

We are here in a studio in New England, and knowing you've introduced me just now, and having no idea what you've said about me, can be very disconcerting. I think the other thing that's bothering me right now is if this is truly being shown in the auditorium there in Garland, you've probably dimmed the lights. This conference has been going on. All the men in the audience are very tired, and I can imagine them all going to sleep.

Here in New England, back in the Puritan days, there was a cure that a church came up with for that particular problem. They had a long-winded, very dry speaker. So, on Sunday mornings, they appointed this man who had walked up and down the aisles with a long stick and a very sharp point, and every time this gentleman saw anyone nodding or about to go to sleep, he would walk over with this long stick and this very sharp point and he would jab... the preacher. So I'll try to keep you awake, gentlemen, as best I can.

I'd like to talk with you this morning about a vision of the church in the 21st century. Now, there are some things that perhaps I should let you know before that. My ministry is on the deeper Christian life, and I hold conferences on that all over America. But throughout my life, I have also been very concerned about the church as it is today, and I have a hobby, and that hobby has been a study of church history. Gentlemen, I'd like to talk with you about what the church will look like in the 21st century and what we have to do to prepare for it.

I suppose I'm speaking mostly to the younger men in the audience right now. Think about it. Let's say that everybody in this room is given 70 years. How many years will you minister in the 21st century? I will be ministering two years in the 21st century. Now, don't misunderstand. I'm not old. I couldn't possibly be. I'm only two years older than Elvis Presley.

Many of you who are in this room are going to be ministering for 10, 15, 20, or 25 years in the 21st century. I'd like for you to know that you have a responsibility as grave and as great as any men who have ever preached the gospel because there is going to be a titanic change in the gospel. No, I mean in the way the gospel is presented, or we are going to face catastrophe. Now, let me try to explain to you exactly what I mean, and let's go back in church history to do so. In fact, let's go back exactly 100 years. 100 years ago, I would like for you to consider where the Catholic Church was, and I'd also like for you to consider where Bible-believing Christians who were committed to the fundamentals of the Christian faith were a hundred years ago. And let's project into the future where we will be and what we will look like a hundred years from now. And what that means to us today and how it affects our future ministry.

As far as I'm concerned, we're in a crisis that's quite grave. And perhaps the most frightening thing about it is that it moves slow enough that it is almost imperceptible over a short period of time. The Roman Catholic Church, a hundred years ago, had its churches in Europe filled. virtually everywhere. Today, 100 years later, almost without exception throughout Europe, those churches are closed. They've been converted into museums. They are empty. They belong to the city. They've been turned into libraries. And though the

Catholic Church speaks of no numerical loss, as far as attendance is concerned, they are in total retreat.

I've just recently come from Canada, where I've been for the last six weeks. I've been in Quebec City. You can stand on Grand Alley in Quebec City and look about 200 yards this way and about 100 yards that way, and you will find five churches. At one time, 100 years ago, those churches and every one of them had monasteries were filled Today, one of them is a condominium. Another one is closed. A third one is an old folks' home, leaving only one church left on that street. And on Sunday mornings, there are a handful of people who walk in there.

Now, would you believe, can you conceive, that this just very well may happen during the 21st century, to those of us who are evangelicals and those committed to the fundamentals of the Christian faith? Gentlemen, I would like to make a prediction at the beginning of this message. A hundred years from now, the way that we are practicing the Christian faith has nothing to do with theology. The way we are practicing the Christian faith today will have either radically changed, or our church buildings will be in exactly the same state that they are today among the Roman Catholics in Europe, the modernist churches in America, and, for instance, the churches in the province of Quebec, Canada. We are headed that way.

Now I want you to consider exactly the debt that you and I owe to men who lived a hundred years ago, the evangelicals who came before us. They were our forefathers. They saw something, and they acted, and we stand today on what they did. The problem is that I, you, and I, are also someone's forefathers, and we will have to take some dramatic, radical, new course in order to deal with the 21st century's matrix. Now, gentlemen, if you'll consider a hundred years ago, the 1880s, when there were no telephones. Today, science with its enormous leaps, we can only imagine what the 21st century, a hundred years from now, will look like. We've got to prepare now, and it will take radical action, and there are only a few men, and it is to you that I am speaking, who will be able to make that radical change in our practices.

A hundred years ago, modernism had the seminaries, they had the universities, they had the money, they had the church buildings. And evangelicals breaking from that, men believing in the fundamentals, began with Bible schools, a small minority, seeing what needed to be done, teaching, preaching, and slowly out of that came evangelical archaeology, which has put modernism in retreat. Today, the churches, the great churches today, are the evangelicals. Today, over 50% of all the churches gathering on Sunday morning claim to be either conservative or very conservative. The modernistic church, the liberal church, is not only in retreat, it's becoming an asterisk. And that has happened because of the vision of our forefathers.

Gentlemen, I would give you today a vision of our desperate need. Our battle, as far as I'm concerned, is virtually over with the test of those who question the inerrancy of the Word of God. That is among the men I'm speaking to today. That's all. I recognize the battle has got to be fought in many other areas, but to you.

I want to go back to what happened to the Roman Catholic Church. The problem in Europe was that she never saw what was happening because it took place so gradually. And the priest, the cardinals, and the pope have blamed the people. But the truth of the matter is, Roman Catholic practices simply became outdated to its people. I don't know if you know this, but the Sunday morning Mass that the Catholic people are subjected to every Sunday was actually created virtually the way it is done today, around the year 560, by a gentleman who is referred to in church history as Gregory the Great. Now, to go 1,500 years without changing your order of service is a study in suicide.

Now, what is it that is truly withering away our foundations so imperceptibly that we cannot see them? This imperception is our greatest enemy. Now, to tell you what it is, I'm going to have to make a major change here in this message, and I want you to follow me. First, I need to explain to you that though my ministry is on the deeper Christian life, I write books on the history of the church. In fact, I believe that the book entitled "The Revolution: The Story of the First-Century Church" is the largest-selling church history book in the English language.

Now, I made a mistake that I may live to regret today. Some years ago, a long time ago in fact, I began to, as a hobby, study where we Protestants got our traditions, where we got our practices. I'm going to once more draw the line. I have nothing to say about our theology, but gentlemen, I will tell you that most of our practices today did not come from the New Testament. They came from traditions, most of them right around the Reformation. And let me hasten to say to all of you that those traditions are by the day becoming more and more outdated and irrelevant to the changing matrix of North America. And we will change with it. Not our message, not our convictions, but our practice, or we will suffer in the 21st century the same fate the Roman Catholics suffered in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Now, I suppose right now at this moment, I'm glad I'm in New England and you're in Texas. By the way, Texas is my home state. I come from Tyler. I was really looking forward to being back where people don't have an accent at all. I didn't expect to not be with you, but right now I'm glad I'm not. I don't know if you can take the next few minutes. By the way, someday I hope this will be in a book, and it will all be textually documented.

You're going to have to believe that what you're about to hear is true. Where did we get our practices? If I had a verse of Scripture to read to you, it would be Philippians 3.13, where Paul says, Forgetting those things which are behind, I press on. Gentlemen, one of the most difficult things we as ministers do, and especially those of us who are Baptists, is to forget that which we have latched on to in the way of practices. You know the old story. Anytime a Baptist does anything two times in a row, after that, it becomes a New Testament doctrine. There are practices that will have to be dropped.

Let's just begin with some of them, and I hope you'll listen very carefully. I think you all know that the church building did not exist as a Christian concept until the days of Constantine. He literally emptied the coffers of the pagan temples and built buildings commemorating saints all over Italy, all over the Holy Lands, and then, during the reign of

his sons, this spread all over Europe, buildings that Christians had never even conceived of. In Constantinople, they walked into these buildings, just stunned at what they were, couldn't conceive of them, but they had been given as gifts to the churches. The Constantinople Christians walked into them; they had forgotten to put in pews, and the people sat down on the floor. And then they were told they couldn't do that, so they stood up. And today the Eastern Orthodox Church stands through its entire two-hour service because of what happened that day.

The Italians, being a little bit less tight about this, brought in benches. And believe it or not, the chair was invented just about the time of Martin Luther, and with it, the back of a pew was invented. And so the Eastern Orthodox stand, the Roman Catholics sit on benches, and we Protestants get to lean back and relax a bit. That's the pew. That's the church building.

The church building came to us through the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not New Testament. It is not scriptural. It is a tradition. And I would like to repeat what I said. And you may quote me on this. In the year 2089, whatever is going on in the Christian faith, I predict, gentlemen, that those who are still tied to the church building will be irrelevant to the Christian faith. The Christian faith will find its expression somewhere outside the church building. This concept of the church being a building will one day be passé.

My wife and I were married on television in New York City, in Rockefeller Plaza, Studio B, National Broadcasting Company, on an old program you never heard of called Bride and Groom. And we were put up free of charge in the Barbizon Plaza Hotel. Last year, celebrating our 35th anniversary, we decided to go back there and found out that the Barbizon Plaza Hotel has been converted into condominiums. And those things are selling. Little one, two-room apartments are selling at \$400,000, half a million dollars. Now, how could Christians go in there today and build a church building around Fifth Avenue to minister to the hundreds of thousands of people who are moving back to downtown as hotels are being converted into condominiums and apartments. There's no way. It would take five to ten million dollars at this moment to build a church building in downtown New York, and then, gentlemen, no one in those buildings would come.

In the next 40 or 50 years, we're going to see real estate become so precious that it will be impossible to be tied to the concept of a church building. When I was born, 10-15% of a man's income went to his home. It grew to 30%, 40%. On the West Coast today, it's pushing 50% and 60%. This trend will continue, and property will be beyond our ability to work with.

That's not all. The social matrix is changing. People will, for reasons I nor you can comprehend, simply lose interest in sitting down in a pew and hearing a message and going home. There is a loneliness that has come with our present-day society, with its abstractions and its computers and its isolation, in which men and women are innately, instinctively crying out within themselves for something we don't have a word for. So let me use a word: the word community, the word of people caring for one another, living close

to one another, having a relationship that is not provided by a building that we report into two, three, or four hours a week. We will move out of the church buildings in the 21st century into homes, coming back to the primitive origins of the Christian faith, where we began for the first 313 years of our history. We will do that.

Now, we will suffer incalculable losses. Well, I can go on through lots of other things here, and let me do so. Have you ever wondered why we meet, all of us Protestants meet, at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning? Everywhere in the world, Protestants gather at 11 a.m. It's sacrosanct, and no one seems to ever question why, in fact, we don't ever seem to question most of our traditional practices. It's like this tie, I don't know where it came from or why I wear it, it's of no utilitarian value. I cannot conceive of what this lapel is doing here. This collar serves no purpose. I have a heel on my shoe that causes a backache, but because it's there, I wear it, and we do not often ask where we got things that seem to be New Testament in their concept.

Sunday morning church is one of them. And this is one of those things we are going to be forced to forget and leave. And this is the story. During the Reformation in Wittenberg, Germany, Martin Luther began his Protestant church services at 5 a.m., which had been the tradition of Christians gathering throughout the centuries in Europe. But he also liked to go to the tavern on Saturday night and drink beer. So the later he stayed at the tavern, the more he moved up his Sunday morning church service. So 6 a.m., 7 a.m., 8 a.m. And he stayed longer and longer at the tavern on Saturday night, drank more and more beer, moved it up to 9 a.m., then 10 a.m. Finally, someone said to Martin, Martin, if you keep this up, there's not going to be any Sunday morning Mass. You've only got one hour left. He said, Great, that's fine. We'll move it to 11 a.m.

And that's why you and I gather at 11 a.m. And we're locked in. We have to shut down at 12 because everyone's hungry and wants to go home and eat. I had the privilege of going into Thailand just as Vietnam fell, and I went there into the jungles to bring out a tribe of Christians who had not been seen. They were Hmong, had not been seen in 50 years, been converted by a missionary who left them. And I went into the refugee camp, and there in the middle of the refugee camp was a hut that was about three feet higher than any other hut. And I got there on Sunday morning, and I walked in. Now, these people had not seen any other Christians in 50 years until that very time that I walked in there. And there were bamboo poles stretched out on stakes, all in a row. There was a pulpit up front, and they met in the jungle at 11 a.m. on Sunday morning. It has gotten into the very lifeblood of the church.

I'm going to come back to this business of the Sunday morning church service. And I realize this is so sacred, it's almost inconceivable that we would ever dare break with it. But gentlemen, I am saying to you, somewhere within the next century, and especially to you young men, we will have to break with this tradition, or we will suffer enormous loss as the matrix of society changes before our eyes.

We will not only have to adapt, we will have to adapt radically. And I would present to you the pattern of the first-century church. Well, some other things you might be interested in. I think you probably know that the choir really did not come chronologically into the church through the Old Testament concept of the temple. But it came to us through the pagan choir. And it was introduced into the Christian church about 50 years after Constantine. And at that time, the popular music was chanting, and it froze. And today, the Gregorian chant is still within the Roman Catholic Church. And we have, of course, left the chant, but we still have the choir.

Now, gentlemen, there are a lot of other things that I'd like to run down with you on these, but I think I'm going to present one or two that are just downright scary. The Sunday morning order of service, which, at least for us who are Baptists, and I speak as a Baptist now, we hold to religiously. But the truth of the matter is, if you'll go to a Lutheran church, a Methodist church, a Baptist church, anybody but the Pentecostals, you'll find that Protestant churches have a very similar presentation on Sunday morning. This was invented about the same time as the Sunday morning church service. It was invented by John Calvin, picked up by John Knox, and brought into the evangelicals by that means, and brought to America by the pilgrims, the Puritans, and others. And we are locked in today to an order of service invented by John Calvin in the year 1540. Now, that's disconcerting, and you can look at it and say, I don't want to hear that. That's offensive. Or you can say, forgetting those things which are behind. If that's where it came from, then I can be liberated to think in new, wider, broader, more dramatic terms.

Brothers and sisters, I may be mistaken, but I think that if you took a poll of Christians across America, they would tell you something that would shock you. And that is, after 400 years, the Sunday morning Protestant church service is boring. And brothers, there is so much more dynamic, such greater freedom for the expression of the gathering of the body of Christ than you and I, most of us, have ever seen and known. I would like to challenge you to consider a totally different view of how we as believers gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A couple more. I think you need to know where our seminaries came from. This is a shocker. In fact, I have been asking and writing to seminaries for, I suppose, ten years. Did anybody know where they came from? I got back answers, telephone calls, letters, and personal inquiries on campuses. No Protestant. Presidents of seminaries and on down. No one could tell me where the seminary originated from.

Well, it originated in 1545 at the Council of Trent. It was a Roman Catholic thing. They met for 18 years trying to decide whether or not they would reform themselves as the Protestants were pressuring them to do, or if they would remain conservative in the state they were in. And finally, after 18 years, they decided they were going to stay the way they were. But they had two problems they felt they needed to deal with. One was the low caliber of the priest at that time, and the other was the immorality in Europe. And in the last six months, they fought a battle over what they would do. Now, I'm telling you history. I did not

make this up. You may read it in books yourselves. All you have to do is study the Council of Trent.

As for the immorality that they felt was rampant in the church and throughout Europe, where the Catholic Church was, they came up with this cause, that there had been too many statues made during the Renaissance with people with no clothes on. So they asked the governments of Europe to go around and plant propitious fig leaves on those statues. That was their cure for their morality in Europe and in the churches. Read it. And as to the matter of the low standard of the ministry, they invented something called the seminary, which in our language has become the seminary. It was brought over out of a Protestant imitation of that into our country. Now, I have nothing to say to that except I believe we need to reexamine today how it was the Lord Jesus Christ raised up men who were called to preach the gospel. And we need very much to study exactly how Paul related to Timothy, Secundus, Aristarchus, Titus, Gaius, Epaphroditus, and how he raised those Gentile workers up to preach the gospel. It may be, gentlemen, that we have a more powerful tool in the first century approach to raising up young men to preach the gospel than we do in seminaries. Now, that may be too radical for anyone within this auditorium to consider, but I ask you as a fellow believer in Christ, committed to the Word of God, that these things are matters we must consider as we stand on the brink of a new century.

And now I'm going to do a death feat here, I'm going to walk right into the jaws of sure destruction. Gentlemen, I want to talk with you, and I don't mind telling you, I have never discussed this subject before publicly. This is the first time. Maybe you should write me a letter and tell me if I should ever, again, as long as I live, discuss these things where we Protestants got what we have today in the way of traditions.

I don't know if you know this or not, but we have just done away with the church building, the choir, the pew, and the seminary, as things being New Testament, the Sunday morning order of service, and 11 a.m. Now, I'm going to the last two. I hope you're ready, and I call for your Christian graciousness. I cannot change historical facts.

Where did the practice of the modern-day pastor come from? I looked for that longer and harder than anything else, and when I finally found it in some of the old records of early Protestant expression, I was surprised, to say the least. At the time of Luther, the Roman Catholic priests had something called the seven pastoral ministries. Don't confuse that with the seven sacraments. The seven pastoral ministries. And those seven pastoral ministries were picked up by the Protestants, who were mostly Roman Catholic priests turned Protestant under the teachings of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others. I'm frightened to tell you what those practices of the Roman Catholic priests were. One of them was to pray over civic gatherings and bless them, you know, like a football game. Another was to bury the dead. I don't know if you've ever tried to find in the New Testament a funeral being preached over by a Christian; it is a Roman, not Roman Catholic, but a Roman tradition. The philosophers preached over the dead bodies of people before they buried or burned them, and this was picked up by the Catholics, and then brought over into our territory. The priests were to visit the sick. And some of them were to tend to the preaching of the Word.

Most of it is those things that we consider so much a part of what we do today, most of which really cannot be found in the New Testament Scripture. And I'm saying to you, brothers, that those of you who are pastors, and I have been a pastor as well as an evangelist. Gentlemen, as I have ministered among you and your churches, my heart has bled for you, that the modern-day concept of the pastoral ministry has so locked you into things that your people are expecting of you. The tragedy has enshrouded not only the preaching of the Word of God but has affected the whole tenor and expression of the church itself.

Forgetting those things which are behind. I am not bound by the seven pastoral ministries of Roman Catholic priests in the year 1530 in eastern Germany. I would invite you to look again at what your calling and practice is, and also that of God's people. I can witness to the fact that the Lord's people don't mind having others pray for them; you don't have to go visit all those sick folk, you don't have to preach over the dead. And all of the other things that you and I get called on to do were in the first, second, and third centuries in the hands of God's ordinary people. And very little of it was in the hands of those who'd been called to preach. They had other jobs, far more dramatic and, in fact, terrifying to do.

Well, now, I come to the final one, and this one is going to shock you like it did me. I am going to ask you a question. Have you ever wondered not where the Sunday morning church service comes from, but where the Sunday morning sermon comes from? Well, Gene, it comes from the tradition of the preaching of the Word of God. There is no question that there is the preaching of the Word of God, but that's a far cry from the Sunday morning sermon to which we are all attached, and if you please, enslaved, come hell, come high water, at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday morning, we have to preach a sermon. Where did that tradition come from?

It has been traced, and you can read this in history books. I'm sure you've heard the term rhetoric. Let's go back to the Roman Empire during the days when the Christian faith first began. Rhetoric was taught as one of three or four sacred subjects by all the schools, mostly attended by the elite and the rich. Oratory was an innate part of the Greco-Roman tradition. And after the Romans conquered the Greeks, and the Greeks had no great orations to give over many different crises that they had traditionally had great orators to address, they began to play like in Greece, and vast audiences would gather, and they would pretend that the Spartans were upon them, or the Romans, and a man would come up before the audience and pretend a great oration, and the people would go wild over his ability to captivate his audience.

Now, there were Roman orators who became converted to Jesus Christ in the fourth century. They had been steeped in a 400-year tradition of rhetoric. Rhetoric had been addressed by Aristotle, who said every good speech oration has to have an introduction, a clear conclusion, and two, three, or four major points. And that is still being taught today to young ministers. That's what we learn to do on Sunday morning. I am not discounting the need of the preaching of the Word of God, but I would like for us to see a vision of how these

things can express themselves much better in a more primitive, first, second, and third-century expression of the church.

Gentlemen, it is frightening. As I read, it was frightening to me to read the ancient documents of how the orator would come out in front of an audience, and there in front of the audience, he would put on a robe with a strange-looking collar. And then he would bring his oration. But I think the thing that stunned me the most was to find out why we have chapters and verses in the New Testament. It was not originally for the edification and for the help of God's people, but the tradition among the orators was that before they spoke, they read a passage out of one of the classics. And they would say chapter so-and-so, verse so-and-so. And then they would read it, and then they would speak on it.

And when those men, some of them, became converted to Jesus Christ, they asked that the New Testament be divided into chapters and verses so they could carry on that same tradition. And today, when we stand up to preach a sermon, we are in the rhetorical tradition of the ancient Romans. Brothers, if we could see what the first-century Christians did, the ministers of the Word of God, they preached out of emergency. And they preached out of urgency. And their preaching was sporadic. It was inconsistent. I mean by that you never knew when they would or would not do it. It was not tied into ritual. And when they preached, they stayed with a subject until God's people were soaked with it and had become masters of its spiritual content.

Forgetting those things which are behind. I hope that a little of this has opened up for you the prospects of what you, especially you young men, might be able to do with a great liberality of practice open before you. Brothers, break, first in your thinking, then in your practice of traditions that have come down to us, most of them in the period around the 50 years of the Reformation and the 50 years around the coming of Constantine to the throne in the Roman Empire in 313-323 AD.

Now, those are practices that we are locked into today that over the next 100 years may very well become irrelevant to the people of this country as their own needs change and as the world becomes more worldly. Gentlemen, I see a church of the 21st century that I would like to share with you. It is not a church that gathers in formal dress on Sunday morning to go to Sunday school and church. And I have a dear friend who recently simply said before a vast audience of people, the Sunday school will become irrelevant in the next 50 years. And I know that's sacrosanct. But consider, brothers, the community of the believers.

If there is anything that church history has taught me in the study of the first, second, and third century church, it was this, that it was not some way of evangelism. It was not some way of preaching the gospel. It was not some method nor depth of commitment that they had that we did not have. There were two things that marked those people that made them both so attractive and so abominable to the society around them. One was their depth of Christ, and the other one was, and this has been so completely overlooked, the very beauty, the attractiveness, and the magnetism of the body of Christ. People came to the Lord Jesus Christ in the first, second, and third centuries because of the ecclesia. It was so beautiful, so

incredibly unlike anything they had ever seen. It was not a place people gathered on Sunday morning. It was a civilization within itself. It was a 24-hour-a-day, 7 days-a-week, 365 days-a-year way of living. They met in homes. Their meetings lasted for hours. Often they did not see ministers or anything near a minister, nor an elder, nor a deacon, for months and sometimes years.

If that sounds impossible to you, then perhaps you would enjoy studying the ministry of Pram Pradham in India, where he single-handedly went out and preached the gospel in villages and left people with nothing more than a gospel of John and the gathering. And he would have to come back sometimes six months later, not one of them could read or write. And yet there they were, meeting all the time during the week, sitting down in their homes and in their huts and meeting for hours and hours and hours, sharing with one another their divine encounter with Christ.

This was how the first-century church came into being, how it took root. Paul would go into a city and preach the gospel. He did not appoint elders. Not the first time, not ever. He left the people holding on to one another in desperate situations. He then returned and appointed elders, but those elders were appointed on top of, or in the midst of, an organic expression of the body of Christ, which had already found a way of gathering, of caring for one another, of loving one another, of living with one another as a civilization, as a way of life unknown to the rest of the world and unprecedented in all of human history.

That we would see the church return to the living room. That we would preach in those meetings, but we would also leave them. I have watched Christians gather in a home who at 11 o'clock would get up and walk out on you at 12 a.m., and I watched them gather at 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening and share and sing and pray and fellowship until 11 and 12 o'clock at night, and then complain because they had to leave. Koinonia, Ekklesia, had returned to a functioning body of people under the ministry of men who were willing to preach to them, show them Christ, show them the depths and the joys, the unfathomable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust them then to care for one another in those meetings.

Now I know that it's a fad right now to have home meetings. I went to one recently, and there were all these people gathered, and they had this big thick syllabus; there was a huge notebook, and everyone had one of them, and in it was how to meet in the home.

Brothers, I did not get this nose on my face because I read a book. Nor these eyes in my head because I read a book. I got them because they are organic to my species. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has an organic expression that is outside of ritual and form and the traditions of men. She will express herself, brothers. There is something that is divine within the depths of all of us that is not human. Something of the Lord's own life has been placed in us that has an organic expression. That organic expression was known in the first century. And I have watched Christians who have been well cared for, well ministered to, well pastored by daring men who were willing to show them the riches of Christ and move out of their lives just for an evening. And the nose just comes forth, and the ears just grow

out, and the eyes are just there. There is an organic way that happens when God's people get together and hold on to one another.

In a sterile society that will become more and more sterile and detached, it will be the community of the redeemed in the next century. Brothers and sisters loving and caring for one another and holding on to one another in a spirit and atmosphere of total freedom that will be the attracting magnetism that draws men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ in the 21st century. Whatever happened to the most beautiful girl in the world? She will return in the coming century. She will leave some in the dust who will hold to their traditions. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is still the most beautiful thing this world has ever seen. And for men daring enough to face into the future and see the enormous and unlovely prospects of the 21st century, who are willing to drop, if you please, the Protestant, Reformational traditions that bind us, to the men who take that day, the 21st century will serve them and the Lord Jesus Christ and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to bring men and women to Christ in multitudes and honor him by a living, breathing, organic expression of the ecclesia.

Back during the Roman days, not the Roman Catholics, the Roman days and the Greek days, when the Olympics were held, just before the games began, there was a parade that would come by of athletes. The first ones that came out were very old men, and then those who came out next were men who would be in the games, and after them were some very young men. And they would all stand before the audience, and the first group would cry out, "We were, We were", and the second group would come and say, "We are, We are", and the young ones still practicing would come out and enthusiastically say, "We will be, We will be."

You heard from men who, forgive me, Dr. Criswell and Brother Lee Robinson, and I'm pushing you, "Were." I still, for a short time left, I'm one of those who can say "We are." But as I look at the young men coming up on that field who are crying out, "We will be, We will be", my plea with you today is to catch a deeper vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and your people, knowing him in a depth of reality that has not been known in ages.

And of the church. Beautiful, glorious, and free, adaptable, willing, and able, and capable of changing her practices in any and every direction. And if you wish a chart, gentlemen, if you wish a pattern, then look at the organic, living, breathing expression of the house of God. God's people in the first century, as itinerant men, went around the earth preaching the gospel, often having to leave God's people to the Holy Spirit and to the Word and to one another. There will come in the next century, as we might say the Roman Catholics here, the high church here, the liberals if they last that long, the present traditional evangelical expression of the Protestant church, there's going to come a layer, a new layer of Christians who have adapted, who have returned and reverted to a primitive expression of the house of God. And brothers, that ought to fall to you. To you who are committed to the inerrancy of the Word of God, who are committed to the Scripture. It ought to fall to you who preach the Word of God today. It is your mantle to seize, to take the 21st century.

But it will take a radical view. It will take brave men. It will take changes in the very nature and composition of our character. It will take withstanding persecution and criticism, but the mantle belongs to you. And if you take it, God will bless you. If you don't, there will be in the 21st century somewhere, someplace, a people who answer the call of God, who will meet the matrix, the need, the culture of the challenge of the 21st century. May God be pleased to make it men sitting here right now in this auditorium. Brothers, I thank you for the privilege of having addressed you this morning.