



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 12:1-30

“The Local Church: Its Spiritual Gifts”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight our subject is the subject of spiritual gifts. And we should turn in our Scriptures to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1 through verse 31. Years ago we could say that the subject of spiritual gifts was one of the most neglected in the church today and at the same time one of the most important. But we cannot say that today. Today there has been a great deal of emphasis in the doctrine of spiritual gifts. I think it is still possible for us to say that there is a great deal of misunderstanding. And I hope that tonight we'll be able to clarify some of that.

We have said that the church is composed of a head, of offices and of members. The head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head, of course, of the invisible church. He is the head of each local church. We have said that there are offices in the local church. Offices are spiritual positions. And these offices exercise certain functions in the church local. There are elders, there are deacons and there are priests. The elders are in the church for oversight. The deacons are in the church for Christian service as helpers of the elders. And the priests are in the church for the expression of worship. Every believer is an office bearer because every believer is a priest.

Now, in the meetings of the church only the male priests have the opportunity of audibly exercising their priesthood. But every believer is an office bearer. Every believer

is a priest. Some believers are not only priests, but also deacons. Or not only priests, but also elders. So it is possible for a believer to have two offices if it's fair to speak of elder and deacon and priests as offices.

In the local church there are also gifted men, or spiritual gifts. Gifts are spiritual abilities which are found in the local church. Perhaps we should speak of functions, but we'll just use the term ability and function without trying to make a great deal of distinction between them. All Christians have spiritual gifts, spiritual abilities. And usually these spiritual abilities, or spiritual gifts, are ways by which the Lord enables us to accomplish our Christian service in a way that will please him. So they are generally speaking gifts for the service of an individual believer. They are designed to be helps for us in service.

There are many different kinds of gifts. And there are gifts that are both utterance gifts and non-utterance gifts. Unfortunately, in the Christian church today we have so stressed the utterance gifts and we have often so stressed one utterance gift, the gift of pastor-teacher, that the impression you get is that the local church is really a loud mouth with a paralyzed body. This is really an apt description, I think, of many of our local churches which have fine ministry in the pulpit. But so far as the individuals are concerned, they do not exercise their spiritual gifts of utterance at all.

One of the reasons why we have in Believers Chapel an open meeting on Sunday night is that these spiritual gifts of utterance that others have besides Mr. Storms and me and other teachers is to have an opportunity for those who do have spiritual gifts to exercise their spiritual gifts in our meeting.

Let's come now to the definition of spiritual gifts. And I want to read a few verses beginning at verse 4 of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 4. The apostle writes,

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

There are individuals who have looked at 1 Corinthians 12 and have tried to say that we really do not have spiritual gifts before us in 1 Corinthians 12, but rather simply spirituals. I remember G. Campbell Morgan in his commentary makes a great deal over the fact that in verse 1 all Paul says is, “Now concerning the spirituals.” I do not want you to be unaware. He makes a great point over that. I think overlooking the fact that in verse 4 he says, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit.” So do not be misled. This is a chapter that has to do with spiritual gifts.

Now, look at verse 11. For here we see who the giver of spiritual gifts is. “But one and the same Spirit works all things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”

Now, the whole trinity is involved in the gifts of the spirit. You can see this as you study this passage and the other passages, but it is the Holy Spirit who is here said to be the giver of spiritual gifts. It is his particular province to take the lead in the giving of these gifts for service in the local church. So the giver is the Holy Spirit. The gift, well we have looked at a number of them right here. The gift is a spiritual ability. They are for service in the Christian church. And about twenty-five of them are listed in the New Testament. Let me say if you go to count them yourself you may come up with only

twenty-two or you may come up with eighteen or you may come up with twenty-three. It is possible to come up with all of these numbers. Because if you will put them all down on a piece of paper looking at the passages that have to do with spiritual gifts, you will find that some of them are described in such a way that it almost is required that they be the same thing under a different name. And consequently, in putting them into a list you almost inevitably feel that some of the terms are really equivalent terms.

Now, I don't think that's too important except that to note that there are a number of spiritual gifts set forth in the New Testament. We read here a number of them. You will find others listed in other places. Incidentally, it is easy to remember the places where the doctrine of spiritual gifts is found because the chapters which give the greatest information are very similar.

Now, I hope I'm able to remember this. But there are four chapters that give us important information on spiritual gifts. Two of them are fours and two of them are twelves. There is 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans chapter 12, Ephesians chapter 4 and 1 Peter chapter 4. So it's easy to remember. If you want to construct a doctrine of the Holy Spirit these are the normative passages, these four. Two of them are fours, two of them are twelves: Romans and 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians and 1 Peter 4. There are some other passages that deal with spiritual gifts, of course, but these are the great sections that have a good deal of the information. If you want to find out how many gifts there are, look at the four passages and put a piece of paper down before you and list the spiritual gifts. I've done that. And see what you come up with. Capital C under Arabic 1, the gifted.

Now, the Bible teaches that every one of us has a spiritual gift. Look at verse 7. “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Verse 11. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” So everyone is a priest with the right of access to God, direct access. He can go right into the holiest of all. And everyone has a spiritual gift. Every one of

you has at least one spiritual gift. There is nothing in the Bible incidently that says that we cannot have more than one spiritual gift. Some of us may think we have quite a few. And it's possible that you might have because it does appear that the Apostle Paul was both an apostle and a teacher. He refers to himself in that way. And I'm willing to grant that he probably had several of these spiritual gifts. It is not said that each has only one, but simply that each has one, but he may have more than one. So everyone has a spiritual gift.

These gifts are not given us in accordance with our spirituality. In other words, the man who is not very spiritual is not going to have a gift, whereas the man who is spiritual is a man who has a gift. Or the man who is not very spiritual may have one gift, but the man who is spiritual may have two or three. Gifts are not given according to the standard of spirituality. They are given sovereignly. Notice the 11th verse, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” That's why it is possible for a person to have a spiritual gift.

Now, this is most prominent in the case of a person who has a spiritual gift of utterance, I guess. It's possible for a person to have a spiritual gift, say a spiritual gift of utterance such as an outstanding preacher who at the same time is not a very spiritual individual. I have been in the ministry long enough to know my own heart to start with and then to have had enough experience with other individuals and their experiences in ministry to know that this is true. There are actually individuals who have been used of God in the teaching of the word who themselves have been shown to be guilty of some very deep sins. The gift was given by the sovereign will of God to the Christian man. His spirituality was not at a very high level, though outwardly it may have appeared to be so. But God used him because he had given a sovereign gift, or given a gift sovereignly. And the glory is the Lord's, not the individual. We've all known of illustrations of this. But it is true, still. I could go back and talk about a number of individuals where it's obvious.

It is in the case of my saying this and no one else believing it, but it's well known. And they themselves would have admitted it too.

Another thing that we need to remember is that the more gifted, and of course we're speaking from the standpoint of human evaluation, should not feel any merit on their part because of the gift that they have. It is obvious that some people are able to preach with more unction it seems than others. And yet the individuals may have a comparable spirituality. In fact, it is possible for a person to be a much more spiritual man than one who stands behind the pulpit and is able to do a magnificent job of teaching. It's helpful to remember in case you have any desire to teach that the fact that God uses you is due ultimately to the fact that he has given a spiritual gift and not due to how great you are.

So those of us who may have gifts that are a little more unusual in the eyes of the world should not feel any sense of merit thereby. And those who seem to be less gifted should not feel any less importance in the work of the Lord. It is just as important that you have the particular gift that you have that someone else have this outstanding gift of utterance which seems to attract the attention of everyone. In fact, I think it's a sign of growth and grace and immaturity that we learn to evaluate gifts as God evaluates them. He doesn't think a bit more of an outstanding preacher than he does of a simple Christian who probably could not stand up in front of a group this small without stuttering most of his sentences. But nevertheless is a servant of the Lord in the church and does things that are absolutely essential for the progress of the local church. It may be true that some gifts seem to offer more opportunity than others, but that is about as far as we can go.

I'm persuaded myself that this idea of a person really having a greater gift than another is false in itself. The illustration the apostle uses in this 12th chapter is the illustration of the human body. And we all know that the functions of the body are all essential. And we would be not fully possessed of a complete body if we didn't have an arm or a leg or an eye or an ear. And the apostle has some very interesting statements to

make in illustration of this point in this chapter. Perhaps it would be good for us to learn to look at things as the Lord looks at them and to see all gifted people as important and as having an equal importance in the sight of God even though one person may in the eyes of many in the church or the world seem to have more influence than others.

Well, let's turn to the description of the spiritual gifts. There are two classes of spiritual gifts, I believe. There are temporary gifts and there are permanent gifts.

Now, I've listed a number of the gifts there I think in your notes beginning with apostleship under temporary gifts and concluding with discerning of spirits. Let me just make a comment or two. I think it is necessary to say just a word or two about apostleship in order that we may see that the principle of a temporary gift is established in the word of God.

This is a question that is a rather tender issue with some people today. There are people who believe that we do have apostles today. I think it is also a very tender subject with Pentecostals and the charismatic movement because they want to be sure that we acknowledge that there is such a thing as a gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of healing. And so if we say that some gifts are temporary we might be introducing a kind of classification that would rule out the gift of tongues and the gift of healing. And therefore they react very negatively toward the idea of a temporary spiritual gift. I think it's important therefore to establish the principle of a temporary spiritual gift by reference to the gift of apostleship.

Now, in the New Testament the term apostle is referred to Barnabus who was not one of the twelve. So it is possible for the word to be used of an individual. But in the case of Barnabus and in the case of Luke who probably is called that too – the reason I say probably is because the verse that we think refers to Luke doesn't mention his name specifically – those apostleships were not apostleships of Jesus Christ. They were apostleships of local churches. They were men sent out by the local church on a specific task. And in that sense could be called an apostle. I spoke about this Sunday morning.

In the case of the twelve and in the case of Paul and perhaps in the case of James, they were individuals called by the risen Lord who had an experience with him. And as a result of that, apostleship was a gift which was given by the Lord Jesus as the risen savior to certain men who had accompanied with him from the time of the baptism of John on through his resurrection. Paul said, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?”

Now, that means that since we don't have people seeing the Lord and resurrection today, there are no apostles today. There are no apostles today. There are no people who speak with the authority of the apostles. The apostles were men who were not only commissioned to found the church, but they were men who commissioned to give us divine revelation. And there are no such ones today. Consequently, since there are no apostles there are temporary spiritual gifts. The same thing could be said with reference to prophecy.

Now, people today are inclined to think that prophecy is just standing up and saying something about spiritual things. After all, don't we always say prophecy is to predict the future, but it's also simply to proclaim the word of God today? Don't we say that prophecy is that? And if that's so, then don't we have today individuals who are simply telling forth the word of God and not necessarily predicting the future. Are they not just as much prophets? No. Prophecy was something very unique. Prophecy was the giving out of the revealed word of God. I mean it was the communication of new truth given by God to men. It may be truth concerning the future or it may be truth concerning the present in the form of exhortation. But it was new truth. That's the specific character of prophecy. It is new revelation. It's important you remember that. It's new revelation.

Now, we don't have people giving new revelation today. Sometimes you'll run into people who say, “I'm a member of a charismatic church and we have prophets in our church.” I always like to say, “Would you give me a few of the prophecies that are being uttered?”

Now, that usually doesn't produce much of an answer because they can't remember any prophecies, which, of course, in itself seems to me rather strange. If they really had the gift of prophecy and were giving out divine messages, you would remember some of them. And finally I pinned one man down who was a member of a church in Oklahoma City. And I said, “You have prophecies in your church?” And he said, “Yes, we have prophecies in the church.” And I said, “Well, of course I don't believe there're prophecies given out today. What are the prophecies?” Well, he couldn't think of anything. And finally I kept pressing him. I said, “Give me one prophecy.” He said, “Well, last Sunday one of the prophets did stand up and say, ‘We're going to have great blessing next Sunday.’” [Laughter] And I said, “That hardly qualifies as a biblical prophecy because there is no way to test that.” If, for example, next Sunday somebody was converted through the preaching of the word, you would say the prophecy was fulfilled. But if the building burned down, you would say the prophecy was fulfilled. We were supposed to experience testing this next Sunday and received blessing thereby. And that is usually the case. And I just suggest to you if you run into anybody who thinks that there are prophecies being uttered today, just ask them for one of the prophecies. And write it down and bring it to me because I need a new illustration of this. [Laughter]

Now, in the Bible in the case of Agabus, in Acts chapter 11 and in Acts chapter 21 we have an example of New Testament prophets. And I think maybe we should read the one in Acts chapter 21. I think that's the one I put in your notes. Acts chapter 21, verse 10 and verse 11.

Now, Agabus also prophesied earlier in chapter 11, verse 27 and verse 28. But here in Acts chapter 21, verse 10 and 11 we read,

“And as they were staying there for some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and

hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

Now, that’s a definite prophecy. What Agabus did was to carry out as the prophets of the Old Testament in a kind of illustrative way. He took the apostle’s belt and he said, “The Jews at Jerusalem will bind this man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” And it was tested and proven to be true because that is exactly what happened in the case of the Apostle Paul.

Prophets did exist in the early days of the New Testament church. They do not exist today. And therefore the principle of temporary gifts is established in the word of God. We don’t have people giving new revelation today. We have men teaching the completed revelation, but not giving us new revelation. If you have any question about this, I suggest that you take your concordance and look up the term prophet and prophecy and just go through the Bible and see what prophet or prophecy means. You’ll find that it begins with Aaron who was the prophet of Moses. And we have a rich instruction in prophecy all the way through the Book of Revelation. And always, it is new revelation. That’s the key point. It may be regarding the future or it may be exhortation in the present, but it’s new revelation. Miracles, there are no people performing miracles today.

Now, the test of this is simply, “Are there people restoring individuals from the dead? Are people being raised from the dead?” No. A few years back reports came out of the East Indies that this was happening there. It’s now shown to be false. There are no people performing miracles. Healing, healing takes place, of course. God heals. But there is a difference between God healing and the gift of healing. The gift of healing was a gift given to an individual who healed. And incidently, so far as we know, he never failed. He did not, like the modern healers, have very little success. But whenever he exercised his gift, it was effective.

The other gifts – the gift of knowledge incidentally is not the gift of knowing something. There are people who obviously know things. The gift of knowledge in the early church – by the way not much is said about this, so I’m speaking rather dogmatically about something on which there is little revelation. I want you to understand it. The gift of knowledge was evidently a temporary gift which existed in the local church because in the earliest days they didn’t have the New Testament revelation. So when a group of believers met in one of the cities where Paul had founded a new church, they didn’t have a whole lot to go on. All they had was what the apostle had taught them in the few days that he had spent with them. Sometimes only three weeks. So what would you do when a situation came up that required some of the information that would later be found in the New Testament. Well, God gave certain men this charismatic gift of knowledge so that they were able to stand up and give on the spur of the moment as information from the Lord. Instruction in spiritual things later incorporated in what we know as our New Testament. The gift of wisdom of a similar thing except the difference of knowledge and wisdom is the difference between that which is – well the difference between knowledge and wisdom, wisdom is practical knowledge, knowledge in application.

By the way, in connection with healing the apostle himself in the early days of his ministry healed, but in the later days of his ministry he did not. If you’ll take time to look up Acts chapter 19, verses 11 and 12, and the Philippians 2:27, and 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 20, you will see that the apostle exercised the healing gift and later on he did not exercise that gift. Well, I mean he did not exercise it. He doesn’t say he didn’t exercise it. But we gather by inference that he did not. We read in Philippians chapter 2, verse 27 where he is speaking about Epaphroditus, “For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” He says nothing about being the instrumentality of the healing of Epaphroditus. Evidently, he couldn’t heal Epaphroditus. In 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 20 he says, “Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.” So the apostle

did not heal Trophimus. He left him sick there. It seems to be a sad thing to do if you had the gift of healing and you didn't exercise it on one of your good friends who was ministering the word of God with you.

The facts are that the gifts are gifts that were designed to testify to the New Testament revelation. They had a particular purpose of testifying to the teachers of the new revelation. And when that necessity passed by the temporary gifts no longer had relevance. The permanent gifts – well we're much more acquainted with them – some of these are utterance gifts and some are non-utterance gifts. Take first the gift of pastor-teacher. It is my opinion that that expression in Ephesians chapter 4 is a reference to one gift and not two. That is, when we read in verse 11 of chapter 4, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,” the fact that he connects these two nouns together with one article, it does not prove it because this is not really an application of the rule of the article that binds these two together because these two nouns are plural. But nevertheless, generally speaking when one article connects two nouns together there is a relationship between them that makes the two more intimately connected. And in my opinion what we have here is not the gift of pastors and teachers, but one gift which we'll just call for the sake of simplicity pastor hyphen teacher. And what we affirm by this then is that every pastor is also a teacher.

Now, the gift of teaching is referred to separately in 1 Corinthians 12, so it is possible for a person to have the gift of teaching and not necessarily be a shepherd of the saints. Take Mr. Scofield for example who wrote the notes to the King James Version which many of us have read. Dr. Scofield was a person who, according to Scripture, was not qualified to be an elder in the church. He was not qualified to be a shepherd in that sense. But he certainly was an outstanding teacher of the word of God. There are also many people whose personalities are such that they do not do very well at shepherding the flock of God. But they're outstanding teachers. Teaching may exist separately. But

so far as we know the gift of pastor must be accompanied by a teaching ministry, so pastor-teacher. Incidentally, this is a gift as you can see. Paul says, “And He gave some as apostles, and He gave prophets, He gave evangelists, He gave pastor-teachers.” It is not an office. We do not have in the New Testament the office of pastor-teacher. It’s not there. It’s a gift, not an office. Now what that – ([Laughter] Now, if that had happened while I was talking about temporary spiritual gifts, I might have wondered, but [Laughter] When we talk – I’m electric. [Laughter] Wasn’t it Sammy Davis, Jr. who onetime said he was electric? [Laughter])

When we talk about pastor-teacher then, we should not talk about the office of pastor-teacher. There is no such office. It is a spiritual gift. I challenge any one of you to study the New Testament and come up with anything other than that. What this means is that the local church is governed by a body of elders among whom there may be individuals with the gift of pastor-teacher, or not. There may be the gift of teaching. All elders shepherd. But there is no office of pastor-teacher. Why do you think Paul, when he wrote to churches, never wrote to an individual as the pastor of a church? That’s what you would do today if you were writing a church. People who don’t know anything about Believers Chapel and don’t know that I’m not the pastor of Believers Chapel, I get letters all the time, Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Pastor. I got one today from a person who wanted to deny the trinity and he has Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Pastor, Believers Chapel. [Laughter] He thinks that a church having a pastor has a person who has that office and therefore exercises administrative control over a church. The New Testament doesn’t know anything of that. In the New Testament, government is in the hands of the elders.

Well, we have other gifts here that are listed: Pastor-teacher, teaching, exhortation, administration. It would seem that elders generally should have some measure of gift along this line. Administration, it seems to me, is something that would be very helpful to an elder. And evangelists, incidently an evangelist may be a deacon, as the case of Philip. He was an evangelist. He was also a deacon. The same thing is true of Stephen. He was

a deacon, but he was also an evangelist. It's possible for a deacon to have a spiritual gift of utterance and not be an elder. He may have these gifts. The gift of administration, that's the gift of service. That would seem to be something that would go along with the office of deacon, but it's not said specifically. And the gift of giving, incidently, all Christians give, of course. But the gift of giving obviously is a special ability of serving the Lord in giving. Faith, every believer has faith. But the gift of faith is evidently an unusual ministry of believing God as a means of service and of showing mercy.

So, to sum up just a few points. Elders may or may not have gifts of utterance. Deacons may have gifts of utterance. Women have spiritual gifts, even of utterance, so far as the Bible is concerned. We all know that women have great gifts of utterance. [Laughter] But I mean we're talking about utterance of spiritual things. And women may have spiritual gifts of utterance and may be teachers. As far as the Bible goes, it seems to limit the women's teaching to the teaching of women. And they are not permitted to teach in the meeting of the church. They are not to usurp authority over the man, the Apostle Paul tells us. But they may use their gifts outside. And we certainly have gifted teachers in our assembly among the women. We don't have any gift of chairman of the ladies' auxiliary listed. And various other things we might say, but for the sake of time I better not say them.

There was a man once who came to one of the elders and said that he had, he thought, the gift of criticism and he asked for a little advice on what to do with it. And the elder said, “Well, if I had that gift I think I would bury it.” [Laughter] I thought everybody had the gift of criticism.

The design of spiritual gifts, I have listed the design of spiritual gifts. And for the sake of time, I think I'm just going to say look up the Scripture references with reference to them. The spiritual gifts are given to bring salvation to the lost. The evangelist is a good illustration of that. Certain men have gifts of evangelism that others don't have. They are to use it for the glory of God. Some have gifts of attestation of truth. These are

the miraculous gifts particularly. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 4 makes that plain. Other gifts are for the edification of the church. Ideally, all of our service in the local church is designed to equip the saints so that they may do a work of ministry themselves. That particularly pertains to the teachers and the pastor-teachers. I teach in order not to have you sit in the pew and not do anything, but rather to equip you in order to do the work of ministry yourself. And, of course, all gifts are designed ultimately to glorify God. The end of all ministry of gifts is that.

Let me close by just making a comment or two regarding how I may know my spiritual gift. I have suggested several clues here and I'd like to just for a few moments emphasize them. This is a question that comes to all of us. How can we be sure what our particular spiritual gift is? I think first of all we should have a desire along a certain line. It seems to me very plain and certainly reasonable that if we really have a gift of ministry we should desire to minister. If we have a gift of giving, we should have some unusual desire to give. If we have a gift of teaching, we should have a desire to teach. So, it would seem to me the first thing to pay attention to is the desire that God has implanted in my heart. And then secondly, when we exercise our gift others should feel that we have that particular gift. In other words, if I teach and no one feels that I have the gift of teaching except me, I should take that as perhaps a good indication that I don't have the gift of teaching.

Now, of course, you should allow some time for development. Most of us who have taught the word for a longtime would like to forget the first year or so that we tried to do some teaching, at least there are a lot of times I would like to forget and some recent too. So, we don't mean by this that if a man has a gift of teaching he immediately is a Charles Haddon Spurgeon. That's not true. But when you do teach there should be others who feel that you have that gift. And let me say to you young men who are here, don't believe everything that people say to you. Because, unfortunately, many Christians are nice people and they're really bad people because they're nice when they shouldn't

be. They will go up to someone who really has done a very poor job and will say, “It was really good to hear from you tonight.” And so the individual is up again the next time talking when he really should not. And you really are responsible for something that is really wrong.

Now, of course, if it was something that was worthwhile that’s another matter. And a teacher should be sure that others should feel that your gift is from the Lord. And finally there should be definite evidence of the reception of spiritual blessing from its exercise. Not only should people come and say to you, “I do enjoy it when you speak.” Or, “That was a blessing to me.” But there should be some concrete evidence of your gift. That is, there should be some who are growing in grace. Or if its evangelism, there are some people who have been converted through the exercise of your gift. Putting all of these things together, that will be a series of clues that will help you to come to an understanding of what your gift is. I used teaching as an illustration. I think it could apply to all of these other important spiritual gifts.

Now, we have just a minute or two. And I’d like to answer a question or so that you have. So, feel free to – yes, Randy?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] That was a text I started to refer to. In 1 Corinthians chapter 14 the apostle, in verse 1 or 2 – I think it’s verse 1 – says, “Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” I think that means this, Randy. We have said tonight that gifts are given sovereignly by God. But at the same time I think it is within the province of an individual to ask God for a certain spiritual gift.

Now, of course, when his answer is no he should recognize it’s no. But nevertheless it may be yes. In other words, there is harmony between the sovereignty of God and the gift of gifts and the responsibility of man in the seeking of spiritual gifts, just

as it is in salvation. Salvation is a sovereign gift of God, but we all know that within our own hearts the Holy Spirit enlightened us so that we came to him by his grace and believed in him. And there are many of us who have cried out for salvation and faith as a result of the sovereign working of God. So I think that’s what’s meant, Randy. I think that a person is perfectly free to get down on his knees and say, “Oh, God, make me an evangelist. Give me the gift of evangelism if it pleases Thee.” And maybe the Lord will give it to you.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well, now he has in that chapter distinguished between prophecy, tongues and knowledge. And he goes on in chapter 14 to point out that prophecy is more significant than tongues. So I think that’s what he is thinking about there. He’s talking about the gifts that have to do more with instruction rather than the miraculous. Yes, ma’am?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The question is – I made the statement that spiritual gifts, I believe in the sight of God, are the same. That is, what we may think to be a greater gift is really no greater in the sight of God. All are necessary. But yet at the same time there are degrees of blessedness in heaven. I didn’t really say that tonight. You have gotten that from other things perhaps. I do think there is such a thing as a distinction of glory in the kingdom or in heaven. But I think that pertains to capacity. In other words, there are some people who by virtue of God given faithfulness in this life have greater capacity for enjoying the future life. That’s part of rewards, it seems to me. And so the difference is a difference of capacity. There is equality in enjoyment in heaven, but a different capacity. I don’t know

whether that has a specific reference to this. I'd have to think about that. But I feel that in spiritual gifts each gift is just as important as the other. But rewards are not based on the importance of the gift; they're based on the faithfulness with which you exercise your spiritual gift. And there may be differences there. Does that help?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] I'm surprised. [Laughter]

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Such as what?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] The question is, is there a possibility for the exercise of other spiritual gifts than teaching and exhortation in the evening meeting?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] I'm repeating the question for the sake of the tape. The question is to what extent are the gifts exercised in the evening meeting? Well, I think that the utterance gifts obviously can be exercised in the evening meeting, Pastor-teacher, teacher, exhortation, which happens to be one. Gifts of giving, yes, that can be exercised too when the offering plates are passed. You can manifest that to your heart's desire. But some of them such as showing mercy, it would seem to me that that might be a little difficult to exercise in the meeting. It would seem to me that the gifts don't all have to be

exercised in the meeting. There are certain gifts that would be exercised in the ordinary daily life of the local church in the community. Showing mercy would be – they’ll be many, many opportunities of doing that in Believers Chapel. When people have needs of various kinds that’s when you could show mercy. But I think in the nature of the gifts that not all of them necessarily are exercised in the meeting.

Now, the Apostle Paul did exercise the gift of miracles in the meeting when Uticus fell out of the window while he was sleeping and was taken up dead, he healed him. And so there are occasions on which these gifts evidently could be exercised. And for example, it’s possible for a person in a meeting to have some kind of physical disorder or something that required mercy on the part of individuals. I can conceive of that. But mainly in a meeting you would think of the exercise of the more common ones that are exercised here. One last question. Yes?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well, I think what you mean – the question is if you have a gift should you also do something that pertains to another gift even if you don’t think you have that gift? I think the Bible says something about that. Because Paul said to Timothy, remember, “Do the work of an evangelist.”

Now, we don’t know that Timothy had the gift of evangelism. We know he was a teacher. But we don’t know whether he had the gift of evangelism. But Paul said to him, “Do the work of an evangelist.” So I think every Christian presented with an opportunity should do the work of an evangelist even though he may not have the gift of evangelism.

Well, our time is up and things are happening...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]