

Well, last year I went through Romans chapters 1-8. Have you heard it? Okay. It was wonderful, wasn't it? Now, what we're going to do is so totally different from that, you're going to feel it's a totally different book. I'm going to try to create for you an image of what it was like to be in Rome, Italy, in the year 56 AD, when this letter arrived. Okay, now that's not going to be easy to do, but in the process of doing it, I want to share with you some things I have never shared in totality with anybody...all of it, one great big lump. Now, that has suddenly become extremely important to me. As I give you the background of how a letter got to Rome, Italy, I really have to share with you everything that's on my heart - that is really big. And I want it to get in your heart. I really do. I want it to get deep inside you. So, I'm going to try to get it inside you tonight. I'm going to get it in every one of you, and especially some of you brothers, because I think Paul would like it, because I think the Lord would—because we're dealing with some of the most important things and some of the most lost things of the Christian faith, as far as the practice of our faith. We get a lot of preconceived ideas of what the church ought to be and how we ought to do things, but we're going to look at how they really, truly did it, without any puff or play-like. The really, really, really, truly, truly, truly honest-to-goodness, 21 or 24-carat, solid gold, genuine, grade-A New Testament way God's people did things in that era.

Now, tomorrow night, you're actually going to meet the people this letter was written to, but you're going to have a totally new view of who they are. After that, everything from Romans 1 through Romans 8 might be considered very spiritual. Everything this week is going to be about church life—the practical—because that's what Romans 12 through 16 is about. That's what he wrote. That's what we're going to find out. We're going to discover what was really going on in Rome. We're going to find out what their problems were—a group of Christians living together in the city of Rome. And I'll bet you they're very similar to a group of Indo-Europeans living in Chicago, Illinois. Now, this is wonderful for me, because if I walked into the church in Rome, they'd all look just about like you. Now, I don't want to wear this out—I see one white man over there—but if I were to have walked into the church in Rome, Italy, in the year 56 AD, they'd all look just about like you, except they wouldn't be wearing glasses. They hadn't been invented yet, and their clothes might be a little bit different, and that's about the only difference. I have a notion that their number was just about what is in this room, too.

So, all of this becomes very, very exciting to me. I'm going to tell you a story tonight. I guess I should read a verse of Scripture. Sometimes people say, "Gene, you don't begin your message with Scripture." And you ought to begin your message with Scripture. If they tell me why I should do that, I will. Alright, here it is. Isn't this profound?

This is Acts 18:1-2: "And after this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And there he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome." Now, isn't that profound? Well, on that hangs one of the most exciting and intriguing stories the world has ever known. Now, I'm going to have to really tell you things that are so deep in my heart that you'll just have to bear with me if I stop and talk to you about them, and they have nothing to do with Rome, Italy, but they have to do with what's on my heart.

I'm going to start by beginning. First, I'll ask the question: How did the church in Rome get raised up? And the answer is—all the scholars in the world don't know. They have been speculating for 2,000 years on how the church in Rome got started. Now, one of the tragedies of being a scholar is that you read what some other scholar wrote, and you're scholastic. So, when you write a book, you repeat what he says so you can quote somebody profound, and somebody fifty years later reads what you wrote, and he quotes you, and it becomes locked in concrete. So, all of them say they do not know how the church in Rome, Italy, got started. Well, I know how it got started. I know exactly how it got started and who started it, and when this meeting is over tonight, you and I will be the only people in the world who know exactly. Yeah, clap—that's it. That's wonderful. Amen! And I am not joking. You will know, and you will be convinced as I am. This is how the church...in fact, I'm absolutely certain of it. No question about it whatsoever. I don't care if the scholars don't know—we'll know.

But as we come to it, we will discover that Paul has done one of the most incredible things. I see in Paul's ministry two majestic strokes of genius. I'm not talking about his message; I'm talking about a couple of things he did. He pulled off two of the most beautiful ways of getting the Lord's work done. Nobody's ever thought of it. Nobody's ever duplicated it. And it's the way things ought to be done today.

I'm going to tell you that in the New Testament, there are basically four ways that churches were raised up. Actually, there are six, but I will put it this way: there are four lines of churches in the New Testament. If you ever read Nee's little book *Concerning Our Missions*, he presents two lines. I did not know when he wrote—I had never read his book—when I wrote my own notes on the early church, going from 30 AD all the way to the end of the century, I had four lines of churches. Brother Nee overlooked two, and I'm going to tell you what they are, and in so doing, we're going to learn how churches were raised up in the first century. The last line is what I would call the Roman line, the way churches were raised up *a la Rome*. And it is so incredible what this man did.

Okay, the first church ever to exist on this earth was called what? Ah, you don't know? What was the first church in the world? Don't look at me like that. Yes, brother. Oh, I'm talking about a church, the first one ever to exist. I'm not talking about churches. I'm talking about the first church. One church is the only one that existed on this earth. The church in Jerusalem. Okay, let's get back to reading *The Early Church* by Gene Edwards; I'm not going to put up with this. (laughter) Now, there is uniqueness to that church. No other church in the world has ever been raised up like that church was; probably never will again. I don't see how it would be conceivable, although I'd like to watch it if it could be done. The only reason it could be done was because of the enormous unity born out of having lived personally with Jesus Christ. You can't get twelve men of great stature working together; it can't be done. Hey, trust me, it can't be done. They're too individualistic, too different.

This time—the first time, the only time—on the Day of Pentecost, a church was born in the city of Jerusalem. Please read *The Early Church* by Gene Edwards, Volume 1. You'll learn all sorts of things. This is the way the first church ever raised up was raised up. It was raised up by twelve apostles—not one, not two, but twelve. No other church ever got twelve. It was important because

it would be the model for all the Jewish churches to come, and it would be literally what the church was. Whatever those men made the church, it could be. It could have been a cow born, it could have been a kangaroo, it could have been a rock, it could have been a cloud floating through the sky. Nobody knew what *Ecclesia* was until Peter, James, John, and some other men showed the world what it was. It was a gathering of believers.

By the way, there was only one church in that city. They didn't have any splits. They didn't have the East Jerusalem Church and the West Jerusalem Church. In fact, the word *church* is really a misnomer. If we could use some other word, the assembly and the assembling in Jerusalem, the gathering that was in Jerusalem. It did not meet in a building. The only building that was off-limits to them was the temple. It was too small anyway. They did get the courtyard because they were Jews—they had a right to the courtyard. They had to meet in homes, and then the general meetings - probably fifty to a hundred or more homes. After all, there were at least 3,000 just to begin with. Big church!

Furthermore, it was the only church on earth for six or seven years. Now, the first thing I want you to know is that it blows soot out of all theories of evangelism. Don't ever fall into this: "We've got to go save the world! The apostles went out from Jerusalem and preached the gospel all over the planet." That is not true. The Lord told Simon Peter and the other apostles to go to the ends of the earth and preach. Now, I'll show you how obedient they were. Pentecost came. Twelve men sat down in Jerusalem and didn't move for six or seven years. The world went to hell, and they didn't care. And that's the truth. I'm not exaggerating. Men were dying without Christ all over the earth, and they were sitting there. Now why? It's really simple: because the *ecclesia* is more important than evangelism. And I'm going to say that again, then you're going to repeat it: because the *ecclesia* is more important than evangelism. Because the *Ecclesia* is more important than evangelism. In our day, evangelism is everything. "We've got to go save the world," and we don't end up with the *ecclesia*. We don't have the gathering of the body of Christ. Evangelism is something that will organically come out of the church. It's the church's business. It's not a man with a big, long trailer and a tent that he throws up and says, "Come here, evangelist so-and-so." Evangelism is the church's job. In fact, saints, everything is the church's job. Everything ought to be done within the church. *The church*.

Just an ordinary—I don't mean *the* church, but I mean *the* church. Everything happened in the church. All those promises you're trying to milk out of the New Testament; you try to make them work for your life. The reason they won't work is that they weren't written to you; they were written to the *ecclesia*. And you're in it. This book doesn't work, and this faith doesn't work, and Christianity doesn't work outside of the local gathering of the body of believers. So, for five or six or seven years, there was one church on earth, and it got defined - what it was like. The people loved it. It was glorious. It was wonderful. It was a layman's movement. It was not built with scholars. The men who were leading it could not read and could not write. They had no New Testament. Now, this just blows... it blows soot out of everything. You know what soot is? Do people in Chicago know what soot is? That's a southern expression. Blows the soot out of it. Well, you've seen soot coming out of the back end of an engine when you've seen it race. It's just, you know, leftovers of burned fuel. We think of it as wood. Well, anyway, this just blows up—destroys—the 20th-century,

even the 21st-century concept of what the church is and what we're supposed to be doing. Twelve men who had been given the Great Commission didn't go anywhere until a people—probably fifteen to twenty thousand minimum, at the end of six or seven years—knew what the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was and experienced it. It was not a sit-and-listen proposition; functioning depended upon the body itself, where they met in homes and wherever else they could meet informally.

Now, how's the first way to raise up a church? Alright, somebody tell me, what's the first way a church can be raised up, New Testament pattern? A little bit louder—you need an apostle. Alright, say it, brother—you need an apostle. *No!* You need twelve apostles! Okay, twelve apostles. Twelve apostles in one city for a long period of time—six, seven years—that's the first one. Now you got that? Twelve men working with ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand people. Isn't that wonderful? Each one got about a thousand people. They started off with 3,000 people and 12 apostles. What's twelve into 3,000? How many people is that per apostle? About 250 people? Each apostle got about 250 people. Each one of them...they probably rotated. Each one of them had something different to tell about the Lord Jesus. It was all oral, being passed down orally.

Believe it or not, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were basically written in Jerusalem, out of the mouth of the apostles when they told the story, and other men wrote it down. Each apostle had a story to tell about what the Lord said and did, and later it got written down. It was an oral—a spoken—New Testament at that time.

Now then, believe it or not, if I were to ask you, "There's going to be a great explosion of churches coming out of this," and if I were to ask you, "What is the one man most responsible for the church being spread all over Israel—what we call Palestine, or the Holy Lands, or Galilee and Judea?" The first great massive growth of the church—one man was responsible for it more than anyone else, and he never gets credit for this. Do you know who it would be? Saul of Tarsus - an unbelieving lost man. He came in there persecuting the church, and things got so bad that the people had to leave. They did what the Lord Jesus said: "If you just can't get it done in one city, then shake your foot, let the dust come off of it, and go somewhere else." And something like twenty thousand people poured out of that town, and the church in Jerusalem, for the first time, ceased to exist. It ceased to exist three times in its first hundred years and finally totally ceased to exist for a long, long time. I guess, by the way, it's never really re-existed in its proper form. It ceased to exist, but boy—what an explosion! People went out all over Judea and Galilee. They began meeting in homes just like they did in Jerusalem, and they began adding people in numbers so that, if you numbered all the believers after the persecution and a few years passed, there'd be more than there were in Jerusalem. The church had spread throughout all the land where Jesus had ministered. All those towns had people just waiting—and this is only a few years after the Lord's resurrection; seven years after the Lord had been through much of that country preaching. I always think of Philip going to Samaria and raising up the church there. Who must have been sitting in the front row? Think with me. Can you grasp that? Who would have been sitting in the front row? Okay, thank you both, brothers. Alright, great—the woman at the well! She'd been led to the Lord by the Lord. You know she was sitting right there rejoicing in Him, and the church had come to the Samaritans.

Alright, a great disbursement all over Judea and Galilee. We come now to the second way churches are raised up. Now, this is dumb to even ask because I just told you, but nonetheless, what is the second way a church can be raised up? Don't be so timid. What? Persecution? No. Missed the point completely. Sorry about that. Yes. By groups of people going out to new cities, carrying the church with them. That would be like the last two rows here, alright? Going to a town I just passed through today. I don't know anything about it. The back two rows would go to Toledo, okay? And the back two rows here would go to Cleveland, Ohio. And then this would be all that would be left here in this city—just this group. You'd almost have to start over again. You'd have lost about half your people. But now there would be three churches. Do you understand? You got it? Three churches. Now, in a little while, there would be more in the three than there would ever be in the one. Because in Toledo, you would find seeking people who were just waiting for something like what's here, and the same thing would be true of Cleveland. So, the last two rows, when are you packing? When are you going to Cleveland? What was that? What, please? "After the meetings are over." Okay.

Now, this is often called the Jerusalem line. Out of the church in Jerusalem come one or two hundred churches. By the way, they are all Jewish. I personally feel that they had some inborn problems—that, had there not come a Paul—not a Saul, but a Paul—the church would have been greatly flawed. We really needed—God really needed, the Lord needed, you and I needed—they needed some Gentiles to get in there and flavor this thing up. Some Italians. And some Gauls. And some Greeks. Greeks, Gauls—I've never thought about that—Greeks, Gauls, and Italians to spice things up. One church produced fifty, a hundred, a hundred seventy-five, or two hundred churches. That's called the Jerusalem line of the churches. Now, I'd like to put it this way: we come now to another church, uniquely raised up in a totally different way than these two. What's the first way? Twelve men of great stature staying in one city a long time and raising up the church as it ought to be, its functioning, and everything. You got it? And out of that come churches raised up by a great disbursement. You got that? Isn't it exciting? I care about that. I really care about that.

I have to stop and tell you that not only were churches raised up, but there were workers raised up. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus started the seminary? When? Oh, I'm sorry—it was the Bible school. Do you remember when the Lord Jesus started the Bible school? I think they called it Moody Bible School—because the brothers and sisters were so moody! Do you remember the Bible school the Lord started? Do you remember the seminary He started? No? And why do we never raise up workers the way they were raised up in the New Testament? Well, it's right in front of us. But you're right, don't seem to know how. The way you raise up workers is to take the Lord—or, if you please, an apostle, or if you please, a church planter—and he was the great church planter—and live with some young men and show them church life. That is what He did.

Now, what was church life for those twelve men? Church life for them was living with the Lord Jesus Christ and one another. In fact, there were seventy of them, not twelve. You know that, don't you? Seventy men and a bunch of women were there to keep them on track. That's right—to keep them from being religious. That's right. Mary Magdalene probably played the greatest role in keeping those brothers from being religious. Praise the Lord for the sisters! Their names, their names? We know the names of five of them. Who were they? Can you name them? Alright, we got

Mary. A little louder—Martha, Mary Magdalene, Joanna—and I forgot the other one's name. Wait a minute—there's Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, wife of somebody—huh? Okay—Susanna! That's it. Susanna. Thank you.

So, we've got seventy brothers and at least five sisters. With five sisters and seventy brothers—no question about it – the sisters outnumber the brothers! I wish we would get back to the raising up of workers the way the Lord did. If it had only happened once in the New Testament, we would say it was an oddity—but it was not, because it happened twice. I'll tell you about that later. So, we have the Lord Jesus raising up the embryonic, prototype church—seventy men and at least five women, probably a lot more—living physically with the Lord Jesus Christ. He was their center, and they lived together for two or three years. They learned a little bit about *koinonia* and *ecclesia*—gathering and fellowship. Then they, raised up by the Holy Spirit, brought into being the church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem was brought into being by these men pouring their lives and all their experience into those people for six, seven, or eight years. So, we've got two situations right there.

Then the third one was the great disbursement—when the people, having what they had, went out and took it to other places. Now, they didn't each go out with a pastor, saints, brothers, and sisters. They didn't do that. There was no leader; this was not organized. Some went back to their homes. Some fled as far as they could and stayed in Israel, and some went as far away as Damascus. That was the disbursement—and around it grew up wonderful New Testament churches without any pastors or leaders or anything, and that set a new pattern for the church in the first century.

Now, let me ask you a question. It may not sound accurate, but it *is* accurate. What was the last church to come out of the Jerusalem line? The very last church—and I'll give you a hint: it was the beginning of a new line. Yes, who said that? Alright, the Antioch church. Now, the reason that church is so unique is because it's not all Jewish. It was started by Jews, but Gentiles just plain flat walked up and took it away from them, and it became a Gentile church. A little bit of a half-breed, but mostly a Gentile church—though raised up by Jewish people, Hebrews—mainly by Barnabas.

We have a unique situation here. We have an apostle who is not an apostle raising up a church that ought not to have been raised up! Now, the reason that happened was because there were workers who came out of the church in Jerusalem, and they were not the twelve, but in those six or seven years that the church was there, young men came up, not many. Out of twenty thousand believers, maybe five or six or seven or eight men. That was about all. Second generation of workers—actually, third generation. What would be the first generation? Huh? Jesus. Then the apostles, and now these men who grew up in the church in Jerusalem. Give me their names. These are workers—a new set of workers. Praise the Lord, there was a second group of workers!

Now, who are they? Philip. Stephen. Barnabas. Silas, I'll put Silas in there. Okay? Yeah. John Mark? John Mark was probably around sixteen, seventeen years old, maybe twenty. Too young. Absolutely too young. No—Agabus. Now let's do that again and count them. We've got Silas, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas, and Agabus. We know the names of five. I'm sure that if I go back and check, there'd be more than that. One of those brothers sneaked off—well, he didn't really sneak off; he was sent off—but he *did* sneak off, and he did something he shouldn't have done. He raised

up a church. And I can tell you why he did. He was tired of all this Jewish stuff. Even though he himself was Jewish, he was tired of it. There was still a whole lot of mixture in this—still the synagogue, still the old Jewish traditions; he was wanting a revolution, and he knew somebody who could help him pull it off - a recent convert. So he went, got on a mule, and rode all the way over—some way or other they went over to Tarsus—and found this man in hiding, whose name was Paul, and came back, and they raised up the church in Antioch. and this is really unique. It's basically a one-man show, but we can say five men raised up that church. Three of those men started it, brought in Barnabas -they respected him - and he took over the leadership. But he needed help, and he got Paul. That was fine.

Now, can you give me the names of these other three Jews who fled to Antioch, who dispersed to Antioch? Now, if you can do this, I'll be impressed. Alright, come on—give me any one of them. They're in a prayer meeting—they're listed in the New Testament. I think it's Acts 13, I'm not really sure. Okay, they had a prayer meeting. These are the leaders, the prophets of the church. These are the men who go out and preach, and by the way, the church in Antioch is quite large - probably fifteen hundred, maybe two thousand people. These five men go out and preach in the homes, but they can't preach in *all* the homes, so lots of times you don't have to put up with these preachers! You get to have your own meetings, with nobody around, and you get to do all your sharing—no elders, no bishops, nobody staring down the back row keeping you from doing something. You can do anything you want, stupid things and all that!

These five men who were instrumental in raising up the church - none of them were really apostles. The church is quite large. I want you to remember that four of those men had the experience of being dispersed into the community, where there were no leaders. Every once in a while, one of the twelve apostles would come from Jerusalem and preach to these little groups, but these men had come out of the dispersion, and they knew the church was to function without a human head. That had been their experience—that had been the experience of the church in Jerusalem—and that had been the experience of the twelve when they lived with the Lord.

Those men are Lucius, Niger, Simon of Cyrene, Barnabas, and Paul. They had a prayer meeting, and the Holy Spirit said, "Send Paul and Barnabas out and raise up Gentile churches." And Simon the Cyrene, Niger, and Lucius stayed in Antioch, in this great big, huge church. They could give up two workers and not miss them. Now that's quite a deal! Remember, all those Christians were meeting in dozens of homes throughout that great city. Are you following me?

This, to me, is fascinating—that the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, would send twelve men to two million Jews, and send two men to all the rest of the entire planet. Isn't that incredible? And you know something? Because of the way they did it—the kind of men they were, and the way they did - they pulled off something fantastic. By the way, the discussion tonight is about how the church in Rome was raised up. Are you following me so far? Okay. We're coming to the Book of Romans tomorrow night for sure. This, to me, is what I live and breathe for. The Lord Jesus raises up an embryonic church in Galilee, and He raises up workers at the same time. The church in Jerusalem becomes a large expression of that embryonic church in Galilee, where twelve men—or seventy men—lived with the Lord. The Jerusalem church was raised up by those men staying with a large group of people for six or seven years. Do you begin to see how important that is now? There's a

great going forth, but there needed to be a really solid work first, because things have definitely picked up. Have you noticed that the center stage here is the church? It's not Campus Crusade for Christ. It's not InterVarsity. It's not Moody Bible Institute—I'll pick on something local here. I don't mean that as criticism; I'm just telling you, it was the church.

Would you also notice that the men who are center stage are the church planters, not the pastors? Today, the church planter does not exist, and something called a pastor does. Where he came from is beyond me. All I can tell you is, he stole your right to function. He turned you into one great big, huge ear, and about the only thing you know how to do is listen. I'm not talking to you individually, but we, as believers, just became a huge ear. The rest of the body died. We became one big tongue and one big ear—and you know who the tongue is.

Then came the dispersal. Churches were without leaders; they did not have leaders. There were not that many leaders. The apostles were circuit. That's in the New Testament. They went around preaching to these churches. That circuit ministry helped them, and then they'd go on, leaving the churches to function without leaders. Later, leaders grew up. At the same time, new workers were being raised up. How were they raised up? They were not raised up by the Lord Jesus. They were raised up by the apostles. Yet, that's not exactly true either. The apostles didn't sit down and train them. You know what really raised up those men—Barnabas, Silas, Agabus, Stephen, and Philip? You know what raised them up? The church. Just being in the body of Christ. Praise the Lord.

Now we have a new church being raised up in a new way. First of all, it is Gentile and it's far from Jerusalem. Those people never saw the Jerusalem church. Everybody else did. We don't have a people being planted as sort of a little Jerusalem church. In Antioch, you have something totally different. You have a tiny little group of Christian men speaking to and raising up a people who never saw a church in their lives, never had a day of experience in the body of Christ. They got the church of Jesus Christ by the preaching of these men. Now, these men—not a man, but these men—go around preaching in these homes. Two of them leave town. I think it is wonderful that these men feel like they can leave. I was a member of a church in a town in Texas that, over a period of 50 years, had only two ministers. Two. One ministered, I think, as pastor for about twenty or twenty-five years, then he retired, and his son-in-law took over and just recently retired. That's fifty years by two men. They never left. Their whole lives were spent there.

Now, I ask you—do you think that when that second pastor retired, the day he left, he had that church raised up to a position where he could walk out of there and they'd never need another minister? That they were all functioning and taking care of themselves? Can you imagine what it would have been like on the Sunday he said farewell? "Next Sunday you're all going to meet here, and there'll be no choir, no song leader, and no me. You're all here to function and carry on the church by yourselves, without any human headship." How do you think that church would manage? Fifty years of preaching—and they were exactly where they had been fifty years before: sitting and listening.

I'm laying out to you things on my heart. This is what makes Gene Edwards run. You see right back there? You wind that up, and that's what makes me run. Those men stayed—three of those men stayed. I'm sure they were there forever, but that church functioned as a church.

Now, out of this comes what we call the Antioch line of churches. We've got the Lord in the embryonic church. We've got the church in Jerusalem. Out of the church in Jerusalem comes a great dispersion of churches—the church in Jerusalem splitting up into little pieces and being taken out everywhere. Are you following that? The disbursement. Then we have a church raised up by people who never saw a church, by a handful of workers—and they're Gentiles. It turns out they seem to have a better handle on this than the Jews did, because they don't have to forget what a synagogue is like. Do you understand? They've never seen a synagogue. I wish you'd never seen a church building—you'd be better off. I wish I'd never seen one. I wish nobody had ever seen one. Say "Amen." I'm feeling insecure—say "Amen." I want you to know that it's like throwing raw meat to a hungry lion. I don't feel insecure anymore. I think I am good.

Now, let's look at this Paul and Barnabas situation, because they've got a little task. They've got somewhere between fifty and a hundred million people on this planet. We don't know the population of the world at that time, but it's been estimated that the Roman Empire was made up of about fifty million, so let's just stop with the Roman Empire—two men against fifty million heathen who never even heard of Abraham, Moses, or Isaac, or hardly even heard of God. They only knew gods—and those gods were mostly men. The gods they understood were just jumbo men who went around chasing one another, hitting one another, cursing one another, and throwing thunderbolts at one another. Men with jumbo virtues and jumbo human failures and frailties. They had a job on their hands, and what is incredible to me is what God led those men to do, and as far as I'm concerned, it's from here on that I really pay attention to how a church is raised up, because from here on, it's Gentile territory. I'm a Gentile, so this speaks to me.

The first thing you have is two church planters. They're not pastors. They're not prophets. We're not looking at evangelists. We're not looking at song leaders or ministers of education or worship leaders. We're looking at men who plant churches. They have vanished from the face of the earth. We don't even think in these terms anymore today. But they were center stage in the first century. You did not see a pastor center stage in the first century. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, you find the pastor center stage. In that day, it was the church planter. Two men went out to plant churches, and what they did was so exciting—and I lay it before you. They raised up four churches in two years. That means they spent approximately five months with each church. Now, you're going to tell me the names of those four churches. Four churches—four months. We have a saying down in Texas: "One riot, one ranger." Four churches—four months for each one of them.

Okay, what are the names of these churches? Don't be timid. You'll make a mistake, that's all right. I'll tell you you're stupid and dumb. I'll give you two ladies another chance. You don't know? Okay. Antioch Pisidia. The Antioch of the Pisidians. We just left Antioch of the Syrians, and now we're at Antioch of the Pisidians. What's another one? These are all located in Galatia. Derbe - the last of the four. Lystra - the third of the four. So, you've got the second one. What's the third one? We've got Iconium. Okay, so we have another Antioch, the Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. And I think what's exciting about Derbe is that it was not much more than a village, and I thank God for that. That means a lot to me. Alright, we've got two church planters. Now, if you are a people right here, and you're all heathen, and you've been saved by the power of the gospel through the Holy Spirit—two men as the instruments, Barnabas and Paul—and they've preached to you for four

months, can you understand that they're the only two Christians you've ever seen? They can sit around and tell you all about the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, and all the wonderful things—but all you've ever seen are these two men. And you love them. You never heard of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. You never heard of Moses. You don't understand the law—trust me, you do not understand the law. At the end of four months, these two men—hundreds of miles away from the nearest church, with no sister church—get up and walk out and leave you.

The thing I want you to understand—and if somebody could just catch this, please Lord, let somebody catch this. Left you without a leader. And that isn't all. Except for coming to visit you again for a couple of weeks—around two years from now—you won't see them again for about four years. You are this group of people who've had four months, and the only two Christians in this world have run off and left you. You've got no leaders. Now that's really what happened with the seventy in Galilee—their leader ran off and left them, and when Saul persecuted the church, and the church had to break up and people fled everywhere, they were cut off from their leaders, and they functioned without them. Now it's happening in Galatia. There's a trend here. The trend is *not* a trend—it's the testimony of the church that Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

Now, if we have any task today in this century, it's not to have a headless church with no leaders. You missed the point completely. We need to be raised up in such a way that we can function. Now, we need some young men to learn how to do that, brother. You understand? You don't quit, Stanley. No, you don't quit, and you don't just preach folks to death; you show them how to function with you being absent. That's your business—to raise the church up. And that takes preaching. Don't misunderstand me—it takes beaucoup, beaucoup preaching and teaching. It takes a long time, and in our day, it's going to take longer than it did then, but there must come a day when God's people can have a meeting without me present, without anybody present that's got any kind of position of leadership. That's the goal we should establish.

Now, let me tell you why I'm riding this horse, because when we get to Rome, this gets really exciting. I'm telling you folks, this, to me, is so exciting. Also, notice there are no Bible schools. Alright, we're back here to this little town. No Bible school, no seminary, no Christian college, not even Bibles. What Bible? First of all, you're all illiterate—except this Jewish girl here, who knows how to read Hebrew. That's going to help you a whole lot, isn't it? And this Jewish merchant has one portion of a scroll his great-grandfather gave him, and he can quote the Psalms. He's really religious—watch this guy. We have a Greek merchant here who can read Greek. And we have one Latin soldier among us who can read Latin. That's really going to help the rest of you, isn't it? Well, this brother right here, who can read Greek, says, "Well, you know, everybody ought to love one another. Bless our hearts, let's love everybody." And he says, "I can read Greek in the synagogue downtown—they've got the Old Testament Scriptures in Greek as well as Hebrew. I'll just go down there and ask them if I can borrow their sacred Scripture." And I'll tell you for sure—that doesn't work very well, does it? So that doesn't work. You've got no Scripture, no Bible, no seminary, no Bible school, no Christian university, no apostles, no elders, no deacons, no gifted ones. And you've had four months of hearing the gospel.

And you're so stupid that when those two church planters leave, you think it's exciting! No Gentile workers. Are you clear with me? No Gentile workers, and you're in a mess. Except for a two or

three-week visit a little later on—praise the Lord, you're on your own. You know what's going to see you through? An indwelling Lord and the body. Boy, you're going to close ranks. You're going to help one another, love one another, and care for one another. Some of you are going to learn how to talk and share because you're dependent on it. This brother, who's memorized the whole book of Psalms—we're going to lean on him. Every meeting we have, we'll say, "Quote us one of those Psalms." "Which one?" "It doesn't matter which one—just quote it." And we're really going to lean on this brother. And this brother's going to go over to the synagogue, and he's going to listen to the Jews reading the Scripture. He's going to come back and say, "Last Saturday I heard them read out of a book called Ezea...or Azur...or Ezra...or something like that, and it said in there such and such and such and such." Of course, he misquotes it, but he gets the general idea. And you take that for a few weeks, and it becomes what you fellowship with the Lord.

And that's not all. You know how to pray. You know how to get in with the Lord Jesus and have some fellowship with the Lord. And when you come together, you have something to share with one another. You build up one another in love. You build up one another. The building is now in your hands. The spiritual building is in your hands. And those two good-for-nothing apostles, they just walked off and left you. They don't seem to care. They honestly believe that Jesus Christ can take care of you.

Alright, so we have a new way of churches being raised up. I guess I have to admit, this is where my favorite way of seeing the church raised up starts. You all get anything out of it? Alright, I'll take that. How does it work? Two church planters who don't have good sense walk into a town, stay for a while, and leave. Boy, that's hard to do in America. You know why it's hard to do in America? Ask me why it's hard to do in America. Because of two or three reasons. One of them is, everybody immediately wants to know what their gift is. "What's my gift? I've got such and such gift." "You'd better listen to me because I've got a gift." And the other one is, doggone it, you're too democratic. "We don't want any leaders. We're not about to be special. We're all equal. All the same. All of us are the same. Many leaders! Who's Paul? Who's Barnabas? Who's this guy who raised us up anyway? What do we need him for? He can just stay away. We don't need him. All we need is the Holy Ghost." Anarchy. That may be great for the American government, but it doesn't work that way, saints. We are not equal. Tell me that a thumb is equal to an eye. Fine, then let me yank out your eye, and you keep your thumb. How do you feel about that? I will give up a thumb to keep an eye on any day. Will you? Because my eye has a greater function than my thumb. It's more important to my survival. It's not a democracy, and it's not even a theocracy. God appointed church planters to raise up people. If they've got any good sense, they'll get out of there. Otherwise, they'll become local pastors, which, as the old saying goes, that and a dime will get you a ten-cent candy bar. That's just pastors. That's modern-day stuff. He should eventually leave, and I mean really leave. Well, we don't have any of these things today, and I'm not even suggesting that we try. I'm going to come a little bit later to tell you what we ought to do. These are not the places where we cure the problem.

I think I'd like to stop here and tell you something. This group of people defines all "Edwardian theory." Do you know what I mean by that? "Edwardian" -Edward - Edward - you, and I know you've heard of this, but you remind me of the bumblebee. The bumblebee has been scientifically

studied—and it cannot fly. Its fuselage is too long, and it's too wide. It cannot, aerodynamically, get off the ground. It weighs too much. Its wings are too small, and its wing muscles are too weak. It cannot fly, but because nobody has ever been able to tell the bumblebee that, it flies anyway. That, to me, is this fellowship of believers right here. If you understood that you could not exist, but you do. This is one of those precious, rare things, and those of you who have heard me tell my story know that I've always included the story of a Japanese church in a town called Toyama, Japan. I've seen something that few men have ever seen. I've seen three or four organic expressions of the church survive. Survive.

Now, saints, there are thousands of groups of Christians that organically touch church life, but they die in weeks. Some die in days, some in weeks, some in months. Probably you've had that experience. I had it in college with a group of college students. We touched the life of the body of Christ. We had it for three, four, five months, and it died. The Baptists killed it. Dead. They didn't know what the thing was, so they shot it.

I saw a Black community of believers in Watts, California, that, for a short time, was an expression of the body of Christ. Organic. But it lacked a vision of the body of Christ. It just had it but didn't know what it had. They didn't realize that that was more precious than anything else on earth they could do. So, they got off track.

In Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, I saw a French-Quebec expression of the church. It was there for only a few months. The leader decided to go to Africa as a missionary, and the thing died within days. There are more Christians in any one country in Africa than there are in all of Quebec, Canada, but he felt like he had to go preach the gospel to "other lands." And it died; sank like a rock.

Then I saw the organic church in Isla Vista, California, and I think I've probably seen it more than any man living. That's four times. I never expected to see it as long as I lived. Then I saw it once, and I figured, well, maybe it'll happen twice. And boy, I tell you, you all get down on your faces and thank God, because you have the most precious thing in the world. Now you've got a living, breathing body here. I guess all I'm doing right now is seeking to get you to appreciate that and broaden your horizons.

Okay, where did we leave off? We left off with four Galatian churches, each raised up headless. Now, that's so exciting. Americans love to hear that part of the story: "No leader? Hot dog, no leader? Wow!" But it did later get leaders. Paul did come back, and Barnabas, and they ordained elders—who immediately took control. (laughter) "Stir me a mess, the business. Stir you! No more of that! Those earrings...they have to be square, not round! You sit there and shut up, and don't you say another word! I'm going to preach to you for fifty years!" There is no evidence in Acts, nor in the epistles to the churches written by Paul, that elders suddenly came in and took control of the meetings.

Let me try to explain something to you, saints. We have in America something that's organic: it's democracy. It grew out of frontier living, when your nearest neighbor was a mile away. Those were British people. You understand that? They came out of the slums of London, came over here, got

out into the wilderness, and they came over talking this way, you know. "And I say", they got in the sun, and it was hot. It was very, very hot. And they got tired. Pretty soon, they began to speak a little slower, and a little slower, and a little slower. They picked up some Indian words, like 'crick' and 'moccasin', and pretty soon, they didn't sound like they used to sound back in England; they sounded about like they do in Texas, and they evolved from a monarchy to anarchy. That's something that is so much a part of our nature, we can't even comprehend that we've got it. It's organic to this country. If you ever live in another nation, you'll find people don't think the way we do about freedom. They think in terms of the State taking care of them and doing whatever the State tells them to do. Go to Germany sometime, and find out that the only way you can get anything done is if somebody's got a title, then anything gets done. That's not true in America. You know, we're all the sons and daughters of John Wayne. Now, I don't want any trouble, because I'm a peaceable man. That's Americanism.

Well, I'm making a point here, and that is this: those people in Galatia had won something organically when those apostles left them alone. They won the functioning of the Body and the headship of Christ, and those elders were not imported in from out somewhere in Judaism, from legalistic backgrounds. They were the farmers, the merchants, the illiterates who had been saved right along with you. You can't take the functioning of the Body of Christ away from those people just because you've been called an elder. They'll bite you in the knee! "What do you mean by pulling this off on me?" Some of those sisters..." I knew you when you were a shrimp! Six months ago, you were a blood-drinking pagan, and now you're trying to tell me what I'm supposed to wear?" Are you following me? There was something organic to their nature. Those men who became elders were there to take care of things that had nothing to do with the meetings, things like people who wouldn't work, people who lied all the time, cheated, stole, got thrown in jail for getting drunk, adultery, robbery, or whatever.

Now, I'm taking longer than I thought I would, but I'm enjoying this. I'll throw in a little story here, and that is, the day they met some more Christians, and this is probably one of the great weaknesses of an organic expression of the church, and that's when someone from outside comes floating through. Now, can you imagine? Let me talk to you, saints, over here. This is the church in Iconium. Can you imagine that you've been led to the Lord by Barnabas and Paul? They were precious, weren't they? Weren't they neat? You really loved them; they were loving and caring, and you caught it; now you're loving and caring. They were open; you're open. They were normal and natural, and you're normal and natural, and you think that all Christians are like you and like them. You hear that some brothers have come all the way from Jerusalem, and they have been in Pisidian Antioch, and now they're coming up to you. You've got the rumor. Some more Barnabases and Pauls! Yeah Really! You're so excited. You make all these wonderful preparations, and boy, here they come.

"Are you circumcised?" I'm sorry, but that's what happened. "Do you eat pork?" And so, it goes. And in just a few weeks, these people are living in absolute confusion. Some of them are getting circumcised. They start observing the Sabbath. They didn't even know what the Sabbath was! It had never even been brought up. They're trying to figure out whether they should go to the synagogue. They're memorizing the Ten Commandments, and they're not allowed to go over a few

feet on Saturdays and Sundays. And you know? They're all loving this! They're eating this up—because “Boy, this is going to make God love them more.” Boy, I think the Lord...I hope you get control of yourselves.”

Paul writes a letter, and you just go home and thank God tonight for the Galatian letter. In fact, that letter is in direct contradiction to some of the things he says in Romans, which is very befuddling. And that's wonderful, too, that Paul can contradict himself so totally! That way, we can never fall into any...I don't care what you decide you're going to believe, other than the cardinal things of the Lord Jesus: the virgin birth, the resurrection, and so on. I don't care what you decide to believe. Something in the New Testament will contradict it, and that's wonderful.

He wrote this book of freedom—incredible freedom. And these people were truly set free. You don't really have freedom until you have it, lose it, and get it back. By the way, that's what happened in America. We didn't win our freedom—we got it from the organic nature of the frontier. Then the British started taking it away from us, and we found out what we had. Then we fought for it, and then we really got it. These people were free and didn't know it. They had it taken away from them by the Judaizers, and then they got it back, and in the process, they really did get Barnabas and Paul as their church planters—as the men whom they would look to—because they suddenly realized they had something wonderful and incredible in those two men. The Gentile churches were the free churches. They were the place to be, saints, and they would become what God would eventually have on this earth.

The Jerusalem church and the Jewish churches in Palestine pretty much ended by the year 70 A.D. I'm jumping ahead of my story, but if you were a Jew living in the first century and you were a Christian after 70 A.D., you would have to humbly walk into a Gentile church in order to have fellowship, because that was all that was left. Isn't that wonderful? You see what the Lord was doing in Barnabas and Paul.

Okay, we have four churches organically raised up. After they are raised, they have organic fellowship in Christ. They eventually get their local leaders. We're not talking about workers, we're talking about local leaders, and one day Paul and Barnabas will circuit...you understand what I mean by “circuit”? They'll make a circle, come back, and build them up every once in a while—just like the apostles did with the dispersing of the Christians all over Israel. This thing follows a pattern.

Now Barnabas and Paul leave your church, and leave your church, and leave you—and they go home. They're planning on staying just a short time, but there's a big stink over this business of circumcision and the Law, and they end up going to Jerusalem. They're home for two years. So, they were out for two years raising up four churches—about four months in each city. Then they come home for two years. Now you put that together—that's four years, right? Alright, let's see if we can put that together in years. Let's say that this happened. Somebody write this down! Is nobody taking notes? You are really illiterate, aren't you?

Alright, if they go out on their first church-planting trip—did you notice I didn't call it a “missionary journey”—church-planting trip; if they leave in 44 A.D. and are gone two years, what year is that? 46. That doesn't work out. Make that 42 A.D. They go out in 42 AD, gone two years, back home in

44. And now they're going to go out again for two years. So, they'll be gone until 46 A.D.? Alright, let's try that on. We'll see how that works. What year did Paul get to Corinth? Okay, let's try that again. Make it 44. Two years out, two years home. 48 A.D. Aha, that's it! They leave in 44, go out for two years, raise up four churches, come home for two years, and then they go out on their second church-planting trip. Now, don't feel ashamed if none of you can tell me what the first church was. Oh, by the way—they went back and visited your four churches. You're doing fine. After that scorching letter you got, some of you who had gotten circumcised tried to get uncircumcised! You gave up the Law! Boy, you went back to freedom just as fast as you could! Hallelujah!

So, Paul and Silas are on the second trip now. Now, why isn't Barnabas there? I'm going to tell you why. Because two men of equal stature can't work together very long, and that's just the way it is—and that's the way it's going to be—and that's the way it ought to be. The only time there was ever an exception to that was in Jerusalem, and that was because those men lived with the Lord Jesus. Barnabas and Paul had a falling out, and Barnabas went back to Cyprus to try to make those Jewish churches there into Gentile churches, or at least free churches. Paul went on with his commission to preach to places he had never been.

He raises up three churches on this trip, doesn't he? What's the first one? What's the first church that is raised up after he visits you folks again? He's now in Greek territory. He's left the Gauls. By the way, I am a Gaul. Being French, I am Gaul. What? No. Second trip, not third. Second trip. Huh? No. First one? Oh, there are four churches. I'm sorry, I forgot one. Four churches. Is it Philippi? I thought it was Thessalonica. I think it's Thessalonica, Berea, Philippi, and then Corinth. Are you with me? Because now the plot thickens. He raises up the church in Thessalonica, Berea with Silas, and then Philippi. He's only there for less than a month. That's really a short time, and that turns out to be one of the most precious churches of all the first-century era. Now, what year does he go out on his second trip? Let's do that again. In 44, he leaves. Gone for two years. That's 46. Comes home and gets back in 48. He stays a little time in Thessalonica, a little time in Berea, a little time in Philippi, and he hits Corinth in 50 AD.

Now I want you to watch the man who's coming into Corinth. Our story really begins here. He's Jewish. He is committed to the Gentile world and to a Gentile church that is not bound up in legalism. Isn't that wonderful? He has raised up churches; he has raised up seven churches plus Antioch, and now he's going into Corinth. He's going to stay there for two years, but there is a city he wants so much to raise a church in; he can taste it, a very interesting city. He wants to get there before the Jews get there. He wants this thing to be a 100% Gentile church.

Now, Paul at this time is going to come up with two of the greatest strokes of genius that I know of that have ever taken place in the Christian faith, and he seems to come up with both of them at the same time. The question has always been: who raised up the church in Rome? And the answer has always been, well, there were some people who just went up there, got transferred there, moved there, preached the gospel to other people, and a little church was started. I don't question that, but I can tell you this: whoever they were, they were Jews, because Paul has got seven Gentile churches in the whole world, two of them had just been born in the last few weeks, and the other four are you

Galatians who are living in an obscure part of the world. You're all poor. You're illiterate. You're not the kind of people who would travel five miles, much less go to Rome. The travelers of that day were the merchants. Who's that? The Jews. We're talking about Christians—the Jews. If there are any Christians in the capital of the world, if there are any at all, and I figure there are a handful, they're Jews.

Paul does not like this. A church is being born in Rome, Italy, and it is going to be Jewish, and that means it is going to be culturally locked in. It is going to be ritualistic. It is going to be dead. It is going to be confined to about 50,000 people in a city of a million, because that's how many Jews are there. And by the way, that's a pretty accurate figure. They took a lot of censuses in those days, and some of them still exist. The figures still exist. Can you imagine how excited Paul got when he got to Corinth, and he's going there to preach the gospel, and he meets a couple of Jews, and they are Christians. We don't know where they came from, but they are Jews. They are two Jewish businessmen and businesswomen who happened to have gone to Rome and who have been there with the believers there. Paul says, "Well, hi, Priscilla. How are you doing? Aquila, how are y'all? How are things in Rome?" And they say, "Oh, haven't you heard? Claudius has ruled that all Jews must leave Rome." Paul says, Hot Diggity! "Are you following me? That makes Rome virgin territory for the gospel."

And now, here is the stroke of genius. Now only you and I know this. Give me a minute before I tell you what the stroke of genius is. He has two strokes of genius. We've got the Lord in Galilee raising up men and workers. We've got a Jerusalem church raised up by twelve men over a long period of time: foundational work. We have the dispersion of the church, little Jerusalems going out and being transplanted. We have a church raised up by workers who are Jewish, and the people are Gentiles, but they are not apostles who raise up the church. We have two men going out in twos in the way the Lord had shown the apostles. Two men go out; they raise up four churches and leave them headless—human headless. Those churches develop an organic relationship with the Lord and one another. The men come back and ordain elders to take care of the piddly stuff that nobody really wants to mess with anyway. The churches go on functioning as they did when they had no leaders.

Now, that to me is the best way, but there are two more ways of raising up the church, about to be any minute now, and they are even better. The only thing is you can't have those in the beginning. The two best ways have to come later; you can't have them in the beginning or the middle. They have to be later. Trust me, it's true. It'll get clear in a minute. Paul comes into Corinth. I don't know why he stays so long. He stays 18 months; that's in the book of Acts. I don't know why he stays so long, but the reason has got to be one of two reasons: either he thinks they are a wonderful bunch of people and he really wants to invest time in them, or they are the absolutely dumbest human beings that ever lived, and it takes him longer there than it does anywhere else. I tend to believe it's the second one. He was there for 18 months.

Paul has another city on his heart, but he's got something else on his heart besides cities. He's got a dream. And I've got a dream. If you want to know what winds me up and makes me go, I will tell you now what winds me up and makes me go: I have a dream. I may not live long enough to experience it, but I'm going to get caught trying. When I saw this as a young man, it was a vision, and it will live with me till the day I die. It's my hope. It's my prayer. It's the reason I get up in the morning. It's the reason I go to bed at night. It's the reason I live and breathe. I want to do what Paul

of Tarsus did. I'm going to tell you what he did: he had another city on his heart, and that city was Ephesus. He wanted to preach the gospel there, and he wanted a church raised up there, but he wanted something else: he wanted workers who were Gentiles, not Jewish workers.

Do you notice that until now, all workers have been Jews? And that's dangerous because they've all got a legalistic heritage. Now, you folks over here in Iconium don't have a legalistic heritage. You're a bunch of heathens. That's what you are: converted heathen. The brothers and sisters in Antioch are Gentiles. Wonderful. They all have a rich heritage of the church without any great leaders over them. Here's the church in Pisidia, Antioch...Antioch of Pisidia, if not Antioch, Syria. You have a wonderful, rich heritage of freedom and joy. You've gotten past the Jews and circumcision, and your experience is unique because you had a certain persecution. You almost didn't make it, but you did, and you got a real-knit body. You've got a wonderful testimony. Here's the church in Iconium. You've got a unique history. You've gotten past the Jewish thing and religion, and you are beginning to develop leaders. And you are Lystra, and you've got a brother who, from the day he got saved, was just a firebrand, preaching the gospel almost from day one. His name is Timothy. You've got a rich heritage that's uniquely yours, and so does Derbe. That's four churches, right?

Well, hold steady. Actually, it's five, because Antioch. Alright, then there it is. Now the church in Thessalonica: new church, but it's coming along really well, and the church in Berea is really unique and wonderful; brand new and wonderful.

(Continued in Part 2)