 120 people to start with? That is a formidable thing. And they were in Jerusalem, mind you; they weren’t down at that river Jordan where they had a whole river to do it in. I don’t know *where* they were doing all this baptizing. *3,000 people*. You think in terms of our old two- or three-hour (or sometimes four-hour) baptism counseling sessions, and some of you think about the fact that you got turned down three or four times and had to come back again, and the difficulty, it does make you wonder a little bit, doesn’t it, about how any of these people got baptized the first day they heard the gospel of the Kingdom preached to them this way. Just as a matter of curiosity: How many of you people were turned down the first time you counseled for baptism?

(Just out of curiosity. I’m surprised it wasn’t more than that, just knowing what I know about some of these things. But it happens. And, of course, some of you may not wish to stick your hand as far as that’s concerned. Because, knowing what I know, I’m surprised that about two-thirds of the hands in here of people who are baptized didn’t go up, because of the attitude and the approach that sometimes we’d take. It was different. It *had* to be different. I *hope* it was different from what we’ve done in the past, at any rate, because I don’t see how they could have done it.)

Acts 2

AKJV

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

⁴³ And fear came on every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, [...]

And, who knows...well, we know they had land. They had houses. They had different things. They had cattle. And they sold them.

Acts 2

AKJV

⁴⁵ [...] and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

And, you know, it's no wonder, with that kind of success, that they did kind of settled back on their leaves, and that they kind of forgot for a period of time about the necessity of doing anything outside of Jerusalem. You know, really, if we were so busy baptizing people around here that we didn't have time to stick our heads up and look out beyond the boundaries of the county, it's not difficult to see how we might tend to forget that there was something supposed to be done besides build a church right here.

It would be an easy mistake to make; and I think that they did it. They sat right there and they kept right on it. Another day they'd baptize 2,000 people. And they kept right on going. Of course, a lot of people packed up their bags and left after they were baptized, and left Jerusalem and went wherever it was that *they* were supposed to go. But an awful lot of them didn't. An awful lot of people, even who lived in other lands, stayed in Jerusalem—didn't even go home. That's why they had to sell possessions and lands and so forth, in order to meet the needs of all those newly-baptized people who *weren't* going home—who were staying right there. The church, for a period of time, had a communal style of living which, I think, is rather interesting to observe and see the things that they did while they were here.

Well, this is all, I think, very interesting—to look and to see the gift that was poured out upon these people on this day; and to understand that the gift of tongues—the gift of preaching—was one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that was given to these people. Is it possible to abuse a spiritual gift? Now, here's God, who looks down upon a man, and he gives you a gift of the Holy Spirit. Not necessarily all of them, but one or two special things that can be used to do his work. Is it possible for you, having been given that, to abuse it. Well, yes it is. And I think it's rather interesting to look at one of the more fascinating examples in the Bible of a church that did—probably a church that, more than any other...as a matter of fact, Paul, writing to them, says to them:

1 Corinthians

AKJV

⁷ [...] you come behind in no gift; [...]

Meaning, essentially, that there was no spiritual gift that was given to the church of God—that this church would have to take second place to some other group of people in that regard. God had been with them, he'd been with them very powerfully, and they had the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A funny thing had happened to them, though, along the way. They had also become *quite arrogant* about the whole thing. Paul uses the expression “puffed up”. And, of course, by now most of you have figured out that I'm talking about the church at Corinth—a church which was a Gentile church for the most part (although there were Jews there), a church that Paul had spent a great deal of time with, a church that had all sorts of spiritual gifts present in it. And yet a church, at the same time, that was split about five different ways, with a certain amount of bickering and elbowing going on for position, taking sides in

whatever kind of an argument was going on—where the apostles were not even there, and still people were choosing a side of which apostle they were going to follow. And whenever Paul, and Apollos, and the others of them heard about it, they threw up their hands in horror and said, “What in the *world* is going *on* over here?”

But these people, *with* spiritual gifts, *had* abused those gifts, *had distorted* those gifts. In fact, there was very little that the Corinthian church had been given that they had not, in one way or another, fouled up. They were not even keeping the Passover right. Paul had to rebuke them and slap them across the wrists for the fact that some people were getting drunk at the Passover service. And I rather gather that he actually *changed*, somewhat, the way that the church was observing the Passover, in order to get rid of the abuse of the Passover, of all things.

Well, it wasn't all they were abusing. They also were abusing the gift of tongues. And you find the account of where Paul is writing to them about this in the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Now remember, in the second chapter of Acts, we are not dealing with unknown tongues, are we? The word “unknown” was not there. The tongues that were being spoken of in the Book of Acts were actually *known* languages, and they actually are *mentioned* in the second chapter of Acts—16 known nationalities, or different dialects or languages, that were being spoken at that particular time. So we're not dealing with unknown tongues. We're not dealing with the tongues of angels. We're dealing with the tongues of men, understood. Now, Paul says in chapter 14, verse 1:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹ Follow after charity [*or “love”*], and desire spiritual gifts, [...]

That's a *good* thing—for you to want to have spiritual gifts. But, he says:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹ [...] but rather [*most importantly*] that you may prophesy.

Now, let me stop right here and explain one very important point. When Paul says “prophesy”, he does not mean a prophet in the sense of a *seer*. There is a difference between a prophet and a seer. For the most part, most of us in the 20th century, when we use the word “prophet” in the English language, we are referring to a seer. That is, one who *sees* the future—foretells the future: an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, an Ezekiel. But whenever you find the word *prophétés* [προφήτης, Strong's G4396] is in the New Testament (which means “prophet”), that's not what they're talking about. That may be *included*, but many prophets did not foretell the future at all. All the word “prophesy” means is inspired preaching. It means preaching under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Under that definition Mr. [*audio break*] is a prophet. Mr. Cole is a prophet. All kinds of prophets, really, existed in the Worldwide Church of God (and some of them may not have lost that spirit yet, if they'll stand up and use it one of these days, along the way).

You can *quench* that Spirit. You can *lie* to that Spirit. You can lie to people, or you can submerge it and not use it, and I think God will take it away from you. But that gift of speaking prophetically—that is, in the sense of inspired preaching—even showing somebody their sins, of what they're doing *right now*, and reaching the heart of a human being, *is* prophesying. And you'll see that that's how Paul uses the term here as we go along in this chapter.

1 Corinthians 14

KJV

² For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue [...]

And if you will notice the word “unknown” (if your Bible has italics) is in italics, which means it is not in the original Greek. And it isn’t in this chapter, at all, in that sense. It is just simply “he who speaks in a tongue”. The translators add the word “unknown” because of the context and the way Paul is using it. Because, apparently, the tongues in this situation *were* unknown. Listen to what he talks about.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

² For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men, but to God: for no man understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

Now, the King James translation almost talks as though he who, customarily, throughout the church of God, speaks in a tongue, is not speaking unto men but unto God. But that’s *not* what it’s saying, because in the Book of Acts they *were* speaking to men, weren’t they? And they were *understood* by men. So this is not the same. Paul is talking about what the *Corinthian church* was doing, which was not right. They were *not* speaking to men. The only person who understood what they were saying was God—in some cases, even including *themselves*; *they* didn’t know what they were saying. So the only person who possibly could have understood it, Paul says, is God.

Now, he doesn’t say that that’s necessarily impossible, nor does he even necessarily forbid it from taking place, but he has some rather poignant things to say about it. He says:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

³ But he that prophesies speaks to men to edification, [...]

Which means helping to build them up.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

³ [...] and exhortation, and comfort.

Which, in the Greek, the word [*paramuthia*, παραμυθία, Strong’s G3889] means, essentially, “encouragement”.

Now, here is a prophet who is exhorting, encouraging, and teaching or edify. There’s not a word about telling the future, is there? What I am doing, by Paul’s use of the word and what he means, is *prophesying* to you right now—telling you things that you will understand, changing your mind about some things, maybe rewiring some of the circuits in your brain a little bit so you can understand certain things in a way that you never quite understood them before. That’s what prophesying is all about.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

⁴ He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the church.

What’s Paul saying to the Corinthians? He’s saying that, “The way you people are doing this is *selfish*. It’s selfish. It’s for yourselves, not the church.”

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

⁵ I would that you all spoke with tongues but rather that you prophesied: for greater is he that

prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, except he interpret [*changes it, translates it*], that the church may receive edifying.

And then he's doing the same thing the prophet is doing.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

⁶ Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

In other words: “What value is there if I come into here and I use the gift of a foreign language that I have been given, unless in the process of doing so I speak something to you that understand, and I do it for these particular goals?” He says it doesn't make any sense at all. He goes on to say:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

⁷ And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

⁸ For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

You've got this hair-lipped trumpeter out here, you know, and somebody says, “Blow a retreat!” And here's this guy who hears the trumpet blowing in the background, and he says, “What in the world was that?” And he doesn't know whether to retreat. He doesn't know whether to advance. All he knows is somebody blew a trumpet. And that's what Paul is trying to say. He said it doesn't get us anywhere. Just blowing the trumpet is not good enough. You've got to sound a retreat, the call to arms, *Taps* (so people at least know to go to sleep)—something where they should know what you're talking about.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

⁹ So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air.

¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

¹¹ Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks shall be a barbarian to me.

Here I am with this guy. He's Spanish, and he's babbling away in Spanish—doesn't speak a word of English. And here I am; I'm trying to speak English back to him. Actually... a rather interesting situation: Ted Gould and I were in Italy once, and in backing into my parking place, I bumped the bumper of the car that was behind me. There was nobody in it, and I didn't really do any damage to it. I just bumped it, and moved back up into my parking place, and I got out and went on my way. The next thing I know, I come back and here's Ted Gould trying to talk to this Italian standing there. And Ted doesn't speak a word of Italian; the Italian doesn't speak a word of English. And so the Italian is gesticulating and speaking and pointing at the bumper—showing I bumped into it and I put these two dents into it. (I *guess* that's what he was saying; I didn't understand a word of it.) And Ted was trying to explain, “Oh, we didn't put those bumps in it. We didn't hit it hard enough”, he was saying to the guy. And, as they talked, both of them got louder and louder and louder. It's a natural thing, you know. You think, “If I will speak a little louder, he will understand me.” Happens all the time. Finally, Ted began to put vowels on the ends of his English words. (You know, like the Italians do.) And it was kind of amusing; the guy looked like he almost began to understand a little bit better when Ted began to do that.

But it's a classic example of what Paul is talking about. Here are two people standing...he said there are *all kinds* of voices in the world, all kinds of languages, and every one of them has meaning to it. But the problem is that here are two of us talking back and forth, and each one of us thinks the other is *an idiot*, because neither one of us understands *a word* the other person is saying. That's all Paul is saying here. And so he says:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹² Even so you, for as much as you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church [*be able to help somebody with it*].

¹³ Why let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

It's wonderful that he's got someone who can speak French, but if he's going to speak to *this* group he had jolly well better be able to translate that French into something you can understand.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹⁴ For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

Now, the question here is: Does he mean by that, I pray but *I* don't even know what I'm saying? Not really. I think how they translate the Greek of "my understanding", that the Greek is "the understanding of me", which could either mean possessive "my understanding" or somebody *else's* understanding of what I'm saying. It depends on the context. I think what he means is: If I pray; I'm standing here praying, leading the congregation in prayer, and I'm praying in *French*, the understanding of me doesn't bear any fruit among *you*, because you do not know what I said in that prayer. In fact, he explains what he's saying. He says:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹⁵ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

¹⁶ Else when you shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned [...]

That's an interesting expression. "The room of the unlearned" means the man hasn't learned the language.

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹⁶ [...] how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what you say?

[Tape break.]

Now, would you do that? It's kind of an interesting thought. If you were visiting the church in Paris. You're on vacation; saved up a little bit of money and you went over there. You happened to be there on the Feast of Pentecost, and you sat through the morning service, and somebody wrote down the scriptures for you so you could at least follow along in your Bible, and you knew what the guy was talking about, sort of. But you didn't understand a word he said all day. Then in the process, finally, you get down and the service is over, and you all gather around the table where the food is. And they call upon some gentleman to pray. And he prays, "Au père, dans le ciel..." And he begins to pray over the

food. And you don't understand *a word* he says. Would you say, "Amen" at the end of that prayer? Probably, but you sure taking an awful chance. Well, not really. I think that you can trust the brethren in Paris, pretty well, not to be saying something bad over the food. But, nevertheless, technically-speaking you really shouldn't do that. Because when you say, "Amen", you are agreeing to a prayer that you didn't even understand. That's what Paul says here.

Now, you have to understand; this is about Corinth. Corinth...I don't even know if there is an equivalent of Corinth in the modern world. It was *the* commercial center of the Middle East. Rome was not; Jerusalem was not; Alexandria was not; *Corinth* was. And—being a commercial center of the world of trade, of banking—*every* sort of person, *every* kind of language, *every* kind of strange doctrine or religion found a home in Corinth. It was a very *tolerant* place for the church. The church in Corinth, I don't think, ever received any persecution to speak of, because there were so many weird religions there people thought, "What's one more?" You might even say it was the Los Angeles, as far as religious things were, of the ancient world. But, because of its position, there were *all manner* of languages that were spoken. And I think, perhaps in the process of time, a certain confusion arising over the concept of the gift of tongues, coupled with the place that they were, created Babylon in the Corinthian church.

And Paul (who wasn't there at the time, and is writing because somebody wrote to him about a problem) he writes back and he is trying to reduce this bedlam into something that makes some kind of sense in the process. And, as a result, leaves a lot of people in 20th century confused about whatever in the world was going on back there. But I think there were some people who probably were speaking in something that they didn't even understand, and had completely perverted the concept of the gift of tongues, and probably didn't have any gift of any kind whatsoever. It was just that the tongue was loose.

There were other people who actually had the gift of God to be able to speak in a language not their own. There were still other people that had other gifts that God had given them. And in the process of it all, a certain amount of ego had gotten involved, vanity had gotten into the picture, and people were kind of contesting for leadership in the church as a result of that type of thing. A nasty, little situation. And so Paul is writing to them. And a lot of the things we read here don't make an awful lot of sense to us. We shake our heads and say, "What in the world was that all about?" And they don't need to...they *shouldn't* make sense to us because we weren't there. Anyway, he says in verse 17:

1 Corinthians 14

AKJV

¹⁷ For you truly give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

¹⁸ I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all:

And I have no doubt that is true. Paul probably knew, as a result of his learning, seven languages. I'd be very surprised if he did not. He certainly knew Greek; he certainly knew Aramaic; he certainly knew Latin. (And I'm sure was *fluent* in all three languages.) And I'd be a very surprised person if, being the intelligent person that he was, and with his education, he did not know a great deal more than that. And it's possible...he doesn't really specify whether his speaking with tongues was as a result of the miraculous gift like the one in Acts 2 or not. He just says, "I thank God I speak with more languages than any of you do."

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AKJV

¹⁹ Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding [*"being understood"*, which is, I think, the way that that verse should be translated] that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

²⁰ Brothers, be not children in understanding; however, in malice be you children, but in understanding be men.

²¹ In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people;

and yet for all that will they not hear me, said the LORD.

²² Why tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

He said the foreign language is given to reach out to people who have not heard the truth before, whereas prophesying is to bring up and to edify and to help the church to grow.

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AKJV

²³ If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad?

“What a crazy bunch of people!”

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AKJV

²⁴ But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believes not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

²⁵ And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

²⁶ How is it then, brothers? when you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done to edifying.

²⁷ If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

²⁸ But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

You can envision some poor, old Frenchman coming to our services, and sitting back in a corner muttering to himself. But I guess that’s what Paul’s talking about, because he can’t very well get up here and speak to you unless we get a translator.

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AKJV

²⁹ Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

³⁰ If any thing be revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace.

³¹ For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Their Sabbath services were quite different from ours. You may think that that’s wrong, but it’s not wrong at all. There are many things that are different today because of the simple fact that every one of you have the Bible. In those days, they did not. Hardly anyone would have had the possession of even a single book of the Bible. In fact, the New Testament wasn’t even *written*. If they wanted to hear the Scriptures, they had to go down to synagogue. And when the time came, the rabbi would get out the scrolls, and he would read from the Law that which was supposed to be read on that day. And then the church, I got the impression, would go back to somebody’s house and have a meal together and talk about the Scriptures. And things are quite different whenever we get the Bible. Suddenly, printing is invented, and every one of you can sit there with a Bible (and some of you with different translations of the Bible) and you go home and you’ve got them all around to study. Naturally, Sabbath services are not going to be centered around the reading of the Scriptures any longer. Nor are they as dominated by the old tradition of the synagogue any longer. So some of the things that we do today would be completely

foreign to them, and vice versa, for the simple reason that times have changed, technology has changed the church somewhat, and we just don't do things quite the same way. He says:

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³¹ For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Paul's point is (and it's true in whatever age and whatever place) that God is not the author of confusion. Verse 32 is one that people ask about a lot. He says:

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³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

Now, what does that mean? Well, it means that here I am standing up here preaching, and somebody pops up back about halfway in the congregation and begins to preach from back there. And I just keep right on preaching up here. And somebody's preaching and then somebody *else* gets up and preaches. And afterwards, somebody calls on it. Do we have the defense of saying, "Look, I couldn't *help* myself. The Spirit of God came upon me and I *had* to preach!"? Paul says, "No." The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet; which means you are not possessed by the Spirit of God. You are not out of control when the Spirit of God comes upon you. When you receive a gift of prophecy, or a spirit of prophecy, or the Spirit of God moves within you, the spirit is subject to *your mind*, which means you have it under your control. It's a very important scripture. The devil or a demon may possess. God's Spirit will not possess. You are still in control.

Okay, so what Paul is saying is, "You have *no excuse* for this bedlam that's going on in your Sabbath services. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Now, you people sit down and shut up and you preach *in order*." That's all. Simple as that. He said:

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³³ For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

³⁴ Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted to them to speak; [...]

And he means, basically...he's talking about preaching in this context. You're going to have all kinds of people that we will allow to speak in the church, but we will not let women. I'm sorry, ladies. You'll have to take that up with Paul. I don't know exactly all the ramifications of it.

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³⁴ [...] but they are commanded to be under obedience as also said the law.

³⁵ And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak [*in the sense of public speaking*] in the church.

³⁶ What? came the word of God out from you? or came it to you only?

³⁷ If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

³⁸ But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

³⁹ Why, brothers, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order.

Now, as I say, there are many things in that 14th chapter that we do not understand. But *that* we understand—that verse, that scripture, is not difficult to get a handle on.

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⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order.

I understand that. *You* understand that. All we've got to do is figure out how we apply it in the 20th century, in our Sabbath services, and under our circumstances. And over the last two days, how many speakers have you heard stand up here and speak to you? We have done so in order, and for the most part we've been pretty decent about the whole thing, and will continue to try to do so along the way. I have, for example, down in Tyler, invited men who would like to speak in the church to submit an outline with an idea of what it is they'd like to say to the church. And certainly, I think we *should*, in the process of time, encourage more of the mature men in the congregation to prepare sermonettes—to have things that they would like to say to the church—so that all *may* edify, and so that all *may be* edified, and so that the church may be strengthened, so that the leadership of the church may be developed for the future. It's a *very* important thing and sometimes, I think, something that we have neglected in the past.

Now, this chapter 14, dealing with the abuse of a particular spiritual gift, grows out of a complete discussion of spiritual gifts that begins in chapter 12. And I want you to go back with me to chapter 12, verse 1 for a few moments, and let's take a look at this very important scripture on this day—a day which pictures a great many things, doesn't it? It is, of course, a harvest festival. It is the Feast of Weeks, looking back on the seven weeks just preceding, which are weeks of harvest. But it is also the day of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit—a day that symbolizes and looks forward to a time when the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be available to all men. And so to understand, and to look, and spend a little time today about the spiritual gifts that are given to the church, I think, is really in order. He says in chapter 12, verse 1:

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AKJV

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I would not have you ignorant.

That was a rather amusing way of putting that. Because he proceeds to dispel their ignorance and, in the process of doing so, has told the whole Corinthian church that they are ignorant. You know, "You're ignorant, and I'm going to have to straighten you out on this particular point." It's really very much in place. You have to read both epistles very carefully, reading between the lines a little bit, and you begin to understand the arrogance, the vanity, of these people. Because there is *no place*, in all of Paul's writing, where he uses sarcasm to the extent that he does in these two letters; that he takes the razor out periodically and takes a strip right off of these people. And sometimes not all that kindly, either. This one he's a little more gentle than some, and yet the barb is there.

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¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I would not have you ignorant.

² You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led.

You know, "Your leaders took you that way." Again, he is not being very kind to these people. He's reminding them, "You know, you were Gentiles, and you were following these stupid idols of yours."

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AKJV

³ Why I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say [*with truth and with honesty*] that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God [...]

You would think, reading that scripture, a person would come to understand that there could actually be more than one organization doing a work—performing a function—for God. You would think so. But for some reason, some people have a hard time quite getting a hold of that. There are, he said, *differences* of administration. Actually, the margin says, “differences of ministries”. “There’s a ministry over here and there’s a ministry over here”, he said, “but it’s still the same Lord.” That’s a little hard, as I say, to get a grip on it and really understand it. But there it is, right in front of your face.

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⁶ [...] but it is the same God which works all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with.

⁸ For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

⁹ To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

You know, you think, “Boy, that would be exciting to have some of these gifts. The gift of healing would be an *enormously* exciting thing to have.” It would...provided that you don’t care whether you ever sleep again. Provided that you don’t care that you, never in the rest of your life, have a moment alone in private with your family again. We do understand, don’t we, what would happen if you had the gift of healing? I mean, I would have to be so bone tired that I would collapse before I would ever be able to stop myself from going from one children’s hospital to the other. I’d want to visit the Shriners burn center in Houston, and go clean that out. And then I would have to go somewhere over to the little crippled children’s hospital in Houston, I think; I’d have to clean that out. And I sure wouldn’t want to leave town before I went through and put Debakey’s out of business, with the heart surgery. Wouldn’t you?

I don’t know; sometimes I think our comprehension of what it would mean to have spiritual gifts is a little on the shallow side. And we haven’t counted the cost when we get on our knees and pray to God and say, “Oh Lord, give me the gifts of your spirit.” I want spiritual gifts, but I’m not going to ask for specific ones. I think I’d prefer to leave that in God’s hands. Because sometimes one of the greatest curses you can ever be given is to be given what you have asked for. Some people think, for example, “The gift of discerning spirits...now, that would be a very interesting thing—so that you could *really spot* attitudes.” Yeah, it is. The only problem is, you can’t turn it off. And so, when someone hates you, you know it. And you’re *far better off* not to know it. It’s much *nicer* not to know it. It’s a two-edged sword, isn’t it? In fact, *all* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are two-edged swords. And I think sometimes we know not what we ask for. And I’m not sure we really want it. I think God, in his great mercy, has oftentimes *not* given us things we have asked for. Because, if he did, we would find it not to be quite what we thought it was.

I’ve always been also interested...I think it’s *so fascinating* to be in a situation where you are with a number of individuals who have been given different gifts by God. The years that I spent in Bricket Wood—from 1962 to 1969—were among the best years, I felt, at Bricket Wood. There were several men over there who were extremely effective men—rather powerful individuals, all of them—and,

taken together as a team, *extremely* effective. Taken as individuals, not one of us was worth the powder and shot to blow us up.

Take Ernest Martin, for example—a *brilliant* teacher; *fantastic, tireless* researcher—but he needed Charles Hunting and I *very badly*, because Charles and I were *absolutely merciless* in our needling of Ernest Martin. We kept his bubble burst about half the time, and we occasionally would jerk the rug out from under him on faulty research. We he followed a line of reasoning the lead him up a cul-de-sac, we were very, very careful to point out that it was a cul-de-sac (which means dead end, no exit, there isn't any way out of this), and to really make him see *exactly* where he was. By himself, with nobody to point those things out, Ernest goes down more cul-de-sacs, dead-end streets, or wrong turns than you can shake a stick at. Charles Hunting *needed* Raymond McNair. Raymond McNair *needed* Charles. I needed both of them; I needed *all* of them. They all needed me. And between the group of us, we made a pretty good team. And during those good years in Bricket Wood—with the balance that we gave to each other—we turned out some very, very *fine* young people into the work of God.

This is what he's talking about. God does not give all of his gifts to one individual. He gives specialized gifts to different people. And I've kind of wondered sometimes myself, if it isn't as though there is a maximum capacity that a human being has. In other words, some of us are ten-gallon buckets, some of us are 50-gallon oil drums, I suppose. But there is a maximum; here is something we can pour full of something. Now, the problem is that if you pour this thing way, way full of (what shall we say?) diesel fuel, there's only a little room left at the top for gasoline, right? You only have 50 gallons in this oil drum, in which you can put things in. And maybe, if we've saved it or put it aside, we're putting food in it. We can stack it. We can put wheat up to a certain point. We can pour in some rice, some beans, and a few other things. But the more rice, the less beans. The more beans, the less wheat. Only 50 gallons are all that's there. All right. Just take a look at this 240-pound man that is standing before you. There's only so much room in here for the gifts of God. And the more God gives me of one thing, chances are the less I have for something else. Make sense?

In other words, in looking around at the men that I have known in the ministry, I have seen that there is a certain category of man to whom God gives his gifts in a fair balance—fairly distributed. They are, generally speaking, not terribly strong in any area. They have been very, very effective men at working as pastors of local churches; because they have a good, broad spectrum of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But there *is* a need in the ministry for individuals who are *extremely strong* in certain areas—such as research. The only problem is, the more of the word of knowledge we pour into this man (using that particular gift as an illustration) the less room there is left for wisdom. Makes sense. And that's where some of our problem comes in. And the greater the gift of prophecy poured into a man, perhaps the less room there is for patience with human beings—something that is *very strongly* required of a pastor of a church. You know, he's got to be the kind of a guy that can sit there hour after hour and listen to somebody pour out a tale of woe, and not get weary with trying to help. Trouble is, that some of us who may have been given the gift of prophecy...you'll wear out our patience in five minutes flat. That's the way it goes. That sometimes, what you have to put into a man to get a speaker like *[audio break]* doesn't leave room for certain other characteristics that we might think were desirable in that man.

Unfortunately, as human beings, we expect our “leaders” to be paragons of virtue. And whatever the particular gift that we have need of at the moment, we expect that to be there without measure. The problem is, it *just won't work*. It's just not there.

[Tape break.]

He gave me gifts to do certain things. Along with those gifts come certain weaknesses that will plague me and dog my heels to my dying day. They are there. I know it. I regret it. And yet, what am *I* to do? How can I reply against God?

It is interesting—that I have noticed over the years as a teacher of speech—there are some man that you can make *brilliant* speakers out of. And there are some men that, I don't care how hard you work, they

never go anywhere. And you wonder: What goes to make up that combination? Well, there is a peculiar set of background characteristics. And I have been *struck* over the years to notice how some of the best speakers are some of the poorest conversationalists. And that has always been an anomaly to me. I've never really known exactly what to do with it. Now, by "poor conversationalists", I don't mean that in certain conversational situations they aren't brilliant; they are. But I mean, generally speaking, or many times, will be very *quiet* in conversational situations, and really don't care to talk all that much on a one-to-one basis. It's very common with good speakers.

We noticed at college a rather interesting thing: how often some of our young men, who came out of a mother-dominated home, turned out to be our very best speaker, and yet oftentimes were very poor in conversation. Charles Hunting and I would sit around and talk about this for hours on end, analyzing it and trying to figure out why and trying to understand what it meant. There is the facet of spiritual gifts of God, I know that. But there is also the thing that we are human beings. And human beings are *limited* creatures. And whenever certain talents and abilities are there, they are bipolar. And the further you go out one way, as I say, the further you are from this side of things over here. And the more strongly you are in some areas, the weaker you are in others. This is true, I think, of some of the really *great* leaders of all mankind down through the years and through generations—extremely powerful in some things, and *extremely* lacking in others. You get men like Alexander the Great—who was an *incredible* military genius—died at age 32 a raving alcoholic, an epileptic.

I could go on and use all sorts of illustrations from history, but I really think I've made my point. I think you understand what I'm saying: That—just as there are human beings who, the stronger there are some areas, the weaker they are—even so with the gifts of God they are not *all* given without measure to any *one* man except one in the history of the world. And that was Jesus Christ, who has the Spirit of God and the gifts of God, in *all facets* without measure. I tell you categorically, I do not. God has given me *some* gifts—some strong gifts—and left with me some very large and glaring weaknesses at the same time. This is something that *you* have to face yourself, when you get up and look in the mirror and say, "What is God *doing* with me? And what is God *giving* to me? And what do I *want* God to give to me? Am I *sure* that I *really* want God to give this to me?" As I said, certain combinations of gifts could mean your death—such as having a gift of having boundless compassion coupled with the gift of healing. What would you do? How would you live? How would you survive with that situation? He goes on to say:

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

¹⁰ To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

¹¹ But all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

¹² For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many.

¹⁵ If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? [...]

Ah, want a profound truth that is! That there is a definite need to bring in *great strengths* in some areas. But in order to have that work, you must have that counterbalanced with another human being with

strengths in other areas. It's a simple teaching, in a way, and profound in all its parts.

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

¹⁸ But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him.

Notice, it doesn't really make that much difference what pleases *you*. It's what pleases *him*.

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where were the body?

²⁰ But now are they many members, yet but one body.

²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet [*our ugly feet*], I have no need of you.

²² No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

²³ And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

²⁴ For our comely parts have no need: [...]

We expose that—our face. We stick it right out there. (At least, we *hope* it's comely.)

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

²⁴ [...] but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked.

²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

You know, I read that and I look at the church today and I feel like crying, almost. Because the division that is in the body should not be. It absolutely should not be, and it is a sin and a grievous wrong. And yet, it still doesn't mean that it's not the church of God. The church at Corinth was as divided as the church of God is today, and it was *still* the church of God. A Christian can sin and still be a Christian, just like the church can be divided and still be the church. It *shouldn't* be, and a Christian shouldn't sin. But, quite frankly, I don't know if there's ever been a time in the history of the church of God—from just right after the Feast of Pentecost until now—when there wasn't *some kind* of bickering or argument or division going on in the church. We barely get out of it—to the 6th chapter of Acts—until there's a big murmuring going on about the Grecians being neglected in the daily administration. We have a Jew/Greek division in the church almost from day one. Why is that so? The answer to that is just as simple as it can be: The church is composed of human beings. And when it's composed of human beings, we are *not always going to get along*. And I'm afraid we're going to suffer for it, too, in the process.

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

²⁸ And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

He puts that last, I think, deliberately because he's putting the Corinthians in their place again.

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

²⁹ Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

³⁰ Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

Of course not. Those gifts are given to different people in order to balance out the church.

1 Corinthians 12

AKJV

³¹ But covet [*desire*] earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I to you a more excellent way.

And he proceeds, at this point, to tell us there *is* one gift that can be given to all of us. Healing cannot. Tongues cannot. *Many* of them cannot. But there is *one* gift that can be given to everyone in the church.

1 Corinthians 13

AKJV

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Your language? It may be the language of men. Who knows? Maybe you even get a chance with speak with the tongues of angels.

[*Tape break.*]

But that gift, if it isn't coupled with love, isn't worth a cymbal—a tinkling, little triangle that we use in a rhythm band in grade school. It makes just about that much sense.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; [...]

And I can foretell the future and tell you who the winner in the third at Hialeah is going to be.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

² [...] and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.

He's defining love for us. And love is not easy to define. He starts out defining it by telling us how *important* it is—how *critical* it is. And then later he tries to tell us how it's manifested.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned,

and have not love, it profits me nothing.

⁴ Love suffers long [*It's very patient*], [...]

Now he's going to begin telling us what are the manifestations of this attitude. How does it find expression? First of all, love is very patient.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁴ Love suffers long, and is kind; [...]

The unkind remark, the impatience, the insistence that I'm going to have it *now*; these things are manifestations of carnality, not of the gift of love, which is a gift of the spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁴ [...] love envies not; love vaunts not itself [*makes no parade of itself*], is not puffed up,

Not inflicted with a sense of self-importance. It doesn't find itself involved in power struggle because somebody else is supposedly getting ahead of him.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁴ [...Love] is not puffed up,

⁵ Does not behave itself rudely, seeks not her own, [...]

Or, as another translation says, "is not selfish."

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁵ [...] is not easily provoked, [is not suspicious];

"Thinks no evil", is the King James version, but basically means not suspicious—not trying to see a conspiracy behind every bush, not thinking that this person is out to get me; but, basically is kind of an easy person to get, because they're not suspicious and not defending themselves all the time. It's an attitude of mind. It's a *beautiful* thing.

You know what kind of interesting to me as I read through this chapter about love? It is nowhere described as a feeling. *Nowhere*. He doesn't say, "Love is a warm feeling toward another human being. Love is a surge in the breast when another person comes into the room. Love is throwing your arms around another person." No, love is an attitude and a reflection of the mind and the attitude of God in a human being. The patience, the kindness, the long-suffering, the humility, the unwillingness to make a show of self: these things are the true reflection of the gift of love that Paul says we ought to *all* be working for in the church. Not necessarily looking around trying to find tongues, or prophecy, or healing, or those things. Because without this one, the rest of them aren't worth anything.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁶ Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

Doesn't get a bang out of it because it sees somebody else get the results of their sin and say, "Aha! He had that coming." There may be a real test on our parts on that one before long, I hope. I hope we get tested on that one.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁷ Bears all things, believes all things [*puts up with almost anything*], hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails: [...]

Doesn't give up. Doesn't let go. Never breaks. Not real love.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁸ [...] but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; [...]

You can stand up here in front of this group and prophesy to your heart's content—speculate about what may happen next year, and how 2 Thessalonians 2 could apply to the Worldwide Church of God, and have the whole thing come down around your ears. You really can't depend on your prophecies. Even though you got them in a vision, directly from an angel of God, you can't depend on them. Because God might change his mind. Remember what he did to Jonah over Nineveh? You can get a prophecy all lined out and get the rug jerked right out from under you. But the *one* thing that will *never* be jerked out from under you is love—the depth of this attitude that he's talking about here.

1 Corinthians 13

KJ2000

⁸ [...] whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

¹³ And now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

It's a beautiful passage of scripture; one that we've looked at so many times in our lives. And yet, when it comes down to a day like today, and we think of the Holy Spirit, and we think of a Pentecostal experience, and we think of God pouring out his gifts upon his church...*Even today* I think most of us would tend to think in terms of prophecy, of tongues, of healing—of those outward manifestations that tend to make people look at you and say, "My! What a marvelous man of God."—instead of realizing that the *greatest* of the gifts, the most *critical* gift, and the one that is intended to be given to *every son of God*, regardless, is to gift the boundless love of God. Jesus said:

John 13

AKJV

³⁵ By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.

I just wonder how good our identity card is right now.

It's been wonderful being with you, and I tremendously enjoyed it. A lot of you have been very kind in saying I much you appreciated my coming up here. I would like to go on the record as saying how deeply and sincerely I appreciate the very early invitation from Mr. Phillips, and I've been looking forward to this visit for a long time.

Brethren, let us work together because there is an *enormous* amount going to be done. Let us defer to one another. Let us strengthen one another. Let us put the other person and esteem the other person as better than ourselves. If we can begin to do some of these things, and to set the right kind of an example, we can do what God intends for us to do. And maybe he won't have to raise up stones, after all. Maybe he can use us.

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Birthday of the Church*
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