

Will you adopt me? This was beautiful, absolutely beautiful. This is the best meeting I've been in...I don't know how long. Sandra, where are you? She's not even here. She asked me to come by on my way down to a conference in Orlando. She said, "I have a few friends I want you to meet," and that's all I knew. This is the largest group of Christians outside the organized church I've ever seen in one place and have ever addressed. I usually speak to about somewhere between 7 and 200 people, and that's about the maximum, and if I put all the influence in the world I have on this planet together, we might round up 300 people.

It's really delightful to be here with you, really. My goodness, this was just so great. I'm going to make a statement here that may not be clearly understood, because I'm thinking, as I sit here, from the viewpoint of history. Throughout history, the Lord has always raised up groups outside the organized church. In the dark days of Europe, back in the 700s, 800s, 900s, 1000s, every once in a while, groups touched one another, not frequently, but they touched one another, and sort of cross-pollinated people. This is the first time I've ever really touched you, and I know it's the first time you've ever touched me, and I consider it an honor. We're always saying, you know, well, praise the Lord, we're different, but we're all the same. And we're delighted with that, but it's a superficial statement. I do want you to know...I want to emphasize the fact that I am different from you. I am from a conservative background, not fundamental. I am from a non-Pentecostal, charismatic group. Believe it or not, I am not eschatologically like you. You don't know this, but you're premillennial, and I'm amillennial, and if I can get away with saying that and you don't throw me out of here, it's wonderful. I'm thrilled that we can touch. I'm thrilled that we can touch, and now I'll make a superficial statement. Who cares what our doctrines are anyway? Praise the Lord.

Now, I have something else to say to you: last night I came in, and someone said, "We were expecting you to speak." I almost fainted. I didn't even know there was anybody here to speak to. Sandra did this and then ran out. I said to one of the brothers, Well, you've got exactly 18 hours from this moment, because I'm going from here to Orlando, Florida. I'm going to speak to a gigantic group of forty, and when I finish that, I'm going back home to New England, where I live, and I'm going to get ready to go to Eastern Europe. I'm going to be there for two months, and I really would like to tell you why, too. I'm going to come back; we have a conference every year in Atlanta called the Deeper Christian Life Conference. I won't even be there for the opening. I'm coming at the end of it. I'm going to share what I've seen in Eastern Europe, Lord willing. Then I'm shutting down for at least two years, and I'm not going to speak anywhere to anybody for any reason ever during those two years...at least two. I'm going to write. I seem to be able to speak all right, but I can't do both of them at the same time. So, this is my last chance to talk to you for a long time, and your last chance to talk to me. I've got a lot on my heart, so kick off your shoes. I'm going to do the next two years' worth of speaking right now, and I think as I speak, you really will recognize that I'm different from you. You'll get stuff in here you've never thought of before, just like if I listened to you minister, you would say things to me I perhaps have never heard or known before.

Let me tell you why I'm going to Eastern Europe. I'm going to five countries: Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. I have a very simple reason for going. I'm quite concerned. I'm going over there to see if I can find some Christians who can translate, and there are very few of them in that country. I want to take the book you may know, entitled *The Story of the Early Church*. I recently changed its name to *Revolution*. I want it translated into the languages of those five countries, printed in those countries, and distributed in those countries. And the reason is really simple. I would like to get there before evangelical Christianity gets there. I want to do as much damage as I possibly can with that book. That book stands in direct contrast to virtually everything evangelical Christianity practices today. I want it there to at least stand and say, no, there really is something besides this ... smile, shallow, insipid, supercilious, inane, pusillanimous Christianity that the evangelical Christians of North America are right now trigger-happy to get over there and give those people. Before the Bible schools, the seminaries, the church buildings, the pastors, and all that other garbage get over there, I would like to see that book in those languages.

The other reason I'm going is that I'm hoping to visit some libraries, and this is hard to explain, but let's say it's the year 700 A.D. That was a long time ago, and let's say one of our brothers came to a town, preached, they arrested him, tried him, and burned him at the stake. Let's say they had given them the nickname of the Paulicians, the Bogomils, the Priscillianists, the Lollards, the Albigensians, the Waldensians, or the Anabaptists. Did I leave anybody out? Let's say they burned him at the stake. Sometime between 700 A.D. and today, some dusty scholar went back and researched that and did a paper on it. I want to go back to that bloody trail, in as many places as I can in Eastern Europe, because most of the Christians who stood outside the organized church from about 500 A.D. to about 1300 A.D. were in Eastern Europe, not Western Europe. I want to go into as many libraries as I can and bring home as many of those stories as I can, because one of these days I would like to write the complete history right on up to, say, 1950 from, say, 386 A.D., when they sliced off the first head of a Christian who said, this ain't right, up until about 1950...the story of Christians outside the organized church.

Okay, that's why I'm going there. Now, what am I going to do this morning? Well, let me talk to you about a lot of different things, stuff that, if I don't say it to you, you may never hear it. I'll be kind and as gracious as I am capable. Worry. I think the first thing I want to talk to you about is that we have a right to be here. Secondly, some of the contributions we can make while we're here, and thirdly, some of the things we need to clean house over. Then I'd like to talk to you about the Lord Jesus Christ, and then it'll be time for supper. I was saved just before I was 17. I was in college, and I was an English history major. I like to read, and I always thought it would be interesting to gather a lot of material on things nobody else had ever gathered, and I'd give it to somebody to write it down someday, but no one ever showed that much interest. So, I'm going to have to write it down myself.

I want to talk to you about number 1. Are you with me for number 1 here? Okay, here we go. Number 1, I think you ought to know where evangelicals got all the practices, not their

theology, but their practices, and this is going to surprise you, because a lot of things we take for granted as having come because somebody somewhere gave some attention to the Scripture and wrote this and started it on the basis of Scripture, there is virtually nothing that the Christian faith practices today...I would even remove “virtually” ...that has any foundation or root in the New Testament. It is all out of tradition. Men started things; they didn't even think about the New Testament when they started it, and we have been determined to find it in the Bible ever since.

That's right, which has profoundly warped our abilities to understand the Word of God. Because we do not understand the Word of God, we come to the Scripture with our concepts and practices and make it say what we want it to say. Please don't get too self-righteous here; we're all guilty of this. If there's anything we need—and I would come to a word that you may not know or like, but I've got to communicate here—is to... our problems are not our practices or our theologies. Our problem is our mindset, and until the mindset is cracked open in a very dramatic, revolutionary way, it doesn't matter what we get taught or what we practice. We will keep doing the same old junk, and it is very rare in the course of human history that the mindset has ever cracked. In fact, Western history records only two times when the mindset of Western man changed, and in Christian history, perhaps only three times, or four at most, when the mindset of Christians changed, and none of them improved when they changed.

We do not need to look forward to the future about what the Lord is going to do. Some way or other, we have got to lay hold of literally everything, God's own mind, and that's a bigger deal than you may think. Oh, yeah, we just need the mind of God. I don't mean it in a light way; I mean that somebody has got to go back into God, because what was and what ought to be flowed from the living God even before eternity, even before creation.

So, I'm going to take a crack at your mindset and mine this morning and try to shake you up a little bit. I want to tell you where we've got all of our practices, and that might help clear the ground just a little bit. Have you ever wondered why we go to church on Sunday morning at 11 a.m.? Well, some of you perhaps know this by now; you've been listening to my tapes. Martin Luther loved to drink beer on Saturday night and talk to his friends, but he kept having a hard time getting out of bed on Sunday morning. Services were held at 5 a.m., so he asked that they be moved up to 6, then 7, then 8. He drank more beer and talked longer, and they moved it to 9, and then he drank more beer and talked longer, and they moved it to 10. And they called it Sunday morning mass, and somebody said to him, Luther, you're going to have to stop this, or it won't be morning any longer. He said, " Great, we'll do it at 11 a.m."

I was in the jungles of Thailand and met with a group of Christians who had lived in the jungles in Laos and had not seen or been seen in 50 years, and I came to the refugee camp where they were. There were several thousand of them, and they were lost to the knowledge of man. I walked into that camp, and I could tell where they were located because the government had given them big, huge rolls of plastic, and they had built one building in the middle of that refugee camp that was about two feet higher than any others. I

walked into it and saw these little bamboo pews, a desk, and a Bible that had just been translated into their language, and it was 11 a.m. Now, if you don't think we have a problem, consider that. I would like to recommend that we stop meeting at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning. In fact, I would, in order to swing the pendulum the other way, shoot...I'd quit meeting on Sunday altogether. Thank you, all three of you.

The first church building that was ever built was in 323 A.D. Actually, there were around seven, eight, or nine of them built between 323 and 327. They were all built...they were paid for out of the coffers of the Roman Empire. They were sponsored mainly by Constantine's mother, Helena. Later, the Catholics made her Saint Helena. They were all built as memorials over supposedly sacred places. Until that time, Christians had never conceived of meeting in a building, a special building. They had always met in homes. The only known Christian gathering place ever discovered and excavated in archaeology is in a town called Douro Europa, in what today would be called Syria. It's nothing, and you're familiar with this because I know you do what we do; it's nothing in the World but a house. They kicked out the wall between the two bedrooms, and that was the earliest and only known building ever set aside for Christians. It was built probably around 250A.D. And it was nothing but a house. You've done that, haven't you? Kicked out a wall so you could hold 40 or 50 people.

I shared with two of the brothers last night that there's been an awful lot of work being done by the French, and none of it's gotten into the English language. It's called church archaeology. It has nothing to do with the archaeology of the Holy Lands, but of the early Gentile churches. There have been a lot of documents and letters uncovered; in fact, 25,000 have been located and identified as Christian. Some of the most interesting things that archaeologists have discovered are that nobody had a religious vocabulary during the first three centuries of our faith. Christians writing one another did not start off the way we do with, "Oh, our dear brother in Christ, praise God for this, that, and the other." The only way they could find out they were Christians was if there was some reference to the Lord or to other brothers and sisters. They had no religious vocabulary for the first 300 years.

They also never took the names of biblical characters as we do. We think we got that from the Jews because they did, but we Gentiles did not get the idea of naming our kids Bible names from the Jews. We picked it up because the heathen named their children after heathen gods, and after Constantine began building memorial buildings and naming them after saints, because he had built hundreds from the coffers of the Roman Empire's treasury. He had built hundreds of temples to pagan gods when they began building church buildings. And as they had named temples after heathen gods, they named the church buildings after Bible characters. It was only after that Gentiles, heathens, Christians, us uncircumcised, that we began to name our children Bible names. Rather, the Christians of the 2nd and 3rd century, from all archaeological evidence, all of them dropped their last names and went only by their first names, because their last name was a giveaway as to which part of the sociological strata they lived in, and they did not want to know who was a slave or who was a wealthy man. They all called one another by their first names and dropped their last names.

Now, I can go on and on and on, and I'm trying to do this just as fast and succinctly as I can, so let me come back to some of our practices. Have you ever wondered where we got...I bet you have never wondered this...where did we get the Sunday morning sermon? You thought that was because people in the first century preached. I'll bet you think that. A sermon is an unscriptural sermon, non-New Testament, totally heathen practice. Yeah, I'm going for it. And its warp and woof in us, and we can't get rid of it; I don't think we ever will. There was something called rhetoric that goes back to about 400 B.C., and the Greeks were into rhetoric, like today we're into television. Rhetoric was both a form of entertainment as well as a thing greatly depended on by the government to make its decisions. When the Greeks came together in their different towns and even in their national governments, they had orators who would stand up and debate. These men were brilliant. You've never heard, I've never heard, things like what they could do. Brilliant men who had spent their whole lives learning to do nothing but speak with some of the most brilliant ideas conceivable. They would literally turn the day with their oratory, and Aristotle came along and set down rules for oration.

I did not know this when I was in the seminary, and I will speak to you...brothers...for a moment. Everything that I learned about homiletics, message, and sermon preparation came first from Aristotle, and I quote, and you will recognize, every great statement of rhetoric will have a clear introduction, a clear conclusion, and three to four major points. All that Aristotle left out was a deathbed story and a poem. There was no such thing as a sermon in the Christian faith until about 400A.D. A great heathen orator was converted and brought sermons into the Christian faith. The Greeks had made a science out of this. When the Romans conquered them, they were so into rhetoric that they would actually gather in an amphitheater... they were conquered people...and someone would come before them and say, "Now we're going to pretend that the Spartans are upon us, and what are we going to do about it?" And four or five men would come in and orate. Then, boy, at the end, the whole amphitheater would go wild as to which one they felt had won, as to what should be done about the invading Spartans.

The Romans picked this up, and they were great orators. But perhaps one of the greatest was a gentleman whose name is known as John Chrysostom, which means, when translated, "John the man with the golden mouth." And John, the man with the golden mouth, brought out of his pagan life abilities as an orator; he brought in and became a Christian; he brought that in with him, and he created and gave to us this damnable, stinking, non-Christian thing called the Sunday morning sermon, and it has wrecked as much havoc upon the Christian faith as anything possibly could. I've read his stuff. Man, it's unreal. It's just like what you might hear on any given Sunday morning. Beautiful rhetoric, taken to its ultimate ends. Down with sermons. I didn't even get one amen over that one. Amen.

Brothers and sisters who preached in the first century preached out of urgency and emergency, and there was no ritual to it. You didn't know when you might get one, when you might not. Amen. Why are you clapping? Why don't you repent? We need a completely different understanding of the Christian faith because what we have was not what it was.

Now then, if that doesn't slow down your kitty car, here's another one. Everybody knows that we have pastors. Pastors have absolutely no scriptural place. I'll give you \$1,000 if you can find a pastor in the New Testament. He ain't there. I know that obscure verse in Ephesians. I read that too. I read that once. I read Ephesians once.

Now just a minute. The practice of modern-day pastoral practice...find me a man in the New Testament who goes around visiting the sick. Find me a man who shakes hands and pats old ladies' hands. Find me a man who gets up in a pulpit and preaches every Sunday like clockwork...a sermon. Find me a man who prays over a football game on Saturday nights, just before they go out and half-kill one another. Find me a man in a suit and tie. There is reason and tradition. Now you can name the time and place when we started wearing suits and ties. Find me a funeral in the New Testament. The Romans had funerals, and they brought in philosophers and orators like John Chrysostom to bring an oration over the dead. John Chrysostom and two or three other contemporaries of his introduced the funeral to the Christian faith and brought the first sermon orations ever delivered in the history of our faith, sometime between 400 and 450 A.D. I've read one of them. Would you like to hear it?

This is a pagan one. "Oh, friends and comrades, oh, we are gathered today here on this sad yet glorious occasion to bid farewell to our friend. And oh, though we weep, oh, though we mourn for his passing, yet I tell you that somewhere he's looking down upon us today and saying, "Weep not, weep not, for I am in a far better place." Excuse me, I'm an old East Texas boy who grew up with horses, cows, and chickens, and that is a bunch of bull. We've got no business with that kind of stuff in the fellowship of the believers. But that wasn't my point. My point was, where does the modern-day practice of the pastor come from? And I have spent more time trying to find out where pastors came from than on any other search I've made. I know one thing for sure: they didn't come out of the New Testament. One day, I got some writings, some original writings of the Anabaptists. It was just recently published about that thick. The thing cost a fortune. I found it, and I was stunned.

Here's the story. We're back to about 1525-1530. We're right in the middle of the Reformation, and we're in the days of Martin Luther. It seems as though it was the practice in that particular day...I know you've heard of the seven sacraments, have you not? Well, there were also seven pastoral duties of a priest, and that's where the word pastoral came in. Now, I can never remember all seven of them. Let me see what I can do. The priests were to visit the sick, marry the young, bury the dead, and bring blessings upon civic events. Some, a few, mostly those who could read and write...not many could...to teach or write. I can usually remember six. I don't know what the others... oh, did I say, "bury the dead"? Yeah, I did. What were those other two? I don't know, but you're so familiar with them. Martin Luther— oh, I'm sorry, baptized, of course, and baptized the babies. That was another. Now, that was considered not only a sacrament, but one of their duties, one of the things, the perfunctory things they did. I don't remember the seventh one. No, it's not, and you would think it is, but it was not a pastoral duty. I don't know what it was, but anyhow, Luther had all of these ex-priests on his hands, and they would come to Wittenberg for training under him. He'd send them out to these empty cathedrals and huge church

buildings to go back as Protestant priests, and he changed the pastoral functions a little bit and told them to do this a little differently than the other. They all went back to these church buildings, where, because of Frederick the Wise, who was more or less the governor of that area and was protecting Luther from the Roman Catholic armies and from being burned at the stake, all of these men went out back out...oh, changed, changed the church. Dispensing of the sacraments, you know, when people come by, and y'all don't do that here, do you? That's not what this is here, and those of you who are Catholics, you know.

Well, instead of that, he told them to go back, rip all that out, which they literally did, and instead put in a platform and preach and make it the Word of God. Those became the seven pastoral duties of the Protestant priest, and from that grew up that lone single man who buries the dead, marries the so-and-sos, does this and that, and always speaks in a stained-glass voice. "Oh, brothers, I'm so happy to be with you here today. Oh, what a joy it is. Oh, how wonderful." Why can't we speak English just like everybody else does? There's no scriptural basis for all of these things. If you can find a funeral in the New Testament where some brother preached over it... You can't find an ordained man going out visiting the sick, or any of the other things we get stuck with. That office, as is practiced today, ought not to exist.

Well, let me see. Oh, the pulpit. Would you like to know where the pulpit came from? That is a cute one. Luther would come in at 11 a.m. with all these books and stuff, and he wanted to preach, and they had this big box full of wafers and bread. He'd stick his Bible up on that, and he would speak to them. Later, on the pillars that held up the buildings, they had these pulpits. You walk up a spiral staircase as part of the Sunday ritual, go up there, and announce. They had announcements in the Roman Catholic Church, just like we do. They went up there, and they ripped those things down and brought one of them and put it up here in front, and that's where we got our pulpit. And oh, brothers, those great men who stand behind the sacred desk and proclaim the Word of God.

We've got a long way to go. This is just trying to get rid of some of the garbage we've got. Then what do we do to get back to a... a genuine... Let me give you two more. Where do we get our pews? That's interesting. When Constantine began building those church buildings, he did so in Rome, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and in a city he was founding called Constantinople. They were all being built. The church buildings were being built at the same time as he was building Constantinople. And interestingly enough, this is the difference between a Greek and an Italian. When they built those buildings, they didn't think about anything, because they were, after all, memorials anyway. They didn't think about putting anything in them for people to sit down in; people had been meeting in homes. The Greeks walked in, looked around, and just stood there for their meetings. The Italians, bless them, came in, looked around, and sat down on the floor, and so somebody got the idea of bringing in a bench, just a plain old bench.

So, the Italians had benches, and until this day, if you've ever been to an Eastern Orthodox church, you will find no seats in their buildings. They stand throughout their entire service.

That's why there are not very many Eastern Orthodox Christians, and believe it or not, the chair was invented just... nobody ever thought about putting a back on it. The chair was invented just before the Reformation, and the Protestants took one look at those hard benches, and they put a back on them, and that's how we got our pews. Now I've got one more, and this is a crack-up, and this is a little embarrassing to tell, but it's history, so I'm going to tell it the way it happened.

This is just history. During the time of Martin Luther, the Roman Catholics had to decide whether or not they were going to reform their church, because they were really corrupt at that time, or if they were going to defend what they had. So, the Pope called a meeting just north of Italy so that it would not be considered part of the Italian Roman Catholic influence, just over the border. The great Council of Trent lasted 18 years; they debated for 18 years whether they would reform or dig in. And at the end of 18 years, they decided they were going to dig in. They did not reform, but they did have two problems. One of them was the corruption of the priesthood and its ignorance, and the other one was the gross immorality that was in the church. Making decisions as only scholars can, this is what they came up with: that in every diocese where the Roman church still had land and power and political influence, there would be built a "seminarium" to train the priest to read, to write, to know Greek, to know Latin, and to make a highly educated priest out of them.

And so was born the seminary. By the way, Dwight L. Moody said, "Why do you have to go all the way through college before you can go to a seminary? Why don't you just, when you get out of high school, do so?" And so, a low-grade seminary was born, which we call Bible schools, and that was actually... around, when was Moody Bible Institute formed? It was the first Bible school in the world. I don't have time for this...all built on the curriculum and concepts of Aristotelian-type universities. And that's where our Bible schools came from, and that is not the way workers should be raised up. It is not the way workers should be raised up. Now, why don't you ask me how workers are supposed to be raised up?

God had His way, and to give you a little peek at what we need to do, we need to go back into God and discover that the first Bible school or seminary, the first training of the first Christian worker, began in eternity past in the Godhead. A pattern was established there that remained unbroken throughout the first century, and when Jesus Christ called twelve men to be with Him, He was doing nothing in the world but duplicating what the Father had put Him through in eternity past, and that was for someone to sit down and live with God. Amen. And twelve men sat down and lived with God and watched the Son of the living God fellowship with His Father, and that's what they learned; that's how they were trained. And when He ascended, those twelve men were trained. Having lived with God and watched the Son of God fellowship with His Father internally, that's what was given them.

They were men who walked with an internal living Lord, and they were called sent ones. They were not called apostles. They were called sent ones. And what were they sent to do? Well, let me get really clear what a sent one is. A sent one is one who raises up the ecclesia. That's what he does for a living, and he raises up ecclesias. He raises up Christian

communities. I'm almost reluctant to use the word church because of what it conjures in our minds. And out of those ecclesias, the young men experience church life just as the twelve did, living with the Lord Jesus Christ in a community of 13 or 120 or whatever... And some of these men are called of the Lord, and they live with the sent ones, and then they took over the torch from the sent ones.

There's nothing any clearer than that when Paul of Tarsus goes back to his eight churches he raised up — 8, not 800, not 8,000, or not 80,000, and not 800,000; 8 churches he raised up and went back and picked out one man from each of those fellowships, and they had already known church life. Then he took them to a city where there was no church and no Christians, and he said, "Watch me." And eight young ex-heathen Gentiles walked with a sent one who raised up churches in that city and lived with Paul of Tarsus for four years, watching how he did it. And when Paul died, they took the mantle. Brothers and sisters, we need some sent ones, and we need some church life, and we need young men who will go live with the best sent ones we've got, who are called of God, and live with them, and we could turn the course of history by that simple practice.

(Continued in Part 2)