

(Continued from Part 2)

...is that we've got to see the recovery of the gifts, and it began in 1790, and it was very, very effective. Preachers are not fools, hucksters, yes. Fools, no. Are we ever going to recover from today? And so, some of these preachers saw that that worked mightily well over there. There were thousands of people in there, recovering the gifts. So, if it works for them, it'll work for us. So, by 1810, it was the fad of a half-dozen groups: what we need is the recovery of the gifts. They got to the United States, and it blossomed in the 1800s. It rekindled itself in the 1920s. It rose again in 1948, and I was personally there when it happened as a young teenager. Then again, when the Jesus movement came in...boy...I was right in the middle of that thing. I remember the day that men my age began to preach, "What God is doing in this day is recovering the gifts." Now, brothers and sisters, I'm sorry, but that's 200 years now. By the time it got to 1970, it was a tool in the hands of corrupt men who were trying to put together movements, and they had not done their homework. They had picked it up from somebody else. They thought it really was the age for the recovery of the gifts. It was 200 years old, and it was worn out. If God can't recover gifts in 200 years, He's not a very big God. I watched thousands and thousands of young people lose their Christian testimony, their experience, and everything else on something that was ancient as a gimmick and a tool that has been used by at least 200 separate movements.

Now, that's hard to take, but it is a historical fact, and you can't budge it. That's number one. Here's number two. These are some of the things we need to do some house cleaning on. "Gene, don't you believe in the gifts?" Yeah, I believe...not in the fivefold...is it fourfold, or fivefold? What do y'all do with her? Fivefold? Hmm. I counted 17 of them; I believe in the 17-fold gifts. (laughter) My point is that it was used to draw people to a movement, and it became the central purpose of that movement. Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the center of our movement. Corruptly motivating God's people and drawing them in for reasons that are outside of Christ. Recovering the gifts is not a motive to bring men and women together. Christ is our only motive. We begin with Christ. We center on Christ. We end with Christ, and the rest will take care of itself. The gifts are organic to our species as surely as my nose is organic to Homo sapiens. The gifts will come when Jesus Christ is made central, supreme, and the living experience of our lives.

We don't need apostles. We don't need gifts. We don't even need the Church of the Living God. Put a group of people in the middle of the Living God. Put them in God in eternity. They will love and desire the church because it is part of God's nature to desire the church. They will come together. They will fellowship around Him, and out of it will organically come everything that you ever heard or dreamed or saw or believed or read about in the New Testament. I did not get down in front of my baby's baby bed and pray for ears for my kids. They come with ears. Elders are organic to the species; they are not made nor chosen by man. Workers are organically part of our species. You don't make them; they emerge out of the body. Leave the church alone to let the Lord Jesus Christ be the intimate, encountering, living, real experience of your life, and all else will come.

Corrupting element number two. I don't know if you all have ever even heard of this, used it, or what, but I'm speaking from experience and observation. This guy came right in the middle of the Jesus movement to us. And I was, at that time, very ignorant of some of the things that people do in the fundamentalist and Pentecostal realm. It was very cold one night, oh, it was cold, and I didn't have on a coat. He was walking along beside me, and here came this spiel. "Now, Brother Gene, we've heard about you, and we've been praying for you, and we love you, brother. And oh, we feel that these are the last times. And God wants us all to be one. And so, brothers, let us be one. It's the last hour. Things are horrible, and it's time for God's people to become part of the prayer to be one. So, we're getting together to be one." Well, brothers and sisters, that man was putting together a movement under the guise of oneness...and I have been one with you ever since Jesus Christ ascended. I have oneness with you. We sat down on a bus stop bench, and he said, "And Gene, we need the restoration of the gifts. What's your gift?" I was freezing to death. I was bored stiff, and I jumped up and said, "Brother, I don't know what my gift is. I never have known; I never will. Can we go back in where it's warm?" And that's the closest I ever got to being hooked into oneness and gifts.

Alright, let's get a little closer. This one's going to be a little painful. I'm going to make the same point over and over again. Brothers, I held a book in my hands and didn't know how important it was. I didn't see who published it. I didn't see who wrote it, and I didn't read it, but it was written before 1800. It was the first book ever written on the concept of the overcomer, and it spread throughout England in the early 1800s, even before the Brethren rose. And it captured England. England was going to go into the fiery pits of a French-type revolution. People were going to have their heads sliced off, this, that, and the other. Everybody in England was expecting the Lord's return, and it was the day of the overcomers. And it worked. As I said, we preachers are not stupid. We may be hucksters, but we're not stupid, and the same thing happened with the overcomers that occurred with the concept of the restoration of the gifts. It worked, and just about every group that there was, including Baptists and Congregationalists...I have heard Southern Baptists get up and preach on the overcomer, and the overcomer is somebody who moves his letter. "Now, would those of you who are going to move your letter, please come forward and be overcomers." Are there any Southern Baptists here? Ex-Southern Baptists? Do you remember what you used to say to get people to move their letters? You'd promise them heaven and threaten them with hell if they didn't move their letter. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? Moving your letter from one church to another? Well, brothers, again, it has been picked up by at least 150 different movements, and much of it is simply because we're ignorant of history.

We need to write down some of this stuff. One of the most important things we could all learn is not doctrine, but where doctrines came from. And if we could learn where doctrines came from and where practices came from, rather than practicing our practices and teaching our doctrines, and learning where they came from. We would leave most of them alone. Something new has been invented, and it was invented by the Brethren, the Plymouth Brethren, John Darby's folks. They came under a lot of fire and criticism, and they began to

promote an idea that is so powerful and overwhelming. It is used everywhere today. You can't deal with it. You can't get on top of it, under it, around it, or through it. And what they said was, "God raised us up; we have never read anybody else's literature. We use the pure Word of God and nothing else. We have been taught only by the Lord and by the Scripture." And that was the biggest lie a man could perpetrate. John Darby and those other men had read many, many books, and they had been greatly influenced, believe it or not, by some Christians writing in South America. That was back in 1820, and they pushed that and pushed that, "It's nothing but the Word of God and the pure Word of God, and we believe only the Word of God, and the Word of God." They took Scripture and moved it almost to idolatry. They lost and left an indwelling Lord, and it still pervades. You Pentecostals and Charismatics can really warm up to this. They literally lost a living God.

Let me tell you a story you won't believe. In one of the great, well-known seminaries of this country, a young brother went for some courses who came out of our fellowship, and they were preaching the Word of God, the Word of God, and they meant the New Testament. They weren't referring to Jesus Christ, the Word of God. "And it's only that, and nothing else, and we can find nothing else in anything but that." He went up to his professor and said, "What about an indwelling Lord?" And the professor's answer was, "The only way we can know that we have an indwelling Lord is because the Bible tells us we do." Now, that, to me, moves God completely out of our universe and leaves us with printed material, and that's all.

Brothers and sisters, meanwhile, back over there in the fundamentalist camp, we lost a living personal relationship with the Lord, and they used that as a gimmick to hold off their critics, and it worked. They literally stopped the mouths of their critics by constantly hammering on the fact that they were Bible-centered and nothing but Bible-centered, and that still floats around to this day. I have seen it used...as beautiful as it is, as lovely and as great as it is, and I do not question the concept, but it has been corrupted to the point where it is used as a way of gaining people to a movement. There ought to be nothing that we ever say that says we are God's people chosen for this hour alone. I said it in a book; I'll say it to you. That's left to the people who live in the year 2200 to decide whether we are God's people. What we do is we be faithful.

I will say it again, brothers and sisters, my dear, dear brothers and sisters: Jesus Christ and His beautiful bride, the church, is enough to magnetize, hypnotize, mesmerize, and draw anybody on earth to Him without the garbage thrown in. We have got to get past these corrupting influences. They are killing the testimony of Christians outside the organized church. It has been a beautiful, beautiful testimony for 1,700 years. It's time to leave the corruption that Plymouth Brethren and the early Pentecostals put into our minds. That needs to go, and Christ should take its place. I did my best, brothers. I did that with a clean, pure heart. I did not do that. I don't know what time it is, but I'm coming to my final point now. That's some of the corruption we've got to get past.

There's a book out on the stands right now. It says, *Beware the Naked Man Who Offers You His Shirt*. I don't know what it means, but every time I see that book, I think of Christian Movements, offering you things that we never live up to. For those of us who are outside the organized church, we have one job: to know the Lord, and then to lift Him up. And that's what my last point is.

I don't want you to go to sleep on me because I'm speaking for so long. I live in New England, and they tell a story up there about the days of the Puritans. This particular church had this very dry preacher, and he droned on for two hours. A lot of people were falling asleep, so they came up with this marvelous idea. They appointed this man on Sunday morning to carry this long stick with a very sharp point at the end, and his job was to walk up and down the aisles. While the preacher droned on this dry sermon, this man walked up and down the aisles, and if he saw anybody nodding, he took this long stick with this sharp point, and he went over, and he jabbed the preacher. I want to quit before you get an idea like that.

Well, it's a beautiful thing to stand here and say Christ should be our center. But again, historically, we're dealing with a major problem here. The Roman Catholics had what they called their mystics...Roman Catholic mystics. No one ever knew what the word meant; still don't know. They were... They don't. I don't know what it means either. There was a small group of people in the Roman Catholic Church who always seemed to love the Lord more than the other people, and they were kind of spooky people, and the Roman Catholic Church gave them room. They usually ended up putting them in prison, burning them, or killing them in some way or other, but there was a traditional place for them, like John of the Cross and St. Teresa and so on.

They were usually clergymen, and they had a teaching in the Roman Catholic Church that only very special people could be this way and know the Lord so well, intimately. I like to use the word intimately here. The rest of us took wafers and drank from the communion cup, yeah. Well, Martin Luther was in the St. Augustine Order of Monks, and he made this statement. He said, "We," speaking of the Lutherans and the Protestants, "we are not going to have the mystics among us. We're going to be centered on the Word of God," which was absolutely a disaster. The Roman Catholic concept of this deeper relationship with the Lord was really corrupt and came out of Platonic Greek, Platonic mysticism. Plato was a mystic, and they were very, very strong in Neoplatonism, a hierarchy of spiritual development.

And to this day, Neoplatonism is the ladder by which a Roman Catholic ascends to finally something they call "union with God." The Protestants ran as far and as fast as they could from that, and in so doing, probably lost any hope of ever really understanding the New Testament. And it is a mental thing. See, the St. Augustinian monks were very much mental, and they believed Augustine said that the soul is the highest, it's the way you reach God, and the highest element in the soul is the intellect. So, the best way you know God is to cultivate your intellect, and that's what a seminary is there for. The seminary is built on the concept that if you raise the intellect, you'll know God better. Consequently, the Church of the Living

God simply doesn't know one thing about... I love to make outrageous statements. That probably is not accurate, but I'm going to say it anyway. We don't know one thing about knowing the Lord well. It's an ocean we have not traveled on. We have not sailed that ocean.

I don't want to talk to you and leave you with the impression this is something we've got a corner on. This is a world we have not even scratched. Protestant Christianity is intellectualism, pure and simple, from top to bottom, and the Pentecostal charismatic movement is a reaction to that. Now, one is too much in the mind; the other one's mindless, and I want you to know which way I would pitch my tent in a minute. Brother, I'll go with the Pentecostals any day. We have more fun. They are the blondes; we have more fun. Um...

But there's this great big gaping hole in how to know the Lord. I will be in Orlando bringing the last messages I'm going to bring in a long time, and I'm going to do exactly what I'm doing to you right now. I really...y'all are not going to understand me. I know it's going to upset you, and don't upset me. Listen to whatever these guys tell you when I leave. Don't pay attention to me, but I wouldn't give you two cents for our prayer lives. I wouldn't give you two cents for our prayer lives. For one thing, one proof and test that it's not getting anywhere is that it is so dull. Oh, we've got to pray, and we've got all these verses, and we get down on our knees, and why won't they ever give us a carpet to pray on? Why do we have to sit on, lie on, or kneel on floors without carpets? Is that something in the Bible, that our knees have to hurt, or that we have to kneel to pray? The fact that the word "prayer" exists in the New Testament does not necessarily mean that what we do today is prayer.

I know you've heard of intercession, but what we do today in the way of intercession does not necessarily mean what they did. Neither does it mean that we all have to do it all the time. In fact, I think the most remarkable thing, the lesson most of us could learn, is this: that in the church of the living God, everything is seasonal and nothing is permanent. You cannot hold on to anything in the church forever. It will get boring and lose its place, and that includes preaching. It even includes meetings. I think one of the most spiritual things we could do is get together and decide that for the next six weeks, we're not going to have a single meeting. You don't have to meet to be the church. If she is the church, she will go on organically, being the church without meetings. I have seen this done dozens of times. Go for months without meeting, call another meeting, everybody's there, you haven't lost a soul. Giving hasn't dropped, and everybody's rested and refreshed. I would recommend it as a very radical but beautiful thing to do. Anyway, I'm making a point here.

I really don't see much in almost all of our concepts of prayer, and I don't know about what we ought to give it up for Lent. I want to talk to you brothers, back here. I'm going to tell you something. I get invited to lots of places. You wouldn't believe that, but I really do. In the organized church, I really do. They are so gracious. I have preached *once* in front of almost everybody. I have preached twice...nowhere. Again, and again, and again, I have talked this way to ministers, and I have yet to have my first minister come up here and come to me and say, "Brother, I want to know more." Not one. Isn't that incredible? Now, God's people do, but not ministers; isn't that incredible? I have been invited by some of the most outstanding

men in the organized church to share with them what I know about the Lord Jesus Christ and to fellowship with and walk with Him. I preached to them, and not one person showed any interest. Now, I'm going to get out of here on a thin limb, and I trust the Lord will forgive me, but my life and ministry have been centered on one thing, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. And contrary to what you've heard today, in the fellowship of the believers, I only have one message, and that is Him...and knowing Him and knowing Him real, and knowing Him intimately, and knowing Him well. I am not speaking about stuff I do not know. I am speaking about things that most Christians have no knowledge of whatsoever. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Nothing. And only a few of God's people even seem to care to know. Some way or other, we think, yeah, he's really preaching it now. Well, praise the Lord.

Yeah, Christ is the center, and nobody stops to say, how can you do that for 30 years and never repeat yourself? And how can a people really know Him that well, personally? As I walk off the stage this week, these are some of my closing words. I am stunned that men and women do not wish to know Him well, when He should be the only thing on earth. I'm not talking about speaking in tongues, and I'm not talking about visions, and I'm not talking about prayer. I'm talking about just the most intimate, unbelievable relationship with Him that a human could conceive of. I am talking radical, I am talking extreme, and I want you to understand that...really clear...that He can be known better than almost any of us know Him.

We are dealing in a world here, that ocean we have not sailed on, neither Pentecostal, Baptist, nor anything else in this world. It should be where the brothers and sisters outside the organized church are leading, and we, of all people, ought to be the hungriest and the most seeking to know Him. I will tell you that your meetings will eventually die, and they will get boring, because a meeting is not intended for you to come to *get*. It is a place where you give. And what do you give? You give the Christ that you have encountered this week, that you have walked with, intimately laid hold of, and known. You have intimately, intimately, intimately known. The whole concept of Christian meeting, and how we meet, and why we meet, and what a meeting is, needs to be turned totally upside down.

Now, I was sharing a moment with John this morning because he said I could blame it all on him. The next book that will come from my pen is entitled *The Secret to the Christian Life*. I'm going to take about three minutes to share its content with you, but only to tell you that we've got a new world to look upon here, folks. Something beyond tongues. Do you remember? You be careful, sister. Beyond Bible study. Beyond prayer. *The Secret to the Christian Life*. The book will make the following points.

When you've got saved, what did they tell you was the secret to the Christian life? Probably: read your Bible, pray, go to church, tithe, fast, witness, and speak in tongues if you're from that group, and don't speak in tongues if you're not from that group. The secret to the Christian life is that. That's basically it. Did I leave anything? Tithe? Move your letter...for the Baptists? The secret to the Christian life is that it doesn't work, you know. So, I have to

start asking questions. Where did the Christian life originate? Where did it come from? Who was the first Christian, and how did He live the Christian life?

Now, who was the first Christian? You talk to me out here. The Lord Jesus Christ was not the first Christian, and the Christian life did not begin at Pentecost. It did not begin with the birth of Christ or the beginning of His ministry. The Christian life is the oldest thing there is. The Christian life was being lived in the Trinity long before creation. If you're ever going to understand the Christian life, you're going to have to go back to eternity past and get inside the Godhead to know, and that comes back to a point that I'm sure slipped by you earlier: that we're never going to understand what the church is or what the New Testament is saying until we go back into God in eternity past and learn His mind by direct, personal, intimate encounter. That's the only way we're going to get clear on anything.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ made an incredible statement. His statement is—and was — the Lord said, "I cannot live the Christian life." Your Lord cannot live the Christian life. Now put that in your chewing gum and chew on it. If He cannot live the Christian life, what chance do you think you've got to live the Christian life? Well, Gene, the Lord Jesus Christ did not say that. He certainly did. He said, "Without my Father, I can do nothing." There is only one Christian in the universe. There is only one person who has ever lived a Christian life, and there's only one person who's ever going to live the Christian life. And if He does not live the Christian life, it is not going to get lived. Because the Christian life is above and beyond the human being to live. That's like asking a pig to use silverware to eat. He can't do it because he's the wrong species, and the Christian life belongs only to the species of God. It can only be lived by God the Father.

And now we're back into eternity past. Now we're back into the Godhead. Now we can ask the question: what is the secret to the Christian life? And the Lord Jesus Christ could not live the Christian life. I'm asking you, God the Father, the first and the only Christian, did He live the Christian life by prayer, Bible study, going to church, tithing, fasting, speaking in tongues, and evangelizing? Yes or no? Well, if that's not how He lived the Christian life, it's not the way I'm supposed to live the Christian life either. And He had His first convert, if you please, in the Son of the Living God. I don't mean to make a big deal out of that. I'm just telling you that the second Christian is the Son of the Living God in eternity past, and He learned the living, the outliving of the Christian life from His Father. Then He became incarnate, and He did not pick up Bible study, prayer, speaking in tongues, going to church, tithing, fasting, living a good life, dressing this way and not that way, and doing this and not doing that. That's not what happened. He brought into spacetime that which He had done in eternity past, and He continued doing it.

The question is, how did Jesus Christ live the Christian life? Well, immediately someone says He prayed. I'm a little nervous about that. I know my Lord went out early in the morning to be alone with His Father, but does that mean, if you press that far enough, that means that I get up in the morning and go out alone to be with my Father, then I go down to teach school, and that's the end of it. Am I living the Christian life by that early morning prayer? Did my

Lord really stop praying? Did my Lord really stop fellowshipping with the Father? I want to say that we take away His deity and His divinity when we do that. He was in constant fellowship with an indwelling Father. His Father was not there; His Father was in here, and He lived with Him constantly. And I'm going to tell you how Jesus Christ lived the Christian life. It's really simple. He lived it the way He did in the Father. I'm going to do this really quickly, and all I can tell you is it's an ocean to sail on, and yet, there's a bigger one than that. Listen to this.

First of all, only the Father can live the Christian life. Therefore, He received from the Father the Father's life. And He lived by the means of His Father's life. He said, "I live by the life of my Father." He said that. And He said, "In the same way, you will live by me." I, therefore, have to have His life in me, and I have to learn to live by a life not human, a higher life, the highest life. So, I have that life given to me at salvation. That doesn't do me one bit of good; I've got to learn to lay hold of that life.

The next thing that the Son of God did was He was loved by His Father, and He returned His Father's love to Him by means of His Father's life in Him. Everything is sourced in the Father. So, He loved the Father back with the love that He was loved with, and He beheld...these are His own words; I didn't make this up. This is Him telling you how He lived the Christian life on this earth. He said, "I behold my Father." The Father beheld Him, and He beheld the Father. And, brothers and sisters, without belaboring this, that's how Jesus Christ lived the Christian life on this earth.

You tell me that that's something everybody knows about? We do not know that life is in us. We do not know how to lay hold of that life. We do not know how to love Him back with the love He gives us, and we sure don't know how to behold Him. When the twelve got together with Jesus Christ, you know what they really learned? The main thing they learned? They learned that He was living with someone else in another realm, and they watched Him live by the Father's life. They watched Him, in fellowship, 24 hours a day with His Father.

Then came the resurrection, and He blew in them His Father's life and put that life in them. They, having seen, then experienced and lived by that life, and then they preached that life to others. It was not prayer, and it was not Bible study. Listen, brothers and sisters, it couldn't have been Bible study, because about 98% of people in the world couldn't read at the time. And the few that could read...there was virtually no literature available on the face of this earth to read. The people who first followed the Lord were illiterate in almost their totality. They had to have some other means. That means there's an indwelling Lord.

But I'm going to go a little further, and I'm going to challenge you to prove this, for me to prove this. I'm going to walk out of here today, but I'm nonetheless challenging you. I challenge you to send somebody to me. I challenge you to send somebody to me. Not a large group, a few people, and I'll prove to you that what I'm about to say is true. It is possible for me, the believer, and I would not talk this way if I did not know that I am addressing the ecclesiae. I don't really believe in the Christian life outside the ecclesia, and you don't either.

Your strength is in the church. That's right. There's no such thing for you and me. There are rare exceptions to this, but forget those rare exceptions. Those are dangerous people. They go around writing books telling you how to live the individual Christian life, and you're not one of them.

You draw your strength from the ecclesia, and you and I will only survive in the church. We will only grow in Christ in the church. We're not supposed to know Him outside the church, but it is possible because I am endowed with a living, breathing spirit. My spirit does not belong to this realm, and the life in me does not belong in this realm. It belongs in another realm. And my spirit does not have dimension. My spirit is not subject to space. My spirit is not subject to time. It is possible for my spirit to move out of space and out of time. It's not possible for my body to, or my mind, but my spirit can go back to its origins. My spirit can go back to God. Outside of space, outside of time, outside of creation. And I, as a believer in Christ, and this is Ephesians chapter 1, verse 2 and 3, you have been given all the riches that are in the heavenly places that are in Christ. They are yours now.

I have the right to the heavenly places that are in Christ. I have the right to take a vehicle — my spirit, which is not subject to space and not subject to time. It is my privilege and my right to take my spirit into the heavenlies and plunge my spirit into the Father and fellowship with the Father in eternity. I have that...my divine right, and as I know Him there, and touch Him there, and embrace Him there, encounter Him there, intimately experience Him there, in places outside of space and time, I come back to the meeting to share with you a Lord I just had fellowship with.

I had a Lord who walked on this earth, but sometimes He got mixed up where He was. His mother said, "We're out of wine." But He was in the other realm. He said, "Woman, hush. My time hasn't come yet." He knew He was the wine. She was announcing something physical, and He heard it spiritually. There's a verse in John 3 that ought to really bother you. He said, "The Son of Man who came down from the heavenlies and who is now in the heavenlies." He said, "Where I am going, you cannot come." They asked Him what He meant, and then He said, "Where I am, you cannot come." His body and His soul were here. His spirit was with His Father, and His Father lives both here and in the eternals. He lived in the eternals as well as here while on this earth, and that's my right and prerogative as a believer who lives and dwells not only in Christ but lives and dwells in the church. Brothers and sisters, we've got a world out there to know, and we need so much to make Christ central in our message and experience. We can drop all the foolishness, and we can also come back to lay hold of the mind of the living God.

Now, may that Lord and that Savior have mercy and be kind and gentle to this bunch of crazy people who stepped out of the organized church and put one foot in the glue pot and stagger around in the other foot ignorant, ignominious, and ignoramus, seeking to follow what's set in our hearts, trying to see the unseen, looking for a city we cannot yet clearly envision. But we're out here. And we've got a right to be here. We have a Lord who we have not yet scaled the heights of Him, nor the depths of Him. And we are His girlfriend. We are

His bride. And we are His bride. We can know oneness with Him, for one day we shall be His wife, and that means we will be made one with Him. If all of Scripture has anything to tell me, it is that all things that He will give, He has given and can give, does give, and will give to me...and give to you...a foretaste, which means that I can know oneness with Him now. I can touch that. I can be lost in God.

May God keep you. Thank you for these last six or seven hours we've been together here. Praise the Lord. Amen.