

(continued from Part 1)

Are you following me at all? Brothers and sisters, as long as I have that hope, I've got demands I cannot make. Now, I don't know exactly how to do this, but I'm going to appeal to my weaker nature. One of these days, that retirement fund's got to go. I understand there are ways to get it out, and the only way to get it out is to quit teaching. And if I quit teaching, I've got another problem. If I quit teaching, then I've lost my testimony. So I've got two divergent problems, but one of these days, I'm going to quit teaching, and that fund has got to go.

I can't afford the privilege of dying with security. I can't afford the privilege of knowing that I can live now without owning anything. I can walk around this earth pretty much naked and make all sorts of demands of the Lord's people, but know that when I get old and decrepit, I've got security. Then I live a lie. Is it not true? It's true. When I get old, I've got to have nothing. If the Lord lets me live, I've got to die by God's faithfulness...and no other way. He will be faithful in my old age and my death, just as he has been in my youth.

I haven't made my point yet, but I've made several points. Simon Peter didn't have a thing in this world. I want to go back to Simon Peter. Here's the commercial fishing business on one side, and here is his Lord on the other. And here's Simon, and here's the gospel of the kingdom. You give up everything, and you turn around, and what do you do? Don't put it that way ever. *You gain Jesus Christ.*

When I passed the book out to you recently, I didn't pass it out until I had spent one month dealing with this. Quite frankly, I don't ever want to see anybody attain this without doing this first. Because it is against God; it's merchandising Jesus Christ. Quite frankly, you can't gain this in its totality until you have done that. You know that's true; something deep down inside you knows it. There is no common ground between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God. And brothers and sisters, that is the kingdom of God.

What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is simply gaining Jesus Christ. I do not mean salvation; I mean gaining Jesus Christ. To have Him and to know Him the way Simon Peter knew Him. Simon is the prototype of all who would be in the kingdom. Why would I say it's Simon Peter? Because God gave him the keys to the kingdom. He gained Jesus Christ.

I would like to press the world system. I desire to challenge its ways, its systemizations. I want to walk away from that thing and say, we went to the heart and core of your being, and we defied it.

We broke your power in our lives, but that is not our purpose for being here. We will not do the second part of the kingdom until we have dealt with the first part.

Now, brothers and sisters, you were given a book. You consider that book a precious commodity in your life. I would beg you now: have you gotten through the conversations of Brother Lawrence? And I asked you to go no further? You begin reading the letters one day at a time, okay? I would ask you to read them slowly, out loud, and be careful because some of those sentences you pass over that just look so mundane are very important, and pray those pages.

Now, praise God, Simon Peter stood up in front of 3,000 people. Had he experienced giving up everything? I ask you another question: had he experienced living commonly? Yes or no? You bet your life, for three years he put up with eleven other ugly boys. Yeah, and the treasurer was the thief. Okay. Brothers and sisters, had he gained the right to be in the Lord's kingdom? Yes or no? Was he a great sterling example of how to get there? Absolutely not. John the Beloved was a sterling example of how to get there, but John the Beloved was not handed the keys to the kingdom. I mean, he was not made the foremost apostle. Simon Peter kicked, clawed, screamed, fell, and backslid his way into the kingdom of God. Three cheers for Simon Peter. He got there the way you're going to get there.

And now Simon Peter stands up in front of 3,000 people, Jews to the last man. What does he say? What does he say? He says, chuck it all. Chuck it all. The other day I said to the single brothers, "You're going to have to raise the standard." Single brothers, raise the standard for us, would you? Raise the standard for chucking it all, would you? Is that all Simon Peter did? Was this all he did? What did he do? He said, "Lose it all."

I'm not even going to answer; I'm going to illustrate it. It's Tuesday morning. Pentecost is Sunday morning. Monday, that's the chucking of it all. Tuesday, they're meeting back in Solomon's Porch. It's the first time they've met in Solomon's Porch; it's Tuesday morning.

Simon Peter stands up and clears his throat. He says, now this morning, all the people are sitting there really early. What would you like to hear about? Three thousand people are sitting out there. You're one of them. Don't anybody say it. Just think about it for a moment. What would you like to hear about? What would you like to hear about?

Alright, Simon Peter says to Andrew, Andrew, you stand right over there, and we're going to unroll this chart here. This morning we're going to begin the prophecies of the book of Ezekiel.

If he had done that, what would the 3,000 have done? They would have stoned him. The Bible says that we need to know all these things, so we're going to study the book of Daniel and the book of Ezekiel. At best, at safest, they would have walked out on him.

What did those 3,000 people need? What did they...want? What did they get? You know, there is only one thing that Simon Peter could have dared to talk about, both to fulfill their desire and... what would you have talked about if you had been Simon Peter? What on earth would you have talked about? If we could put you in a time machine, send you back there, and you came back after three years, what would you talk about? We'd never shut you up. What would you talk about?

You would have talked about what it was like living constantly with the Lord Jesus Christ. What did they do on the day after Pentecost? What did they do? They junked it all, and on Tuesday morning, what did they begin to gain? The Lord Jesus. When they got up in the morning, people surrounded them who wanted the Lord. And when they went to bed at night, people surrounded them who wanted the Lord. When they went to the meetings early in the morning, they heard a brother describe what it was like to be with the Lord.

Now, I come to my point, and I have not gotten off the subject of the Lord's love and the Lord's bride. What did Jesus Christ do to attain His Sonship? He gave up everything. Obedience to the Father, even to the death on the cross. Now you tell me, please, what happened on the day of Pentecost? What happened the day of Pentecost? You can say it in three or four words: the church was born, and what is the church? The bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I come back to my other question: who's the first citizen of the kingdom of God? He is. Say it again, please, everyone. Who is the second citizen? Say it - His wife. I've got news for you: she was born giving up everything just like He was. Her history runs parallel with His. Her history is absolutely parallel with the Lord's. Sam, you asked me a question the other day. How important are these next 15 days? Will you tell the brothers what I told you? I said it is possible that the course of church history can be changed by the next 15 days.

Jesus Christ gave up everything of the kingdom of heaven. He was the greatest loser of all time. He lost all. He emerged as a man, owning not only the kingdom of heaven but the earth too, so he might have the kingdom of God and rule over both. But he emerged having given up everything, and he walked the earth looking for a bride He could love. He died for her, and she came out of His side, and she was like Him. Bone of his bone and spirit of His Spirit. She

literally got her spirit from His Spirit.

Jesus, your Lord, lived on this earth, and He had certain experiences. Now He is after a wife, and He wants her to have the same experience. What must be her first experience? The abandonment of all things. To do what? To gain the knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ.

Well, what is the knowledge and experience of Jesus Christ? What is Jesus Christ, anyhow? I'm going to tell you what Jesus Christ is. I'm going to give you a definition, the like of which you've never heard. It might not even impress you.

Was there a Jesus Christ before "A.D."? Well, you say, I don't know. Yes or no? The answer is no. There wasn't...yeah, there was, but no, there wasn't. When you gain him, what have you gained? You have gained a man who was also God, who lived constantly by his Father for 33 years, who began it by giving up everything. Do you realize he had to give up the kingdom of heaven...may I say the kingdom of God... to gain God as a man?

I'm going to repeat that. You've got to be impressed. He Himself was God, but when He became a man, He had to give up his heavenly royalty to gain God in His Manhood. He could not become a man and hold on to His Godship. He had to give it up in order to gain God again.

Well, you're not impressed, but you ought to be...for this reason. You will not gain your divinity until you've lost everything. You will duplicate His first experience, but praise the Lord, sisters and brothers, in doing so, you gain the privilege of duplicating His second experience. Are you clear on what his second experience was? If not, replay the tape. You can hear it.

Listen, that morning, the church was born, and they were saved from their sin. The next day, they dropped everything, and the next day, they began the highest adventure in the universe. They began the experience of gaining Christ the way that Christ gained God.

You may know Him, and to know Him is to know what He knows, to experience what He experienced. He had the privilege of living constantly with His Father, and you may gain the privilege of living constantly with Him. And quite frankly, the business of Jesus Christ having lived with His Father is passé. It's past. It's over.

The greatest adventure in the universe right now is a love story. It's a girl who was once a harlot, now privileged to hold hands and walk with Jesus Christ. It's the privilege of a peasant girl becoming the bride and wife of the Lord Jesus.

We lived in common around here during the month of June, but it's not for physical exercise. It's for the privilege of giving us more time. Now, some of us might not have made that part yet; we're a little pressed on the point. It is giving us the privilege of having left that system. It gives us the privilege of laying down everything to gain the Lord. Now you listen, brother. I believe, I hope, that most of you have gained the first half of that privilege: the privilege of losing everything.

Brother, would you go after the second with a vengeance? With a vengeance. I beg of you. I am pressing you; you press me. I don't want to know how Aunt Sarah is doing. I am not interested in how you feel. I couldn't care less how your automobile is running. Press me into the knowledge of my Lord. Press me; I'll press you. Press me.

I want to ask the brothers and sisters to go to the Lord and covet with Him for a keen awareness of what we are doing, to consider before the Lord if there is anything else we can drop. I'm not speaking out of material things so much as time things. And be my brother's keeper. Would you be my keeper?

I want you to know that there are literally times I forget what I'm supposed to be doing. If I walk into a room and say, "Hi, John, is anybody else here from Memphis yet? You just remember that Gene has forgotten what he's doing. Frankly, I must confess, Susie, I'm not interested in whether or not anyone else has gotten here from Memphis, though I see some new faces here this morning. Praise the Lord. I am interested in gaining my Lord. You know how I want to gain Him? I want to gain him exactly like Simon Peter did. I want the privilege of walking with him constantly for three years. You give me Jesus Christ for three years, and you'll never take him away from me.

I want the Lord, and the glorious thing is that He wants you. The Lord Jesus Christ is out there right now. He's in this room. He's out there. He's anywhere you're going to be today. He's waiting right there. He's on the other side of the door when you open it; He's on this side of the door before you open it. He's in the room when you get there. He's already in the chair next to you. You get back in your car; He's already in there. He's already... at every one of those places, standing there waiting for you to get there right now.

He's the greatest lover in history, and He's waiting to love you. Jesus Christ is takeable. He is the entrance to the kingdom...and He is that kingdom, and we have dropped everything for one purpose: to gain the Lord. You pray that Gene Edwards will be more violent on himself, because

the more violent Gene is on himself, the more he gains an experience, the more he can give an experience. The more I experience, the more I can demand, and brothers, be warned, I mean to press you. I mean to press you. If you say this is foolish, praise God, I'll press you anyway.

I would like to ask you to go to the Lord this morning and say, Lord, release my imagination. Let me see how much of you I can have today. Show me how to be so conscious of you. If the burden gets too great, just lay it down, and then maybe you'll have the experience of Brother Lawrence, and that's having the precious privilege of Jesus Christ catching you completely off guard.

I don't know if my point today has been clear. My point is this. Brothers and sisters, you have left everything. Now, claim what is rightfully yours. Claim what Simon Peter got.

*Claim the Lord himself.*