**BD24-02 The Background of Christian Service**

We are moving toward certain fraudulent activities of the satanic world which are counterfeit for genuine activities that God has for the believer. The works of the Spirit of God which are genuine but which Satan is attempting to spoil what God has for you and me as believers. We’re going to look therefore this morning at the basis of Christian service, and particularly the background of spiritual gifts.

It is necessary to understand these in order to be able to distinguish between what is genuine and false when it comes to Christian activity. It’ll be necessary for us to pause and take a look at this age in which we live, the age of the church. To take a look at what is genuine spirituality. And then what we mean by spiritual gifts which are the bases of Christian service. The age in which we live is a unique age. But it is an age in which every one of us faces the hazard of worthless service.

There is going to be disappointment in heaven on the part of many people who are genuinely born again and who think they have invested their lives in a way that is pleasing to God for which God is going to reward them. They’re going to discover that they have been deceived; that God has rejected what they have given in all sincerity.

**Church**

So the basis of Christian service must be understood, so we begin first of all with the doctrine of the church. What do we mean by the church? The Greek word for church is “ekklesia.” This is an ordinary word in the New Testament world. In the ordinary Greek word, a “koine” Greek word; “koine” being the type of Greek word that was spoken in New Testament times, and it means simply “common.”

This is an ordinary “koine” Greek word. It has two parts. We may divide it first of all with “ekk,” which is a preposition which means “out.” The second part of the word comes from the Greek word “kaleo,” and this means “to call.” We have “out” and “to call.” We put them together and we get the meaning of the word “church” which is “to call out.” The church is an assembly of people who are called out of a larger group. That’s what the word literally mean. There are several ways in which this word is used in the Bible.

The word “ekklesia” is used, for one thing, for an assembly of citizen who gather together to conduct the affairs of government. This is a group of free men out of the mass of slaves in the Greek city state who will gather to make certain decisions relative to politics and to the life of the state. This gathering you have described in scriptures such as Acts 19:25, 29. It is called “the church.” It is the assembly. You have it in verse 32, verse 39, and verse 41 of Acts 18. These are all uses in terms of just general groups which gather to make political decisions.

It is also used of the congregation of Israel. It was used like this in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In Acts 7:38, you have Israel referred to as the “ekklesia.” Acts 7:38 says, “This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel who spoke with him in Mount Sinai and with our fathers who received the living oracles to give unto us.” As we are going to point out a little later, the church did not begin until the day of Pentecost, yet here we have Israel being referred to as the church. On the basis of this scripture, the claim is often made that the church begin with Abraham, and sometimes even as far back as Adam. That’s not true. This is simply the general use of the word “church” meaning an assembly. Israel was an assembly in this sense that they were called out from the masses of humanity to be a peculiar people unto God.

Now this does not connote that Israel was viewed in the technical sense that the New Testament uses the word “church,” because this is what God the Holy Spirit did with this word. It came with two backgrounds. It came from the Gentile world with the idea of a self-governing democratic body. It came from the Jews with the idea of a theocratic society subject to God. Now God the Holy Spirit took these two meanings, He put them together, and He created a special third sense in which it is used, and that is the New Testament assembly in reference to the body of Christ. Here is a group of people who are called out from the mass of Jews and Gentiles, and they form a new and separate company of believers. This is not a Greek civic assembly nor is it a Jewish synagogue. It is a distinctive group altogether. This is the technical sense in which the word “church” is used in the New Testament. It’s a new entity (1 Corinthians 10:32).

So the word “church” is used for the body of Christ and it is used in two ways in the Christian sense. It is used in terms of the universal church, the invisible church; that is the body of Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25-27, and Colossians 1:17-18 all use the word “church” as a universal organism. However, the church is also an organization. For that reason it is used of a local congregation in which there may be mixed believers and unbelievers. It is used in terms of local congregations in Acts 8:1, 3, 1 Corinthians 1:2, and 4:17. So the word “church” simply means a group called out of a larger group. In the New Testament it is used in a technical sense referring to the body of Christ, both in its universal and its local application.

Secondly, what are the terminal points of the church age? When did it begin and when did it end? It began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). If you’ll turn to Matthew 16 for a moment, let’s begin reading at verse 13. The Lord makes a declaration concerning the church that gives us a clue as to when it began. “When Jesus came into the borders of Caesarea Philippi (He’s on gentile ground here), He asks His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?’ And they said, ‘Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He saith unto them, ‘But who say ye that I am.’ And Simon Peter answered, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed art thou Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock (of his testimony), I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’”

Now verse 18 is what we want to direct your attention to where the Lord said, “I will build my church,” which is (still in the) future. So at the point of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the church was not yet in existence. It therefore did not begin with Adam. It therefore did not begin with Abraham. It did not begin with John the Baptist. I’ve actually heard some people who were ministers with Baptist groups say that the Baptist church began with John the Baptist. Now that’s about as “kookie” as you can get, and you have to really be blind, dumb, stupid, and death relative to the word of God to make a statement like that. There was no church during the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:5 tells us how and when the church would begin. We have from the Lord Himself, while He was still on the earth, a preview of information concerning how and when the church would begin. Acts 1:5 says, Jesus says, “For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” It was ten days later, on the day of Pentecost that this baptism of the Holy Spirit took place, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the mechanics for uniting all believers into the body of Christ, the church. And thus began, on the day of Pentecost, this unique group of believers.

If you will turn to Acts chapter 11 and compare with Acts chapter 2 verses 1 through 4, I think you will see that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred for the first time on the day of Pentecost, and thus that is the birthday of the church. You cannot have the church without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That’s what performs it.

Acts 11, beginning at verse 15, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning.” Here is Peter’s vindicating his ministry to the gentiles, explaining what had happened in the home of Cornelius. What’s he referring to when he said, “… then the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning.” Well, he’s referring to Acts chapter 2, those first four verses that speak of how the believers on the day of Pentecost suddenly found themselves fused together in one body as they were filled with the Holy Spirit and baptized with the Holy Spirit, and began giving evidence of this union with the spirit of God by speaking in tongues, in foreign languages.

Verse 16 says, “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” What he is saying here is that what happened to us on the day of Pentecost has happened to these believers in a gentile household subsequently. And what he says happened to the gentiles was that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, which he says is what happened to us on the day of Pentecost. So we know that what took place in that upper room was, for the first time, the baptism of the spirit of God, and that began the church. You cannot have the church without the baptism. The baptism is what joins you to the body of Christ.

So the church had a totally separate and distinct beginning from Israel. Israel is not the church. There is a system of theology called Covenant Theology which mixes Israel and the Church which therefore then ignores the unique features, corrupts the techniques of the church age, confuses grace, injects legalism from the Mosaic law, and completely ruins what God has for the believer under the age of grace. Israel and the church are separate entities. God is yet going to pick up Israel and take Israel to her final conclusion, as the church is going to have a separate conclusion all its own.

So the church is to be removed from the earth when it’s completed. Israel will remain because it is a separate entity. So the church began on the day of Pentecost because (on) the day of Pentecost, for the first in human history, the baptism of the Holy Spirit took place. Remember, nobody in the Old Testament was baptized with the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a unique operation for this age in order to place a believer into union with Jesus Christ. This is very important to understand because it is the basis of your eternal security.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

**Eternal Security**

People are regularly coming to me to talk to me, to ask me questions because they’re concerned about not being saved. One of the favorite idiotic statements, and it usually comes from some sweet old relative who doesn’t know a thimble full of doctrine. One of the favorite statements is, “If you don’t know the time and the hour and the day when you were saved, you’re not a Christian.” This tears people up fantastically. If your children are reared in a Christian climate, they’re not likely going to know the time and the day and the hour when they were saved. But there is a definitive point of accepting what Christ has done, and at that point God the Holy Spirit puts you into Christ, and you’re there for good, and you can breathe a sigh of relief. That’s the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

When does the church end? It ends on the day of the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 John 3:1-2, Philippians 3:21, John 14:1-3). Christians are a unique group of saints. They’re in union with Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. At the rapture, the church is going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. He will take her to heaven to become His bride. There she will be prepared for her marriage to the Son of God, with the resurrection body that she will have received. Her old sin nature will be removed. She will have her human good judged, which is filthy rags, and she will be dressed in the divine good righteousness that she has produced over the years of her service in the church age. Now that divine good righteousness is dependent on your understanding this business of spiritual gifts.

If you do not understand spiritual gifts, you’ll be open to every fraud that comes along and it’ll cost you the divine good that God would produce and reward you for. When the bride returns to the earth after the tribulation to execute Project Footstool upon Satan and his demons to remove them from this earth, the church will then celebrate for the millennium the marriage supper of the lamb.

So the church began on the day of Pentecost. The church age ends at the rapture of the church and God goes back to working with the Jewish people again. This church age was a mystery (Ephesians 3:1-6, Colossians 1:25-26, Romans 16:25-26). The Scripture uses the word “mystery” and defines it as a truth which has been hidden in the Old Testament but which is now revealed in the New Testament. What that means relative to the church is that the church was never revealed in the Old Testament.

In Romans 16: 25-26, you have this definition. “Now to him that is a power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ; according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” Paul is referring to the church—that it was a mystery, and now it is made known.

In the Old Testament, as you read the prophets, they didn’t know anything about the church. Anytime that they spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ, they never interjected the church age between His first and second coming. For that reason, when they spoke about Christ, they would speak about His first coming, and then they would slap right up against the first coming things that had to do with the second coming. They never indicated that there was a gap of time between that first and second coming. They didn’t know a thing about that. Consequently, 1 Peter 1:11 tells us how they wondered and tried to inquire about what was going on as they received these revelations from God. They couldn’t understand how Jesus could come as the conquering lion of the tribe of Judah and yet come as the meek and lowly lamb. The figures don’t match. Well, they didn’t understand that first He came as a lamb, and at His second coming He comes as the conquering lion.

So the church age was a mystery, never revealed in the Old Testament. There’s no reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that’s basic to the church age. The church itself is not called a mystery, but all the main features are—its indwelling, the bride relationship, the rapture, and so on.

There are certain distinctive characteristics of the church which are not true of saints in other ages. These are your spiritual assets alone as a Christian:

1) Union with Jesus Christ – As we have indicated, this is true at the point of salvation, when you permanently enter the outer circle of salvation. (Given two concentric circles) the outer circle is eternal fellowship and the inner circle is temporal fellowship. At the point of salvation, you enter this outer circle and you are in eternal fellowship. That’s union with Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

2) Then Jesus Christ indwells every believer permanently for fellowship (John 14:20 – “ye in me and I in you”). That was never true in the Old Testament.

3) Every believer is indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Your body has become His permanent dwelling place. The Holy Spirit will never leave you. In the Old Testament this was not true. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came and then He left. He acted sovereignly. He would come upon a person to perform a certain mission. The person would perform that function, and He would leave him. That’s why David, in Psalm 51:11, because of his sin, prayed that the spirit of God would not be removed from him, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

Every now and then I hear somebody get up and pray that prayer. Now this is hideous. This is monstrous. There are some liturgical churches that include this regularly in their liturgy. (At) every church service, Christians hear this appeal made to God, “Take not thy spirit from us.” Now that is blasphemous and it is the height of doctrinal ignorance because once we are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit in this age, it’s an asset spiritually which we never lose again.

 But it was not true in the Old Testament, and David, for sin, could indeed lose the spirit of God. Saul did. We’ve already been through that séance with Saul and we saw what happened to a man that loses the spirit of God. He (Saul) was (had) the spirit of God and then lost it. That can’t happen to you. No matter how sinful you are, you cannot lose the indwelling presence of the spirit of God. It is important that you understand that because when people stray far off from the things of God, and they get way out in left field, the first thing they think is that they think is that (they are) permanently scarred and through and hindered and incapacitated spiritually; i.e., they think, “God will have nothing more to do with me.” Don’t you kid yourself. God is only waiting for you to come around and say, “Let’s go,” because He’s ready to go. He will never leave you or forsake you. So the Old Testament saints could pray Psalm 51:11. You and I cannot.

4) Every Christian is a priest (1 Peter 2:9). In the Old Testament there was a specialized priesthood. It is a distinct feature of the New Testament saint that everybody is a priest. In the Old Testament, only the tribe of Levi produced priests. Today every one of us is a priest. Today you are your own priest. Now this is not to say that it is wrong for you to ask believers to pray with you about something. (It is wrong to have the idea that somehow you can go to a believer (who has more access to God than you have). The pastor is usually viewed as the priest in the local assembly, and if you want to make points with God you go to him because he has pull up in the front office, so to speak. Don’t kid yourself. You’ve got all the pull that he has. You are your own priest. Now if you are going to be a priest and be a self-sustaining priest, you’re going to have to know something. You cannot be self-sustaining as a priest if you do not understand doctrine. That’s the way it’s set up.

5) Another asset that’s true of the church age only is that we have a completed canon of Scripture—a completed set of Bible books. The revelation of God is in writing and complete. Through doctrine of the Bible, the Christian has the mind of Christ. Bible doctrine gives us the mind of Christ. This mind is essential to leading the Holy Spirit. The spirit gives you the information as to what to apply, but the Word of God gives you the materials that He applies. You see why it is so hazardous to be moving without a spirit full of doctrine. If you are ignorant, there’s nothing to guide you with. You will then substitute. What will happen will be there will be a flip inside your soul, and instead of your mind being led by the spirit of God through doctrine in your spirit, your emotions will flip up. They will charge your mentality, and your emotions will conquer your mind, and then you will start thinking with your emotions. The next thing you know, you’re going to be running around trying to jack people up to some action, and yourself, by some inspiration push. What will happen is that you will set up a cycling system, up and down, up and down. And you will eventually phase out in the very thing that you want to do for the Lord in service.

Now we have a completed canon of Scripture, and that gives you a magnificent advantage over every Old Testament saint, for you have the mind of God in writing, and it’s right there for you to take. And it’s essential for the leading of the spirit of God. There’s a certain amount of leading that the spirit of God may lead you, but it’s a minimal amount. Without doctrine, you’re not going to have much leading from the spirit of God. That’s why most Christians are being led around on the basis of public relations promotions. That’s how Christians are dealt with. They’re dealt with on being encouraged to think that serving the Lord is fun—fun! That’s the image and the public relations image we are creating. A Christian is inspired. You’re forever reading stories about this spiritual leader and that spiritual leader on how he got to be so wonderful. Nothing is more revolting than to pick up a book that tells you how to be spiritually wonderful, like somebody else. And you ought to be sensitive enough to reject that kind of public promotion. That’s OK for the business world, but it is blasphemous and disgusting when it comes to Christianity.

As we get into spiritual gifts, you will discover that whatever spiritual gift you have (and every one of you has at least one), whatever God does with that spiritual gift is what’s going to be done with it. There isn’t a human being, there isn’t a Christian on earth that’s using a spiritual gift to the blessing and to the advancement of the kingdom of God that has any credit coming to him for that gift. He didn’t deserve it. He didn’t earn it. He isn’t using it. It is God all the way. It is time that we get over reading books about how somebody became a spiritual giant because they are misleading. You have all the assets to be a spiritual giant. All you have to do is get with doctrine and be positive, and God will take your gift and He will use it in just as marvelous and magnificent way within the sphere that He has designed for your gift as anybody that may have a lot of TV advertising and public promotion. We have a completed Scripture.

6) Christians are commanded to live an entirely supernatural way of life. Ephesians 5:1 in the Greek says, “Imitate God.” In previous ages there were certain supernatural characteristics but they were mixed with natural characteristics. The demand of the church age is a supernatural way of life, and you cannot live this life without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who operates that life for you.

7) Every believer is an ambassador representing Jesus Christ on earth. This was not true in previous ages. Every Old Testament saint was not an ambassador of God, nor will it be true in the tribulation or the millennium.

**Spirituality**

Now secondly this morning let’s look at the doctrine of Spirituality. We briefly summarized for you what the church age is all about—how it functions, how unique it is, how distinctive it is, and what your assets are as a believer in that age. Now the doctrine of spirituality.

First of all, let’s look at true spirituality. There is a difference between the ministries of God the Holy Spirit before salvation and those after. First His ministries at the point of salvation. Things done for every Christian at the moment that he is saved. Now you notice what I said. This is done for every Christian at the moment that he is saved:

1) Regeneration – Every Christian experiences regeneration. He is born again. He is given a living human spirit (John 3:1-16, Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration.

2) Every Christian experiences the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian automatically receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now here you see is an area of tremendous false doctrine. Thousands of Christians are told to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You will never find in the Bible that any of these ministries of the Holy Spirt are something that you are to seek. You are not told to seek these. Now there is a ministry you are told to seek, but you cannot be told to seek these because these come to you automatically: baptism (Acts 1:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:5).

3) Indwelling – Every Christian is indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, permanently (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

4) Sealing – Every Christian is sealed (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30). This is the basis of your eternal security. God the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal. There is a seal that is placed upon you. God stamps you with this seal and says you belong to Jesus Christ. Because is upon you, you can never be lost. If this seal was not upon you, you might have a ground for being lost—you might think you do. Sealing is God’s way of saying, “I’ve stamped you. You can go no place else but heaven.” There is nothing you can do, once you are born again, to go anyplace else than to heaven. There is nothing God can do to take you anyplace else than to heaven. He has to be true to Himself. Since salvation is His production, there is no way for you to miss out.

5) Then, the one that we are moving toward, this fifth ministry (is) the distribution of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11), at the point of your salvation, determines the nature of your Christian service. Some of you may discover as we go through the spiritual gifts that you are moving in areas of Christian service that are not God’s plan for you. You have not been gifted in trying to do that. Others of you may discover that you’re right in the groove. It will be a great encouragement for you to persist even more faithfully in the service that you’re engaged in. But everybody has a gift, and everybody is in service. That’s one of the things that is characteristic of this age. Everybody is in full-time Christian service.

Now there are certain things which are done after salvation by God the Holy Spirit. One thing—and that is the filling, and you are to seek this. Again and again you are to seek to be filled with the spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:16, Romans 13:14, 1 John 1:7). You are to seek to be filled with the Spirit.

Alright, that’s point number one on true spirituality—the ministries of the spirit of God at the point of salvation and after salvation.

2) Spirituality and carnality are mutually exclusive. You are either spiritual or you are carnal. I find that many Christians like to think about spirituality in this way: They think about this as spirituality, and then they think about this as carnality. What they think of is that they have an area here that’s gray. So they say, “Well, I am 40% spiritual today, and I am 60% carnal. And I have an overlap. I’m not all spiritual and I’m not all carnal.” This is not true, for you know that spirituality is a relationship to the spirit of God; that either He is controlling your life or He is not. And confession of known sin puts Him in control. Therefore, you are either spiritual or carnal at any one point. These two blocks are entirely separate. There is no overlapping. You are either spiritual or you are carnal. You are either in the inner circle which is being spiritual, or you are out here because of sin and now you are carnal. You are still in eternal fellowship, but you are no longer in the inner circle of temporal circle. The outer circle is carnality; the inner circle is spirituality. And each is an absolute state all the while that you’re on this earth. Spirituality in the inner circle is 1 John 1:7, 2:10. Carnality is out of the inner circle (1 John 1:6, 2:10). You’re either negative and in darkness or you’re positive and moving in the light.

3) Spirituality is a matter of imitation. It’s a matter of imitating Christ, in the case of the spiritual Christian, because you are controlled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:1, 2 Peter 1:5). A carnal Christian imitates Satan because he’s controlled by his old sin nature (1 Corinthians 3:3, 1 John 1:6). Believers who are out of temporal fellowship simply imitate an unbeliever’s way of life.

4) There are certain objectives to be achieved by spirituality. One is a partnership with the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Secondly is imitation of God (Ephesians 5:1 in the Greek). Third is glorification of Christ (John 7:39, 16:14, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The glorification of Jesus Christ as a result of your spirituality. Your spirituality will bring about a fulfillment of the Mosaic Law (Romans 8:2-4, 13:8).

5) Spirituality is not subject to the Law of Moses. Some people think that if they keep the Law of Moses, they will be spiritual (Romans 8:2-4, 10:4, 13:8, Galatians 5:18, 23).

6) Spirituality produces the character of the incarnate Christ (Galatians 4:19, 5:22-23, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:5-6).

7) Spirituality is obtained by confession of know sin. I think you understand that. The Holy Spirit is God so He cannot sin. When a Christian is under His control, the Christian does not sin. When a Christian goes negative to the Spirit’s leading, he is under the control of the old sin nature, and then he can sin. The only way to escape that control is by confession of sin.

8) There are certain results of spirituality. First, Christ is magnified in the inner life of the Christian (2 Corinthians 3:3, Ephesians 3:16-17, Philippians 1:20-21). Secondly, you have a perception of doctrine (Joh 14:26, 16:12-14, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16). That’s why we stress at the start of every service that unless you are filled with the Spirit you will not understand doctrine. Third, spirituality will produce effective witnessing. Unless you are spiritual, you cannot witness effectively and you will phase out of witnessing for the Lord (Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians chapters 3 through 5). Some people think that they witness in order to be spiritual. It’s the other way around. If you are spiritual, you will witness. Fourth, spirituality will give you guidance and assurance. If you are spiritual, you won’t be doubting your salvation (Romans 8:14-16, Ephesians 5:16-18, Galatians 4:5-6). Spirituality will enable you to worship (Philippians 3:3, John 4:24). Spirituality will enable you to pray properly (Ephesians 6:18, compare Psalm 66:18). Spirituality will help you to lead other Christians in their confession of sin (Galatians 6:1).

9) What do you produce with spirituality? The production of spirituality: You will produce divine good (1 Corinthians 3:12, 14) as carnality will produce human good (1 Corinthians 3:12, 15). There is certain terminology that is used in Scripture for spirituality. Some are positive. Galatians 5:16 says, “Walk in the Spirit.” That means, “Be spiritual.” 1 John 1:7 says, “Walk in the light.” That means, “Be spiritual. Have known sins confessed.

10) The Bible tells us not to do certain things in order to be spiritual. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Quench not the Spirit,” which means don’t be producing human good. Ephesians 4:30 says, “Grieve not the Spirit,” which stresses personal sins.

11) A very important one: Ecstatics and emotions do not signal spirituality in this age (Romans 16:17-18, 2 Corinthians 6:11-12). Now ecstatics will be characteristic of the millennium (Joel 2:28-29). There is no religion on earth then to distort. There is nothing wrong with emotions. A mind which is oriented to God’s viewpoint and function under the leading of the Holy Spirit is going to have emotions that are tremendously expressive. You will find great joy and great satisfaction and great emotional expression, but it will come as the result of the mind directing the emotions. But ecstatics is the emotions taking over. And of course you can produce emotions on anything. That’s a great mistake to think that emotions shows that you’re spiritual.

12) You’ll have confidence about being filled with the Spirit as you come to a knowledge of doctrine (1 John 3:20-21).

Now there is certain false spirituality which we should mention. There is often a confusion between the means of being spiritual and the results. People say, “You should be a spiritual Christian.” “Well, what should I do to be spiritual?” “Well, get out and witness. Read your Bible. Give to the Lord. Come to prayer meeting.” Those things are all properly in order in the Christian life but they do not make you spiritual. They’re the results of spirituality. You may do all those things and be acting in the flesh.

Some people think that spirituality is a matter of how they dress. And there are some Christians who dress in poor taste. It’s not a matter of spirituality. They just don’t have good taste. They just don’t wear clothing that is fitting and becoming to them. Some Christians feel they should walk around like slobs. One of the defenses often for this is that they can reach other slobs this way. The hippie types tell me that they’re wearing their hair long, the old flappin’ around down to the shoulder-type hair (of course which is the sign of having a woman’s soul). Now the defense has been, “I can reach other long-hairs.” Don’t you believe that. That’s about as ignorant a statement and about as big a piece of human viewpoint as Satan has ever concocted.

Years ago when I was a teenager (oh, not so many years ago), my pastor at the time, who was a very highly educated and capable man, used to go down to the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago which was a rescue mission. There were the derelicts off of Western Madison Street and South State Street dragging in for a bowl of sleep and a place to sleep. But they had to listen to a sermon before they got it. I noticed that when he would speak to them. I’d go down and sit up on the platform and play my trombone and take part in the service.

I’d notice that when I would go with him and he’d speak, that he spoke to him just the same way that he spoke to the little church on the corner back on the west side of Chicago where all the people dressed nice and drove nice cars. And he pointed out to me one time, he said, “Some people come in here and they make a mistake. They think that when they get up in front of these men, they should talk to them in slang, poor grammar, and slovenly speech in order to try to get down to their level so these men will see that you’re really one of them.”

After one service in which he had spoken, a man came up to him, and he was a bum. And he said, “I just want to thank you for the kind of language you used in speaking to us today. You didn’t treat us like bums even though we are.” And from this man’s speech, it was obvious that he had not always been a bum. He was a man of background and of education who had known better days, but something had happened that brought him to his derelict condition. But I thought that was a pint well made, and it is most applicable today. You do not demonstrate spirituality, you do not demonstrate interest, and you do not demonstrate concern by taking on and aping styles that in themselves are derogatory to the Word of God and to God Himself and to His principles.

You’re not going to be spiritual by how you dress, or by how you speak, or by your mannerisms. Some people think that if you just say, “Praise the Lord,” and “Hallelujah” enough that you will be spiritual. Some of you think that if you have a sickening sweet smile you will be spiritual. And all you do is make everybody else sickening with your sweet smile. I tried that when I was a teenager too. I decided one day that I was always going to be smiling. Always smile. I was always going to be pleasant. And I was sitting on the street car coming home from high school and I started smiling. I would keep the smile because Christians should always be pleasant. That’s what a real spiritual fellow would be. I got a muscle cramp in my face. And I’ve never smiled since! It has nothing to do with spirituality.

Another false basis of spirituality is taboos. “There are certain I don’t do.” Well there are certain things that borderline on not being good things to do, but you’ll not be spiritual simply because you don’t do certain things which maybe you should not do. Or by relativity: “I’m spiritual because I’m not as bad as somebody else. I don’t do these things that you do: therefore I am better.” That does not make you spiritual.

By asceticism: “I rise up at a certain hour; I splash water on one eye at a time; I kneel on one knee and pray on that one; then I kneel on the other knee and I pray on that one; then I lie on my face on the floor and pray.” Now that’s a favorite one. Every now and then I hear some religious leader tell about how he came to a climactic moment with God. How he finally had his breakthrough. He came to spiritual insight because he went into his study and fell on his face and prayed. He probably picked up germs from the rug; it probably made him sick; he probably couldn’t work for the Lord for a long time—any number of things that could have happened. But this is a favorite one, “I fell on my face and I prayed in my study.” Just think how that would have been if somebody had come in and found him there and said, “There he is. The pastor is drunk again.” He would have really advanced the cause of the Lord, wouldn’t he? You have no idea the insanity and inanities that people go through, and this is all asceticism. This is false spirituality. And if you don’t understand this, you’re going to try to exercise your spiritual gifts in these false ways. That’s what I’m trying to prepare you not to do.

Or by ritualism. “I’m spiritual because I go through certain rituals.” Or, “I’m spiritual because of my ecstatics—my emotions.” “I’m spiritual because I have a program of activities.” This is a favorite one. Get the local church, get in a program of activities and start getting with it and that will really make you spiritual.

Or by self-improvement. I’m going to force myself to do certain things. I’m going to force myself to like certain people. I’m going to force myself to go out and have lunch with somebody I loathe because this is going to make you spiritual. Maybe you shouldn’t loathe them, and maybe you should go out and have lunch with them but it will not make you spiritual.

Alright, we have sought to establish two big things this morning as background for the study of spiritual gifts that Satan is confusing and deceiving people about. You live in an age of grace. You live under tremendous spiritual assets which were never true of any believer in any other age and will never be true again after this age. You have the character of the incarnate Jesus Christ, and all that simply by confessing of sin. No emotions. No ecstatics. Full confidence. No false spirituality. No putting on from the outside, but what God brings to from the inside. Now if you understand this, you are in a position to identify your spiritual gift and then to exercise it in a way that will bring great to you, great blessings to the believers around you, and great reward someday in the Lord’s presence.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971