

O Magnify the Lord with Me, and Let Us Exalt His Name Together, Part 2

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Now I want to direct your attention to one verse of Scripture as I begin this morning, and it's found in 1 Corinthians 15:10. I will say nothing about the context, but simply read the verse and make just two brief comments upon it. The Apostle said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." My pastors to whom I am subject in the Lord have directed me to take two adult Sunday school classes to recount something of how God's grace has come to me as a man and also as a servant of Christ who has been a part of the life and ministry of this assembly for 46 years. I sought to fulfill the first part of my charge last Lord's Day, declaring that whatever I am as a man, I am by the grace of God, that is, by the unmerited favor and kindness of God shown to me in Jesus Christ.

This morning my charge from my fellow elders is to review something of a selective history of the life and ministry of Trinity Baptist Church. And as I do, I say with the Apostle Paul, whatever labors I have known among you, whatever blessing of God has been upon those labors, just as much as what I am as a man is to be attributed to the grace of God, yet it was the grace of God that was with me. And as I have spent many hours reviewing the history of these 46 years, stamped on every single period is grace, grace, all of grace. So I trust that at the end of this hour, all of us would find it very easy to quote from the heart the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:36, the first text ever printed on Trinity Baptist Church letterhead: "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen."

Now as I've wrestled with how best to structure the material, rather than just give a one-hour stream of consciousness, I had judged that the biological model of a human being from conception to advanced maturity was the best, albeit not a perfect way to do this. At some points, the divisions that I have made are rather arbitrary, but nonetheless, I have found it helpful in thinking through these 46 years, to think of our life together from conception all the way through to a present state of advanced maturity with its blessings, with its trials, and with its changes, because all of you who have reached your mature years know that you don't coast. These years are marked by peculiar blessings, but they are also marked by trials and by changes.

So we begin unit number one, the conception of Trinity Baptist Church. Well, in a very real sense, we could say it was conceived in eternity, for Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God

before prepared that we should walk in them." And when did He before prepare them? They were prepared from before the foundation of the world. And what has unfolded in these 46 years has been in a real sense a transcript of God's eternal purpose and plan. God's providence is a transcript of His sovereign decree. So in a sense, we could say Trinity Baptist Church and its life and ministry was conceived in eternity. But I'm speaking of its conception in space and time. And if you're to understand its conception, and with that conception the ongoing development of its configuration and its life in infancy and maturity, there are certain facts you must be aware of or you will never understand Trinity Baptist Church. So I go back to 1956 when I graduated from Columbia Bible College in early June, and on June 30th was married to that brown-eyed beauty, Marilyn K. Hart, up in Concord, New Hampshire.

Soon afterward, my wife and I returned to the college where I graduated, where I served as an assistant to the Dean of Men for the academic year 1956 and 1957. In the spring of 1957, I was ordained officially in a little Baptist church in Casey, South Carolina, where a few men came together, asked me a few questions about my doctrine and life, and then laid hands upon me and gave me a certificate of ordination. I told you last week that I had very little concept of the doctrine of the church, of the Biblical standard for the eldership. But I'm thankful I had enough sense of responsibility and accountability that I was a member of a little Baptist church and knew that if I were to preach the Word of God, there ought to be some external validation of my call to the ministry. Now although I was asked to remain on the staff of that college, for a number of reasons, I declined that offer with no present sense of what God wanted me to do.

Marilyn and I very passionately sought to see if God would open a door for us on the mission field. For during our courtship we prayed about one large country every night when we separated (she up in Rhode Island, I in South Carolina), pleading with God to make it plain if He would have us go to one of these countries. And that dear woman literally wept when it became evident for a number of reasons that God was not opening a door for us to serve on the mission field. So having turned down the opportunity to return to Columbia Bible College on the staff, not knowing what we were going to do, my parents invited us during this holding period to relocate up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. They would give us a large room, allow us to store our very meager goods until it became plain what God would have me to do.

There was a man on the faculty of Columbia Bible College who had been invited to be the camp evangelist at a Christian camp up in Wisconsin during the summer of 1957. He was unable to accept that opportunity, and they said, "Well, is there anyone you can recommend?" He said, "Well, there's a young man on the staff who has preaching gifts, and I think he would do a good job as camp evangelist for two weeks." And so he told me about the opportunity. I received a formal invitation, and I accepted that opportunity. And so I drove way up to Wisconsin and preached for two weeks at this Christian camp, seeking to be an evangelist, preaching the Gospel to children of various ages.

Well, that camp always secured the ministry of pastors as their counselors. So as these pastors heard me preach and sensed that I had some evangelistic gift, several of them asked me, "Would you be willing to return to our churches in the fall and preach? We usually have a week of fall evangelistic meetings." And not knowing whatever door God might be opening, I accepted those invitations. And that began a four and a half to five-year period of traveling itinerant ministry, preaching

evangelistically, holding Bible conferences throughout various parts of our country and up into Canada. Most of the churches in which I ministered were small to medium-sized, mainline, evangelical churches. And those four and a half to five years were really my post-graduate seminary education.

As I began to see in the Scriptures the Biblical doctrine of salvation and conversion and the transformation of a truly regenerate life, I saw in all of these churches such a low view of conversion--very little fruit of regeneration manifested in the members. And I began to preach out of the book of 1 John or passages like Matthew 7:21-23, driving home the truth that if you are in Christ, you are a new creation. The old has passed, and the new has come.

I remember in one church I was scheduled to preach for two weeks, and after the first week, the pastor was thinking seriously of canceling the second week. He came to me and said, "Al, you've got half our people doubting whether they're saved." And I said, "Sir, I'm not making them doubt; the Word of God is, and it ought to," For many of them had been taught this wretched doctrine, once saved always saved no matter how you live, and this doctrine that there are three classes of people, the natural man, the spiritual man, but most are in the realm of the carnal man (you've accepted Jesus, but you're living like you did before you were a "Christian"). And during those five years, I wrestled greatly with the issue of what is conversion, what leads to conversion, why are some transformed and not others.

I always stayed in the homes of members of the churches; there was little of any Biblical framework to their family lives. I always tried to get close to the pastors and enter into their burdens. And again and again, they would tell what a headache their deacons were to them. Most of them had the structure of one pastor and then a group of deacons who functioned like deacons and half elders. And I would say, "My brother, it shouldn't be this way. Shouldn't your spiritually-minded men be the men who support you and stand with you?" And again and again, they'd look at me with a knowing look and say, "Well, if you're in the pastorate someday, you'll find out your biggest headache will be your deacons." And I was treated like a Joseph with naughty dreams, that the church could be something more than what I was seeing with my eyes. And so I was wrestling with a number of doctrinal and practical issues.

During that time, God had withheld children from Marilyn and me. She had a miscarriage shortly after we were married, but then no sign of anything. But in mid-61 she was pregnant, and knowing that the Bible said, "Fathers nurture them", I could not do that in abstention. And I began to pray,

"Lord, if I'm going to be a father, I've got to be present to rear my child. And Lord, in the light of these perspectives that you're making real to me of what a church can be and ought to be, I don't want to go through life an idle dreamer thinking the church can be this, that, and the other. And it's just an idealistic dream with no substance. Lord, put me in situation where I can put you to the test. I need to be present to rear a child, and I want to know whether or not the things I'm seeing in my Bible are indeed attainable standards of church life."

In the summer of 1962, I was looking for opportunities between meetings to bring in money to pay my rent and put food on the table, as we were living there in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And I cannot remember how the contact was made in its particular local situation, but I found myself 30 miles from here in Chester, Pennsylvania. A

dear friend of mine who had formerly been a pastor in Wheaton, Illinois, and I had had meetings with him when I was ministering a good bit of the time out in Midwest Illinois, Wisconsin, a lot in Pennsylvania, etc.,--this man was now there in Chester, Pennsylvania in a church-planting endeavor. His home church was in North Caldwell, New Jersey. Well, while he was there in this church-planting endeavor, they had purchased a Roman Catholic retreat center that had a chapel, a house in which he and his family lived, and a barn. They farmed when it was a retreat center, and they wanted to change the barn into a youth center. It had a large upstairs area that was going to be a gymnasium. And downstairs they wanted to put the showers and the sinks and the toilets, but they had a problem. The downstairs area, much of it was a literal bullpen, not the bullpen at Shea Stadium where relief pitchers warm-up, but a real bullpen to keep real bulls. And the problem was that the dung from the bulls had so plastered against the floor that it was like concrete. So if you're going to put in showers and toilets and sinks, you've got to reactivate the dung and shovel it out.

Well, my friend said to me, "Al, do you have two weeks before your next meetings?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How about we pay you \$15 a day to reactivate the dung and shovel it out?" I said, "It's a deal." At that time, I did anything legitimate in order to make the money necessary to put bread on the table and pay the rent. And so for \$15 a day, I was reactivating bull dung and shoveling it out of the bullpen. I've thought again and again, God said to David, "I called you from tending sheep." And when things have gotten rough here over the years, I said, "Lord, You've called me from shoveling dung." You can't get much lower than that, so I can't go any lower. So let me press on in doing what You've called me to do.

During that two-week period, over the weekend in the middle, this friend said to me, "Al, my home church up in North Caldwell Jersey has lost two pastors in the space of eleven months. A man who had been there eight years left; they called another man, and he lasted eleven months." He said, "Sometimes they have problems getting pulpit supply. If they don't have anyone for this weekend, would you be willing to go and preach?" I said, "Of course."

So I'll never forget it. Every time I've driven up Bloomfield Avenue through West Caldwell into Caldwell to Small Avenue, I relive that day in April of 1962, when I made my way up Small Avenue onto Mountain Avenue, turned right and showed up at a little church there at the peak of Mountain Avenue in North Caldwell. And as I prayed, "Lord, what shall I preach? These people who have gone through a mess. One of the men said, "The people in the local Elks Club get on better than we do." They had been through terrible disruptions. I thought of Matthew 7:12: "As you would that others do unto you, even so, do ye also unto them." And I said, "Whoever's coming into this mess, what would I wish someone else had done for me to set the stage?" I said, "Well, at the base level, I would hope they preached on what a real Christian was."

So that Sunday, I stood up with both guns blazing and preached from Luke 14:25-33: "Whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has cannot be My disciple." And I went after shallow easy-believism, decisionism, Savior-Lord dividedism. I went after the whole bunch, hip and thigh, figuring the worse thing that could happen is they would hold back my remuneration. Then during the afternoon, I put together quickly a sermon entitled "Why Should Christ, the Head of the Church, Give You a Pastor?" And I went after them. I figured again, all they can do is hold back my

honorarium; I go back to Chester, shovel more dung, and then go off to my next meeting.

A few minutes after the evening service, when a man who was chairman of the board (the elders and deacons formed one board) said, "May we see you?" I said, "Uh oh, I'm in for it." So I walked in the back room, and they said, "Look, you've said things today we've never heard before. But you said them out of the Bible, and we believe we need to hear more. Would you be willing to come and hold a week of meetings this summer?" This man told me later it blew his mind when I said, "Well, I will pray about it." He knew that I had no other commitment, no other preaching opportunities. I had turned down for reasons, I don't know why, an opportunity for a whole summer ministry. And yet I turned it down, just sensing I could not take it. And so after some days of praying, I called them and said, "Look, I'll come for a week of meetings."

Partway into that week of meetings, the board said, "Would you be willing to come and be supply pulpit for six weeks for the rest of the summer?" And so Mrs. Martin, 18-month-old Joel, and myself made our way up from Pennsylvania into the parsonage, where they had put together bits and pieces of a bed and a chair. It looked like a Goodwill store, but we had a place to sleep and a table on which to put our food. And I began to preach to them.

Well, the hearts of the people responded to the Word, and several weeks into those six weeks, they said, "Would you consider becoming our pastor?" Well, since it was connected with a denomination, one of the rules of the denomination was, no one could be called to pastor one of their churches who did not have credentials with what was called the executive committee. So I made two trips all the way up to Rome, New York. (If you want to know how far that is, look on a New York map.) And I was grilled by that committee; I told them two areas where I did not agree with their doctrinal position. And they understood that, and yet they gave me credentials. To make a long story short, later on that summer, I went back to Pennsylvania, filled up a truck (I think it was a Ryder or U-Haul) with our meager belongings, and then we arrived at the parsonage there in North Caldwell.

Then on September 9, 1962, I was installed as pastor. This nice looking young guy with a full head of hair, 28 years of age was now the pastor of that church in North Caldwell. And this was in a very real sense the conception of what is now Trinity Baptist Church. I arrived with many doctrinal issues still very much up in the air, but with some sense from my Bible of what a church could and ought to be, what preaching ought to be, and what congregational life ought to be.

Now we move secondly to gestation to the birth of what is now Trinity Baptist Church. Gestation is that period you spend in the womb when you're developing prior to being expelled into the world on your birthday. Well, during that gestation period, I began consecutive exposition. I preached through large sections of 1 John. That denomination had an emphasis on a second work of grace, and I said the problem is they don't understand the first work of grace. And I shall never forget when one of the leading men came to me in the midst of that consecutive exposition of the birthmarks of a child of God from 1 John, and he said, "Pastor, I'm beginning to see it. The reason we are so messed up is that we've got this emphasis on the second work; we don't understand the magnitude of the first work." And that brought great joy to my heart, that spiritual perception was being given to the people.

I preached through from Matthew 5:1 to the end of chapter 7, the entire Sermon on the Mount, seeking to blow away the mist of dispensationalism, to show the abiding validity of the law of God in the life and in the conscience of the people of God. In the Sunday School (I was doing all three in those days), I did a basic course on Bible doctrines starting, I believe, with the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the person of Christ. And I'll never forget the day when I was preparing to teach on the doctrine of regeneration. I walked out of the study in the parsonage into the kitchen where Marilyn was working, and I said, "Dear, I've got to quick the ministry. I'm teaching on regeneration, and I've got to teach the people either we believe in order to be regenerate, or God regenerates us in order that we might believe. And it can't be both, and I don't know which it is. What am I going to do this Sunday?" And I was preparing on an old mimeograph machine. Remember those things? You cranked the handle; there was a big round tube-like thing. And I'll never forget it.

Those were the kinds of things I was wrestling with. And it was during that period of wrestling with those issues that God brought me home theologically. And my coming out party was the series of sermons preached in 1964 on the sovereignty of God. I still get letters from people who are downloading that series off the Internet and finding it helpful: the sovereignty of God in creation, in providence, in grace.

Shortly after that, I preached a series on the fear of God, opening up to our people that the very soul of true and saving religion is the fear of God. And it became clear that both I and the people were moving more and more away from some of the doctrinal distinctives of the denomination, and moving more and more into what we discovered were the old paths--nothing new. And we were finding ourselves being drawn to such doctrinal statements as the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.

Not wanting to be in any way a fifth columnist, I met with the denominational executives; I told them where I was going in my thinking; I asked them what I should do. And their attitude was, "There's room in our denomination for you. Don't worry about it." Then they tried to entice me to a very prestigious church within that denomination, not understanding that with me the issue was not having a bigger church and a prestigious platform. It was being true to the Word of God.

Well, at the same time, there was a church down in the Philadelphia area where I had preached when I was in the perambulating traveling ministry that had put out overtures to me to consider becoming their pastor. They had just built a new building, seating 750. They had a daily radio broadcast. They offered me my own home and company car. It was a marvelous opportunity both personally and ministerially. And I figured, "Well, Lord, though I hate the thought of leaving these people, I don't want to be party to anything that looks like a church split. I have no right to impose my ways upon the denomination." With grief and with pain, I tendered my resignation to the people.

Well, they refused to accept it. And by an overwhelming vote of the members and the adherence (for in that denomination, if you attended regularly, though you weren't a formal member, you were considered an adherent, and you could vote on congregational matters), they said, "We want to retain you as our pastor, even if it means we leave the parsonage, we leave the church building, we leave the church property, and we start with nothing." Well, I immediately called that church in

Philadelphia, and I said, "I'm not your man." I don't mean to be course when I say I felt it would be like a man who impregnates a woman and walked away.

I didn't know if I would be back doing construction work to put bread on the table. It didn't matter. Truth mattered. A people who had a hunger for the truth, ready to buy the truth and sell it not. That's all that mattered. Dear people, when you hear us get excited about truth, that's why. That's our birthright in this church. A group of people ready to walk away from what at that time was a half a million dollars worth of property for the sake of truth.

The denomination would not consider selling the parsonage and the church building. So in January of 1967, we had our first meeting in the Woman's Club of Caldwell. And what a joy it was that first Lord's Day with about 90 plus people, including children, to sing the praises of God and to be in a posture where this became a phrase that was very precious to us: we could now go wherever the hand of Scripture would lead us. We were now free from that pressure of denominational perspectives.

We immediately began to meet in Pastor Dixon's home for prayer meeting. And after a couple of weeks, we were able to get approval from the school board to meet in the Jefferson Elementary School multi-purpose room. The people then decided to disband the membership, disband the officers, establish a steering committee to handle money and administrative affairs. We had to have a name to put on the checking account; we were called Calvary Fellowship. Sounds very charismatic, doesn't it? Back then it didn't. But that's where we were. You sitting here who are members of Trinity Baptist Church were once Calvary Fellowship. But in a real sense, that little title was prophetic. It was what the Son of God did upon the cross that bound us to Him in ties of submission and love and faith, prepared to go wherever the hand of Scripture would lead us. They then asked me to be their official teacher and preacher, and so in the Jefferson Elementary School, I brought that initial series on the church. I brought a verse-by-verse series on 1 Thessalonians, which was an infant church.

Then in July of 1967, we moved into the parsonage at the time on Meadowbrook Lane. The denomination was kind enough to let us remain in the parsonage there in North Caldwell until we found a suitable home. And after going into dozens of homes all over Morris County and Essex County, God led us to the home in which I have lived for 41 years, in which Marilyn lived for 38 years, in which our children were reared. Joel was six; Heidi was three, and Beth was two when we moved into that home in July of 1967.

Then in September of 1967, we constituted with 44 members; the 1689 Confession of Faith as our doctrinal standard. Two elders were recognized (pastors Dixon and Martin) and three deacons. George Gergelis was part of this history, and we were trying last week to recount who the three deacons were. And I've not been able to track back into the church records and find out who they were, but that's how we started. And we began to meet together once a month as elders and deacons, that we might learn how to apportion our various responsibilities. Mr. Dixon and I began to meet regularly every Saturday morning. I said to him, "Don, you and I are shepherds; if we're going to oversee the flock, we must do it together." We established that Saturday morning meeting because he was still working full time for what was then Ma Bell before everything split up into the various phone companies.

We have precious memories of those early days. So what is now Trinity Baptist Church was born, then, in September of 1967. Our name then was Trinity Church of West Essex. We didn't know where we were going to settle. We were meeting in the school. We didn't know where God might give us land or a building. So we were called in our official documents Trinity Church of West Essex.

At the same time, something else got birthed that radically affected my life and the life of this church. In April of that year, I made my first trip abroad. I had been invited to speak at the Lester Ministers Conference in Lester, England, sharing the ministry with the late, beloved Professor John Murray and other servants of God. And at the time, I shall never forget. It was as though the Lord was saying, "My son, you passed this test. You were willing to turn your back on what was a marvelous opportunity for the Gospel, for your personal advancement at age 28 [at that time I was 33 just coming to 34]." I could have had my own home, company car, radio broadcast, and been 20 miles from Westminster Seminary. (Faculty members had been praying God would bring me near the seminary to have an influence.) But when a handful of people said, "We want the truth at any cost," I said that's where I'm going to give my life. I don't say that to brag, for I am what I am by the grace of God. And all my work has been the grace of God. But I say it to help some of you of the second generation to understand why we are so passionate about holding fast to who we are and not courting and flirting with novelty. I hope this helps you to understand why some of us have paid a price. Don't treat that price lightly or cheaply.

So we've looked at conception in 1962. We've looked at gestation to birth in 1967. And now we come thirdly to our infancy and childhood: 1967 to the mid 70s. From the very outset, we determined to look beyond ourselves, not to be ingrown and navel-gazing as a church. We made a decision very early in our life to set apart a minimum 10 percent of our general income for missions and benevolence and ministries beyond our own assembly. We had only been constituted 18 months when in conjunction with Grace Baptist Church in Carlyle, we helped to oversee the establishment of the church in Hazelton, Pennsylvania. There was a young man that we had had an interest with when he was at North Eastern Bible College, who subsequently went on to Reformed Episcopal Seminary. And we were privileged to lay hands upon him and send him to Hazelton as a church planter. And there in Hazelton, Dr. Ted Tripp has been pastor for years (as best as I can check the chronology, 38 years as a church established).

Foolish! We didn't have land; we didn't have a building. What in the world were we doing helping to support a home missionary? Then when God gave them a piece of land and they were ready to build, we gave away thousands of dollars to build a building. And some people were saying, "You've got to start a building fund." One of the texts that God used with us again and again was Proverbs 3:27-28: "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it. Say not unto your neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when you hast it by you." And we had it by us. We had no real present prospects of land or building. So we said, "Let's give it away for the advancement of the kingdom." Another text was Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again." And I can remember saying, "Brethren, I hope I'm around when God fulfills that passage."

We'd give away our money like drunken sailors. When we have need, it's going to come cascading in upon our heads. You don't believe it. Look around you. Not a dime has been owed on these buildings for years. That's your legacy, young people. That's your heritage. Again and again, when visitors have come, and I've walked them through these facilities, they'd asked, "Well, how did you raise the money?" I'd say, "I don't have a clue. We prayed." They'd asked, "What did you do at the practical level?" I'd say, "We prayed some more." And when building bills came due and we had no money, we called special pray meetings and cried to God, and the money was there. Dear people, that's your heritage. That's what's in those pews and in these beams and in the decking and in that beautiful living room you now have when you walk in the front doors. My, my, my, I should have left earlier; things would have gotten real fancy around here.

Now, then, as we work through infancy to childhood, from the outset, this is what we sought to do. By then, the tape ministry began to proliferate. Cassettes were the in thing. And somewhere in that period, Roger Philbrook gave up a very steady and stable job teaching auto mechanics in order to give himself to working in the tape room.

Then we began to pray for our own building. We recognized that if we were going to have any stability in our culture, we needed to have a place where people could say, "I know where to go to Trinity Baptist Church." So on a Saturday in 1969, we walked into a building on Runnymede Road in Essex Fells. It stank of stale beer. I'll never forget, there was egg on the wall where someone had obviously taken a live egg and thrown it against the wall. Why they did it, I don't know. It was at that time owned by the local Elks Club. It had formerly been the Hungarian American Hall, where some Hungarian immigrants wanting to preserve their culture had gotten together, formed a society, raised money and built this 30 x 60 two-story building in order to carry on their life. I shall never forget that Saturday morning. All of us who were part of the leadership, elders and deacons, walked into that building and in spite of the smell of beer, the big shuffleboard downstairs, and a huge bar about 35 feet long, we looked at one another and said, "This is it. This is the answer to our prayers." And I invited everyone back to 25 Meadowbrook Lane to pray and talk about it. And Frank Nixon was so excited (he was not a coffee drinker; he liked tea) that he put both lemon and milk in his tea that morning. Those are some of the little things that fasten these events upon one's memory.

Then for the next six months with our hands, we gutted that building, renovated it, until it became a very attractive, lovely, English Tudor style chapel. It was a beautiful little building, and we had very precious days during those days in that building. It was then God brought a large group of young men and women from New York, many of them Julliard School of Music students, recent converts. And at that time, as we felt we could horseshoe 180 people in there (we made a balcony, eventually had an overflow room downstairs), we thought this will do us till the Lord comes--perfectly content with what we affectionately now call our cracker box. People had to come early to get a seat. It was wonderful. There was no sauntering anytime, figuring there's lots of empty seats. If you didn't get there 15 minutes early, you got shunted downstairs. And there was a long period when there was no insulation in that building before we had insulation blown into the roof. It had block walls; we couldn't insulate them, and it was a hotbox. One time a preacher literally fainted preaching there--it was so hot in the platform area.

But we look back, and we think, what was that? There were days when the spirit of God would draw near, and Christ became precious. That was the time (1973 to 1975) when pastor Blaize was among us as co-pastor with me. And toward the end of that time, as people in the UK began to send letters to him and say, "We don't have a shepherd. We need a church in East London." To make a long story short, we had the joy of sending our first "foreign missionary." And that night, as we laid hands on Pastor Blaize and commissioned him to go back to East London to plant a church, the place was a Bochim. Everyone wept with brokenness of heart to release that precious man of God. But again, one of the texts that God brought home to us then, and He has continually: "He that would save his life shall lose it. But he that will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel, the same shall save it."

During that time, Kurt Cutler was taken on fulltime with the tape ministry. He worked from 1975 to 1982. Roger was taken on around 1973. And one year, 32,000 cassettes were sold. These men had a map in the little place they worked in the back of that building where the tapes were going, and they literally went out into the entire world. We bless God for that period.

There were several men in the church who had special gifts of what I call confrontational evangelism. And they went systematically around the streets circling that little cracker box, knocking on doors, seeking to bring the Gospel. They went to the local park on Sunday afternoon, seeking to minister the Word of God.

And during that period is when I did the series that has now been used greatly in many places on premarital counseling. There was a two-year period during this period of what I have called our infancy to childhood when there were 22 weddings in the space of 24 months. And I came into one of those falls, and I said, "I've got seven couples (and I was in the habit of having four sessions with every couple). I'll have to change my title from pastor to marriage counselor." So I got the seven couples together, and I said, "Would you be willing to meet on four successive Friday nights for an hour and a half and let me give this material to all of you. Then I'll have one mopping up session with each of you subsequent to that." And so those were very precious days. We never knew what God was going to be doing. There was a sense of the excitement of God's graciousness.

We come now, fourthly: adolescence to adulthood (mid 70s to 1989). By this time, as I mentioned, we had an overflow room in the basement with TVs. Pastor Fischer was made an elder after he graduated from Westminster Seminary. Then more and more pressure came upon us from the churches, not from us sitting and saying, "We've got a vision." No, the churches (and there were only a few reformed Baptist churches at the time. Some of you are shocked that I used the term "reformed". I seldom use it, but in this context, I must use it) were saying, "Pastor Martin, God's given a stewardship to you and Trinity Baptist Church in this matter of training men for the ministry. I had been meeting Sunday afternoons with a group of students, and then we began a Saturday morning class. And from that pressure from the churches, not an idea spun out of our own noggins, we began to pray and take steps to see if God would bring us a fulltime resident scholar. And then some of us who were resident pastors in our church and others would fill out the faculty and begin to train men for the ministry. So in the fall of 1978, Trinity Ministerial Academy opened with three students. And by the time we had to go back to the use of the school auditorium for our a.m. and p.m. worship (our Sunday School and prayer meeting were still in the cracker box), TMA continued to function in the cracker box.

By then we recognized we had outgrown our lovely little building. It was not going to last and be adequate until the Lord returned. So we started a weekly Saturday morning prayer meeting to cry to God, that He would give us land, or give us a building, or give us a building on a piece of land. And we added to our prayers, looking at this building and that building, and this piece of land and that piece of land--nothing.

During that time, I preached a series on Achan's sin. I said, "Could it be there's an Achan in the camp who is keeping the blessing of God from us?" It was a time of tremendous searching of heart. I preached a series on Jehosaphat's prayer: "We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon You." God gave us some wonderful seasons of both searching of heart and uplifting and encouragement. And so we cried to God, and you know what God did? There was a family (never became members) who were then in Pennsylvania. One day I got a call from the wife who said, "I understand you are looking for land." I said, "Yes, we are." She said,

"Well, there's a man I went to high school with whose name is Mr. Schisco. He and his brother were the owners of Schisco Dairies in Montville. They had sold off all their land to the township for recreational facilities, etc. But there's one plot remaining, and they have not yet sold it. I understand they may be thinking of selling it for a strip mall. I suggest you contact him."

So we contacted Mr. Schisco, and come to find out he was a Christian. And he said, "The thought that the final piece of land might be used for a church is very attractive to me. Let me speak to my brother." Well, he and his brother were of one mind, and so we purchased that track of land (8.2 acres) for \$160,000, knowing that putting a building on it, we would have to set the building where it is set today because Chainsbridge Road used to have a dogleg. You came down to where the light is; you went left and then you cut back right to the end of our property. And so we knew we would only have use of five acres on which to build.

We secured the services of an architect who gave us plans that were really just an expression of his own aesthetics. It was a weird-looking building, set ten feet into the ground. And while we spent considerable money for his services, thankfully, the design review committee said, "No, that kind of building will not do here in Montville." It's one of those times when the design review committee was a blessing. And so we scuttled the plans, saved the site work, and secured another architect.

But we had a big problem. Computers were just coming of age. (We're talking about back in the late 70s.) And one of our men, who was our computer geek at the time, programmed into his computer the patterns of giving among our members, what it would cost to build an adequate building, and he said, "With every passing month, what it would cost and what we have, the gap gets bigger and bigger. Humanly speaking, there's no way we can build a building."

So what did we do? We cried to God and ask Him to give us wisdom to know what to do. And on an elders retreat, one of the brethren came up with the idea, "Well, let's not think of going for broke in the first stage, but let's think in terms of building in stages." Again, to make a long story short, that part of the building over there is phase one, that 50 x 48 x 100 two-story building--very unattractive when it stood all by itself. It just looked like a box with a slanted top on it, but very, very functional. We

could seat over 400 people in the upper level where we had our worship services; downstairs was used for Sunday School.

In 1980, phase one was completed, Trinity Book Service then expanded greatly. The Pastors Conference started in 1983. Pastor Nichols became an elder and an instructor in TMA. Mr. Davies was taken on fulltime as chairman of the deacons. And then because we were outgrowing phase one, we had plans to build phase two, which was going to be a one-level structure. It would be half way between up and down of phase one to seat 600. But as we wrestled with the whole matter, we said, "No, it would not give us adequate space for the academy. It would not give adequate space for the book service, etc. And so the architect drew plans for a 100 x 100 two-story building, which, by God's grace, was begun to be construction in the spring of 1984 and was completed and dedicated in March of 1985. And it was somewhere during that period that somebody prayed, "O God, don't let this building become our resting place, but make it our launching pad." I'll never forget that. And so God graciously worked in this building. The book ministry was enlarged; Trinity school began. Steve Hoffmeyer had been commissioned the last special service we had in the phase one auditorium before this was complete.

So you've had the history: conception, gestation to birth, infancy to childhood, adolescence to young adulthood, young adulthood to maturity. Now then, I want to close with ongoing maturation with increased blessings, trials, and changes (1985 to the present). I'm condensing 23 years into 7 or 8 minutes.

TMA continued with the blessing of God. The tape ministry continued to expand. We began a radio broadcast; at one time, 22 stations in the U.S., Canada, the Philippines, Trinidad. And God blessed that endeavor then.

In 1997, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and had to look the reality of the implications of that straight in the eye. God was merciful. All the indications were that the cancer was contained in the prostate. I'm 11 years post-surgical removal of the prostate. People would call me a cancer survivor. I don't like the terminology at all. You'll never hear me use it. I've used it now; that's the first and the last time you'll hear me use it. God mercifully enabled me through early detection, having made conscientious medical decisions about the annual DRE and the PSA tests, etc. that this would be dealt with. But then in 1998, Marilyn was diagnosed with her cancer that began a six year battle that ended with her death in September of 2004.

Then in 1998, we had the most serious crisis in our history. Some of us refer to it as a mutiny, when all the powers of hell were let loose upon this place. When it was all over, 20 percent of the membership had left. There was a spirit of bitterness and animosity. I've never told this publicly before. It was during that period (Marilyn told me about this sometime later) that she was very conscientious every morning to check the mailbox several times before I could ever come out of my study and get to it. She said, "Dear, the spirit of bitterness and murder and hatred was so deep in some that I would not put it behind them to have put a letter bomb in our mailbox. And I figured, if they did, I wanted to take it so that your ministry could continue." That's what that dear woman was made of. God brought us through that in His grace and mercy.

A church was born in Newark; Arif was first sent to Pakistan--great blessing even in the midst of all this disruption. But then there was the closing of TMA, the downsizing

of the book ministry, the radio ministry. But then there was this great explosion of the Internet. And as I stand before you today, it's not uncommon any given month to see more than 10,000 downloads in 60 to 80 countries, all of the states and all of the provinces of Canada, where once we thought that 32,000 cassettes a year was off the charts. Now in a matter of three months that many of the preaching of the Word of God go forth to many places.

Now in two weeks, the 16th of June, the moving van will arrive at 25 Meadowbrook Lane to put some 80 boxes of my books in that truck. I've packed 80 boxes of books, 15 or 17 file boxes of letter files, very little furniture because the condominium out in Michigan is well-furnished. What's the future of this church? Well, only God knows, but I want to say this in closing this morning: God has blessed you with two proven men who have the roots and the history of this church in their spiritual blood. They are willing to spill that blood to maintain and carry forward the work of God in this place. And God is bringing a man who, as best as I can know him, shares those spiritual perspectives and convictions with all of his being.

And as I leave you, which is going to be dramatic (I stand here this morning like it's no big deal--I know otherwise), you have the living Christ as your head. Christ does not cease to be the head of Trinity Baptist Church. A.N. Martin was never its head; this was never his church. It's been Christ's church from its conception, birth down to its present state. And it will continue to be Christ's church if you continue to acknowledge His headship as He exercises it through His holy and infallible Word. You have the indwelling Spirit. You are a living temple of the living Spirit of God to give you life and power and usefulness. You have the Word of God as your guide.

And I am old enough to pray that just as you have a beautiful new foyer so that the best days of the attractiveness of what people first see now smacks their eyeballs, that the best days of Trinity Baptist Church's usefulness here and to the ends of the earth are yet before you to make it evident that this is Christ's church. And though I've had a significant role in the will and purpose of God by the grace of God, only one person is indispensable to the ongoing life and blessing of this church, and His name does not begin with A but with J. And He's at the right hand of the Father. And He's your sovereign, living Lord. He is present to carry you forward into great blessing in the days to come.

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