

It's very, very difficult to stand here and look at you and know what I've got ahead of me right here, because what I'm going to seek to do is totally reorientate all your thinking in every way, and hope by the mercies of God it will remain permanent. Now the chances of that are pretty remote. I don't know if you realize how much the typical Protestant Christian, and I'm going to say evangelical Christian, has the way of a mindset. Let me just run it by you. We get saved because Jesus died for us, He cared for us, He loved us, He died on the cross for us, and He forgave our sins. If we believe in Him, He will save us. Change our lives inside, internally. We're not talking about a moral change here. And then we will love Him, and we will serve Him, and He will be good to us. And we'll, you know, the other things that get involved, but He will love us, and we will love Him, and we'll pray, and whatever else, and then we will die and go to heaven. Now, that's pretty much it, isn't it?

You know, none of that's really very scriptural. Oh, it is. It really, really is. But it isn't. The truth of the matter is that it is an orientation that has come to us as Protestants. I think one of the first recollections I have of a little sense that there's something to miss here was when I was no more than 17 years old. It was the year I got saved, and I was reading the book of Ephesians. I didn't understand anything in Ephesians. Like, you know, when you read Ephesians and you don't understand anything in it, it just seems to be words piled up on top of one another, a vocabulary of which we know nothing. It bothered me that I was hearing some real basic, and if you don't mind, objective things. Very objective - object things. And here was all this world that I kept stumbling across in the New Testament.

Well, listen. The orientation of the Lord Jesus Christ was to the Father. And something of this orientation was passed on to the disciples, and they had an orientation that was also *away* from themselves. The Lord Jesus had an orientation *away* from Himself. Boy, if you don't understand me at any time, will you throw a hand up? I want to be clear. And the early writers of the New Testament had an orientation that was away from themselves. I don't know any simpler way to put that.

Now then, the gospel that you and I get preached is a gospel that is an orientation toward you and toward me. Are you following me? Well, can we break that? Can we break that and come out into a whole new realm, a new place to stand? We've got to, and I'm here to help a little group of people begin meeting in Atlanta in a very simple way. And I'm saying to you, as I said last night, you ought not to come here. I am taking a stand with the brothers and sisters I will be working with, a unique stand. I have not done this before. This is new for me. I'm growing. *It will be a fellowship of believers whose orientation is not toward themselves.* I am not promising you a rose garden. I'm not promising you anything for yourself. And before this week's out, it's going to get tougher and tougher, but I would like to show you a little bit of the Lord's orientation, which was to the Father. And the early Christians whose orientation was to the Lord. It's all in the New Testament; we somehow just don't seem to catch it. But brothers and sisters, it's a lot more than this. It's entering into an eternal plan, and that plan becoming your life. That your orientation be for Him, to Him, by Him, and through Him. By Him, for Him, through Him, to Him. Actually, if we have any other starting place, we will always end up in the wrong place. You begin the wrong

way; you end the wrong way, like in, uh, back in the days of Galileo, and, and, uh, what was the other guy's name? Copernicus.

People always started with the Earth as the center of the universe, and no mathematical equations would work out. Finally, one of these guys got down and made the sun the center of the universe, and everything worked out mathematically. Well, my dear sisters and brothers, if you start with an orientation of God toward us, and that is definitely the gospel we have always been preached. It is extremely us-centered. Nothing ever really works out. It has to be lifted totally out of this sphere.

Now, how shall I begin, what shall I say, and what shall I do? I've done this before. I hope most of you have never heard it. Well, let's just ask some very basic questions: why did God create? It's not a question often dealt with. What is man's destiny? Those are two good questions: why did God create, and what is man's destiny? The New Testament is very clear about this, both of them. Don't come here if you're here to go to heaven, here to enjoy meetings, here to be blessed, here to have your prayers answered, here to enjoy our meetings. Right now, they're not very good, so you don't have to worry, but they will get better, and that's what I'm afraid of. They become some of the most beautiful meetings you've ever seen, and you'll want to warm your hands at the fire of the meetings. Don't come. And don't come for you. This one is for Him. For Him. For Him.

Now, my question is just as simple as it can be. Did God create the universe in order to save us from our sins? That's a little difficult, isn't it? Because we were not here yet. But boy, here is a big question. And that question is, was his purpose stopped by the fall of man? Was his purpose stopped by the fall of man? Was his purpose altered by the fall of man? Say it. No. No, it was not altered by the fall of man. Therefore, this wondrous, glorious thing we have of redemption, which we spend so much of our time and effort on, is in fact a small part of a far greater whole, and that greater whole is that which he intended before He created. And my word to you is simply this: we're here to discover that purpose, to plunge into that purpose, to make His purpose our purpose, to become one with that purpose, and to live for that purpose. And not only live for that purpose but live for the God of that purpose. To join into His heartbeat, His care, His passion for what He's concerned about.

Now, wait a minute, Gene. If I knew that and I come here, who's going to take care of me? If we're all here, it's turning away from our own center to a God-centeredness, a really profound God-centeredness. Words are cheap; anybody can say God-centeredness; words are cheap. But if we turn from a self-centric, not self-centered, self-centric reference to "God's intention" center, who's going to take care of us? Well, have you got any volunteers here? Have you got any possibilities? What? Huh? I really am afraid that's true. And that's not very trustable, is it? If God's going to take care of us, you know, God, He's not really very dependable. I mean, do you really believe He's faithful? You really believe that? Phooey. You think God's faithful, go talk to Prem Pradhan. Don't tell me God's faithful, Prem, I know how many years you've spent in prison. God didn't come take him out of prison. God really mistreated Prem Pradhan. Would you agree to that? Oh, yes. Say yes. Don't do that. Yeah.

Yes. He'd better never treat me that way. Huh? Yeah, I know. Just a different level. Different approaches. Same God.

Now, brothers, I'm trying to tell you that God's standard of how He's going to care for you, and your standard of how God's going to care for you, are two different standards. Two, really, totally different standards. Brothers and sisters, I do not know how to issue forth this burden tonight: that God had an intention before He created, and that intention has been so incredibly neglected, overlooked, and forgotten. And we, as God's people in every generation, and certainly in this one, and I don't guess this one's any worse than any other, have almost literally lost the ability to contact that intention and to embrace that intention. I have read, I suppose, what little has ever been written about this. I'm sure there are things I have not read, but I think one of the things that has always bothered me is the men who wrote...they wrote so long ago...were so optimistic that God's people were going to see God's greater and greatest intent, and that the church would change as she began to enter into the very heartbeat and purpose of God. And those books are old, and I tell you that sometimes you feel like that flame is flickering out.

Praise the Lord, God will raise up somebody someday somewhere, but right now, if it goes out, He'll relight it. Right now, right here in this town, I would like to say to the 15 or 16 people who are going to make up the basis of this town and this little group, and their fellowship, I want you to consider seriously rethinking your being here because we will not pursue the avenues we normally pursue. The messages will not be toward you. The ministry will not be toward you. The ministry will not be for you. The ministry will be toward Him. The experience that we will enter into will be toward Him. The message will be toward Him. It will be to Him, and it will be for Him, and if we can pursue far enough, it will be through Him and by Him. It will not be aimed at you, your needs, and so forth.

Gene, how am I going to get my needs met? I don't know. I honestly don't know. I figure if we will glorify Him, if we will know it's more than glorify Him, if we will enter into His passion, His eyesight, His vision, some way or other, He'll manage to take care of us. I mean, brothers and sisters, we will meet and we will discuss, and we will search out His intent, and then we will, early in the mornings or in the afternoons or in the evenings with one another, we will pursue a touch with Him toward His intent. And that's where we will pursue our spiritual life. It will be oriented to Him. It will be oriented as coming from Him. It will be toward Him, and if He lives, it will be from Him, for He will respond.

Do you understand anything I've said so far? You sure? You want to talk to me? Have I lost you? This is important to me. Are you understanding? I've heard the illustration of the brother...by the way, I happen to know him...he used this illustration. He went out to the backyard and called his little boy. His intent in calling the little boy was to go to town. That was his intent. He went out to the backyard, and the little boy was in a mud pile. He now had two intents. Take the little boy to town. Clean him up first. So, he brought his little boy in and cleaned him up; got him all pretty and nice. Came back a few minutes later and called the little boy. He didn't answer. The little kid had a toy, and he was very intent on the toy, and he was totally distracted from going to town.

Now that's a really simple illustration, isn't it? The little boy was dirty and needed cleaning before he went to town, then he got distracted by a toy, and that's where his thoughts were. He wasn't going to town. He wasn't thinking of going to town. His father's first intent was to go to town. Can you follow the meaning of that simple, simple illustration, that the father had an intent? Something happened. He did not give up his intent. The church of God gave it up.

We live in a day when it is almost impossible to comprehend how utterly His intent has been lost. How many of you used to be Southern Baptists? Will you raise your hand really high? We got...yeah, we're all over the world, folks. Us Baptists and ex-Baptists, you know, I just don't know of anybody in the world who has so feasted and so fasted for so long on salvation as us Baptists, and we lived for the revivals that came in the third week in August, and we rejoiced in our salvation again and again and again. Boy, that's all we had. That and a lot of law and pressure put on us. Brothers and sisters, that gets so old. I'd say rejoicing in your salvation is pretty good for about four years; it's great for about six months, but it gets old fast when there's nothing else. However, there is something else, and that is the very thing He saved you for.

Now what did he save you for? You think I'm just going to tell you in a sentence in a whole week, maybe a month, two months. Sure, I will. *He saved you for himself.* But oh, that gets so big. It gets so glorious and so wonderful. Why don't you say Praise the Lord? Would you, Scott, get your mouth open a little better in there? Say praise the Lord. Can you folks say anything? You don't have to say Praise the Lord. You can say, "Wow, gee golly." Okay. Then will we do Him an injustice by turning away from the self-centeredness of salvation and what He has done for us, and turn our eyes toward Him on what His passion is and what He wishes? I want you to know, I'm going to stay with this theme. I'm going to stay with this until it runs out of your ears. When this conference is over, we're going to keep meeting in homes. I'm going to keep talking to you. There isn't a reason for the Ekklesia outside of his original intent. The Ekklesia is for Him. It is not Him for us. It's us for Him.

By the way, I left off two points. I'm going to do a little parenthesis here from last night. Don't come here if you want community. A lot of people want community. We will have community, but we're not here for community. Don't come here for community. You will be very disappointed. Community is the worst thing you can do to yourself, one thing. Has anybody ever done it? Say amen. Boy, you are a quiet bunch of people. Would you open the door a little? The other one is, don't come here for spiritual warfare...and one of them I left out.

And I need to tell you something. And this comes back even to the matter of God's purpose. There is a great deal of centeredness on ourselves. Oh no, it's just total. It is a gospel that is self-centric, but boy, I'm always stunned also at an element of the Christian faith that is so taken up with Satan and the need to fight him. I would like you to know that this does not reflect me; I am really not interested in Satan or the devil or Lucifer, and I will not give him credit for anything. But doesn't he do things? Not without permission, he doesn't. And from where does the permission come? It comes from the hand of God. Then why should I fear

him or be taken up with him? And I go a little bit further and say God has already dealt with him. I think the best thing I can do with Satan is ignore him. Thank you. Do you think he appreciates that? I bet it really drives his gizzard.

You don't any of you know this, I'll tell a little worldly story here. Back when this young kid, who's about my age, by the way...he's dead now...first person in my generation to become nationally famous. First person my age to become nationally famous. And he was selling records faster than anybody had ever sold records. Elvis Presley. And he just left all the other great singers, well-known and really good singers...they could actually sing...behind, and one of the old-time greats recorded a song that outsold one of Elvis Presley's, and Elvis Presley was dominating. I think he just did everything that was being sold was Elvis Presley. Anyway, this fella did it. He outsold Elvis Presley. They were afraid nobody could do that anymore. And they threw him a party. They threw this fella a party, and they put this...and everybody came celebrating the fact that he had outsold Elvis Presley's records. They put this great big bear up in the room that said, Elvis who? And I want you to know that that is my attitude toward the devil. "Satan who?" The church will do warfare, but it will not go to seed on warfare. It will go to war when there is war, but it will not make up war, and we are not going to be centered on the devil and we will not fear him, and we will discuss him an absolute minimum. And as far as I'm concerned, I don't ever want to hear anybody say that was really of the devil. For one thing, I've heard too many people say that of other Christians. That man is really of the devil. How do you feel? I tell you, that's the work of the devil. Yeah, and that's not good. We Christians ought not to talk that way. Sure, the devil does a few things, but not without the permission of him who is totally sovereign.

I'm off the track. My parentheses ended. Let me go a little bit further. I want to take a few minutes to just look at a few passages of Scripture you may have never noticed. I want you to watch the reference of the early Christians. I think you all know, for instance, Romans 6, 7, and 8 are the great passages Christians turn to concerning the secret to the victorious Christian life. And chapter 6 is about reckoning yourself dead, dead to sin and alive to God. It is a very difficult concept to get over, which has changed the lives of thousands of Christians when they have recognized that they are not going to be, but are dead to sin, and therefore they reckon themselves dead. But if you live long enough, you find out there are a bunch of people walking around going, I reckon myself dead, I reckon myself dead, I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead. I'm just reckoning this situation; I'm dead to sin. I'm reckoning myself dead to this situation here now. And you know, it's not there.

Again, our orientation is toward a very self-centeredness. Would you like to turn to Romans 6? Well, it's a long, long, long, long, long passage. I'm not going to read it all, but I'm going to read 10, 11, 12, and 13. *For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life that he lives, he lives to God. Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts. And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but presenting yourself unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

There are just some very simple words I would like you to look at. *For the death that the Lord Jesus died, He died to sin. He did it once, and He did it for all of us. But the life that He lives, Christ lives unto God.* Will you say this with me? Christ lives unto God. Christ lives unto God. He lives unto God. Alright? *Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin.* Oh, boy. Praise the Lord. If we can just understand re-radiation. You didn't think this up, being alive unto God. The first person who was alive unto God was Christ. Now, where are you? Say it. You don't have to spend your life reckoning yourself dead. Look at the rest of the verse...*but alive unto God in Christ.* Alive unto God, alive unto God, say it again, alive unto God.

Now, brothers and sisters, we in this fellowship can make a lot of approaches to the Christian life and the living of the Christian life, but I'm telling you, this is what we're going to do. We're not going to look at ourselves dead. We will see Christ's death. You understand? Then we will see Him alive unto God. And we will look at His death. And we'll look at Him alive unto God. And you know what else we're going to do? We're going to look at ourselves in Christ. And it's going to be Christ, not us in Christ, that we will concentrate on. And we are alive unto God in Christ. We are in Christ, who is alive unto God.

Now you want to go a little bit further? We're going to remember what book we read this out of. Now, can anybody follow what I'm saying? If you can, I want you to raise your hand right now and acknowledge it. We're going to remember which book we read this out of. Can you stick your hand up and say, 'I think I know what you mean,' Gene? Okay, we got Judi, we got Arlene, we got Tim, and Arlene's been so good to me, I'm going to embarrass her. Arlene, what book are we reading this out of? Not good enough; the living Word, Christ, but for me, more important.

Alright? See, I really realize that I'm not making my point. It's a book written to a church. Not an individual. And it is not me who is dead. It is not me who is alive to God. It is us: a corporate body of people. And we will go into this, and we will come out of it as a people, not as an individual. We're going to remember where we got these verse references. This was written to a church. Did I disturb you? Anybody offended? Okay. Brothers, we have literally lost the ability to recognize where these precious promises are aimed at.

Okay, let me just go through this again. Even so, consider yourself dead to sin. By the way, did you notice it says in verse 11, 'even so, consider you to be dead to sin?' Did you notice that? That's not what it says. Consider yourself. Consider yourself dead to sin. Say it. Selves. Selves. That's plural. That's to a people who met in Rome. It's not to you. It's not to me. I would hate to leave you to be reckoning yourself dead, alone. And I would even give up the idea if I were you, and I'd start reckoning myself alive unto God with the rest of God's people, and you can enter into that experientially.

Even, let me go, *therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lust. Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those, plural, who are alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Once more, unto God. We will be a fellowship of believers unto God. Unto God.

What does that mean, Gene? Unto Him in what way? What manner? The answer is, I don't know what that means. I honestly, literally cannot tell you what it means 'unto God,' but I can tell you this. It's overwhelming that we will be unto God. Not God unto us. But we will turn and take the heavenly view. We will turn and look through His eyes, we will turn and go into the heavenly realms and see from His view, and we will be unto Him first, and if God be merciful, only. Praise the Lord.

I just want you to know that the purpose of these videos, not the purpose of this meeting, but these videos, is for you to really get serious. If you consider coming into the fellowship of the redeemed, there are enough churches in this world to take care of you and your needs. This one is going to take care, not of God's need, but of His intention. We will be toward Him if He will be merciful to us. If that can grab you by the revelation of His own spirit, then perhaps you want to consider being here, but if that is not at least the willingness of your heart and hopefully, very soon, the revelation in your spirit, I beg you in Christ, don't come this way. There are 35,000 Southern Baptist churches out there just waiting for you to come join them.

I want to make you all a pledge, and then I'm going to break it to show you that I don't have to be consistent. I will seek to never preach a gospel to you that picks verses out of the New Testament and presents a concept. I will always seek to go through from Genesis to Revelation, or if it's the New Testament, through the Gospels, Acts, till you get to Galatians, then Thessalonians, and First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians. I always kind of bogged down after that. Philemon, First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus. First Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy, what did I leave out? First and Second Thessalonians right after Galatians, and oh, after that, Hebrews, after that, probably I jump over to Revelation, or I might stop at John 1. I never had a lot to stop at in the book of James; forgive me, James and I would never have gotten along very well.

But there are three times in the book of Philippians a term, and then it presents itself again in Corinthians, and then one other time in Ephesians, and I'd like to put those words, which are all on the same subject, together, and once more, to lift us out of our self-centeredness. I don't know how to impress you with how self-centered our orientation is. Those who preach salvation almost always preach about what God has done for me. Those who preach a social gospel almost always speak of what you must do for one another. An evangelist is always discussing what you must do for the lost.

And here's the living God out here burning with a passion; the thing that caused him to create the very thing we're standing on. Who will enter into that passion? Forget themselves and leave themselves and enter into that passion. Well, we have this week to find out what that intent is. I want you to look at these verses with me, if you will. You might want to open to Philippians. Philippians 1:5 uses the term 'fellowship of the gospel'. You see that? Alright, look to Philippians 2:1. The fellowship of what? Please, quickly. Philippians 2.1. The fellowship of the Spirit. Okay? Now then, we're going to leave Philippians for just a moment. Would one person hold your Philippians? We'll have one person go over to First Corinthians 1:9 really quickly. Who will do that for me? This brother's doing it right here; it looks like it.

Yes, brother. First Corinthians 1:9. Okay. Fellowship with Christ. We've got three fellowships so far. The fellowship of the gospel. The fellowship of the Spirit. The fellowship of Christ. Are you with me?

Now, those of you who stayed in Philippians, go back, go to Philippians 3:10. The fellowship of what? Fellowship of what? His sufferings. Did Prem talk on this yesterday morning? I mean, this morning. The fellowship of his suffering? Oh, okay. I bet he can. We have four fellowships here. The fellowship of the gospel, the fellowship of the spirit, the fellowship of Christ, the fellowship of suffering. Praise the Lord. I'm going to read one more fellowship. Does anyone have King James? Ephesians 3:9? Would you read it? *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.* Amen. Amen. What fellowship is this? Fellowship of? What is it? It's a mystery.

How many fellowships did we get? Five fellowships. I put them in this order because they are progressive. Five fellowships. The fellowship of the gospel, hot dog. Isn't that a wonderful fellowship? You get saved; you run around with your brothers and sisters. But I want to try to remember. I want to try to remember what book this came out of. That's right, that's right, this was not written to you. He wrote to a church in Philippi, and they'd gotten saved, and they had wonderful fellowship. Can you imagine they'd only been saved for a few days, and they got to wash the backs of Paul and Silas? Well, they told that story for a hundred years, you know they did, and how the jail opened that thing and how wonderful salvation is. Now, did you ever have a fellowship of the gospel? I had the fellowship of the gospel when I first got saved with a bunch of other kids who had just been saved. And everything was a wonder, a marvel to us. Well, thank God we were able to move on.

The second fellowship is the fellowship of the spirit, and I'll be clear, brothers and sisters, that's just number two, and we're already leaving most of the kingdom of God right here. Is that not true? We leave 99% of the folks behind right here. I'm not trying to be exclusive or anything like that, but what in the world does it mean, the fellowship of the Spirit? And you know, I speak on this to brothers and sisters, and they look at me like, Wow. Gee? Wow. I'm going to face this camera. Wow. The fellowship of the Spirit? I'm going to tell you what the fellowship of the Spirit is. It means that within you, put in you by the Lord, is a realm, another dimension that does not belong to this creation and is not created. It is of the very nature of God, who is not created. There is a life form in you. There is a realm in you. There is a person in you who is a life form and a realm. And He is not physical; He is spiritual, and he is Spirit. And he's in you, and there is a place in you that is non-dimensional. But it's in you, and you can go there. Now that's the part everybody gets lost. And you can go there? Yes, you've been invited to walk there. And to live there. And here we see you have even been invited to fellowship there. Is that for you? No. No, brother, you're catching on, that's right. Is that for you? No. No! Who's it for? The church. In Philippi. It's for the church. That's a plural you.

Will you please give up your individualism here for a few minutes? Now, I don't believe most of us are ever going to have the privilege of really knowing a lot of being in our spirit,

walking in our spirit, and fellowshipping our spirit out here as a solo Christian. We don't have that much willpower. And as I've said so many times before, I cast a jaundiced eye at those few people who are successful at this, and I wish they'd go away. Because most of us are weak, and we need the body of Christ. We need the body of Christ. We are not made to make it on our own. No, this is for the body. We go from the fellowship of the gospel to the fellowship of the spirit.

Now, brothers and sisters, once you begin finding this place and going into this place and fellowshipping in this place, you make a marvelous discovery. You truly, genuinely, honestly, really, not theoretically, get to know, livingly, breathingly, actually, you get to know your Lord. I don't mean by salvation. I mean, you get to know Him. You get to sense Him. You get to feel what He's like. You begin to touch His mind and understand Him a little bit; there is a fellowship with Christ. Now, isn't that wonderful? No, it is not wonderful. That is the most dangerous thing that can happen to you.

Out of the fellowship of the gospel comes the fellowship of the Spirit into a fellowship with Christ. You're beginning to leave the realm of the fall, and when you get over the Lord, you begin getting over to God's original intention. You begin to get over to this thing of why God created, and the destiny of man, and the destiny of creation, and the destiny of this age, and the destiny and the purpose of this age, and the destiny and the outcome of the age to come. That's dangerous. And then you get to know him, you get to love him, you get to appreciate him, and he does the worst thing in the world; he's just unfair. You just fall in love with him, you get to know him, it's wonderful, and what happens? Alright, say it. You move into the fellowship of his suffering, and we're going to talk about that some more, too. Brother Prem, you have my permission to talk about suffering all you want to here, brother.

I have to tell you, saints, I'm not good at suffering. Prem and I were saved in the same year. Did you know that? Do you remember what month you got saved, Prem? Okay. About five weeks later, on July 17th, about three in the afternoon. What year was that? 1951? Oh, wait a minute, Prem, that I'm wrong. I was saved in 1950. I've known the Lord longer than you have. No, in the summer of 1951, I was on my way to Europe to study theology. See how far ahead of Brother Prem I am? (laughter) I was saved in July of 50. He was saved in June of 51. Okay, we're about the same age in the Lord. Prem is 10 years older than I am; he looks years younger.

Prem, God has given you a marvelous ability to accept suffering. I've never seen anything like it. I also want you to know, I'll just tell you all this story. By the time Prem was saved, I could tell you the population of Nepal and the fact that it was one of the four or five nations in the world that never had the gospel preached. And, however, in five or ten years, I'd pick up a new mission book just to see if there'd be any progress made somewhere I didn't know about, and in about 1967 to 1970, I don't know when. In 1974 or 1975, I picked up a mission book. History of World Missions, and I was turning to the unevangelized nations of the world because I've always kept up with them, and I turned to Nepal, and there were three sentences about some man who had brought the gospel to Nepal, and this is what it said about him. *He rejoices in his suffering for Christ.* Well, I'll tell you two things.

One, I was jealous. And secondly, I wanted to meet him, and I did. I don't suffer well. I bellyache all the way through. I know I'm the only one in the room like that. I have asked the Lord to give me a greater grace, to suffer with greater grace. I want to look beautiful when I suffer. Man, I don't. Do you think that God loves me anyway? I get discouraged. I get down. I don't get real down. I don't get down like I'm going to quit. I get down like I wish this would go away. I hurt. I cry. And I get discouraged. But I gave my Lord permission to work in my life. And then you know what I found out? I found out in the Philippines one summer that He wouldn't take it back. I gave Him permission one day, and I asked him to take it back. I didn't mean it; I was only kidding. I want out of this. That was in 1964 or 65, and I learned that that doesn't get any higher than the ceiling. At least not in my life, and He's never let go. But I wouldn't be worth a toot if the Lord did not enter suffering into my life.

There's only one place to suffer, brothers. In Christ, in the church. I cannot tell you when that will come, and I would like to tell you there is a definite order of fellowshiping in the gospel, fellowshiping in the spirit, fellowshiping in Christ, fellowshiping in suffering, in His suffering, and fellowshiping in the mystery. But that suffering part moves around an awful lot. It can show up anywhere. We will never get beyond fellowshiping in the gospel, nor in our spirit, nor fellowshiping with Christ. But if you fellowship in Christ, then you really give Him your life. And you make your life unto Him. If you dedicate, consecrate, and give your life unto Him, you have granted him permission to enter you into the fellowship of suffering. And I will add another word. It gets hellish, but you have granted Him that.

And I'm not sure that we, especially those who minister the holy things of God, I am not sure that we can continue serving Him without his continually bringing us into suffering. We have to be made low again and again and again. I will speak for myself, I know I'm still loved and I'm still His when I'm still under the gun, and I'm still in the fellowship of his suffering. But I don't ask you to come this way. You people watching this on television, this gets really romantic. Boy, I'm going to learn; I've suffered. Hot dog. I'm going to be one of those who gives himself to the Lord. No, it's not to the Lord. It's to the Lord, unto God, in his eternal intent. That's when it really gets dangerous. And none of us ever gets what we think we're going to get. I told you about the brother in Quebec who really prayed that God would just really show him this and show him that, and he'd give himself to God for anything. And then his pastor raked him over the coals for fellowshiping with me, and he could not stand being socially outcast. Well, brother, that's a small thing.

Let me go on. All of this moves toward one thing. Do you understand that before God ever created anything, there was a mystery hidden in Him? Before there was an angel, before there was an earth, before there was a heaven; in some ways, even before there was an eternity, because God had to make room for eternity. There was a time when there was simply God, and He was all. That far back, there was a mystery hidden in God.

Now we can spend the rest of our lives here in this town getting to know the Lord on many levels, but I intend to keep you to one thing, and one thing only, to His eternal intent, that which is far outside the reaches of redemption, and to keep you headed for, committed to, involved in, saturated with your life unto the mystery hidden in God. Brothers and sisters,

that's about all you're going to get out of me. If you want to study in the bearish tales of Revelation and the dragon's tooth in Ezekiel and the lion's tail in Ezekiel, you'd better go somewhere else; forget me. Brothers and sisters, the Church of Jesus Christ is perfectly content to let the mystery remain a mystery. If I were to ask in this room right now, What is the mystery, I believe I would get a dozen different answers and a whole lot of blank stares. You know what the mystery is? I'm going to tell you something, brothers: it can't be told in one sentence. It is so grand, and it is so glorious, and it is so wonderful that it is beyond putting into a sentence. If you do that, you do a terrible injustice.

You know, brothers and sisters, I'll never be part of a movement. I'm going to live and die. Probably the greatest thing I will have ever done on earth is marry my wife. It is so important that we *be*. Churches have so many purposes; this, that, and the other. How about a church that will just *be*? For Him, to Him, through Him, in Him; committed to the heartbeat of God's own passion. Gene, don't we have other things to do? Yeah, but let's take care of the big thing and see what happens. We can let the interdenominational organizations concentrate on this and this and that. I would like to concentrate on God's eternal purpose. If we begin there, we are in the right center. If we do not begin there, no matter where we go from that point, we will be off course. Do you understand? It'll be like Copernicus trying to figure out the motion of the stars with the Earth as its center. Then we will begin with God's intent, which is far outside the realms of redemption and outside of your needs and mine. Not His need; His intent. His purpose in creation, before creation, and after creation.

I'm going to tell you a story I don't think I've ever shared with anybody. I believe it was 1963, and the Lord had just opened my eyes to so much. He showed me His church. I mean, He showed me the Ecclesia; what she really was. Do you notice that I said 'she,' not 'it'? This beautiful girl, the bride of Christ. It was a revelation. It was from God. I was a young man, very zealous. I was an evangelist, but I was giving that up. I had never seen an Ecclesia. As far as I was concerned, there wasn't one, and I didn't know what to do about that either, by the way. There was a lady who had lived in China, had seen the Little Flock and had been part of it, and had come home and shared what she knew of Christ with a tiny little group of people in 1945. They had no leader. They had no help. They were about four families. They were in the town of Louisville, Kentucky. And I went there.

I hope I'm not misunderstood. I'm not holding this up as the way it ought to be. I doubt those 4 or 5 families had led anybody to the Lord in 10 or 15 years. I don't know that they had done anything since 1945, except meet. They had nobody to lead them. They're very simple people, but they'd seen something, and they had a sense that they ought to stand for God's purpose on this earth.

They will never know how important they are or were. They didn't lead anybody to the Lord; they didn't do any great things. They were not big numbers. They only had one thing in their favor: they existed. Nothing else. Simple; not organized. Took care of one another. Loved one another and knew why they existed. They existed for Him, and unto Him there were several holiest, most devout, dearest people I ever met. I took the torch from those people for my country. America.

They went under a division a few years later. It's what killed Beta Shirek. That was her home. She was the one who came home from China. If I had never seen that little group of people, I would have never understood so much of what it *simply means to be*; to exist, against all hell, to just be for Him.

I will not preach to you in this town some great, glorious gospel, or promise you all sorts of wonderful things if you follow him and live unto him and live wholly for his purpose. I promise you nothing for yourself. But maybe when you're old, old people, and folks are wondering why in the world you're still meeting here, and you've never done a blooming thing, maybe some young 32-year-old kid will come by and take the torch, and take it to Afghanistan, or Africa, or South America, or Canada, or Romania, or somewhere...or America. It's going to need all the help it can get.

I have a question. Last night, I asked you if you brothers were willing to live here and never become a leader or an elder, or a deacon. I'm asking you if you're willing to come here and never be anything other than a testimony. Now I'm not saying that's what I want to come; I'd love to see the place have a thousand folks; I'd like to see you turn upside down and land upside down. But I know where the heart of God is. The heart of God wills for something that you can give Him if you're only 15 in number. It ain't the size, saints. It's what you are, and I don't mean what you are by good living or how nice you are. But I mean in what you live unto. To live unto Him. To live unto Him. To your God. To God the Father. To grasp something of what went on in eternity past in the Trinity. And for that to be extended here on this earth, if you don't know what I'm talking about, come back tomorrow night.

To enter into the fellowship of the mystery and simply bull-headedly and narrow-mindedly and stubbornly sit here on this earth and stand for His purpose against all hell and the will and anything else that can be thrown at you. This satisfies the heart of God: to be part of his eternal purpose. That's why I'm in this town, and you should not be here for any other reason. I call you by name. Jeff. Old, gray-headed, bald, and fat. What did y'all do here, Jeff? Not much. How many were you when you started? Fifteen. How many are you now? Sixteen. What have you been doing? Brother, we existed. We were on this earth for Him and for nothing else. We touched Him. We knew Him. We grasped Him. We fellowshiped, and we entered into His prayer, into His intent, into His purpose. We lived it out as best we could by the life He gave us to live it by.

I don't ask you to consider anything else but this, and I ask you to not be here unless it's for the rest of your life. That God may call you into another city, but it ought to be out of this church. Do you understand? Out of this fellowship, not because you left and got mad. But when you live and when you die, it should be unto Him, unto His purpose, and nothing else. Brothers and sisters, give this some very serious consideration, and please don't come this way if you've got anything else in your heart.

Amen. Praise the Lord. Don't just sit there.