

Twelve men are walking down a street together. They go up a rather primitive staircase, go to a second-floor room. They're going to hold a prayer meeting. It's going to be a very memorable day in the lives of these 12 men. I've said to you there is a pattern that begins in the Godhead and moves forward and does not change. I want to look at that again on this Sunday morning. I want to introduce to you two words: called and sent. I do not know if the Lord Jesus Christ was ever called, but I can tell you about the day He was sent, when He was incarnated into His mother's womb, and He was 100% man from His mother and He was 100% God from His Father God. He lived with the life of God in Him and the life of man in Him, but all this was taking place inside Him. God was in Him, but on the day He was baptized, the Holy Spirit clothed Him.

Do not think of the Holy Spirit coming inside Him at that time. You often hear people say that on that day, the Lord Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit; that is not true. On the day the Lord Jesus was baptized, there was no water poured inside Him. That cup is filled with water. It's filled with water, but it is not immersed in the water. If you immerse it with water, then it is clothed with water. He was already filled with the life of God. He had been for 30 years, but this day, He was clothed, immersed in the Holy Spirit, outwardly clothed, not inwardly changed, outwardly clothed for service, and on that day, He began to serve the Lord.

Now, I wish every worker on earth would hear that it took Almighty and the living God, the Almighty and the living God, eternity and 30 years to prepare the sinless Son of God to be a Christian worker. It doesn't take that long anymore. You can get saved on Monday and go out as a missionary Tuesday. How we've sped things up these days. That's right. Eternity and 30 years, and finally sent, but not for us. Get saved. Go through Bible school, who knows what Bible school, what magic it's supposed to perform, it doesn't, and then we're headed out for parts unknown. We're headed out in 10 different directions to save the world. We can do faster and better than God can do. And consequently, something has happened. We have a large number of men today who have been called to the work, but we do not have a large number of men who have been sent.

There is a mighty difference between called to be a Christian worker and being sent out to serve the Lord, an enormous difference, and I believe of the tens of thousands of Christian young men who have been called, and this is a guess, and I may be wrong, but I don't think so. I think this - virtually none have ever truly been sent in the proper New Testament way in the living way of God. They have not been sent out by the Lord himself. Why? Because if the Lord is going to send you, then the Lord reserves the right to prepare you. If the Lord is going to send you, He reserves the right not only to prepare you, but prepare you properly. And furthermore, He won't send you unless you've been prepared by Him, and prepared properly by Him, and knowing that you're going to go out to do what He wants you to do. And there is only one thing He wants you to do. If He cannot prepare you, prepare you properly and send you out to do that which He wishes to do, He won't send you. He will only call you. He'll let the Baptist send you out. He'll let the mission board send you out. He'll let some youth organization send you out.

That day, there was introduced upon this earth, a sending, only after there had been an eternity and 30 years of preparation. Now I think I understand why there haven't been so many people sent. They go too soon, prepared the wrong way, and go out to do the wrong thing. What did this apostle, the first apostle, get sent out to do? Tell me he was sent out to save the world. No, he was sent out to do something that reached from eternity to eternity. Salvation only reaches from the third chapter of Genesis to the 18th and 19th, the 20th to the 20th chapter of Revelation.

The fall begins in Genesis 3 and ends in Revelation 20. Yes, He did save us, but he saved us to stretch us out beyond Revelation 20 and out before Genesis 3. You know, this apostle was sent by God to raise up the church, the bride of Christ. That is what He was sent out for, and there's never been anybody sent out by God to do anything else but to raise up and nurture the

church of God. Not a mission for lepers. Not Bibles to China. Not a youth organization to evangelize the world. Not a little...club that sits around, studies the Bible for 40 years, and not a prayer group that's going to pray down God out of heaven and get people healed and saved and bring in a great revival. None of that. He will send only for the raising up of the church, and that's what He did with Jesus Christ. The first thing the Lord Jesus did was get a group of men around Him and begin showing them church life in their little experience together.

All right, we now have 12 men starting a prayer meeting on in the second-story room, and they're praying, and some others walk in. It's daybreak. There are now 120 of them, and this is a Sunday in which there is celebrated a great Jewish holiday that has to do with baking two loaves of bread. This morning, these 12 men get sent. They were called four years ago in Galilee. Now they're sitting in Jerusalem, and they are about to be sent, not to the lost house of Israel, not to lepers, not to this, not to that. They are going, well, let's just watch and see where they get sent. You know where they get sent? You won't believe where they get sent. Does anybody want to guess where they actually physically geographically get sent?

They get sent downstairs. That's right. Think about it. They got sent all the way downstairs. That's how far their great commission went, downstairs. They have been filled with His life for 50 days. It's been 50 days since the resurrection. They are like this water filled with the life of God. But now there is a door that opens in the heavenlies, and a rushing something, like a rushing mighty wind, fills the room, and they're in the room, so they get immersed, they get called upon for service, and they are sent out. They have been properly trained. Now listen to this.

God the Father sent Jesus Christ. God the Son sent the 12. This thing is just about this big, and it's physically visible in Jerusalem. It's so small we can hardly make out the outlines of it, but the pattern is still holding. Somebody in the Trinity has sent some men who've been properly prepared, and they were first filled with the Spirit at the time of their salvation. He came in, transformation has taken place within them, and now they're being called on to serve Him. How long have they been prepared? They have been prepared by the living God for four years. For four years, they have been prepared. Of course, they're going to go take the world. No, they're going to go take the staircase downstairs. They're going to walk about half a block. They're going to stand out in the middle of the temple courtyard, and they're going to explain to all these people who heard them yelling hard and want to know what's going on. They're going to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ, and a lot of those people get convicted and get saved, and those men now want to crusade to save the world. No, this is Sunday.

Sometimes in that great thing that happened that day, by the way, I would just like for you to be clear. It is said in Acts that the apostles spoke in tongues and the 120 spoke in tongues and they spoke in tongues and preached in the languages of other people. There is no record that those 3,000 spoke in tongues. We get the impression that all those people spoke in tongues and all of them got...At most 120 people spoke in tongues that night. Well, sometime that day they said to those 3,000 people, "Report back here tomorrow morning right over there under that shed. It's called Solomon's Porch and let's get together." Now, I am fascinated here by geography. I wish everybody who's a Christian could hear what I've got to say right now.

The geography of this thing is incredible. First, geography. The Christian and church life are confined to a space no larger than God. Hello, eternally. Now, Jesus Christ is incarnated, and how far does the Christian faith and body life, church life, Christian fellowship, increase? It is now confined to one town. What's the name of the town? Nazareth. All of it taking place inside one human being. Are you following me? And that's where it stays. Again, look at the time span. 30 years. Now watch the geography and watch the time span. At the end of 30 years, there is an enormous cataclysmic increase in size.

It's greatly expanded. Christian fellowship and the Christian life is now shared by 20 people in a small area called Galilee. And that is where it's confined for the next four years. Now watch it. On the day of Pentecost, wow, you talk about getting big. Here is something hidden in eternity, just barely got into Nazareth, hardly even visible in Galilee, has now expanded to 120 people confined to the town of Jerusalem. And now 3,000 more people converted in one blinding moment of glory. Join with them and get this. Watch the time span and watch the geography. For the next six or seven years, church life will be confined to the Godhead, 12 apostles, 120 other Christians who've been around a while, and 3,000 believers in one town for six or seven years.

Do you get the impression God is in a rush? Do you know something? In a way, no, but in a way, yes. Because if you're really going to do a big job, you're going to do it slow. Does this sound like anything we hear today? I do not know what you brothers have been exposed to in the way of the Christian gospel, but I grew up on the hour is urgent. The day is spent and we have got to getting into the business of such and such. Whatever it is, somebody's promoting. That's right, or who knows. You got 12 men. The entire hope of eternity is in those 12 men. The gospel is in them. It is not in Christ. It's in those 12 men. If they die right now, suddenly, for some reason, the gospel will never be known because they're the ones who know it. The gospel is Jesus Christ, and they're not going anywhere, and they're saying to the mountain, you come to me or come to us. We're not going to you.

The geographical confines of the gospel are incredible. May I go ahead and tell you the rest of the story? This is absolutely mind-blowing. For the next six years, the Christian life and the church, the life of the church is confined to one city. 10 years thereafter, it is confined totally to Judea, expands all the way out to Judea. For 10 years, maybe out into an area with a population of less than a million, into the villages and towns of Judea, among somewhere between 10, 20, 30,000 people. Get this. For the next four or five or six years after that, it expands to a few towns outside of Judea. Then after that time, the gospel is sent out to all the rest of the known world.

That is, the entire Roman Empire plus whatever else there is on this earth. Guess how many go to the whole rest of the world. How many people does God send out to evangelize the whole entire planet? Well, you got 20 or 30,000, maybe 40 or 50,000 Christians by now. All these Jewish people down there. The gospel spread out a little bit into some of the surrounding nations. How many people get sent out to the Roman Empire to save the world? And this is God who does it. I'm not talking about man or a movement. God picks how many people to go to the rest of the planet? Guess? You're right. It's two. His name is Paul, and his name is Barnabas. And that's all. 60, 70, 80 million people. Two men. Well, certainly it's two men. This is God doing things. God's not in a rush. He wants the fellowship of His Life. He wants the fellowship of the Godhead taken out. And He's being really careful about this, and He wants it done well.

Now brothers, if we could have that kind of attitude today, we might get somewhere. I have said on several occasions lately, what I am trying to do in my lifetime, what I am doing is too important to succeed in my lifetime, and it is far too important to get big. Okay, did you hear all that? Two people. Two people. Disprove me. Go get your Bible, your concordance, get your history books, get your scholars, everything, and try to find it to be any different than that. These are not verses of scripture I'm quoting you. You can prove anything or verses of scripture. This is what the story tells us happened to men. Okay, Tom, you had a question.

Audience member: The whole thing with the upper room experience is, you know, pretty controversial. The people, the other 108, or 120, I guess, were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They were, yeah, because they had that call.

Well. We better talk about that a little bit. There are 120 people present. Are they sent? Well, there's two things we have to recognize, and that is that day that the clothing of the Holy

Spirit was introduced brand new to the human race, to the church of the living God, to people other than Christ, and for all of us since that day, we are both indwelt with the spirit of the Lord and we are clothed.

Now, of course, there are some people who would say no, that's a second experience, you're indwelt by the Lord, by the Spirit, but there has to come a moment in your life when you have this clothing. Well, I don't want to get into this. I don't want to get into this, but that's not what I believe. I believe that every one of us is saved and we have the Spirit. We are, well, let's put it this way. Is Christ in you? Yes.

On the day of Pentecost, the church was plunged into God. It's not an individual thing. It's a church matter. The church is plunged into God. And the church of God is now clothed with Him. Now, for each of us, as individuals, as being part of that corporate thing, and I know this is very difficult for us Americans and us modern Christians to realize because we're so individualistic, but in a very real way, you don't exist. In the eyes of God, you're part of a woman. You are part of a woman. He loves you, but when He died, He didn't even particularly die for you. The scripture clearly says He died for you, Gene. Yes. But the scripture also clearly says He died for the church. He loved her and died for her. Gave Himself for her, and since that day, she's been as a body, as a woman, fully equipped, filled within, clothed without, but those of us who are her members, that filling does not include full transformation. That's gradual, and the clothing does not mean that I am, on the day I am saved, prepared to be sent out.

The apostles were prepared in every way to be sent out, except that they had not received this clothing that He had received. At the moment they received it, they were prepared, and they went out, and in that respect, the bride was prepared and went out, but you, as an individual, it does not mean that you are suddenly prepared for service just because you are saved, indwelt by Christ, and clothed with His Spirit. The rest of the New Testament witnesses to a little preparation wouldn't hurt.

Now then, I don't know what would be the answer to what I just said from the charismatic family, but I want you to know that many, many people who get saved speak in tongues the next day. I personally am not willing to contribute money to their going out as missionaries the day after they are converted. I do not see them as being clothed for service, and in the terms of the charismatic movement, I do not see them as empowered from on high, but I see them as being part of the body of Christ, having come into the full riches of their inheritance, but it's going to take a little time for them to be prepared and one day sent by God to raise up churches. A man who is two days old in the Lord should not be raising up churches. It's a no-no.

Alright, on the day of Pentecost, these men got called; that was the last preparation they needed. They were sent out and they were sent all the way downstairs, and they stayed there for six long years. Then 10 more years passed after that while they and others worked in Judea, and then more time passed before more people were sent out by the Lord. *By the Lord.*

We have two brothers who are sent out also by the Lord. They both were indwelt by the Lord on the day they got saved, and who knows if you're Pentecostal, you got to believe that Paul spoke in tongues the day he was baptized, but he didn't go out raising up churches that day. Barnabas had been a Christian for a minimum of 14 years on the day the Lord sent him out. If you're Pentecostal, you gotta believe he's been speaking in tongues ever since the day of Pentecost. That's 14 years and he's not been sent out anywhere until that time. So, we see a tremendous lapse of time between getting saved and getting sent out, be ye Pentecostal or be ye not Pentecostal. All right, Tom, stop asking questions. That took 15 minutes to answer.

Okay, they're sent downstairs. Now what are they going to do? They have several tasks. One of their tasks is to simply live by the life of the Lord. Okay. Another task they have is to be in the church. And another task they have is to raise up the church, or they have to raise up the church and be in the church.

Let's look at these men. I bet you Sunday night they were absolutely astounded that 3,000 people had been saved, and they remembered when they had been running around saying, "Look, even the demons obey us," and people are now getting converted and they can hardly believe it's them. They have established a habit for four years that Christ had established for 30 years and eternity. What is the habit that they have established during those four years? Please, quickly. Fellowshiping with God. They have been running around with the world's only Christian. They have been fellowshiping with God incarnated. We come back to the word habit. Will they now break their habit, or will they continue their habit? They have to make a small transition. They have to get used to fellowshiping; they have been used to fellowshiping with Him physically. Now, they have to get used to fellowshiping with Him invisibly, but the fellowship will go on.

Brothers, Jesus Christ can be fellowshiped with whether you're lying on His chest as John did or whether He came into your rib cage as He did on the night that He rose from the dead, and He breathed the Holy Spirit into them. On that night, 12 men got Him inside. Now I will ask you, which is more intimate fellowship, to be sitting next to somebody or for them to be inside of you? That is really oneness. Is it not? This comes back, excuse me, I realize this is sensitive, but it is nonetheless pictured to us in marriage. The one being in the other, and the Bible says they are therefore one. There is an intimacy there not known in any other kind of relationships because the two become one entity, and when the Lord comes into you, marriage is but an illustration of His coming inside of you and making Himself one with your spirit. That is true intimacy. They have watched Him behold the Father, fellowship with the Father, hear the Father, speak to the Father, respond to the Father, be loved by the Father, love the Father back, obey the Father, and obey what the Father has said.

They have been watching Him do this for four years. Now, they wake up one morning and say, "Yes, this is happening to me." As the Father indwelt my Lord for 30 years, this morning, the day after the resurrection, He has indwelt me. I've got to go start a Bible class. I've got to go found the seminary. I've got to go build a church building. No, I've got to tune in to this indwelling Christ the way He in tuned Himself with an indwelling Father. I've got to start sensing this love and love back. I've got to start listening and hearing, and what I hear I must respond to, and if I get something, that means to obey, I've got to obey. I've got to continue the pattern. It has now been passed out of the Father into the Son, and out of the Son into these men, and of course will stop there forever and never go any further. No, of course not. Hey, will y'all just grin a little bit every once in a while? Don't look so serious at me. I never know when you're believing me when I'm being sarcastic. You don't want to believe that. I'm afraid some of you will go start a Bible school.

They wake up. They wake up and they hear voices. That's right, brother. They are now men hearing voices. I hear the Lord Jesus speaking to me. I fellowship with Him. It is not primarily a matter of I've got to be good. I got to behave and be nice. It's a matter of internal fellowship with an indwelling God. Who lives inside these apostles? I'm calling them apostles now, not disciples anymore. They're sent men. Sent ones, apostles, sent ones, apostles. Who lives inside of them? Say it. Christ. Who lives inside of Christ? Well, who lives inside of them? The Father and the Son. The fellowship of the Godhead is now inside their rib cage. It's not in eternity. Praise the Lord. It's not in Nazareth. It's not in Galilee. It's in men. And it's getting bigger. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Glory. The Father, the Son, and a bunch of men are all fellowshiping inside their bosoms.

Amen. The wonders of the Godhead. Well, they get down there to Solomon's porch, and they see 3,000 people. Jesus Christ got down to the Jordan River and saw two or three men; he later picked up a few more. When the Lord Jesus Christ got into a room of those 12 men, He thought about what He had been doing for all eternity and 30 years. These 12 men take a look at 3,000 people sitting there, and what do they think? They think about what they've been doing for 3 and 1/2 years plus 50 days, 51 days.

Now, they look around and they don't have any new ideas. All they got is a very old idea. This is the oldest idea there is. Praise the Lord. Hey, let's teach them. Let's say, listen, let us declare unto them that which we have seen and heard, that they may have fellowship with us, for our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord. That's what they said when they got out there that morning. Let's tell these people what we've seen and heard.

Thomas, have you got that chart of Ezekiel's? Andrew, have you got that chart on the book of Revelation? Let's tell them about premillennialism. Let's pick out some of these young brothers and build a building, raise some funds, put them in a class, and teach them the scrolls. All they know is what they share, and all they share is what they know, and that's all they've got. Well, the 3,000, of course, they're all out there waiting to learn the Bible. Teach us the book of Daniel. We want to know about the 70 weeks in Daniel. Tell us about the man of sin and the mystery of iniquity. That's what we want to know.

I'll tell you what they said to those 12 men. This is exactly what they said. That which you have seen and heard, declare you unto us, that we may have fellowship with you because your fellowship is with the Son Jesus Christ. There could have been nothing else that happened that day. I'm certain of it. Argue with me and you will absolutely lose. We are so Bible. We're so orientated to the Gospels. We think they taught them the Gospels. They undid the Gospel of Matthew and taught it. I'm going to turn now to Matthew 1 or John. Take that one you've written. John says, "I'm going to open this scroll. We're going to turn to John chapter 1 verse one, and I'm going to teach you chapter one of the book of John."

Can you see John standing up there? He's going to say, "Listen, God was in eternity and then He became flesh, and He came and dwelt among us, and we've seen His glory." Yes, He has such great glory. Some little kid writing it down. Tell us about it, John. A lot of people he preached to, but not many received Him. Some brother's writing this down, when He gets real, real old, maybe this guy comes back to Him and says, "John, you remember everything you taught down there in Solomon's porch? I made a bunch of notes; they're getting old, they're falling apart. Could you maybe put it together and put it in a book?" And John is 100 years old now. And he says, "Well, if I can see it well enough, I've got plenty of time, stuck out here on Patmos, nothing to do but write, but the day that John started talking about Jesus there in the porch of Solomon, he was talking about his fellowship with Him. I rested on his bosom.

Today, as we come to scripture, you brothers, listen to me. You don't know how to do this; that's why you're here this week. When we come to the Scripture, we have one orientation and only one. I am going to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to see what it is God wants me to do. What is He expecting of me? Because if I don't do it, He's going to get mad at me, and we start tearing those books apart, trying to find out what I'm supposed to do to be a good little Christian, be a good little boy, and be a good little girl. That is not what those three or four books are about. They are a record of Christ's own fellowship with the Father. Look for it, and with His fellowship, with a group of people. Look for it. You are reading how another species lives the Christian life. You're reading the record of Someone who is indwelt by the eternal almighty living God, the Father of all things. That's what this story is about, and it's about some men who had fellowship with one who was in dwelt with the eternal almighty everlasting living God. That's

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and don't you ever look at it from any other view. That's the only view you want to look at it, and don't ever let anybody put you under the pile with it.

Well, now let's go back to Solomon's porch. The people wanted to hear about my Lord and yours. Now, let me skip over just a little bit. Roy, what do you figure people really want to hear about today? Really want to hear about? That's true. You know, that's absolutely true. What people want to hear today is what will the gospel do to put money in my pockets? You want a Mercedes. We take a list here. Who wants, everybody? Cadillac, Rolls-Royce. That's true, and we know why they want that, because they have never found out what it is they really want.

What a Christian really wants is the Lord Jesus Christ, whether he knows it or not. He doesn't always get Him, and sometimes the best fail to get Him, but sometimes the best refuse to receive Him too, but what the Christian really, really wants, whether he knows it or not, is he wants the Lord, and I would like for you to know, there are not many people who proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ.

As you get older, you'll hear a lot of messages. Listen to how many of them come out of the epistles and listen to how few of them come out of the gospels. It's so much easier to take a little verse out of an epistle and put you under the pile with it. And you can go to a parable in the Gospels and put yourself under the pile with that, too, but to just saturate a people with the Lord Jesus Christ is a thing that is rarely done in ministry, in any generation.

Now, I'm going to make a point. Tom, if all the Lord Jesus gave those 12 was the fellowship that He had within Him and Himself, and if all that they gave those people was the Lord Jesus Christ, then if you dare stand in that tradition when you get up to speak, what should be the major thrust of your gospel? Jesus Christ. Amen. The Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what people would like to hear about. Now, unfortunately, that's not very glamorous. Unfortunately, they're going to come to you with a lot of other things besides what they want and need. They're going to come with a lot of their problems, and it'll tax you, if not kill you out, right? But that's the centrality of your gospel, brother. It's got to be the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, your gospel is basically worthless. It's the Lord.

Those of you who are out there on the other side of that glass lens, you don't hear me after the lights go out. These bright lights move; the ordinary lights come on. You don't see me making this practical. This thing that I'm talking about is the Lord indwelling within us. And you may be saying, well, Gene, why don't you do that, Gene? Why don't you put that on tape? And I have a question for you. Why won't you come get in this room? No, I'm not going to teach you those things. I'll make you hungry, but I'm not going to give you those things. I give those things out only in the house of God and nowhere else. Because I don't make a living doing this. I get the same amount of money no matter how much I do or don't do. In fact, when I do it, I make less money. When I don't do this, I save money. I do, I can bank a dollar or two when I stop preaching; it starts going out of my pocket.

No, I'm not going to give you the Lord in your isolated little place out there, or your two or three people. If you want Him so much and you want His church so much, sell everything He got and move, call over cut glass and then you'll find out what it is we do when we turn these big white lights out and turn away ordinary lights and we just sit around here and we make the encounter with Christ a living experience. I'm going to tell you we sit there and watch 10,000 tapes. Hey, you, you have to come here. It's on tape. It has now been recorded for posterity. I am for the church. It's on tape. It has now been recorded for posterity.

I am for the church of the living God. I am not for individual Christian living, and neither were these men. They went out and started declaring Christ to these people, but they declared

Him in the context in which they had received Him, among a body of people. The Lord neither went to the masses nor did He go to one and that is critical. That's crucial. He did not go to everybody, nor did He just go to one. He went to a group of men.

Their habit was to know Christ as a group, and their habit was to proclaim Him as a group to a group, to deliver to them the fellowship of God and to contain that within an experience like unto their own, just bigger. Do you know what I'm telling you? We've talked about the Christian life this way. I'd like to talk about the church going backwards. The church is in Jerusalem, with 3,000 people. The churches in Galilee, 20 people. The churches in Nazareth, one people, or two invisible and one visible. Then in eternity, three invisible within one. One with one another.

Now let's go back and look at Galilee. I want you to notice how they experience church life. It's very simple. They have just been teaching the masses in one city. They go to bed. They get up early, and then the next morning, they're going to the next village. They're about halfway there.

It's Sunday morning. It's about 11 o'clock. And the Lord stands up and He puts on His big robe, and He gets out His Bible and He says, "You 12 men stand up. We're going to sing the doxology." And they all sing the doxology. He puts away His scrolls. He says, Now Peter and John will come forward with the morning offering plates. Everybody, stand, and we're going to repeat the Apostles Creed. And now will Brother Thomas lead us in prayer. And God bless the offering and the missionaries. And they go sit down. Sit down and everyone be quiet, for God is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silent before Him. Now we are going to sing Amazing Grace. And after that, we're going to sing I Surrender All, and then we're going to sing Bringing In the Sheaves, All the children, please be quiet. The Lord delivers a 45-minute message, three points, a poem, a deathbed story, an introduction and a conclusion, and an invitation, and that's church till next Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. Y'all noticed that in the Bible, didn't you? You all saw that in the New Testament. Do you think that was their concept of the church?

My point being, there as they meet that first time in Solomon's porch, they are free from all concepts of ritual. Their only experience of the ekklesia, the gathering, is free fellowship. We will have two brothers who will speak to us tonight around the fireplace here on the road to Jericho. The rest of you 10, be quiet. They didn't have anything like that. They just fellowship with one another. I am certain that brother Simon didn't speak, talk, or share enough; very quiet brother. And I'm sure Peter talked too much, and sometimes maybe one of them said, "Oh, Peter, hush you talk all the time. Let someone else talk." And Peter kind of laughed and let someone else talk.

Maybe they had things like that happening, but there was no ritual that bound their fellowship in Galilee. None. So now they're in Jerusalem. Now they're sharing Christ. And now they're going to introduce ritual because they're 3,000 people, and you've got to introduce ritual. Either that or you got to divide them up into homes. So, they divided them up into homes and people got together in living rooms and they sat there just like the apostles, when they were disciples, had sat in living rooms and fellowship and there wasn't a bit of difference except the visible Christ had now become the invisible Christ and the one who sat 10 feet from you was now sitting inside you.

There was no difference in what was happening in Galilee in the fellowship with 20 men with Jesus Christ and what was happening in those living rooms in Jerusalem. There isn't any difference, and when you go home, the church is that same fellowship. Granted, I will grant you that when those 12 men ministered to those 3,000 people, it might not have been a typical living room meeting, but I'll tell you for sure, it also wasn't a typical Sunday morning church service down at the First Baptist Church.

Let's look at those 3,000 and let's look at those 12. What all happened? Well, for one thing, I doubt very seriously that all 3,000 of them got together at one time for the simple reason that most of them had to go get jobs just like you did. So, there were early morning meetings. There were morning meetings, afternoon meetings, and night meetings. And there might not have been over 500, 200, 600, maybe a thousand. Probably more like four or 500 each time, and that's not so bad when you've got 12 different men who can talk. One would speak in the morning and tell about the Lord, and the other 11 would listen or sleep or rest, and they'd get in on what one another was telling and they'd correct one another and they'd reshare, and if somebody said something that was really wonderful, the other one would cheat that afternoon and repeat it. But what was happening was the gospel was finally getting unraveled. Three and a half years were being reported in its totality and its fullness.

The full life of Christ on this earth was being made known for the first time, and people were hearing it and entering into the experience of those 12 men with that Christ. That's what was happening, and then they were taking it home with them. And the church of the Lord ought to be basically the same thing today. There ought to be some meetings in which that which is, is declared, and some other meetings in which that which is experienced is shared. I think I should repeat that, shouldn't I? When that which is, is declared, and other meetings in which that which is experienced is shared.

Now, you can do a little of both in both meetings, but there has to be some declaration of the living Word of Christ within us, for us to learn our heritage. I even have to tell you, don't let this get out on me. We even have to teach the Bible. We have to teach what the New Testament says. I do it all the time, it's all I do. I don't do anything else but that, but I don't want to make it central. I want to make the Christ of the scripture central. If I am to obey the scripture, then I will make Christ central, not the scripture. If I make the scripture central, I disobey the scripture, and I intend to obey the scripture and make my Lord central. And make Him practical and obtainable and practicable of and even edible for you, for your spirit, for your internal parts. That's what they were doing.

Now you need a handle on how to know Him and how to share Him, and dear brothers, 'ere you go home. I hope to have done both of those a little with you, give you a handle on how to know Him and a little bit of a handle on how to share Him. Will you be good students? Will you do whatever it is I ask you to do? If you will, let me see you raise your hand. Why didn't you folks raise your hands? You raised your hand? Come out from behind that lens and make yourself visible.

The people go home. I do not know how the apostles taught them to fellowship with Christ. I don't really know. I'd like to know that, but I know one thing they taught them: the apostles taught those people where He lives and where He dwells.

They told those 3,000 folks all about Him and then said to them, "He moved inside of you on the day you were saved." And I'm sure they added, "You women have got to wear dresses down to the floor and let your hair grow out, and you men have got to stop smoking, drinking, and cussing." And you got to tithe. We only had 2,500 people out for visitation, door-to-door visitation this week. The other 500 of you are going to lose your salvation if you don't show up. It says that there was door-to-door evangelism in Jerusalem. If you'll read real carefully, it tells you exactly who went door to door. It was the apostles. Can you imagine that? Howdy, lady? Good morning, my name is the Apostle Peter. I think that's wonderful. I think that's wonderful, that it was Simon Peter out knocking on doors. I like that, but it wasn't the young brothers and sisters. There are apostles preaching the gospel from house to house. This is not the gospel according to a course of New Testament evangelism preached at somebody's seminary somewhere.

Well, those men had picked up a lot of habits in their four years with the Lord. One habit they had picked up was being with Him; another habit they had picked up was watching Him pray and fellowship with the Father. Another thing they learned to do was to do nothing but watch. That's all they had done; they had served Him for two full weeks out of four years.

They had really good stewards. When it comes to the city of Jerusalem, the other people do not serve the Lord. They do all the work. And they're working like Turks. I mean, they are working night and day. Ain't that incredible? It gets so bad that they're even waiting on the tables. Good morning, Mrs. Sapphira. Good morning, Ananias. Would you have some soup this morning? They're out there taking care of the distribution of the wealth. These guys are doing everything, and finally they decide that they probably shouldn't wait on tables, that they should attend to the word. And so, they get seven men who wait on tables. I'm not sure that was a great idea. I think every once in a while an apostle ought to go out and serve a table, but, anyhow, that's just my, I don't know if that's true or not.

Six years, they stayed in one town. Do you remember during those four years with the Lord, who got persecuted? Tell me. The Lord got persecuted. Did the 12 get persecuted during those four years? Absolutely no. The only one who got persecuted crumbled like an accordion. Do you remember that incident? Simon Peter, on the night the Lord was crucified, got caught and crumbled like an accordion. He wasn't used to being persecuted, but he has seen his Lord persecuted, and brothers and sisters, during the next six years, there's an awful lot of abuse. For the first five years and 10 or 11 months of that, that abuse fell on those 12 men and not on God's people. They had learned how to be persecuted.

From where did they learn how to be persecuted? From their Lord, watching Him. Tom, and I'm sure this has never been written down, I'm sure no one has ever said it before, but if you were to ask a bunch of young preachers going out to pastor churches, give it some really serious thought. I think one of the things they would say is, "I wish somebody had taught me how to take persecution." Ask a minister sometimes if that wouldn't help him. Maybe the word persecution is too strong, but to take all the guff and criticism and nitpicking and backbiting and undermining and getting thrown out of the church and all that kind of garbage, which hurts so badly. It's a strange thing to say, but a young Christian worker, a workerette, ought to have the privilege of watching somebody be persecuted and see how he takes it. By the way, I'm not a good candidate for that. I'm not the person you want to watch. I did that for 12 years. I let some brothers watch what it was like to be persecuted. I sure hope they remember.

I was sensational. I was great, and I'm worn out. I am tired. And when somebody starts that stuff on me now, I bite their head off. I took that for 12 years, and I took it just so, so godly. I was the greatest there was. I was a real witness to how to be persecuted with grace and godliness, and I am up to here with that. And uh, I don't know what I'm going to do in the next round, but don't watch me. Watch ... and watch Watch some other brothers. They are the ones who are supposed to now show you how to be persecuted with all graciousness and godliness. Right, brother?

You need to see, and if you see something ugly, it's going to destroy you. If you see a man answering his critics, you see a man getting bitter and angry and shriveled and hurt, it'll destroy you because you'll imitate that and you ought not to see that. And those 3,000 people saw 12 men take it and take it well, and you ought to have the privilege of watching that. I sure hope you find somebody. I really hope you find somebody.

If anybody out there would like to volunteer to be that person, please write me a letter and let me know, and we will persecute you and let the young brothers watch how graciously you handle it. I'm so tired of being the witness to this. I am weary to the bone. And I have said again

and again and again that the one thing I fear the most - I don't fear some great crisis, I've been through so many of those - I fear being worn down. And that's, by the way, I'm off the subject, but that's why a man who serves the Lord should stop serving the Lord from time to time totally and quit for a period of years and rest from the battle because if you don't, you're going to get worn down and you're going to become a pickle puss. You're going to look exactly like a 12-day-old prune, shriveled, wrinkled up.

It's just one other thing I want you to notice about these 12 men. I want you to notice how much backbiting they do among themselves, and how they fight for prestige, and preeminence, and for a position of importance, and how often they get in arguments with each other, and they get their feelings hurt, and they're pushy, and they're picky, and they're peevish. Did you notice that? You'll notice that in the Gospels, you don't see it in Acts. You really meet some gracious men. Why? Because Jesus Christ knew how to raise up workers. That's why. Jesus Christ knew how to raise up workers. I hope, if there is a young worker somewhere in this room or out there, I hope you get raised up by the best.

You are so picky, and so sensitive, and so irritable, and so ambitious, and so religious, and at the same time so simple, and so guarding against all of that and trying to hide it so badly. And you need to have the experience of the 12. You need to get in church like life like they did in Galilee, and it'll fix your fenders. It will iron your wrinkles, and it will burn your toast. It will singe your hair. Those men had lived together for nearly four years, and they were exposed men. Now, it was behind them, and they were doing just fine. Thank you. And there were some young men following them just as religious, just as messed up, just as picky, just as peevish, just as sensitive, who in the next 14 years, count them, 14 years, 10 to 14 years, living in the church under the apostles, learning about Jesus Christ, fellowshiping with Christ within them, and fellowshiping with other Christians who were fellowshiping with Christ within them, and those men got past such immaturity. Now guess what you should do...

Well, ideally, you should find an apostle, and if I'm serious, I'm dead serious. Ideally, you should find an apostle, and if you have been called to serve the Lord, you ought to quit serving the Lord immediately, and if you've got a little church somewhere that needs you so desperately, and if you can't see that it's more important for you to leave that church, then stay there and help them through their piddly little problems, which somebody else can do just as well as you can. And if you cannot see that you ought to give that up for the purpose of you yourself having the experience of being a brother in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you can't see that, you can't see anything. You can't see anything if you can't see that.

Don't be so ambitious that you can't pull the plug for a few years and sit down under somebody who has been called and sent by the Lord, whose one purpose in life is Christ within the church, and who is being sent and who is going out to do nothing but raising up churches. Then, brother, after a period of time, you go out and do what you want to. If that man is worth his salt, and salt is cheap, if he's worth his salt, he will let you go; he will not try to turn you into part of his movement. He will set you free. If he is any good at all, go get under him, but go get in the church, and go get with some brothers about your own age, and go get yourself so exposed that it's absolutely ridiculous. Oh, you're so high, and you're so mighty, and you're so great, and you're so neat, and you're so godly, and people think you're the first thing that ever was. Give yourself four or five years in the church, and you'll just be another piece of bread and peanut butter. That's all you'll be. You'll just be something as common as dirt is common. And they'll have a fix on you. And a lot of that fanciness and all that religiousness and all that high tone Christianity you've got will be down to normality. And while you're at it, get a job. You want a job for the simple reason that someday the church of the Lord Jesus Christ may throw you out.

God's people may get rid of you, and you need a way to make a living. And besides that, if you're going to raise up the church, you need to know how to earn your own living. You ought not to depend on God's people; let that money go to other things. Get in the church. Know the Lord. Know the Lord. Get in the church. Sit for a while and it'll work out eventually that if God calls you, and if the Lord prepares you and if you are willing to do that which sent ones are supposed to do which is to go and nurture the church or raise up the church, someday He'll send you, if you got a heart that's pure, or fairly close to pure. But don't be so self-righteous and don't be so big and proud that you cannot quit all the glories of the pulpit and come be an ordinary human being with other brothers.

That's the one other thing I want to say to you is that these 12 men work together. They work together in coordination, and there's nothing high-toned or highfalutin about them. Hey, listen. I'm speaking to so many southerners here. I'm afraid that other people can't understand what I'm saying. Do you understand high-toned and highfalutin, and putting on the dog? You know all that stuff, don't you? Well, those folks out there don't. They've never heard of that. All right.

These men are ordinary. Even though they are apostles, they are ordinary. They've got the touch of Christ humanity on them. They've got the touch of normality on them, and they work well with one another. Not only do they not fuss and fight with one another, but they are a constant companion with one another, and a strength to one another, and they know one another's weaknesses, and they all know they have weaknesses, and they know someone else has a strength they don't have. They don't mind calling on it.

You know, if there is any witness today or any lack of witness that shames us who are Christian workers, it is this. We can't work with anybody else. I will ask you to answer this question for me. How many men do you know in the world who grew up together in their Christian life who serve the Lord together, and the ministry is dual or triple or quadruple, it's four or five or six people or two or three rather than one solo, one Charles Lindbergh? One solo flight.

God hasten the day when young men have their history as having been with one another, and they go out to proclaim the gospel together. I hope God will let me live to see that day, and I don't want to just see it once, I want to see it about a dozen times, or a dozen different cases of it. In fact, I'll take eight. I'll settle for eight right now, men who go out and serve the Lord together and who know one another. What a witness to God's people. And if the common touch be on them, how much more wonderful. And boy, if both of them work for a living, or at least have, maybe they got in a position where they have to take the Lord's money; that's okay, that's scriptural, but they have the testimony that they're not professional religious workers. You understand what I mean? That they worked for a living at one time or another, just like everybody else did.

What a wonderful witness. They didn't backbite, and they were in complete coordination with one another. And I don't know how to stress this, but those men were not introducing religiousness into the life of God's people. And that was revolutionary. I want you to see those 3,000 people. And we're going to stop with this. I want you to see those 3,000 people out there. And all they've ever known are Pharisees and long fancy dresses and long solemn faces, long sad faces. All they know are special dress scribes with long grim faces. And all they know are colorfully dressed priests with long grim faces. And that's the only thing they've ever known in the world of religion, and some of them have been turned off by it. Others have accepted it because they love the Lord, and others have never known the Lord because they simply couldn't stand it from the very outset.

All three of these groups are represented in that 3,000. Here are 12 men who are human. You can't be human until you're truly divine. Until you've touched Christ's divine humanity, you will just be a fallen human or a religious human. You'll not be a human.

Being with this carpenter, being with a carpenter, changed their life, and they had become spiritual without being religious, and that's quite a trick. That is quite a trick. I've told this story before. I'm going to tell it again. The meeting's breaking up, and some young brother notices that the Apostle John is sitting over there by himself. He's sitting on one of the foundations of one of the pillars of the temple.

This young brother has been listening to this man, and he just almost worships him, and today, for the first time in his life, he's going to go talk to him. and he staggers over to this foundational pillar, foundation on which the pillar is resting, and there's John sitting there, and this kid's holding his heart and he's just about to pass out. His heart's going boom, boom, boom.

Finally, the young man gets up there and he says, "Mr. Apostle, I don't want to bother you, but could I ask you a question? And John looks at him and says, "You're scared, aren't you?" And the kid almost dies. Yeah, I'm scared. He said, "You know, I understand that. I used to be afraid of the Lord. Come on up here. Let's sit down and talk." And the Apostle John leans back against the temple pillar, and he raises one leg up kind of like this and says, "What you got on your mind?" And the kid thinks to himself, "That's the way my daddy used to talk to me. This man is just like my daddy. Why? He's normal." And he sits down, and he talks to a man about the Lord, but as he does, he senses a human he can identify with.

Do you think that happens very often? That is a very rare commodity. Why had it happened to John? Because he had moved into the inner fellowship of the circle, the inner circle of the fellowship of Christ, to the point he could fall asleep on his chest. There's something about getting that close to the Lord that makes you human. It doesn't make you religious. I am certain that my Lord was not religious.