

March 10th, 1985. It's the first time we've ever met in this room, and this is the first session of a one-week meeting with ten people from other parts of America. I'm going to talk about an introduction to the deeper Christian life, and I'm going to start right now. Where did the deeper Christian life begin? Where did the experience of the deeper Christian life begin? Where was its origin? Before we come to a definition of it, where did it begin? Does anybody want to venture a guess? Anybody new around here want to venture a guess? Okay, a little louder.

Certainly, it didn't start at Patmos. It wasn't in the churches. An experience with Christ of full and real meaning, experience as over against head knowledge. Where did an encounter with Christ come from? Where did this thing of being in Christ and Christ in you and all of these mysterious terms begin? The answer is not in the church, not in Galilee, not in the Old Testament.

Where it began, if you can get a hold of this, it will change your life. In fact, it will so completely alter your life that it'll just make you totally different. Maybe not change you spiritually, but it'll just give you a whole new attitude as a Christian. If you're a fundamentalist, you'll stop being a fundamentalist. If you're a Pentecostal, you'll stop being a Pentecostal. And if you stop being a fundamentalist and a Pentecostal, I'll be so relieved.

The deeper Christian life began in God before creation. There was a fellowship going on in the Godhead. There was a fellowship of the Father and the Son and the Spirit even before eternity. The Lord would say there never was when I was not. He was always there. It would be my guess that this fellowship was so rich and so wonderful that the Lord must have thought to Himself, *I would like to enlarge it*. Now I cannot prove this point, and I may be completely amiss, but I have a notion that with all the joy that there was in the Godhead, my guess is there was also some pain and suffering. Maybe not, but perhaps. I am certain of one thing: that suffering preceded the visible creation. But whatever was going on inside of God, there must have come a time when He said, I would like to expand the experience, the fellowship that goes on among us.

Now then, that was not the beginning of the deeper Christian life. *That was the beginning of the Christian life*, which happened to be a very profound thing, so we would call it quite deep. Whatever God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit do together, it has to be more than trivial. I have often asked this question, and I will ask you this question. I will ask Barbara this question. Barbara, who was the first Christian? Who was the very first Christian? No, not exactly, but maybe it's a trick question. Just give a stab, it doesn't matter.

Audience: Alright, I want to think I'm thinking cosmic now because...

Aww, you shouldn't do that. You're supposed to give me an answer like this, Mary Magdalene, you're supposed to say Mary Magdalene or you're supposed to say John the Baptist, or I know you and now you're cheating, so you've ruined everything. Alright, who was the first Christian? Adam. Ah, good. We slipped by it.

I would say, or would you say that Jesus Christ was the first Christian? And I think we would be wrong. I think we would be completely wrong. God the Father was the first Christian, if there is any first in the Trinity, and perhaps there is not.

Now again, that may seem like a very small observation, but it is not a small observation, because if you get the implication of it, it destroys the whole foundation of almost everything you and I have been taught about what the Christian life is. I would like you to imagine the origin of the Christian life in the Godhead. Now, I would like for you to take our concept of what the Christian life is and try to put it in the Godhead, and we end up with the Lord Jesus sitting there with the Father, and they're reading the Bible and praying. Is that not true? And they are witnessing, and they're passing out tracts. They're praying, and they're giving their tithe. Alright, is that not true?

Now, I am telling you, if the Christian life originated in the Godhead, then whatever was going on there in that glorious fellowship was greater, much greater, than Bible study, prayer as we know it, forbid, and passing out tracts and witnessing and reading our Bibles and tithing and speaking in tongues. Now, I am telling you that when this one who had lived in eternity incarnated himself into humanity, he came with the enormous storehouse of that eternal fellowship with Him and in Him and from Him, and He did not come and say, That was wonderful, but now I'll make all these people read their Bible and tithe.

Do you understand? He had to come mostly with a backlog of His personal experience, which was the fellowship of the Godhead, and that is what He came to share, far and away above any and everything that you and I have laid upon him in our interpretation of Scripture. It was greater than that. It was deeper than that. And yes, I feel like we've missed a great deal by our traditional...you know, if you say praying, reading the Bible, speaking in tongues, and going to church are the center of the Christian life, and you come to the Bible, that's what you will find; I promise you. But if you come looking for the fellowship of the Godhead in the scripture, you will be dumbfounded at how much you will find, and it will put your Christian life on a totally different plane. It will put the Christian gospel on a different plane.

Tom, now you should already be excited. **Audience:** I am.

You're excited. Alright, I'm excited. I would say to all of you: just pick up your New Testament and say, "Wait a minute, my faith originated outside of time and outside of space, and it originated in God." Let me find out what was going on between the Father and the Son. By the way, I'll often say between the Father and the Son, and I won't say between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and I'll tell you exactly why. Because I can find so little in Scripture about the fellowship of the God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and I've really been touched by a recent issue of a book that was entitled, "The Shy Member of the Trinity." He is very hidden. It seems as though his part in the Godhead is to bring the fellowship between whoever, between the Father and the Son, between us and the Father and the Son. You know, in 1 John, John said, 'and our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son', and he didn't mention the Spirit. It was the Spirit who was causing and making possible their fellowship. So, I'm not theologically in error here, nor am I

forgetting to mention the Spirit. He is just very shy and very difficult sometimes to place in all this.

Alright, if you had spent eternity in a certain experience and you broke into a new universe, would you not tend to bring into that universe some of your past experience? Then I would say that whatever the Christian fellowship, the Christian experience is, or whatever it ought to be, it will bear some resemblance to what was known by the Father and the Son. That is where we are going to spend a good portion of this week, and I hope that when you leave here, you will have found a new handle, and I hope you will have found a new plane.

Now, I'm going to take just a moment, and I'm going to review what happened after this eternal fellowship. It was greatly altered when the Lord decided to create. He created the angels. And there seemed to have been at least some communication, if not fellowship, between angels and God before the creation of the visible sphere. Then came the creation of the visible sphere, and praise the Lord, now we come and we break into, really, the deeper Christian life here, or at least a fellowship that is not small. In the creation of man, we see God the Father and God the Son; we don't know...God fellowshiping with Adam, but that must have been wonderful.

Here is a man who is sinless, doesn't even know the concept, who is really as perfect as a man can be without the life of God in Him. He is more or less as perfect as God can make that which does not contain God, and they have wonderful fellowship. It proved to be an inadequate fellowship, but it was wonderful, and I'm sure you and I today would say, "I'd swap what I've got with what Adam had." Yet if we did that, we would be taking a secondary place, because Adam had a relationship like this. Whereas ultimately, the Christian relationship has to be like this. It is ultimately like this, not this.

Well, then there came the fall, and how staggering was the alteration to the very universe...but mostly the man. I sometimes feel that the damage that man experienced was greater than all the rest of the universe combined. I am still amazed at how damaged the human race became in that fall. Now, after that is a period of time that I frankly will tell you I don't understand, and that is the period of the Old Testament. I couldn't tell you the relationship of an Old Testament saint to God if my life depended on it. Now, I know there are many wise men who can, but I'm not one of them. I do not know what kind of fellowship there was on the spiritual plane between the Old Testament saints and the Lord. We see visitations, God breaking into history, God coming from one realm to the other. His spirit is on man, but His spirit does not seem to be in man. Yet you can't prove that going either way. I don't know. I just don't know. So, not knowing, I will immediately run to the New Testament, where things are clearer.

You come to the Gospels, and you see clearly the deeper Christian life. No, you just see the Christian life. What just staggers me is that we, as Christians, always run to the epistles to find out everything, and I can't think of anything that's really more neglected than the fact that we are not looking more at the gospels to figure out what the Christian life is. We look at the Lord's life to find out...do you know what we look at the Lord's life for to find out? Why do we study the Lord?

Why do we read the Gospels? What is our purpose generally when we open the Gospels, and we start reading them? No, not how to live the deeper Christian life. Not at all. You know what it is? Absolutely, we go there really with a feeling of, 'Alright, God, what do you want? What are you looking for? What are you expecting out of me?' Is that not true? Absolutely. And here's a parable. What does that mean to me? What's He trying to tell me? What's God expecting? We go to a conference...parables? That's what God wants out of me. Any illustrations? The Good Samaritan? And we go there looking for what our obligations are. No question about it. Masochistic seeking of that which is obligatory. You got that, I'm sure. Did you understand that? Alright, we are...what have I done wrong? We're doing penance, that's what we're doing. How can I make it up to you, God, Lord? Tell me what I've done wrong. Tell me what I ought to do. Show me what you're expecting of me, and man, do we run over the main point, because we miss the incredible picture of the Christian life that's right there in front of us.

Oh, I'm not talking about Jesus being good to people. I'm not talking about healing. I'm not talking about His teachings. That's what we always look for...and brethren, we must pray early in the morning, the Lord went apart from the disciples, or even before the earliest hour of the dawn, He went away to be in prayer, in prayer. So, the next morning, I drag myself out of bed, and I try to find some sequestered place where I can go pray, and you know what I end up doing? I go to sleep. And so, the message comes to you, and it comes to me: pray, because Christ prayed. Be good to people, because Jesus was good to people. This is kind of the mess we're in. This is what is normally called *the shallow Christian life*. And it is the shallow Christian life. What did we miss? Barbara, what did we miss? What did we look for and not find? A relationship. That's right, and it's all over the 4 gospels if you just open your eyes and look.

This Jesus is marooned in an invisible realm, in the visible realms. He is into a new experience, and He is faced with the most enormous task in history, and He, I'm not going to say He needs His Father, He never ceased the fellowship that He knew in eternity past. At this point, I think I would like to talk to the person behind that lens. So, wake up. When you think of prayer, you see the Lord going out there early in the morning to pray, and you see that painting...I don't know who did that painting, but there's this big rock and the Lord has got His hands like this, and He's kneeling, and He's looking up. It looks like there's a stained-glass window up there somewhere. There's this light falling just on Him, and the minute you look at that thing, the thing you think to yourself is, gee, I wish I had a place like that where I could pray.

You think of the Lord doing this, and it just shows us this mindset we have. Jesus Christ...the Father (separated). He's talking to God. I'm here to say to you that when He went out early that morning to be alone, you have to drop every concept you have of what prayer is, because that was internal fellowship. It was an internal fellowship, and it was a fellowship that had been going on for eternity, and it was within, and it was rich. And there wasn't...if you compare what He was doing there alone in the mornings with His Father, with what we do today, it's mind-boggling. Forgive me for this, but I just, you know...every once in a while, I bump into praying, and it just really frightens me what the modern-day, and probably for the last eighteen hundred years, the

concept of prayer is. It's sometimes a shouting match. Lord! Obviously, He's getting old and deaf. Or it's a thousand miles an hour. (fast) Father, we thank you. We've come here this evening. We bless Your name, and we thank You, and we pray that you'll be with us here tonight. You can hardly know what the guy is saying; he's speaking so fast. And you think, and where is God? And it's just, it's this. It's talking. What the Lord Jesus Christ was doing there alone with His Father was this. It was something going on internally, just as there had been something going on internally in God.

Let us remove ourselves from that passage of Scripture about prayer and just step back from the Gospels and look at them and say, What can I find here about the fellowship of the Godhead? What can I find here about the Christian life? And open your Bible, your New Testament, your Gospels, and you'll find it on every page. *The complete dependency the Lord Jesus had and the constant fellowship that He had with the Father.* Now, I ask you again, just how much speaking in tongues, tithing, praying, and reading your Bible do we catch the Lord Jesus at? Well, you say, oh, but He quoted so much of the Old Testament. No, He didn't. He wrote it. Don't tell me He studied the Old Testament. He wrote it. He didn't have to read about Moses crossing the Red Sea. Shucks, He split that sea Himself. I can't tell you that He was a Bible scholar who had read his Old Testament; He had inspired every word of it. I don't ever find Him speaking in tongues, and His prayer was nothing like our prayer. His tithing was as unorthodox as it could be. A fish tithed for Him.

His church life consisted of fellowshipping with 12 people out in open skies, and it was a fellowship that was a prototype of the Christian life and a view of that which had been taking place for all eternity past. It's a snapshot: God trying to bring to 12, 15, or 20 people what He had known for all eternity.

Well, I would say you have to give consideration to what you heard in the last few minutes. And I would really ask you, if at all possible, that you drop your preconceived notions about the Christian experience up to this point, and go back and remember the origins of the Christian life, the headwaters, the fountainhead, and look again and see if you don't behold something radically different than anything you and I have been... Can I use the term brainwashed? Is it okay? Anyway, we have developed this evangelical, fundamentalistic, Pentecostal, charismatic mindset of what Christian fellowship is, the Christian life is. I would ask you to go back into God to find its origins. That light and that fellowship and that way and that manner, and if I can use the word method, and it wasn't, did not greatly alter from the Godhead to Galilee, and I doubt that was altered greatly much after Pentecost.

Well, let's come to the epistles and let's come to the time after the Gospels. The Lord was implanting something into 12 to 20 people. They could have easily fit in this room. That's right. The inner circle was probably around 20 people. They could fit in this room, and He was seeking to give them something. What in the world do you think he was doing for three and a half or 4 years? He was letting them see how He lived with His Father. That's what He was really doing.

They didn't watch His deeds as much as they watched...the fountainhead, where all these things came from. I believe we read the Gospels amiss. The central theme of the Gospels is not life, redemption, or this or that. I think the center of the Gospels is Christ, and the center of Christ is His fellowship with the Father. Well then, if that's true, those 12 to 20 people had to have carried something with them to 3000. And from 3000, Judea, Antioch, Asia Minor, and Europe.

Saints, if there's anything on earth that impresses me about the epistles, and I mean, it really impresses me. I guess you'd have to reread the gospels to know what I'm talking about. There was no generation before them and no generation since them who had such a profound understanding of time and space. Not till this hour. Do you hear Christians walking around today talking about being in Christ? Just a little about Christ in you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Not, have you heard that, but how attuned to you are such concepts. Here, one of the early disciples, followers of the Lord, starts an epistle off with that, just slashing it across the page, as if everyone out there who would read it would understand exactly what He meant. He didn't explain it; He declared it. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Talking about heaven when we die and go to heaven and play on harps, and sit around on clouds? No, some profound something. Before Abraham, I was, the Lord said, and it set the tone for the Epistles. It set the tone for the Gospels. There is so much sense in the epistles of another realm and of a relationship invisible, belonging to other spheres, terms that we simply don't grasp today.

And what did we end up with? We end up with a gospel, and this is a true gospel. It's a correct gospel. It's an awful shallow gospel. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Well, you need to repent of your sins and get saved. Now we're going to sing "Just as I am." Come forward. And you repent. Alright, that's fine. That's a good place to start, but that's where it ends. That's just about the end of it. Where is "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places?" Where is the tone of the epistles? Page after page after page: Christ, all in all. He wrote it, didn't even tell us what it meant, because He expected everybody to understand what it meant. Mark understands what it means. I don't understand what it means. That's Saint Mark.

What does it mean, "all in all"? Our scientific generation in this age is beginning to understand a little bit of time and space, and that which is not time and that which is not space, and it's only begun in this generation. It has been outside the Christian faith for the past 1,800 years. The sense of the other realm is simply not in our preaching nor our experience. And it was so rich in the first century. Now, I realize that many of you don't even know what I'm talking about, but just pick up your epistles tonight when you go back to your beautifully, lavishly furnished room and turn on one of your 60-watt bulbs there, and just flip through and just look at all of the things that are in there that are not our Christian vocabulary. It's not where we live. It's not the way we think and conceptualize. We always start somewhere else. We start so objective, so surface, so here, so now.

And when we do that, we come up with such an objective, shallow gospel prayer becomes you have to come before the Lord, you have to repent of your sins, you have to pray in Jesus' name, you have to go and make restitution for all you did wrong, and then you present your needs and then you declare your place in Christ and then you say amen and you go to work.

And so here we are: Aristotle. We've broken prayer down into 7 basic steps. We get up in the morning to pray, go through our 7 basic steps, and then where have we gone? Where is the deeper Christian life in this? You cannot find this in the New Testament. You can only patch it together with verses. You have to create that by stealing from one book of the New Testament, then another, and putting your logical mind to it, and we end up with such an obligatory relationship to the Lord in a shallow, outlined, performistic relationship that's not outside of time and space. It's very in time and very in space. I'll try to explain what I mean later.

Well, obviously, some were in the New Testament or some period shortly thereafter; we lost it all anyway, or a good part of it. Today, we're back in the business of trying to get it back. I want to talk to you a little bit about the loss of it. Whatever happened to a first-century experience? The answer is I don't know. My personal theory is that it got killed off. It was not so much lost as it was killed off. If we were to take this room of people right here, right now, and we were to take the brothers that knew the Lord and the sisters that knew the Lord the best, and we were to take them out and shoot them, then the brothers and sisters who knew the Lord best, who were still alive, would take over. There would be some new Christians brought in, and let's say that the cream of the crop in this group was killed, and then the next best group would come along, and they would try, and they were killed, and what you would end up with is some new Christians. Maybe some old boy had been brought out of Hare Krishna, or who knows what, some kind of weird religion. And he'd end up eventually being the leader with almost no experiential foundation. Who knows what that guy would be preaching before it was cleared? Well, there was not that kind of thing in the first century.

What was happening is that more and more, the only thing getting left in the gathering of God's house in the second, third, and fourth centuries was the Greek mind, the Western mind, the Western mind, not the Eastern mind, not the Hebrew mind, but the Western mind. Apollo was coming to the top, and eventually, we ended up with a Christian faith whose roots and foundations are as much in the Greek mindset, maybe not in Greek teaching, but the Greek mindset...there is a difference...as much set in the Greek mindset as it is a set in the Hebrew Christian mindset. I think that the letter of Clement to the Corinthians is a very telling book. He wrote 2 letters. You might read them sometime, and you will find a man tied up with the here and now. He's telling them about their sins. He's threatening them with God and with punishment, and he's griping at them and fussing at them, and you begin, you can almost see fading on the pages in Christ, in God. It's just seeping through the fingers of the second-century believers. It's just going fast, and it's becoming a surface, objective thing. Well, very quickly, I think some of us don't really appreciate what happened next, because everything that happened next is still in our bloodstream, in our heads, in the marrow of our bones.

As best as it has been figured out by the historians, of the many, many things that took place, one of them was, and I'm going to give you my rendition of this, not history's rendition. There were a bunch of young, dumb, single brothers who were highly religious, who got caught up with the Buddhist or Indian or Chinese or Hindu concept of a monk, totally foreign to the Christian faith. Now, you can find anything in scripture if you want to, and they went back to scripture and found this masochistic approach to God. For instance, they took the verse Paul said, "I beat my body." So, they grabbed the whip and started beating their bodies, and they caught on to this thing; they grasped this thing of being sinful, and that sin dwells in the flesh. What they did was head out to the Sinai Desert. Now you have to have a reason for going to the Sinai Desert, and they found one, and that was some ancient teaching that demons dwell mostly in desert places. So, they were going to go out and do battle with the demons. They moved into the caves of the Sinai Peninsula and lived there for two, three, or four hundred years without bathing, drinking the minimum amount of water, eating the minimum amount of food, and looking up at the sun while praying to the Lord. And I always think of St. Simeon more than anyone else. A fifty-foot, I believe it's a fifty-foot pillar, 3 feet square. He climbed up that thing in his twenties, and he died up there in his seventies or eighties. He never came down. St. Simeon. That was a perfect illustration of the tremendous turn that took place in the Christian faith. These people were lauded and looked upon as the center, the high point, and the high...this was the deeper Christian life. This was where you were going to go if you were serious with God. Today, you become a missionary. There isn't a whole lot of difference between the two attitudes. Forgive me, but the mindset itself is basically the same. For those of you who might be offended by that, there isn't any such thing as a scriptural basis for modern-day missionaries. Excuse me, but there's not, and I have watched so many brothers and sisters with this obligatory outlook go to... this is the deeper Christian life... great service to God, looking up at the sun, going to the Africans. I don't take from the gospel going to the ends of the earth. I take from the motivations that sometimes, unwittingly and visibly, provoke what we do. I'm for going to Africa; don't misunderstand, but we're going on a very shallow plane.

Well, the other thing that happened, some guy down in Egypt whose name I cannot even remember, was not even a Christian, but he was teaching the teachings of Plato. There was a revival of the teachings of Plato, and there were 2 young pagans sitting there in that room, sitting under his feet, and one of them was named Origen. I've forgotten the other guy's name, but they both were Neo-Platonists. One of them became a Christian and joined the Christian faith; the other one started some disciples outside the Christian faith, but some of them also became Christians. And you end up with, I don't want to get into the structure of Platonic thought, but you can have Platonic thought without Platonic teaching. There is a mindset, an approach, and there was Greek mysticism outside the Christian faith floating around in the world on how to come to a level of knowing the gods, or maybe even a god, the God even, and they saw it as a passage of many, many stages.

Well, then came the man who did us great, great error. He did us more damage than anybody, and like most men who have done us the greatest damage, we don't even know their names. This man was a Syrian monk who lived in the 5th century, and he was probably thought to be a Christian.

He took the name Dionysius after the man in the first century who was converted in Athens, because he figured Dionysius, the first-century Christian, was a great follower of Plato too, and he was trying to marry the two. And he wrote what is called apocalyptic Christian literature, pseudo-Christian. Oh, thank you. Those are the words I was hunting for. Can you say them really loudly here? Okay, great, and that's why the man is known as Pseudo Dionysius. He wrote a group of letters in which he pretended to be Dionysius writing to Timothy. Dionysius the Areopagite, first century, but this was taking place in the 5th century, and he was teaching his Neo-Platonism in these writings.

Well, a few centuries later, when these things were uncovered, they were widely believed to be first-century literature, and they were almost equal to Paul's writings because everybody believed they were explanations of the Christian faith from the first century. It was Neo-Platonism, and it went right into the Christian bloodstream, and it's still there, folks, and if you don't believe it's still there, then every time you drive down the street and see a church building, those church buildings are built on the tradition of the Neo-Platonist mysticism. That's where the concept of the high arch and the stained-glass windows come in: building a building that will produce a sense of the sublime and awe. That's Greek mysticism. Their temples were built that way, and our church buildings are built that way, and we have the high vaults because they tend to create a sense of awe when we walk into them, which creates worship, and worship is what God wants, and therefore... that was their reasoning behind it.

So, for the next thousand years, there came the pope and the monks and the priests, and then something down here, the people and the peasants, and there came the teaching that only a few people could know God well. And only a very few people endowed with certain gifts and certain physical stamina could know union with God. This became a big word, and for a thousand years, this was the deeper Christian life built on the mindset of Greek mysticism. The Christian faith even took over the term "Christian mystics" to distinguish between Greek mystics, and let me tell you something, some of those people were some of the finest believers that ever lived, but they had some of the most screwed up literature that you could ever hope to get your hands on. You single brothers who feel you've got to go read these people's stuff, go read it, and then you're going to need a good Christian psychiatrist to get your head undone, because these people, some of them, had some really profound experiences with Christ, and it's brackish water, out of it flows sweet and sour, and that which is Christian, you can see it. It was something really real, but here's all this stuff that goes with it. And invariably, it is written on the concept of planes that you must pass through in order to reach... maybe I should do it this way (reaches lower), the deeper Christian life.

Are you following me? Is it making sense? Alright, wonderful. Barbara? Alright. Well, that's still followed today in the Roman Catholic Church. I don't even know what it's all about, but I can tell you 2 or 3 things. I can tell you 3 steps I know of. Well, first there's conversion. So, there are four. Another one is meditation, and another one is contemplation, and the final one is union, but boy, they got a zillion others stuck in here. Everybody who's a deep, profound Roman Catholic varies the version a little. I do not know what meditation is, and I go on record, and I want you to go tell

anybody and everybody, I haven't the foggiest idea of what it is, I've never done it in my life, not for one second that I know of. Then there is contemplation, and nobody knows what contemplation is. All we know is it takes about 30 years to get there, and there are only two or three people in a generation or a century or whatever, just a handful of people who arrive at this, maybe a few hundred. And then some of these people experience union with God, whatever that is, and this is the desire of all religious single brothers. Whatever happened to the New Testament? Gone, lost.

Where are we today? Well, you know, I have to say this, and with all of the problems that little lady had, I don't think we can really appreciate the fact that when Jean Guyon wrote that little book, *A Short...* do you get the point... *A short...* that was a revolution. A short. She wrote a book entitled "A Short and Simple Method of Prayer." You don't know what that woman was saying. She was saying, "You don't have to have 40 years at this. It can be short, and it can be simple. It can be short, and it can't be simple." And then her opening words were, "It's for everybody." It's no wonder they put her in the Bastille. And you know something? What she presented has probably never been improved on...until this week. Till this week. It was a very wonderful little thing she offered. It was very simple, very Christian, and very Christ-centered, and very gospel-centered. It was a wonderful little idea that had changed her life, and she was sharing it, and she got into a lot of trouble for doing so.

A lot of what she writes is very Catholic, and a lot of it is just really funny, but when she wrote that little book, most of what she said was just right on. Well, she influenced Protestants a lot more than she influenced Catholics. But we have to ask the question: where are we today in return to that first-century mindset and experience? Well, we have to appreciate Martin Luther. I mean, by that, we have to understand him.

How long have I been talking? Alright, I'll make this real quick. Martin Luther was a monk who had gone through all of this. He did this. He lay on a cold slab of concrete or stone and prayed for days without food or water, and he was trying to get past meditation, and he wasn't even sure he was into meditation. And all he knew was he was simple. So, we finally became Protestant, began protesting all this, he made a statement, and I have read it: we're not going to have any of this; it's not going to be in this meditation, contemplation, and all this Aristotelian stuff. It's really funny how much he came out against Aristotle. It's paradoxical because he was one of the greatest followers of Aristotle who ever lived. Now, does anybody know why I can make that statement unequivocal? One of the greatest followers of Aristotle who ever lived. Do you not know? Because he was an Augustinian monk who taught Augustinian theology in Wittenberg, and Augustine was 100% the son and disciple of Aristotle. Somewhere or other, Martin Luther never got the point, because he thought so highly of Augustine.

Well, you have to appreciate what Luther was up against. He was up against a dark world where ignorance abounded, where a thousand years there'd been very little literacy, even, very little writing. People were superstitious more than they were anything else. There was as much darkness and superstition as there was the Christian faith. People had their... everything... the Druid

religions, just plain old animistic superstition, pervaded Europe at that time. Tetzl and his indulgences, all of this, buying their way out of purgatory, and Luther felt it was important that people understand the Bible. Wittingly or unwittingly, he set the Protestant faith on a course of intellectualism. He felt that if we would train our children, teach them to understand the Bible, and drill them in the schools, they would understand salvation, understand the Lord, and be a nation of saved people because we would all be just trained up from childhood. Boy, you don't know how intellectualism and the Bible can turn people off.

I always think of this little kid down in Austria. There he is: he grew up in a Lutheran church in this little town, was a choir boy, went to church, went through the whole catechism, quoted it, and he grew up to be Adolf Hitler. If anybody ever thinks that going to Sunday school is going to change your kids, you just need to go to Europe and see the state church and complete control of the educational system, where every kid can sit down by the time he's in the 7th grade and write a profound dissertation on soteriology. And you say, I don't know what soteriology means. Well, that 7th grader does. What is soteriology? It is the theology of salvation, and they can spell it out to you.

Intellectualism. Protestantism: it cannot be understood apart from intellectualism. It is an intellectual exercise. And that's where the deeper Christian life kind of never had a prayer, never got a chance. You and I owe a lot... boy, do we owe a lot... to John Wesley. John Wesley came and brought into the Christian faith, through much persecution... Do you know that man averaged preaching over 3 times a day for 50 years, 7 days a week? And that didn't include the army of tens of thousands of men he set out preaching all over the world, all over the Western world. And you know what they were hammering at? One simple thing. It's because they had had it and been so profound; they were shocked. Do you know what it was? What were they hammering at? Salvation is an experience for adults: first, that it's an experience, and second, that it's not a thing that happens to babies. Then it has to happen to an adult. He brought in evangelical, the evangelical gospel of salvation. He brought in "born again." That's what he brought in. And he brought in the only Christian experience we got. And I underlined the word experience. He brought in the experience of salvation, and that's where the deep Christian life is today. It's stuck in salvation. If you don't believe that, I would admonish you to join the church I belong to. I am a Southern Baptist. You go to one of my denominations or churches, and you'll hear us preaching until the hair is down in our faces and the water pouring out of our shoes. Salvation. Everybody gets revved up when someone gets saved. That's our experience: getting revved up about somebody else getting saved. And that's the two Christian experiences, getting saved and getting excited about somebody getting saved, and for most, that is the deeper Christian life. That's it in most of evangelical Christendom and has been since the days of John Wesley; that is the end of the deeper Christian life today.

There are a few little scraps I'll throw in. In the last century, Ruth Paxton wrote a book entitled "The River of Life," and someone whose name we don't know (Hannah Whitall Smith) wrote "The Secret of a Happy Christian." Then there's something else by an unknown Christian, Hannah Whitall Smith, Ruth Paxton, and then an unknown Christian who wrote something.

I think the Brethren, the Plymouth Brethren in Ireland and England during the 1820s and 30s, had started out in that direction, and then they got sidetracked on what all British people get sidetracked, and that's preaching. They are preachers. They are pulpiteers, and it became a preaching mission, preaching the New Testament. And, of course, salvation got in there. Boy, you talk about an intellectual movement, and you tell a Brethren that he'd corrode on the spot, but it is, it is, you know, positional truth. This is your position in Christ, and you have to have faith in your position in Christ, and the deeper Christian life today, as little as it is, is mostly the revealing, the big secret of positional truth. That's what you get in these wonderful, glorious Bible conferences out here. I'd like to say a kind word at this moment: hang positional truth. I don't want positional truth. I want what my Lord had; I want reality. Aha, reality was what you want, Gene? Then we have something to sell here at the back of the room. Gene, we've got something you haven't heard of. We got the ultimate end, the panacea of all things. Right this way, Gene. Step right up, boy. We've got it. We've got the thing you need: just come right over here and get down on your knees and speak in tongues. And that's the other big deal in the Christian faith.

John Wesley gave us salvation, and then there came positional truth, and then there came this thing of speaking in tongues. Now, bless you, Pentecostals and Charismatics, forgive me, but boy, that's a very small drink of water. Now you may think that's a big drink of water, but you've never had a big drink of water. And I'll tell you, I thank God that there is speaking in tongues, because if there weren't speaking in tongues, there would be virtually no experiential Christianity today. I mean, there's this dry prayer, there's this dry read your Bible, and buster, you better obey it. I'm not against reading your Bible, but I want you to know that when you read your Bible with your brain, you're no better off than a Pharisee, except that you're saved.

There has got to be...I come back to the first-century mindset...there was a sense of other realms. Then there's Pentecostalism, which will give you a high. It'll give you a wonderful high, but it's just like getting saved in a Baptist church. You can't live on that for 50 years. Remember, I've been living on it for 50 years. Well, you go ahead and live on it for 50 years. It's just not enough for me. And it is not the "first-century deeper Christian life." You know, of course, there should be no deeper Christian life. There should only be the Christian life.

Brother (Watchman) Nee gave us a little. T. Austin Sparks gave us a little. Then there are some of these modernists and liberals who even gave us a little. Then Frank Laubach, and a gentleman named Shoemaker, who lived and died some 50 years ago, who was a liberal. The Roman Catholics are still hard at it, and every once in a while, they'll come forth out of them a real contemplator, and he'll write a book, and hundreds will follow him, because they're just as dry as we are. And they're so tired of saying mass. They have said, Hail Mary, and hocus pocus meum, until it's running out of their ears. They've eaten that little wafer and taken that swallow of wine, and it just is not getting anywhere. Even some of the Pentecostals are beginning to think that tongues is dry. I could go on forever, but this is the present status of the deeper Christian life up until this meeting tonight.

I don't mean to make light, but brothers and sisters, we've got a long way to go back. We've got to skip most of the Dark Ages. Forget St. Therese. Forget the two Catherines. Forget John of the Cross. Be sure and forget Pseudo-Dionysius. And forget Meister Eckhart. Those people are mostly...they're devout Christians...I'll tell you; they put us to shame. They're going to go into the kingdom before we ever did, but you don't want to work that hard. It'll make you weird. Then you're an American, and all Americans know there's got to be a shorter, simpler, bigger, and better way.

Now I have to tell you, it's not all fun and games, and it's not all roses. Anybody who gets interested in the deeper Christian life is really asking for a major disaster in his life. Nonetheless, that's what the Christian life has always been. It's just part and parcel of our gospel that has been passed on to us through these 20 centuries.

Well, brothers and sisters, I hope from this room and maybe from other places that I don't know about, and I'm sure they're out there, there's no question in my mind they're out there, and there are young men being raised up, that we will be able to come back to a more profound understanding of the first-century Christian walk. But I want you to know I'm not as concerned about the understanding of it as I am of the embracing and the experiencing of it. I have a belief that every positional truth can be known in time and in space, every one of them, but if I had anything to say to you, it would be this, "How did my Lord, how did your Lord, live the Christian life?"

If we can find the depths of the roots of that statement, and I mean depths, the cataracts. You know what a cataract is? It's a group of waterfalls, the cataracts of our faith. If we can plunge and plummet into the depths of His walk with the Father, we will begin to understand the origin and the meaning of this thing called the Christian walk.