

It's 7:45 in the evening, and the subject for the third time is the Present State of the Lord's Testimony. I'm going to finish this as quickly as I can. But now we're into not only the present state of Christians outside the institutional church, but also the status of Christians inside the institutional church. Now, some of you are going to say, Gene, this is not what the institutional church is really like. You got into an exceptional situation. No, that's not true. The institutional church will kill you if you threaten them. If they don't actually kill you, they can at least make life a little interesting.

When the church in Isla Vista got big enough that it could be seen, known, and heard, and these folks were getting ready to go out on a migration, this gentleman called a meeting of every church (of theirs) in the United States. He traveled to every one of them, and his sole purpose was to attack me. Now, honestly, you've got to believe that. You really have to believe that. So, word came back to me that this was happening, and it didn't particularly bother me. But one of the things that I have tried to do is to be submissive, and when you find somebody, it's really going to hurt them if you don't do what they ask you to. I did something very foolish, and I should not have. So many people said to me, Gene, why on earth did you submit yourself to this? You knew what was going to happen. But Bob said, "Gene, the Bible says if you have something against someone, or somebody has something against you, you've got to go see them."

So, I wrote this gentleman a letter, and you could not send telegrams. The telegraph company was on strike for the only time in my memory. I found someone who would type it up. It was about four pages long, a masterpiece of diplomacy, and it started with "Dear Brother." But the envelope, which was the envelope that I had scratched out to take with me to the Western Union...the person who typed it up took that envelope and put the letter in it and left out one word: "Brother." So, I wrote to him and asked to meet. I went to the embassy hotel to make sure I was at the right place. I stopped, opened the door, walked in, saw their book table, turned around, and walked out. There was a rumor that, within 10 minutes of my walking in and out, Gene Edwards had come to spy on this group. I'm trying to give you some idea of the paranoia with which these people lived in an unreal world. So, the next hour or two, or maybe it was the next morning, I'm not really sure, I came in with Lance and John, and the meeting was held. The brother saw me in the audience. He knew I was coming. He had been alerted. I was there to see if I could sit down and talk with him.

Now, y'all, this is the present status of the testimony of God. Are you clear? He stood there and called people out of the audience to speak against me. There's no way for me to communicate this, but they believed in calling on the name of the Lord, but it had become a scalping cry, a war cry, if you please, a war dance. Mike, shake your head. Yes. When they got through with this orgy of attacks on me, then they went into one of these, "Oh Lord Jesus," and it just reverberates, and it's a screaming match. It was over, and I went to the front to see if I could reconcile...Oh, I didn't either...I knew good and well I was going to get lynched, and there was all there was to it. That's why I was there. You have to understand that there is no human being on earth who can argue with this man. It cannot be done. No human has ever tried it and come out with anything but being steamrolled and squashed. Now I was very aware of that.

So, we sat down, and there was the stage, and he faced me. We were at the foot of the stage. I sat there facing him, my knees together with his knees. They were not any more than that far apart. On the stage was virtually every man in that building. They had packed that thing out, and you know I was an enemy, and he was their hero. So, we sat down, and he said, " We're going to ask you this question." I said, "Brother, I'm here just to see for some time that you and I can get together and see if we can come to peace, a reconciliation, or if not, at least leave on friendly terms." He was very upset because there was a church in Santa Barbara, and even more upset when he heard it was better than his churches. And he was just upset.

We had two men's wills locked in, just locked, and this must have gone 30 or 40 minutes. No, brother, I would like to sit down and meet with you. All these people standing there...it was interesting. This is the only thing I'd say to him. "I just came here to..." Well, brother, we want to talk to you. Nope. "I just want to see if you and I can get together and talk." When we finished, I felt thankful to God that it was finally behind me. He said he would meet with me on Monday. I think that was Saturday morning. When we stood up, I had the only vision I ever had in my life. He stood up and turned, and John, at the very moment, stood up and turned toward me. "I have just traded one slaughter for another one."

I turned to go, and he came to me, and he said, "Gene." No, he always called me brother. "Brother Gene, I have a request to make of you." This was in August of 1971. He said, "I ask you never again to preach anything you ever learned from me." I said, "Brother, I'll take you up on that." He had no idea what he did that day, because from that moment on, it was higher ground. I turned to go, and there was a long, long aisle up to the front, and I knew that every eye in there was going to be watching how I left there. And you know, Mike, it turned out just exactly the way I felt. I made sure how I walked out of that room. Later, before the day was over, they were saying he walked out of there like a snake slithering down the aisle. This is true. I'm not exaggerating anything. In fact, I'm being kind. Well, you've never seen me do a Blackie Edwards/John Wayne walk. I mean, it would make strong men pass out. (laughter) If you ever see me get angry and I'm walking, you'll see it, but I'm not going to try to illustrate it to you. I walked out of there. Well, I don't have enough room. It takes about 20 feet to get started.

That was Saturday morning. I got back to Isla Vista and heard there were a whole bunch of people there on Sunday morning to hear him. The first thing he did was stand up and say, "I am not going to meet with Gene Edwards." Okay, and I understand he did a pretty good job there that morning. Somebody wrote in to ask for the tape they always distributed and wanted a copy of the Sunday morning meeting, and somebody was really thrilled. They were going to send it out, and they thought, "Oh, this is a wonderful tape. You're really going to enjoy it." Somebody stopped it, and no one ever distributed that tape. I sat there with this incredible man, and if you please, this giant of a man, I was as calm and as unperturbed as I could be. But that morning, I did not drive back to Santa Barbara. I drove out about halfway, and I checked into a motel, and I cried the rest of the afternoon, the evening, and the next morning. All those emotions from all those days, weeks, months, and years turned loose.

There had hardly been a month that had passed, maybe two or three, and word would reach me that these folks were going to send an entire church to establish a church in Santa Barbara. Why they did not, I will never know, but it was a mercy of God. That's one thing we did not have to deal with. I don't know what on earth we would have done. I seriously considered asking the brothers and sisters from Santa Barbara to shut down and join the Elden Hall group for the sake of oneness, to stop this bloodletting. I called Steven Kaung, crying, and said, "Stephen, I have never wished any harm for him nor his work, and I don't know what to do." Now, have you ever had an experience where somebody gives you a sentence that's something like apples are red, or the wind is blowing, and it hits you like a truck hitting you? I was crying almost incoherently. I said, "Brother Stephen, I don't know what to do." Now those two men had long since divided.

Now Stephen Kaung is the, I believe, the first cousin of Watchman Nee; kin in some way. Then there was the other brother, and they had served together for years in China. Brother Stephen, always the gentleman, said, "Gene, there comes a moment in your life when you have to follow God and not man." I had been so committed to peace and unity that I felt like that never crossed my mind. I started balling, and I said, "Thank you." I hung up, and that was pretty much it.

I will tell you this legendary story. I was working with a group of Christians in Dallas. A brother who more or less started the group was a gentleman named Caleb. He's still a very dear friend. This story has been told from so many viewpoints. I want to tell you what happened. They had met, and this group had a group in Dallas, and they came into the group I was working with and said, "We want to be one with you, and we want to just all go in together just on the grounds of Jesus Christ and nothing else." And Caleb said, "No."

Oh, did I tell you about the letter, and how the word 'brother' was missing, and how they hit the roof? It was everywhere in America. He didn't put the word "BRO" in front of the envelope. I mean, it was like the Holocaust. We're not going to be like this. Well, anyway, Caleb asked me to come to Dallas...I'm still being a fool. So, I got on a plane, and Caleb asked me to meet with the two groups and see if they couldn't do something peaceful, because these people had gotten so outraged because someone said they didn't want to meet on the grounds of oneness and unity, and they just went berserk. Then Caleb asked me to go meet the two groups in the room.

I walked in, and they were meeting, and they started their ritual, and the other brothers and sisters were there. I sat down with someone I do not know, but that woman later said, "When I sat down with Gene Edwards, I felt so filthy." I listened, and about five minutes later, somebody got on the phone; you could see them dialing. A few minutes later, the Dallas leader walked in, and his name was Bill Freeman. The meeting ended, and I was about to go out to say something to Caleb, when Bill Freeman started in on me almost in a cadence. I want to get this record straight. There was this blackboard. I did not say one word in that room at any time. You know, I mean, there are some things God has to forgive me for. I went over to that blackboard, and I wrote one word. When I wrote it, I knew that it would be back in Los Angeles within 30 minutes. The word was "Ichabod." I put it down there, September 1, 1971. I turned around, walked out, and we got outside, and they

began screaming. Their screaming was just unreal, and I kept hearing, "Yes, it's Ichabod." And they were talking about me. That was not exactly the message I wished to convey. I turned to Caleb and said, "Caleb, y'all have to stop me."

Everybody stood there on the sidewalk, and they were hearing all of this stuff, and they all had their heads down, and there was a defeated bunch of people. I had not said that yet, by the way, to Caleb, and I looked at them, and I thought how sad it was that this had bruised them. I said, "The natives are rather restless tonight, aren't they?" And everybody looked up and smiled, the group I was with. We got in the car, and I said, "Caleb, you have to stop meeting." They did, and I've never been back to Dallas, Texas.

So, if you've ever read *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, there's Napoleon, who's the leader of the farm. He took it over and ran Snowball off, but whenever anything went wrong, it was Snowball who was to blame, according to Napoleon. Well, for about five, six, or seven years, I was Snowball. I had nothing to do with them, but it was coming back to me all the time. When they had a problem over there, that was Snowball: that was Gene Edwards. Now you answer this question for me. Was that an act of cowardice on my part? Was it a neutral thing, or did it take courage? The answer is, I am the only man in this world, and he knew when I left, and I knew it, and he knew it. I'm the first and only human being who ever survived that man.

Now I'm going to jump ahead to 1975. The Far East again. I was there in 1965 and in 1975. I went there to rescue some Christians who were out in the jungles, and I got a phone call saying somebody's got to come get these people. They're going to be destroyed by the Vietcong, the Viet Thai, and the Viet Lao. I took the challenge, and that's another story. But when I got off the plane, I landed in Hong Kong first. Do you remember what I just told you about what I saw in 1965? When I arrived there in 1975, Brother James Chen, who was, more or less, not only the pastor of that whole church but also of the whole of Hong Kong, belonged to him.

James Chen and Brother ... went to court and were tied up for years over who owned that building. It was big, and it was beautiful, and it was ugly, and it was vicious. There was a day when one group was meeting, the other group ran over time, and the other group came into the building to use the church, and the two groups met, and a fist fight broke out. In fact, it was a riot, and that's the present status of the testimony of God on this earth. As far as I know, there are two churches in every city, whereas there was one little flock church in every place in Asia. The carnage has been absolutely unbelievable, and then the same thing came over to the United States. Brother Michael, I believe you are aware of some of that.

Now, I heard something really interesting. Now, you've just been over in Raleigh-Durham, and there are four groups, and all of them are meeting on the grounds of oneness and locality, four churches in Raleigh, Durham. Tell them that Gene sends his love.

A few years ago, I was in California and met with Doug... You know, I love him. He was 19 years old the day that I met these people, and he's now gray-headed sort of. He said, "Gene, you were

so wise to get out of there when you did." Well, I'm not sure whether I got to the door first or they got me out of the door first. It was a foot race." But he said, "Gene, you cannot imagine how many nervous breakdowns there have been, how many divorces there have been, and how many destroyed Christians there have been since this movement was started." I am telling you that some of the things, if I told you that those people have done, you would say to me that cannot be true. Christians would not do that. Well, I'll tell you one thing. I can tell you what happened. What somebody said in that meeting in Dallas that night, one of them said, "If Gene Edwards walks into this room, I'm going to break open his legs." I never met him. That's the present status of God's testimony this year. Now, I'm ending that story, permanently.

It seems strange today, and you're just going to have to be very understanding that I made a statement. I made a vow that I would never criticize that man as long as I live. I think that finally came clear to them because I did not, and I would not. Then I heard he died, and now I'm about to die, according to this verse of scripture I read. I am about to die anyway, and this is the record that I'm leaving you, the status of the present testimony of God's people on this earth. I would say it's not God's testimony. We don't have one, and quite frankly, I'm not sure we've had one since the Plymouth Brethren stepped on the stage, with all the things they have done. But the carnage that these people have wreaked even overshadows what has gone on between the Plymouth Brothers.

That leaves two other groups of Christians who made it into the 20th century: brother Bakht Singh and brother Prem Pradhan. One from India and one from Nepal. What shall we say of brother Bakht Singh? I never met him, but I made sure his people visited us in Santa Barbara. I'm wondering, Paul, do you and the four of you remember their visit with us? You don't remember a group of Christians every time someone said pray, they dropped to their knees. Misha, do you remember their visit with us? Alicia? We went there, and they came here. They were with us one weekend. Well, this brother, you ought to remember this meeting. This brother got up. He just got there, and he rebuked us for not witnessing. I mean, he really ripped us to shreds. This is what his message was; he sat down, and that room went "tomb" silent. I walked up to the front, and I said to him, "Sir, this afternoon you will lead this church out on the beaches, and you will show us how to witness on the beaches." He didn't know that we were loaded for bear. We went out that afternoon, and he led us. And by the way, he later apologized to me in private for having done that.

We got out there, and we went up one side of those beaches, back down the same side of those beaches, witnessing to people. I think we brought a few folks that night that we had led to the Lord. They're very evangelistic. Bakht Singh is, hands down, the most successful Christian worker outside institutional Christianity since the Apostle Paul. Recently, when he died, the funeral was attended by 600,000 people, according to Christianity Today, and the picture that was taken from an airplane is unbelievable. It was the eyes as far as the eyes can see. 60,000 churches in one man's lifetime. Most of them were in the provinces around Hyderabad. That's a pretty good status, Gene. The only problem is that we never saw those people. He had five co-workers. You're going to meet one of them. He's been a friend of mine for many, many years, and if we can ever rake up five or \$600 around here, I'm going to invite him here. His name is Koshy, and he's going to tell you the

whole story. I have nothing to say to you about these people. They were and still are awesome, but I will tell you this. To my knowledge, and I think I'm correct, and I think maybe I'm one book off, in his entire lifetime, Bach Singh wrote two pamphlets. One is entitled "David Recovered All", about 60 pages long, and there's another one, but I'm not sure what its name is. There may just be one, but that's it. Nothing.

I want to take a little credit for the fact that his biography has just appeared because I asked brother Koshy to come to my home in Maine, sit down with me, and, on the phone, exhorted him to get this biography written. We had a nice long meeting for about a week, and the best I could do was tell him how to write, and he just published, a few days ago, the biography of Bakht Singh. It's 450 pages long, and that's it, and that's a great work, but I will have to say that it was purely evangelism, but I also have to say he was a churchman, 60,000 churches.

What about Prem? I could fall on my knees in front of that man, just by using this name. I don't think I'll ever forgive you, Mike. Brother Prem visited us in Santa Barbara. Y'all remember him? Absolutely. Then he visited the church in Atlanta and stayed at Mike Rooney's home. I was absolutely mortified beyond all mortification when I found out that Prem had slept on the living room floor while he was our guest. Let me tell you something. That was Prem Pradhan's bedroom. And I'm still angry with Prem because He died. He died of a massive something internally. He never wrote a book, and the only messages he ever wrote were recorded by us. I don't know of any man who has ever lived, including the Apostle Paul, who has ever been persecuted as that man has been. His testimony is absolutely unbelievable. The work died with him. It doesn't exist. It was taken over by an institutional church. They bought off his people, paying them \$200 a year, because they had been making \$75. I consider it one of the greatest works of God in the history of Christendom and one of the greatest men that ever breathed air.

I'll tell you something else. I was going through some real crucibles, and I met with Prem somewhere in Canada right over the border, and a lot of brothers came over, about 10 or 12 brothers, to meet him while he was there. Prem made the same decision as I had: never to own anything in my own name. He owned nothing in his name, and he trusted his closest friend and Christian devotee, who owned one of the choicest pieces of property in all of Kathmandu. It was two blocks from the king's palace. He had just received word a few weeks ago that this man had taken the property, sold it, put it in his pocket, and gone to a Hindu temple to renew his Hindu vows.

I was in a virtually identical situation, trusting someone else with God's money. I'm not going to tell you that story. But we sat down, and he was crying, and I was crying, and I said, "Prem..." He was trying to figure out a way to raise \$100,000 to buy it back. He had asked everybody just to put everything on hold, and I said, "Prem, you've got to give it up." I didn't know what that man was made out of, because I was going through exactly the same situation he was. I had yielded it; no fighting. The next morning, at about 6:00 am, we met. I think it was in my hotel room. Prem said, "I just called Nepal, and I told them, 'Give property up, we're not going to fight.'" I could have

fallen at that man's feet and kissed them because I just met somebody who wouldn't fight. We were both just shell-shocked, down, and it was the lowest point of my ministry. I said, "Are you going to quit?" He said, "I never quit." I said, "Alright, I'm making a deal with you, Prem. I'll quit the day after you do." He said, "You never quit. I will never quit."

Do you know that a few moments like that in your life can make the difference between nightmares and walks through hell for just a few bright lights, and now I hold him in higher esteem than any other man on this earth. But I'm sorry the work's gone. We were scheduled, if I could ever get well, we were scheduled to go to Nepal, and I was supposed to teach his people, their workers, and we were going to live in the Riverbed, boil water, and eat rice in the riverbed. Well, that's where he told us he held his conferences, he held conferences in the riverbed. I have no idea what that means. I think I was already praying it would be in a time of the drought...and he died on me.

We've got two really good people. One's work is over. This testimony is over except that it lives in my heart. The other one is way over in India, and it doesn't fit anything that you would ever want to be part of, honest. You get tired of hitting your knees 10-15 times a day, every time somebody says a prayer. They have some strange eccentricities. It is not a criticism, but I tell you that man had a way of raising money like no one else in the world. Every time he was at a church, he put an offering box right beside him. This is Bakht Singh. Everybody would start over here, and they'd come by in single file. He'd stand there and wait till everyone of them put money in that box all the way back, and circle back to where their chair was, and as far as I know, they still do that.

Now then, I have received a tentative engagement to be in northern India next October, to be at one of those things they call a convocation. They usually have about 50,000 people show up for that thing, and he has asked me to be the speaker. Do you think I don't want to go there? I'd give my eye, teeth, and some other things, but I don't see any way in this world I can ever get there. But I do want you to know that I respect those people and love them, and if there's anything we can learn from them, we'll learn it.

Let me very quickly switch over to the very injured man who came to be with us. He was a leader, and his people followed him. We looked up a few weeks after he arrived and began to get well. We had a hundred new people in the church, and they were all his followers. He saw my weakness, and by the way, it's well-known. He's not the first person to ever take advantage of it. It has become almost a standard issue among many people. They find out that I won't fight, and they do all sorts of unbelievable things.

One day, they announced that they were taking over the church in Santa Barbara. I figured it out before they announced it. I knew it was going to be a bloodletting. I had dinner with Lance at the Tea House, and I said, "Lance, you don't know this, but when I walk out this door, they're going to split the church." I'm leaving, and I'm going to find out if I built it with wood, hay, stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stone. Can you tell me, Alicia, approximately how old you were at that time? That would have been 1972. Were you one of the younger ones, or were you older?

Everybody was 24. So, we got 23 and 24-year-olds. Do you understand that I got up and left? Do you understand? I packed my bags in April, and those men were ruthless beyond anything you could imagine. This is the institutional church, and when they got there, they began going from house to house, telling everybody they had the right to this church because they had preached there at one time, and that they were taking over the church. Gene left because he was a coward—same way about that snake slithering down the aisle. Yeah, I guess I am a coward if you've seen that I refuse to get in my flesh or to defend my ministry.

They went door to door telling... Well, I'm going to tell you what they did. They went door-to-door, screaming at people. I spent the summer in Memphis, Tennessee, and I waited to see. I wanted to know. I'd only been there with those kids for two years, and I won't know whether I had built stone and silver and diamonds. To my knowledge, and I believe I am correct, they stormed the church. I came back, and they told me I would never preach in Isla Vista again as long as I lived, and if I tried, they would come into the meeting and haul me out. These are true stories, folks. I don't have this kind of imagination. Well, I don't. Phil doesn't remember this, and I'm so sorry. He came by my house, and he said, "Gene..." I had just arrived, and he said, "Gene, you're never going to preach here again." It was one of those beautiful Isla Vista sunsets going right down over the ocean. They're so gorgeous. And he said, "If you try to preach here, they're going to come and haul you out." I looked at that sunset, and I said, "They may stop that sun from coming up tomorrow morning, but they will never stop me from preaching in Isla Vista." Phil shook his head and said, "Gene, I think you have underestimated those men." I said, "Yes, and you've underestimated my God."

So, I announced the meeting, and it was the one thing they weren't prepared for. I announced the meeting would take place in my living room, and we notified the police and told them to stand by. I preached one of the most important messages of my life. In fact, it was a watershed for my ministry. Everything I've ever preached on since then, you can start it with that message, right there, because it had to do with the unseen realms. And there was no room anywhere. We had four bedrooms full and the kitchen full. We had one of those California rooms in the back. The entire backyard was packed, and some people had taken the windows out of every place, heads sticking in, and people around. There were easily 200 people within a few feet of that place. I walked in there and preached like a man who had just fallen out of heaven. I did not in any way, shape, or form make any reference to anything.

That was something, folks. I could not move my feet. They were just right here, and there was, I couldn't have gone 2 inches forward. Well, I would like to tell you they went home, we never saw them again, and that's sort of true. But one of the people, and I heard this, I just got hold of a man in the church who had two wives. I went to see him, and I have to say, Ed, I don't know if you're still alive, but I owe you forever because Ed said, "Gene, I want to go with you." I walked in with Ed, and Ed said to the girl, "I ask you as a father, don't do this." And the young man was not only living in polygamy, but he was also espousing it to them. I said, "I'm going to throw you out of

church." He said, "No, you're not. The church is going to stand with me." I said, "No, that church will not." And he said, "Yes, it will." So, I called a meeting...talk about the Alamo...

Now I have something to say to you: do not ever underestimate the institutional church. You have no idea what happened in that community after that. I'm going to spare you, Gene. It got so bad because it's not on tape. I'm just talking to him. Okay, let me just go ahead and finish then. We had a meeting there where we met, and there were people there who were, in fact, I don't know how I got out that door. They had said I was a coward for leaving for the summer. They were just picking anything. Saints, it doesn't matter. When people get in the flesh, they do anything in the world they want to do.