

(Continued from Part 1)

Let me finish the story of how we got our seminaries, and we ought not to have them, and they are destructive, and they are not good, and they are not helpful. I know, I've been through one. It took me four or five years to recover from going to a seminary. Oh, listen, it's hard to get that stuff out of your head, and it's all basically Aristotelian and Platonic. I sat there for four years, and I learned more and more about less and less until I knew everything about nothing. I know you heard that statement, but I look over my transcript, and I think, good grief, when did we ever get to the point? And we never did.

The Church of Jesus Christ and His people have taught me what I know. I did not learn what I got from a seminary. The Lord Jesus, in me, has taught me. And the church has taught me; His people have taught me. The brothers who have gone before me have taught me. I want to finish the story because I think this is funny, even though it's a little embarrassing. They (the Catholic Church) made two decisions. They had two problems: corrupt people, corrupt clergy, and an ignorant, untrained clergy. So, they started the seminaries. That still left the problem of corruption and immorality. And they came up with the source of why the Roman Catholic Church had become so corrupt during the Renaissance, prior to the Reformation. It was all those nude statues. That's what they figured it was. It was all those nude statues. So they commissioned men to go out all over Europe with plaster of Paris. And if you've ever been to Europe and gone to the museums, you find the well-placed fig leaf, which was to cover up the source of the immorality and the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. Every time I think of a seminary or a Bible school, I always think of that fig leaf. It's not dealing with the problem, saints.

And so, we get up on Sunday morning, get dressed really pretty, and have a fight with our husband, our wife, and our children trying to get to church. We need to be in church by the time we get there because we've sinned against everybody in the family. (laughter) We put our kids in this little bitty, all this pretty little clothing, and we get our Bible, and we walk in there with this big smile, and we subject our children to Sunday school. I tell you, the two things that I could think of that would help us more than anything else on this earth would be to get rid of all the Sunday schools...three things...burn down all the church buildings and shoot all the preachers. Well, while I'm at it, can I take one more sacred cow and plug him good? I think a sermon...the sermon, the Sunday morning church service, good grief alive, I was about to leave out the main one.

Have you ever noticed that, whether you've been Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Pentecostal, we all basically have the same order of worship? You could not tell the difference if you were a heathen and had never been to them. Do you know where the Sunday morning order of service came from? Well, it was invented in 1540 by John Calvin, and today, I sat in seminary classes and had my seminary professors prove to me that the Sunday morning church ritual was in the New Testament. It was invented by John Calvin, and he wasn't thinking of the Bible one bit. He was putting together a ritual for his church in

Geneva, and it has pervaded the entire Christian world. As far as I'm concerned, it is the most boring thing ever perpetrated on the human race. I mean that. I have tried to slip that into every book I've written in some way or other. I think the Sunday morning church service is the most boring thing ever invented by the mind of man. Now, if you want to do something interesting on Sunday morning that's a little more interesting than church, go down into the basement, put your clothes in the dryer, pull up a chair, and watch them spin-dry for an hour. It is not as dull as a Sunday morning church service. Will we live long enough to see these things cracked open?

Well, I'm going to take one more final jab here before I go to point two. I hope you won't be offended. I really am aware that there were two ways this was done in the New Testament, and I honor both of them, but I'm going to stand for one of them for the simple reason that it's not practiced; the other one is. There are two ways for the ministry to be carried on. I'm talking about men called of God who minister. One of them is by receiving income from the fellowship of believers. Not salary, but income. That's the "Peterian way", that's the way Peter did it. But there is also a Paulinian way, the way Paul did it. When I think of Barnabas and Paul going down to catch a boat to Cyprus on their first church-planting voyage...not a missionary journey...we haven't got time to talk about where missionaries came from. They didn't come out of the New Testament. Those two men...I want you to look over here. Here are a million Jews in the whole world; they've got 12 apostles and hundreds of churches. And here, for the rest of the population of the world, us heathen, us uncircumcised and unwashed, there are probably...the population of the world at that time was somewhere between 75 million and 150 million, and God sent only two men to them.

Now, those of you who are urgent to get the world converted—and we don't have time to go into where soul winning, and evangelism came from either—that is not New Testament either; it all has its origins historically, accidentally, and in tradition. But anyhow, when those two men went out, can you and I conceive the truth that they were not paid? That they worked throughout their entire lives for a living. Which means those two men, with somewhere between 75 and 100 million people to convert...those two men were not full-time workers, and they were not part-time workers. They were spare-time workers. Paul of Tarsus worked for a living.

When I left the religious system in 1963, I must tell you why I left the religious system, for two reasons. One very profound reason: because I was bored stiff going to church, and the other one was even more spiritual. I decided to give it up for Lent. When I left the religious system, I decided...and determined...I would go the Paulinian way. And I made a discovery: you don't get a lot done going in that direction, but I am determined, brothers and sisters, to boast that I have not been paid as a minister of the gospel since I left the religious system. I became a schoolteacher and worked as one until just recently, and my health broke to the point that I could not teach anymore.

You ask, Where are you getting your income today? My wife now works for a living. I won't get much done in my lifetime. I will not do much, but I worked for a living. And you know

how much you've suffered as Christians since you left the religious system? You know what you've been through? You remember? You've been... you've been... You walk right through the northeast corner of hell, that's what you've done. Say it is true; is it not? There is suffering and agony out here, so propitious that most of us can hardly comprehend it. I taught school 40 hours a week, and I raised up the house of God 40 hours a week, and we went right through the jaws of hell just like you have. All I want to tell you is, it can be done. The only other thing I want to say to you is that I think salaries are the most corrupting and debilitating thing we could ever do to the ministry. Oh, wow. I got some amens to that one. These guys must be living by faith, eh? Well, praise the Lord.

Now I'm going to take a shot at living by faith. I hate to do this to you, brothers, but there are no scriptural grounds for living by faith. Either the church supplies you, or you work for a living; you don't live by faith. Living by faith was invented by a man who's supposed to have a great place in the history of Christianity, and I'm going to shoot him right now, cold-blooded, and say that was a fraud. Now, do you know who I'm talking about? Boy, I'd better think up his name fast. His name has slipped my mind, but he's from England, and he had orphanages. George Mueller coined the term "living by faith." That...I'm sorry...I know you all think George Mueller is the greatest thing since peanut butter and sliced bread. George Mueller had a problem. George Mueller said, "We never mention money, and we live by faith."

And so, he got... and he's the guy who invented this...he got his orphanage choir, and he went all over England, going into churches with his little orphans back there behind him, singing, telling churches from one end of England to the other, "We do not solicit money," and he's had all these great stories to tell. This was a corrupting influence that entered the church of the living God. We're still doing this years later: "We live by faith. We don't mention money. Now our little choir is going to sing, and let me tell you all the wonderful ways God provided for us." And the little kids got up there and sang. Little tears were coming down their eyes, mainly because they needed to go to the bathroom, and so was born on this earth "living by faith." Well, let the church of God take care of you or work for a living, but stop your hitting. Say amen. Y'all still here? This is part of our evangelical mindset that needs a really good cleaning, brother.

I have point one. You want me to quit? You want me to go to number two? Stand up. We're going to sing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Sit down; let's take some more. We have some contributions to make that I think are monumental, and we're not making them. And I have to tell you, I'm promoting right now...I'm not hitting...I'm promoting. If there is anything that you and I could do that no one seems to have ever thought of, I sure would like to talk you into doing this. I'm not going to live long enough to do it, and it needs to be done so desperately.

There is something so simple that we could do, that if it had been done, if somebody had handed me this particular book when I was a young Christian, I would have left the organized church. I would even go on to say this: what I'm about to tell you, if it were done

and began to be accepted, as simple a thing as it is, I think it would bring down the organized church. I think it would bring it down. Now what in the world, Gene, could you possibly be talking about? Have you ever wondered how we got the order of the books in the New Testament? It is the most fouled-up conglomeration. It makes absolutely no sense, and no one seems to care, and no one ever thinks about it. I'd like to suggest this for the New Testament. I suggest that someone publish a New Testament that combines Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into one book, so you don't have to keep reading the whole story over again. I have a book in my library that I have read more than any other book, maybe all the other books combined. It's called *The Life of Christ in Stereo*. Have you ever seen or heard of it? It's Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all combined as one, with not a single word left out of any of them. It's all put together. It's really beautiful. It's a masterpiece. It's a masterful work.

What if we had a New Testament that combined Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into one book, with the book of Acts attached, and the story...you could read it all the way through, right up to the last chapter of Acts. Then what if we rearranged the New Testament book epistles in the order they were written? Have you ever heard, "I'm going to sit down and read the New Testament through. I'm going to find out what God's doing. I want to know what happened in the first century." That is the stupidest thing on earth you can do. You are going to get to the epistles, and you're going to find Paul in Corinth writing to a church in Rome, and you're going to ask yourself, where did Paul come from? What's Corinth, and why is he writing to Rome? This is over halfway through his ministry. Then we go to I and II Corinthians, which were written before the book of Romans, and Paul is somewhere else writing to the Corinthians. When we get through reading those, we go to the book of Galatians, and he's down in Antioch writing to four churches in Galatia. Where in the world is this? We've got him in Rome, we've got him in Corinth, we've got him in Antioch. He's all over the place.

I would recommend that you take the epistles and put them in their chronological order and read them, and it will shake you to your core because there's enough of the story of the first-century church in there to blow you right out of a Baptist pew. I would like to see a New Testament combining Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then you're reading along to Acts, and just a little note right across the middle of the page: "It was at this point Paul wrote the first piece of literature ever penned. See the epistles, book number one, Galatians." And you could stop right there and go over to the first book among the epistles, the letters, and the first book would be *Galatians*, and you would read what they went through. Then you'd be reading a little bit further, and a little strip right across the middle of the book of Acts is, "At this point Paul wrote to the Thessalonians." You'd go back over and read Thessalonians. When you got through, you'd be outside the organized church. You would be. It is only the chaos of the New Testament arrangement of the letters that keeps us from seeing a clear picture of what the church in the first century was like. I was taught in the seminary through the New Testament as it was arranged; I never had the foggiest idea of what the church in the first century looked like. Do you know where we got this arrangement? For pity's sake.

There was a young man. He was 30 years old and teaching Augustine's systematic theology at the seminary of action, the University of Wittenberg. His name was Martin Luther, and he had a syllabus on doctrine, and to him, if you were going to teach doctrine, the first and best book on doctrine was Romans. The second-best book on doctrine was Corinthians, and the third one was Galatians. And when he wrote the New Testament, he put the New Testament in the order of his syllabus in dogmatic theology, and there has never been a publication of a Bible or a commentary, but what has been arranged in the order Martin Luther put it in, and that's some kind of insanity. It is that our minds could be so glued to something so chaotic and never even think about it.

I'd like to see a commentary on the New Testament put together in chronological order. I'd like to see the New Testament arranged chronologically. It would be one of the greatest contributions we could make. Brothers, it would show that we really do have a right to be here. There are no grounds for pastors. There are no grounds for church buildings. There is no ground for a Sunday morning ritual. There are no grounds for the sermon. There are no grounds for the pulpit nor the pew. There are no grounds for Bible schools. We have a right to be here, and we could make a contribution by showing the rest of the Christian family we've got a right to be here as far as the New Testament is concerned, too. I wish somebody would put that Bible in our chair. We need that contribution.

Now, the second thing is very, very close to my heart, and you're not going to care one bit about this, but it means everything in the world to me. Have you ever noticed that we Christians, especially us outside of the organized church, do you notice that we've got more kooks out here than they have? Say amen. And somewhere or other, they become our leaders. If I have any indictment of those of us outside the organized church, it is simply that we do not do our homework. We do not do our homework. We pick up whatever somebody else we loved and was impressed with, we pick up what he says, and we don't go back to really challenge a great deal of the garbage we pick up along the way. One of the biggest problems we have is that every time we get into a crisis in our churches and fellowships, we start digging through the New Testament for an answer and come up with a verse. And that, my dear brothers and sisters, is not where you start. Maybe that's where you finish, or you're in the middle, but that's not where you start, and I think we're doing great damage by coming up with verses and saying, "See, God said," and in the first century they so-and-so. We get more doctrines, and we get more teachings out of weaving verses together. You can prove anything in the world by weaving verses together. Say amen. In fact, you could do the absolute... I believe it would be possible that you could take the New Testament and prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that God Himself was an atheist. In other words, I'm telling you there isn't anything you can't prove by the New Testament. Amen. Thank you, brothers. I really appreciate that. I'm glad to know you have a whit.

Strangely enough, in science, you have to present a model for anything you do. I'm a schoolteacher by trade. We deal with models all the time. If you're going to propose something, you've got to create a model. You know the big battle between creationists and evolutionists: both create their models, take them apart, and improve on them. In science

and mathematics, everybody starts with a model, and it is an enormous way to prove or disprove who or what you believe, or anything like that. And I cannot believe that I'm standing here in the year 1990...now, that's nineteen hundred and ninety years...that's nineteen hundred and sixty years of Christian history, and there has never been a model built of the first-century church.

Now, okay, I'm going to rush to tell you: I'm building one (a model). You can get Volume 1, Revolution, by Gene Edwards, but there are also Volumes 2, 3, and 4, and that's one reason I'm taking off the next two years. I've got to finish it. But if I were in a place where I could, I would pass a federal law that said every preacher, before he started ministering, seriously, would have to present his model, and that model would be in the form of the story of the church from its beginning to its end. You could sit down and read it, and you could find out what that man believed the New Testament church looked like, because he's going to constantly be pulling verses out on you, and changing your life on the basis of verses that cannot be forced into that model. Did you follow that?

Oh, brothers, the hour is late. The world is wicked. And what we've got to do is move up on a mountain, and the sisters have got to wear long dresses and stop wearing lipstick, and the brothers have got to grow beards and put on coveralls, and we're all going up to the mountains to protect our kids, and we're going to live on organic carrots. You build a model of the first-century church and try to stick that in the middle of it. Do you understand that it cannot be done? That the church of the living God was right down in the middle of the stink and the mess.

Hmmm...how about this one? I've got this verse in Thessalonians, and I've got this verse in Hebrews, and I've got this verse in such and such and so and so...I hope I get out of here alive. I'm picking on y'all in case you don't notice. I'll warn you ahead of time. I think it's safe to here; I think you may have outgrown one of the things that you may or may not have been guilty of. And so, I got all these little verses that say that I'm supposed to be in submission to, and boy, you end up with a situation where an elder calls you at three o'clock in the morning and tells you to wash his car, and you have to be submissive. You can do that with verses, but you can't put that in a model of the first-century church. It won't hold. It absolutely will not hold. It won't hold.

Let me tell you something really interesting. This ought to burn your toast. The book of Galatians, written by an apostle, a church planter, is the first book in the New Testament. It's written to an entire church, four of them, in big trouble, huge trouble; trouble so bad that those churches are on the verge of total collapse. And there is no reference to an elder or any other leader in that letter. The next-oldest books in the New Testament are 1 and 2 Thessalonians... and those churches were premillennial, by the way. The churches in Galatians were legalists. The 1 and 2 Thessalonians are written to a church that's into premillennialism. Real bad. Bad eschatology. The church is in chaos. People are not working; they're about to go up a hill and wait for the Lord's return. There is not a single reference in 1st or 2nd Thessalonians to an elder or to a specific type of leader. Not one.

In 1st and 2nd Corinthians, this is downright out-and-out chaos. This is anarchy. I mean, this church is in big trouble. You got adultery, you got incest, you've got people getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. It couldn't get any worse. 1st and 2nd Corinthians make absolutely no reference to an elder...I don't think it even has anything in there about submission—nothing about leaders whatsoever.

The book of Romans comes next. There is not one reference in there. There are the names of about 30 or 40 believers, and there is not one reference to an elder or a leader. How are you doing back there, brother? There is no reference to an elder in any of Paul's writings that he wrote to churches. Not one. You find it in the book of Acts, and you find it in the letters he wrote to young apostolates he was raising up. You don't find it in any of his letters, and every letter he wrote was to a church in crisis.

Brothers and sisters, in his mind, the church was more important than leaders, and he saw the church as able to handle its own problems. Why, in the name of common sense, don't we ask men to present their models themselves so we can know what in the world they believe? And when they come back and play this verse game on us, we can say to them, 'Alright, expand your model and put it in there.' It won't fit. Most of the things we come up with when the church is in crisis, out of a verse, cannot fit in a model. It will only fit in our Aristotelian dialectic logic, given to us through the mind of Western man; it is not viable in the New Testament scenario. I know you didn't understand that sentence, but it doesn't matter.

I'm going to present a model to the kingdom of God, and, as far as I know, it uses virtually every piece of information available in this day and age. I don't present it as the final word. I present it as the first word. And yeah, I'd like for everybody to read it. I'd like you to challenge me, and I'd like you to write a better one. But brother, have one. Otherwise, your ministry will be like this forever, and you will be leading God's people based on verses rather than on the beautiful, incredibly beautiful, overall panoramic story of the first-century church. So many things come into focus. I wish we used models. You have a right to know what the first-century church looked like and hold that up over against all those verses you get bombarded with.

I think I've said there are two contributions we could make here. The third one I would like to say is that I believe it is our duty and responsibility. I wish somebody would do this. I'd like not to have to do it. I don't want to do it, but we really need a really good history. Beginning with the Priscillians in 386A.D., we need a history of the Christian faith outside the organized church because it's the only history of the church there is. The rest of it is just a bunch of foolishness. Those people stood for something, and we need to see their story. We shouldn't have to start over in every generation. I don't know all that much about the beginning of your group. I want you to know that none of us in any work we're doing, none of us at this moment, have available what we need to know about brothers and sisters who went before us. They learned a lot, and they've got a lot to give us, and we can avoid a lot of mistakes if somebody would go out there and put together...if we would do our homework

on who our forefathers were, we stand on the shoulders of the work of God in the past. We need that; we really need it badly. And by the way, it would do away with half of the need for seminaries.

Okay, I've now finished point two. I'm going to ask you, I'm sure I've offended somebody out here, and I've probably got someone terribly confused. I'm going to stop for a question, but you'd better really have a question here, and then I'm going to go to point three. You got something you want to ask really quickly, clarify? I'm crazy. I'll let the audience talk to me, even in the middle of something like this. Nothing? You're all clear then. Oh, boy. I believe that. Okay. These brothers will clean up my mess after this is over. I will be leaving here this afternoon, getting out as fast as I can.

I think this third one may hurt a little bit. If it's going to hurt you, it's going to hurt me because I've made some of these mistakes. When I left the organized church, I had to find somebody to point me in the right direction and help me out. By the way, I wrote my model when I was 29 years old; I completed it, and I have never, never, from that day forward, had to have some new direction in my life. Not one day, not one minute. What the first century was, and it was, was by the Holy Spirit, and I'm not talking about organization here; I'm talking about what God does organically. In each situation, it's different, but it is organic. It is natural to the nature of God, and there is a pattern in the nature of God. As surely as God raised up His Son, Jesus Christ, that was a natural, organic expression of God. That natural organic expression did not radically change throughout the New Testament. Adapted, a little different, in each place, but essentially the same.

Not that we would ever organize. The church is not an organization. The church is a beautiful girl. She's a woman, and she ought to be treated as a living human being. I was mentioning evangelism here... this is just an insert; it is not any particular point. Again, our evangelical Western North American mindset is that we need to evangelize, and this and that and the other. We've got all those verses thrown at us. Brothers and sisters, the first-century church, I don't care what verse you throw at me, or anyone throws at you, the first-century church grew basically and primarily out of the beauty of that girl. The greatest single magnetic drawing power that we have is that girl. Think about it: she's what drew you. You came here because of her beauty. Is that not true? That's our greatest single offering to the world. She is our evangelism, and He is her center. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Well, let me tell you some of the things that got us off center. I really hope you'll be gracious enough not to throw anything at me if I hit a nerve here. I'm doing this. I'm sweet. I'm a kind, gentle person. Trust me, I'm loving and gentle and kind, and I'm not one of these bitter and all that stuff...and if you believe this, I've got a bridge I can sell you. (laughter) I'm really doing this as tenderly as I can, but again, we haven't done our homework. Something very tragic happened regarding Christians who came out of the organized church back around 1800 A.D. In fact, I can tell you exactly when it was. It was 1790, and there has been a corrupting influence among us from that time on that was never true of the church outside the organized church before then. Brothers, we have got to pull loose of this thing, or we...

we are corrupting our influence, and we are losing our place in church history by this corruption, and it is the corruption of gimmicks.

Now, I'm going to talk to you about something you're not familiar with. Please listen to me, and I'm going to ask you to handle this before God. And a lot of this is going to shock you, but it's true. I've had to face this in my own life because, when I left the organized church, I went to others for that torch. I wanted to carry that torch. I bloody well meant to carry that torch. I knew what I was doing, and I had something to say, and I went back to learn what I could learn, both from history and from those who lived in this day who had come out. But they had not done their homework, and we fall...and I fell...into a lot of traps. I'm going to tell you what some of them are.

Are y'all still awake? Okay. In 1790 ... Oh, let me get off the subject here. Have you ever noticed that if there's an earthquake in China or a couple of hundred thousand people die of starvation in India? We don't pay any attention, but if there's an earth tremor in England or the United States, then the Lord's coming back. If there is not a depression, but a mild recession, then the end of the world is imminent if it happens in the United States. Do you notice that? Well, it's very, very old. It's very colonial. It's part of our...it's what the British gave to us in their island arrogance. It's part of our mind as an American. It's just that way. We don't care what happens in China or any other country. Man... let a Roman Catholic run for president, and it's the end of the world. We've really got a lot of immature saints out here. As I said, this is where all the kooks are...right up here on this platform. You have to be a little crazy to do this.

In 1790, the French were in the midst of a revolution that was scaring the throne and the British to... just beyond words. Britain was panicked out, and the Christians were panicked out, and it was at this time that two separate streams began to grow up. I'm going to call them by their historical names, even though you may wish to run hard to say you're not either one of them. The Pentecostal stream and the Fundamentalist stream were being born. At that very moment, they were literally coming into existence, and both of them reached out and got hold of a mindset, and sometimes the two of them have this wedding of monsters. You put fundamentalism and Pentecostalism together...man, that is a monstrosity. It can't really be done. You can't put a thinker and a feeler in one body.

So, the evangelical Christians of Great Britain began interpreting. There was a great deal of eschatology at that time, and a lot of things were born that we do today. I want to tell you where they are and where they went. In 1790, a group of believers in England, for the first time, made the statement... what God wants to do in this late dark hour, right before Great Britain goes into chaos, and we all start killing one another, and the Lord is coming back. And that was their feeling, and it was strong...

(Continued in Part 3)