

(continued from Part 2)

If we pass off the stage, this is what we will lose.

One, we will lose changing the Lord's testimony back to where it's supposed to be...without the gimmicks. The Lord's testimony will suffer, and we will not be able to put her back on track because we disappeared. That's the first one, and that's heavy. As little as we are, we cover many things. And the first one - we're going to lose a proper expression of the Lord's testimony.

You won't understand this till the rest of the evening and till tomorrow, but we're going to lose—and everybody else is going to lose—a chance at reading the history of God's people outside the institutional church. Because if we don't do it, it won't get done. And let me put it this way. You may say, 'Yes, but no,' but the next one is not easy to describe or to explain, and we're going to lose a non-ministry-centered testimony.

So let me explain what that means. If we were to sit down and interview any evangelical who is on fire for the Lord today and talk to him, and you started talking to him about what he's doing, he would be talking to you about "me," "my," and "us." There is, in the mind of the minister, that he is always central. He is at the center of the stage. He is the one doing the things. There is no such thing as a man who is out there seeking to work himself out of a job completely. Doesn't exist.

And if we lose, if we disappear, we're going to lose a ministry that is not all-pervasive. We'll lose that testimony and that experience. Please feel free to interrupt me if you're not clear. Let me give you the ministry's mind. We are totally self-centered. You are our pawns. We're going to preach to you, we're going to get your money, we're going to go fly to—we're going to hold "a"—and you're going to help us do it. Now, please resent that.

If we disappear, we lose a... wash my mouth out with soap... a lay-led church. That's the same one I just got through saying. We will absolutely lose open meetings. I will now tell you about the first deliberate open meeting that ever existed on this continent. It happened on Fortuna Lane in Isla Vista, and no minister was present. Now they'd been doing all sorts of fellowship, and that's what made my work so easy in sharing all that, but it was, you know, share or whatever. This was a meeting centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. And yes, I gave assignments because I learned long ago you've got to put a match to this thing. You've got to give it some direction. You can't—even here in Jacksonville, I had to show people how to function. You did not talk, you did not share, but it came like that.

It was at Fortuna Lane, and I told the sisters, my sisters in Christ, 'I want you to do this, this, and this.' Brothers, I want you to do this and this. And I even then said, 'The brothers have

to speak last.' That was that long ago. I said, 'You have to come with a song and a song and a song, and do not announce a number. Start the song.' And that was that long ago.

By the way, we don't start songs by numbers; we start songs, and somebody yells out the number. But if you didn't catch that, it's because some of us are announcing numbers. But that's not what we do, and that's not what they did that night. And they had a long meeting. You know how long that meeting lasted? I don't know, but I can tell you this: I got a phone call the next day from the owner. He said, 'Uh, I'm thinking about having these women move because they stayed up last night and made so much noise they bothered the neighbors.'

I was sitting outside under an open window. I knew what was happening inside that room, and I knew it'd happen, and it was really wonderful. And I don't even know if any of the...Alicia, I don't even know if you remember. Did you live at Fortuna Lane at any time?" Oh yes. Alright. Do you remember moving in there? Yes. Do you remember you got in trouble with the landlord? Well, I did. I Scotch-taped it. She called me, and I said, 'Lady, these are the nicest women in the world. This was just a one-time accident. It was an open house. They were this, that, and the other.' Anyway, that was the very first one ever.

When I came back from the Far East, my wife picked me up at the airport, and I knew I was forever persona non grata. I was burning with a burden, and Helen drove me out to Arizona because I had a terrible infection - a sinus infection, and I was trying to get into a dry place. And I was breathing steam, but I could not sleep. And that night, all night long, I wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote. I put it in a little blue folder, closed it, and I wrote the words, 'An Open Meeting,' and I have never opened that book since then.

I expressed, with a broken heart and a soul on fire, that you could have open meetings and that we were not going to be afraid of the crazies who would come along and mess them up. That's one of the reasons people say they won't have an open meeting. A meeting that does not have any jurisdiction whatsoever, and we do it every week like we were falling off a log. And you don't even know it. We're going to lose the open meeting to this entire world, its experience, and the how-to of it. Even now, we need help.

We're going to lose a non-eldership eldering. A non-eldership eldering. This is really important. You have no idea how much more I could have done in this world if I had appointed elders anywhere; it wouldn't matter where it was. Got elders, now I'm no longer a solo pilot getting shot at. I've got the elders who back me up, and they go over and get you where you belong and put you in your place and talk to you about—and I'll tell you something else, it wouldn't have mattered who on earth I made elders, they'd still be around today, with one possible exception. That's because men will die for a religious title. And I repeat: Napoleon Bonaparte, when he held out these medals, said, 'Gentlemen, it is with these toys that we marshal armies and conquer nations.'

And the same thing is true of the word “elders.” If there's anything on earth we have proved, it is this: eldership is transitional. It's transit. Think of all the men in the world who held the place of eldership who today aren't even Christians. If they'd given them a title, they still would be. Or there is one other thing they could do. They could get so distraught with the church or so ambitious that they would decide to overthrow the worker. Now let me tell you something. In my lifetime, I have seen this happen again and again and again. They are either ruthless men or they later turn on the worker. Great! I don't mind that one bit. I know where the front door is or the back one.

But we have seen something beautiful here: we have an eldership with no name. It's never recognized, and it shifts. Sometimes there are those who stay forever, and others are there only a short time before they go. And you don't even know you have elders. Well, yeah, you do too. And I'll put it on record, if you don't know who your elders are, it's really simple. Ask all the sisters to get together on a sheet of paper—no talking—and put down the names of two or three men they trust in the church, and you will have the mind of the Holy Spirit.

I'm going to tell you what - he's not going to look like an elder. An elder's, you know, this is...

**Audience:** I've always seen the difference from my perspective about elders, the authority as we have them compared to what the religious system has, and it's like a plant growing up. They grew up in the church. They begin to function. Nobody puts a name on it. They just are, and they just do.

Yes, sir. That's called organic. And nobody has bothered to take the time to be organic. And men like me are so insecure that they get elders around them to protect them. I'm going to repeat that. I don't know of a man in this world who gets a bunch of elders around him while he's doing his work to protect him, but that man is insecure. I say it, I'll say it again, sir, you're insecure. You're insecure in your calling, your vision, your work, your testimony, and your internal resources. It is not necessary. Furthermore, one of these days, we're going to publish a little book on rethinking elders again, and we're going to prove that elders were transitional. And we're going to put that out too, but we're going to lose that kind of eldership if we come off the stage.

We're going to lose the living room. We're going to lose non-paid clergy or workers. This sword doesn't stay still. I suppose this is the second most important thing I'll put here.

The first one was that we will lose a redemption of the Lord's testimony, which is so desperately needed, a return to our honesty in His testimony among Christians outside the institutional church. Let me tell you what we will lose.

We will lose...*you*. Do you have any idea how many places I've traveled to since I left the institutional church? Have any idea how many groups of people I've addressed? You are a vanishing breed, and if you vanish, not me, and even, not even you, but Christians all over

the world lose. You who don't have elders, you who do have open meetings, you who can touch the Lord, you who do share, you who get together and find the Lord, the mind of the Lord, all the experience you have accumulated. All the trial and error that we have gone through, that you have gone through...if this thing that we are passes off the pages of history, we lose *you*.

We lose the richness of your experience. We lose you, and we lose any hope of anybody coming along to take your place. We vanish. All that we can call on, we lose it all. The question is, do you want to lose it? And yes, it's flawed, but it's still ahead of whoever's in second place.

I speak of you. You're both strong and patient. This thing of being strong and patient. All I have been doing for the last forty years has been seeking to leave no ugly spirit in any group of Christians I have worked with, so that you will imitate me and be strong and patient. And if you challenge my work, I will not fight you. I don't know of anybody else in this world who lives under this Damocles sword. If you don't want me, I will leave you. I will get up and slip out, and there will be those who will be hurt, perhaps fatally, but they will be nothing compared to those who...if I stay and fight.

I have never done it. I have always left. I will not fight. Do you think I left because I was afraid? I do it for the sake of God's people. I have a little bit of a problem. I'm sure you've heard of the Maccabees. The Syrians would come down and fight one day a week. They'd fight on Saturday. The Jews would be sitting there, and the Syrians would come in, and the Jews wouldn't work on Saturday, so they'd just come in and slaughter them, take a whole town of them.

The next Saturday, they'd be back again, because Jews wouldn't fight. One day, a guy named Judas Maccabaeus looked around, and he saw a vanishing nation. He said, "Uh-uh, we're going to fight on Saturday." Some people know I won't fight and try to take advantage of that. Well, somewhere deep inside of me, you better know there's also a Judas Maccabees. If it's a serious situation, I'll get up and leave. But if he's like, "Ah, that's right, he's not going to fight on Saturdays... Well, then I'll fight on Saturdays." And I will, I will take a strong stand, and yes, I will hurt people from it, but I will not be toyed with. Oh, I've had a little of this happen to me, and I thought I'd throw that in.

When we were in Denver, we had a situation that, unfortunately, we have had before and since. Could you imagine a person, a group of people, or a couple who, in this instance, deliberately stayed in the church for one reason and only one reason? They were so convinced, convinced that this should not be, they stayed at church so that anytime anybody joined the group, they went to them and told them they should leave and have nothing to do with it. You wouldn't believe people do that, would you? Well, they did. And the church in Denver is made up of nothing in the world but a bunch of wild men.

They were tired of this, and they told me, "Man, we're gonna, we're gonna..." I took a deep breath and said, Gene, here we go again." Do you think I didn't want to throw those people out? Yes. But I knew that we were at a crossroads that nobody ever goes down. All my flesh said, "Throw them out." And I was talking to a brother who was not the most patient or the most patient-wise person in the world. And even his wife said, "Just leave us alone; we'll take care of these people." And I said, "No, all of you. Step back and let it run its course."

They went to the cross, and they began to learn tolerance and patience. And this went on for several years, even to the point that when Betty came to hold a conference with us...it happened to be held in Colorado Springs...these people...the first thing they did was they met Betty and told Betty all the horrible things about the church in Denver and about me. You ever seen water run off a duck's back? Well, that's what happened when they talked to Betty. That went off a duck's back.

But they were the ones taking care of Betty when she was sick...they were the ones taking care of Betty. And now there are four, five, or six of them, and they were all living there to make sure the church did not grow. We went on and on and on, and then we had a conference, a brothers' conference in Denver, and that thing was really getting explosive. The brothers were again asking me to do something about this, and certainly, we had every right to do so.

I came up to the meeting and, in my inimitable way, took another brother who was in charge of the money and took him out of the money. I gave the—and because somebody, because this particular couple was criticizing him for the way he was handling the money. I put them in charge of the money and took the two people they were complaining about the most, and pulled them out of the brotherhood and out of the money. Or, in other words, I'm stark raving mad. And that caused...I solved one problem and started another. So, this couple now had their way completely. It was theirs to do; they had no more complaints. I had stood in their way and let them have what they wanted. And do you think that stopped them? They just kept right on doing it.

Well, do you know why they finally stopped meeting with you? Oh, you moved, that's right. Absolutely, the whole church got up and moved, that's right, and then they moved. Right. Why did you do that, Gene? Speaking metaphorically, I spilled my blood over that, stopped the church's growth, and slowed her joy. I set aside everything precious about that church. There are two things I will not tolerate. I will not tolerate a church that is cruel or a brotherhood that is cruel. And the other one is, I will not tolerate the situation in Arlington, Texas.

You will have a brotherhood. I ask you to imitate me. I am strong, but I am not dangerous. Not yet. I'm not dangerous. If you don't witness that, I'll witness for myself. My natural heavenly inclinations are to be caring for God's people, know how they're doing, and see if

they have any needs. But if push comes to shove, I will do nothing. And then when push comes to shove again, I will still do nothing. And if push comes to shove, I will do one of two things: I will leave, or I'll wait some more. But ultimately, the church will take care of the situation. When the sisters start telling me to do something about the situation, then it's time to act. I'll ask the brothers if they want it done. I have rarely acted except when it came down to throwing somebody out of the church because of adultery. And then I'm so good at that, you just can't imagine how good I'm at that.

And yes, I have been sometimes unwise in what I've done, but I know where our hearts lie, and we will lose. We're gonna lose this blood-bought, inwrought thing that we are if we die. I have never met a man who was not proud of his strength. Now he's not gonna be bullied by anybody. Whatever happened to dying and laying down your life? I don't want to lose this. It's been too precious, too long, too hard, too much patience. It's literally been a lifetime just trying to create a people who aren't mean to one another.

You heard the story; I just got through telling it. Do you want that kind of recovery of the testimony? No, you won't. You know what you want; you want what you have. And it will be lost in all the blood and the sweat and the tears and the late hours of loneliness and—when you almost give up, we lose it all to have what we have.

Okay, the next one really boils my blood. Have a non-Darbinian gospel. And we're gonna lose it. A non-Darbinian—the word, you might even find it in the dictionary: a Darbinian theology. John Nelson Darby's ideas and thoughts are taught in every Bible school in America and in most seminaries, and you've never been exposed to them... not for one second. You don't know anything about overcomers; most of you don't even know about the millennium. Oh no, those people had a cross. His name was John Nelson Darby. I've already mentioned this: the way we study and use the New Testament is unique to us, and it will be lost... forever. I'm very pessimistic that it would not be.

By the way, Alan, I am going to tell Kristin an interesting story that really should have been told last night. I was sitting in the Tirana hotel, minding my own business, when in walks a hurricane, pulls up a chair in front of me, and starts rebuking me right, left, and middle. I don't know his name; I don't know where he came from; I don't even remember what he said, but for about twenty or thirty minutes, I got chewed, chewed out royally. Somebody walked into the Tirana hotel and chewed me out! He was an American, and I just sat there, and he began just telling me all sorts of things wrong with me, and then I did that thing. I leaned back, crossed my legs, and listened to him, with the very definite impression that I could fall asleep at any second.

And when he finished, I said, "Do I look like the person you've been talking about?" And he said, "Uh, no." The men who follow me, I want you to fit into that category, please. I don't want you to look like the image you will be given.

You do not know this, but there was this thing, I think it's on the internet, that the way Gene Edwards controls the church is he makes them all read all of his books, and they, they, they have to, have to, have to, they have to listen to all his tapes, and they have to do anything he tells them. That is only true in Arlington (laughter).

That's why I've been asking y'all recently: have I asked you to read one of my books, and you've all been giving me the horse laugh. I didn't know I had been asking you to read any of my books. Oh, I know you don't mind anything I say; that's true, but when was the last time I held a book up and said, "I want everybody to read this book"? That wasn't my book. And that was before you got to Roanoke. Brothers don't look like what you really are. And that's a strong, strong man of integrity, character, and piety.

You know what we're going to lose...and I've already said this, but—We're gonna lose the testimony of building slowly. Every man I know has tried to accomplish everything in his lifetime, and it's a fool's journey. You can't do it in one lifetime, and you sure can't do it in one lifetime and build big. Now, how many of you have ever heard me say, "This is gonna take three hundred years"? Have you? It's gonna take a good three hundred years for everything I've just mentioned even to begin to permeate the institutional church, and it'd better start influencing the brothers and sisters who are fifty years from now. They will exist; they will be tired of the institutional church; they will come out of it because that's the way things happen in the Christian world. But are they gonna be Darbinian? Are they going to be ruthless? Are they gonna have elders? Are they gonna have people who go to the cross? Are they going to have people who are gradually transformed rather than transformed overnight? God spoke to Moses and said, "You're not gonna be around here much longer."

We will lose healing, healing that is quiet, unknown, and unobtrusive, and is done without fanfare. Trust me, that will be lost. And I think one of the most amazing things that goes on with all of us is that we —we walk in here; we—every one of us needs a Christian counselor. We do. Over at First Baptist Church, they have them available, free to their congregation, to counsel and help them, and you gradually change. You know, some situations are hopeless. We don't even know you. Jesus, we know, and Paul, we know. It's incredible. It's absolutely incredible how normal we get after a while without anybody giving us any psychological talk or anything like that. You get...you get normal. And there are exceptions.

We're gonna lose workers who are more than speakers. We're gonna lose practical men. You know what else we're gonna lose? This will be after I'm dead; you will not be able to understand this. You're gonna lose me. The Plymouth Brethren, to this day, are exactly like John Darby. Mike, the people in that movement you were in are exactly like the men who founded it. They have his spirit, his temperament, and his way of doing things, and it is impossible for a work not to reflect its founder. And you're going to lose me.

I knew what I was doing since the day I started, and I knew one of the things I could not do was to leave you with an ugly spirit. The next guy who comes along should be influenced by you. If you disappear, we have lost... I hope the next people who come along will be influenced by you. I trust that your own atmosphere and spirit will reflect some of mine.

By the way, something else we'll lose is...we'll lose our story. Not their story, but our story. But if we, if we don't lose this, it's gonna take some remarkable things that you and I are gonna have to do, and you're gonna have to do a lot of it after I'm dead. We've got to be here when others like me come along. Wouldn't it have been great if Watchman Nee had met *us* in the nineteen-twenties? He wouldn't be Darbinian. And if he had told you...or hinted broadly...that we were the only people who were saved, I think you'd cut him off at the knees, frankly.

You were so gentle, you were never more beautiful than that night. Now he was a madman who believed in sinless perfection. I never saw anything like you in my life. You were so gentle to that guy. And you let him talk, and you didn't rebuke him; you didn't tell him he was the nut that he was. And when he finished and threw up the question, "You startled me by your knowledge of the New Testament," I sat back there and said, "What's going on here? You never—I never taught you that," and you asked scriptures, and it was, it was absolutely beautiful.

You know something else? We just had Peter Lord, didn't we? Peter came first. Okay, Peter had come. Then there was he, and we're having visitors come all the time, and we had him, Peter, and we'll have Jack Taylor, and we'll have the people from India, and we are open to—I saw that group of people. And what was the charge laid against us? That we didn't...we weren't open to other people. And we gave him a thousand dollars or something like that, put him up in a hotel, and fed him. And, no, you were beautiful. If I never told you that, you were beautiful. Nobody else in this world could have done what y'all did that day. First of all, you had a harebrained worker who invited the guy. The second thing that happened was you let me get away with it, and he's the man who had said all sorts of things about me, and there was never a word spoken ugly about him.

We're gonna lose a higher gospel, a higher revelation, and experience of Jesus Christ. It's gonna be lost, and we're gonna be back down to this objective Gospel that is being preached everywhere.

Let's see if there's anything else that we will lose. The church in Richmond, Virginia, had elders in the beginning, and they have never allowed another man to be an elder, no matter who it was; it's stuck. Where's the growth? Where's the opportunity? Where's the feeling that the church accepts me and I can be me?

I'm gonna, I'm gonna do one more, and I'm getting big signals here, because this is the one I saved to the last. But I put this right up on all the blood that's been spilled. He's trying to

teach God's people to be loving, caring, and strong. I hope your brothers will learn to be caring and strong. You don't let things destroy a church. That is being cured right now.

Okay, I have one more. And this one's very dear to my heart because I've said this to a few brothers...Mike is familiar with my having said it. You're gonna lose something really sacred. You're gonna really lose workers who are not—workers who are not pious, and I am, of all men, may be one of the...offenders, but I'm also the least pious Christian worker you will ever meet. Pious workers have got to end. You don't understand that piety in the ministry is universal. It is a protective garment that we put on because we're on such shaky ground anyway.

I've often spoken of the castle priest. The castle priest is hired to take care of the castle and all the sin going on in it. He has to be both reverend and holy and ignore everything going on around him. Ministers are all castle priests, holy, and we're dignified, but we sure don't step up and be counted. I can tell you for sure the institutional church will not tolerate it because one day I decided to get real. I won by one vote. That's how lucky I was.

What do I mean by a non-pious minister worker? Take a good look at me. Do you know that you're not afraid of me? Do you know that you insult me? Do you know you tease me? Do you know you interrupt me? That you, you, huh? You say no to me. You are our letter, a proof of our... How can I tell you how effective it is to be aloof and pious, to cause God's people to have fear, to hold you at a distance, and therefore you hold yourself at a distance. That we are not, we are not like you. We don't sin or whatever it is.

We need a whole generation of men who work for a living, who are utterly devoted to the Lord, who are both strong, courageous, and gentle, and who will eat fire, if it comes to it. I will stand there and throw somebody out of the church without asking anybody about it, and know that the angels in heaven are standing with you because you paid a price to have that right.

God, don't let these things die. Not with my cemetery, my grave, and not with the five or ten years that will follow. And now you make a decision because I'm gonna load you down with things to do to see that this work does not die, and I'm gonna need your cooperation, but if you do what I've already asked you to do, you will, you'll be there, you'll be, you'll gonna step up to the plate just like everybody else. And I ask you that this not be a passing thing.

And the Dutch don't know it, but the British know it, and they have had a testimony there so many times when only England did. We've got five or six brothers left, and I want to see a strong, beautiful, prevailing, overcoming testimony back in the British Isles. And the Dutch, there are three of you here, I think you ought to be able to tell me whether or not the Dutch are going to say yes to this or not. If not, you can make a guess, but I will tell you this: if the Dutch do, I'm gonna give you some things to do that will make sure we're not gone from

here in five, ten, or fifteen years. And never forget that with every breath we take, we're inching toward a testimony.