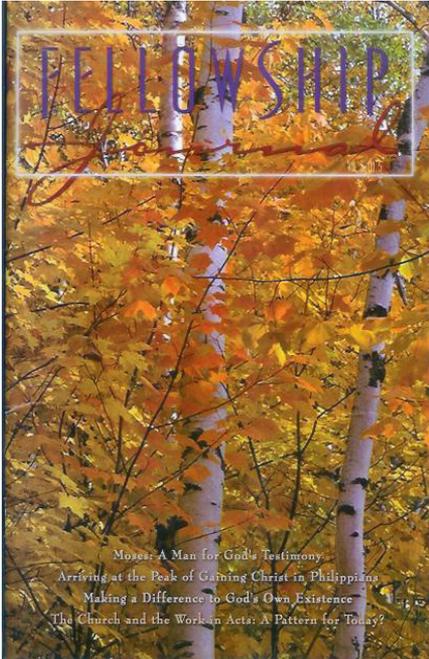


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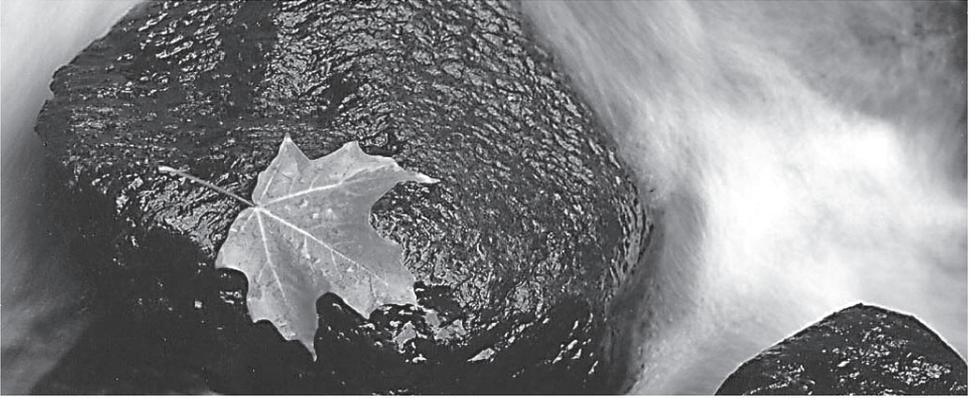
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THE MOST MEANINGFUL LIFE: A LIFE THAT IMPACTS GOD'S OWN EXISTENCE

In our concept, God simply exists. No one can deny there is God, thus He is simply a fact. Few, however, realize that the value of God's existence is something that depends upon us, not God. It is a common thing to hear people say, "Where is my life?" but there are very few who can say, "My living determines the meaning of God's existence." How bold, how prevailing, how high, and how heavenly is this understanding!

To many, God is simply there, and we are here. The thought of most people is this: sometimes, by chance, we do well, and thus our "allowance" from God improves and we live a better life. At other times, when we are not so good, we flunk and so our Father withdraws the things He has blessed us with, and we have headaches. Why? Because God is disciplining us. Is this your understanding? Do you not think in this way? God is the Almighty. In this universe, He is over all. He is abiding in the light. He is all-righteous. He dwells in the highest place, and He is the I Am, and He is Alpha all the way to Omega. He is everything! Yet the meaning of the existence of this all-inclusive, ever-existing, eternal God is very much dependent upon a bunch of His creatures, including you and I. You and I are the ones who decide whether or not God's existence is meaningful.

In other words, when we are not doing well, it is not that our allowance becomes cut off, or that we do not get good grades in school or that our car breaks down, and so on... When we are not doing well, God has to say, "I, the mighty God, am not doing well, for I am lacking in the meaning of My existence". When we are doing well in His presence, then the very God can be joyful, feel so fulfilled, and say, "Now I am really the very blessed God of the universe!"

If Satan were to come to Him and ask, "How can you say Your being God is so meaningful?" God could reply, "I have a very good son whose name is [insert your name here]. Look at this one. How satisfied I am, just because he is here. His life is so different from all the other people living where he lives. They are all searching in finance, education, power, or lustful living. But among millions of corrupted people there are a number whose lives cause Me to have a very meaningful existence!" This is not a small thing!

Recently a dear brother discovered he had cancer. His wife asked me, "How did we offend God that He would punish us in this way? What have I done wrong?" I told her God is not that small. He does discipline us, but discipline is not punishment. The Lord's discipline is according to the meaning of His existence! His discipline is according to His desire! There is meaning in all His doings.

God operates in such a way because He is a meaningful God, and the reality of the meaning He seeks can only be found through our living. If our living becomes so meaningful, then our God becomes so satisfied. When our living becomes so meaningful in His presence, then our God becomes a God full of meaning in this universe! That sister's person was caught with the shock of the situation, thinking "What did I do wrong?" Our thought is that God is a judge, examining us all the time. If we are good, He gives us something as a reward, and if we are not doing well, he takes the blessings away or punishes us. Our God is not so small! No, our God is much greater than this. Our God's leading, guiding, and discipline are entirely for His economy. His acts have His desire in view. He is not a God of punishment; He is a God of meaningfulness. - *Titus Chu*

(From Message One of the College Conference in Toledo, February 1990)

MOSES

A Man For God's Testimony

Part One: Prepared

In the Bible there is not one case of a young person being caught by the Lord because he followed someone else who followed the Lord, or because he enjoyed a meeting, or because following the Lord fit his personality. No! Young people are caught by the Lord by receiving a direct revelation from Him. It is that vision that then governs their lives. Only those who have received such a vision struggle to pursue the Lord and fight for His interest. Therefore, if you wish to follow the Lord, you need to see something! Spontaneously, you will then live a life according to what you have seen, and in the end, you will be able to say, "I have lived a meaningful life".

Most young people, however, have no thought of where their lives are going, or whether or not their lives will hold any meaning. I passed through the same stage after I was saved at age seventeen, simply enjoying the things going on in the church life with the young people, but one day the Lord Himself touched me, caught me, unveiled Himself to me, and I gave myself to Him! Today, over

fifty years later, I can testify that there has not been one "wasted" year in my life. At the end of every year I spend time to consider before the Lord what I have learned, what I have done in fulfilling my ministry, how I have stood before Him, and how I have fought for His interest. Every year, without exception, I have been able to make a full account.

When you come to my age, however, time flies by quickly. Furthermore, the years I have left to function are now few. By the Lord's mercy I still have strength to continue struggling for the Lord's interest. (The apostle John did at his advanced age!*) For this I am thankful. Many of you, however, even after being saved many years, cannot yet say you have lived one day before the Lord in your entire life. Even at this moment, many of you are occupied with what's for lunch or thoughts of what diversion awaits you this afternoon.

It is in such a "spirit" that many of you attend the young people's events. Most of you do not go for the Lord, but rather because of the promise of some kind of enjoyment. What you

MOSES: A MAN FOR GOD'S TESTIMONY



must realize, however, is that the only thing of value in human existence is Christ Himself. The only thing of value is having HIM! When the Lord becomes real and subjective to you, such things as Mountaintop and Ignite can have real value, but only if Christ Himself is becoming the meaning of your existence.

Before coming to this time, I wondered, "Haven't we had enough teaching already? Do we really need more?" Why? Because the only thing that matters is whether or not you really have the Lord. Is the Lord able to take you over? Do you come to the Lord when it comes to choosing where you will go to college, what your major will be, or what kind of work you should look for?

Among the young people, few are familiar with Christ. What I see is a mass of hopeless second-generation young people, thinking about their future and pursuing self-enjoyment. The only reason many of you are willing to attend young people's events is because you are lured by the attractions, such as the singing. Where is your hope? If you hear that there is a meeting that will only focus on Christ apart from such music, you probably would not be interested. What a sad testimony! Many of the second-generation pick up only "bad stuff" from the church life, simply because they do not have a real Christ. Apart from Christ, nothing has value. Two who attend the same event can experience two very different things, depending upon whether or not they are really seeking to know Christ.

In the Bible, there are very special individuals who mark an age. Abraham, along with Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, marked such an age. Their stories stand today as a portrayal of growth in life. In the first stage, growth in life is necessary. In the Bible, however, the first stage, the stage of growth, does not produce the end product! Instead, it typically ends in something tragic if the Lord's testimony has not yet been achieved. The stage of growth from Abraham to Joseph ended up in seventy souls going down to Egypt.

The second great person after Abraham (with Isaac, Jacob and Joseph) was Moses. Moses represents a further stage of development. His life corresponds to the second Book of the Psalms, while Abraham's corresponds to the first (ending with David's suffering in Psalm 41). Moses represents the age in which God is able to raise up His people as His testimony.

This is similar to the growth and establishment of the testimony of

the United States. Initially, many came to North America to flee religious persecution. After arriving in this land, they struggled and gradually grew to the point they were able to become a nation. George Washington was the leader of this country's struggle to have its testimony. At that point, America's riches could develop further, and it was able to receive its defining law, with its bylaws and amendments. This is similar to the process the children of Israel passed through.

Moses, though, was much greater than Washington, for he was used to bring God's own people to be His unique testimony on the earth. Therefore, Moses should be considered the next great man in the Bible after Abraham. He was set apart for this. The Lord was able to use him to turn the age from the calling of individuals to the age of establishing God's testimony.

YOU CAN BE A GREAT MAN TOO
IF YOU HAVE A GREAT GOD

To study Moses, we need some preliminary understanding.

First, we must realize that Moses was not just a great man; he was a great man because he had a great God. Do not think this is a small thing! Do you think you are a great man? Let me assure you, if you have a great God, you can become a great man. Of course, Moses did not make God a greater God than He already was, but because of Moses, God was able to establish the reality of His greatness on the earth!

I used to travel with a Taiwanese passport. When I arrived in other countries, I was treated a certain way because I was from Taiwan. This was because they didn't have to worry about Taiwan being able to do anything about it if I was mistreated. When I got an American passport, however, all that changed. (Once I was accosted for taking a picture in a certain country and was really in danger. When I told them I was an American, however, they became much more polite, and even developed all my pictures for me!) What passport you hold makes a big difference when you travel. A citizen of the USA hardly ever needs a visa to visit a country. If you are an American, you enjoy a certain status wherever you go (at least for now). Do you know how to stand upon the riches you have because of your birthright? Do you know how to apply them?

ABRAHAM AND MOSES

When God appeared to Abraham and called him, Abraham had hardly any realization of what God was after. God had to keep on unveiling who He was to Abraham, step by step, simply because Abraham was not clear about what God's desire was. This continual unveiling was a process of growth. It was not so with Moses, however. Moses was born and raised as one who understood what God was after. God had arranged everything from his birth onward, making it plain to Moses who he was, and what he was being raised up to be.

Those raised up in the churches should be encouraged by the fact that they have been chosen by God in the same way. Many among the young people today, however, do not encourage one another with this in view. Instead, they discourage one another from following the Lord for His testimony's sake by standing with each other to follow something in the world, such as a certain career. Why this waste? You have offered hundreds of consecrations to Him, but you have never applied the riches that are yours.

Why is it that so many cannot be for the Lord's testimony? Why is every step in your life so geared only to yourself? You should live a buoyant life, with the realization, "Brothers, I am nothing, but the one standing behind me and backing me up is GOD!"

Sometimes I am asked how I can sleep at night, with all the troubling situations that surround me. I can testify I sleep well, because I know the One who is always behind me.

Therefore, even before Moses was born, he was great, for he certainly had the great God behind him! In fact, our God has already arranged everything for each one of us so that we might accomplish great things for Him. I once wrote a song with the words, "I knew before I was born, You had already chosen me to be with You." He has arranged everything with our greatest profit in view.

It seems most people only consider three possibilities for their human existence: to be for Satan, to be for themselves, or to be for their spirituality. I doubt anyone here would declare their life was for Satan, even if it were! There are many in the world, however, who fit into this category. Also, probably no one here would declare they were for themselves, although in the world there are many good people out merely for themselves. However, most of you do compare yourselves with others spiritually, so many here are for their own spirituality. Most believers are! We do not look down on this, but you should also be for the Lord's testimony, which is the fourth and highest way to give yourself. When you give your life for the Lord's interest, you are at the top! For a young person to declare this is a precious thing. (I am concerned, however, that although many declare they are for the Lord's testimony, their hearts are really occupied with other things. This is a very sober a matter!)

**A MARVELOUS BIRTH IN
A LAND OF BONDAGE**

RULED OVER BY PHARAOH SATAN

Even before Moses was born, God was backing him up in a marvelous way. To begin with, the Lord arranged his birth during a remarkable situation. What was this situation? Pharaoh had commanded that all the Israelites' male children were to be killed at birth (Exo. 1:15-16)!

Who was in control in Egypt? Pharaoh. The meaning of these two terms is interesting. "Egypt" means "that which troubles, oppresses, and causes anguish." Egypt typifies the world. What marks the world? Troubles, oppression, and anguish. Anything you seek to gain in the world will bring trouble, oppressiveness, and anguish, whether or not you can gain it. If you are trying to get into a law school, you will have to endure much trouble, oppression and anguish to get there, and once you get there you will have further trouble, oppression, and anguish. This is the world.

What then is the significance of Pharaoh? The word means "to disperse," "that which spoils," and "great house". How can this "great house," this great domain, be established? By taking you as the spoil, and by dispersing whatever you have. Moses was born into a situation that the Lord allowed. It was as if the Lord were saying, "If you want to be for My testimony, you must know to Whom you belong. I am in control of everything, and the first item revealing this has to do with something from Satan! You think it is of Satan, but it is still something under My control." We were all born into such a situation. We are surrounded by what is oppressive and troubling and cause for anxiety. Furthermore, everything is illegally being used for spoil; nothing is fair or goes to where it should. So much is "misappropriated".

Lao Tse, a Chinese philosopher, once said "the best life is one where

nothing develops". It is true that in such a life, there are fewer opportunities to be troubled or anxious, but God cannot get much for His testimony from such a life. He gets His testimony in the midst of the world and its development. Furthermore, He even gets His testimony in the midst of a world that does its best to frustrate Him from raising up His testimony! Satan seeks to do this by trying to make sure any "males" are stopped before they can get started.

THE NEED FOR MALES FOR THE LORD'S TESTIMONY

If you say, "But I'm just a girl!" Satan is very happy, because you will give him no trouble. His law is to leave the "girls" alone. According to my observation, the church life is almost totally filled with "girls" today. Nearly no one stands up to say, "Let's fight!" Nearly no one cares for the Lord's testimony. Instead, most just look around and say, "Hallelujah, it seems we are OK; we are in the flow!" When you begin to rise up for the Lord's interest, however, Satan will do his best to put you down. His word is, "I will allow Christianity to be filled with 'girls'; but no boys allowed." The churches need "young men"! Even many sisters today need to become such men! Satan does his best to insure no one can become such a manchild, however. [See Rev. 12:4-5 (ed).] Don't allow yourself to be spoiled by the world's power! Stand up for the Lord's testimony and be a MAN!

Isn't it reasonable to serve the Lord full-time after working a few years? I am not for everyone serving full-time, but I am for more "boys" to be born! I am not for everyone serving full-time, but I am for more who are able to struggle for the Lord's testimony! Whether such a one is a brother or sister makes no difference. Watchman Nee always consulted with a sister when considering matters of the Lord's testimony. Satan's strategy, however, is to frustrate you from being such an overcomer. He will do his best to terminate you even before you have a chance to rise up.

There is nothing wrong with getting a job, but many have never even had the thought of giving their lives to the Lord for the sake of His testimony. Therefore they consider many other things, and then say the Lord has led them into one of those things. Eventually you eat your own fruit.

Remember: first of all, you are in Egypt, a place that oppresses you. Second, realize there is a Pharaoh who is attempting to have you for his spoil. (So many brilliant people have ended up as his spoil. One day they will realize they have wasted their lives. Perhaps their lives were normal and even considered successful, but they were of no value in God's eyes.) Finally, we must see that God is in control, no matter what. We will see more of this in the following messages. How we all need to tell the Lord, "I am here for Your testimony, and I will have no rest until You have it!"

Message 2

Young people have the ability to give encouraging testimonies, but because they are still changing, it is hard to trust their word. Most still plan to try a lot of things. Otherwise, they would feel there is something short in their lives. By the Lord's mercy, however, some will certainly be kept who will become very useful to the Lord for His testimony.

ABRAHAM AND THE STAGE OF GROWTH

When you read Exodus, it becomes immediately clear that Moses is the person the Lord is raising up for the sake of His testimony. In the Old Testament there are three great characters: Abraham (including Isaac, Jacob and Joseph) to whom the promise came; Moses, who raised up the people as God's testimony; and David, who established the Lord's testimony as a kingdom. Abraham and his heirs received all the promises of growth. Thus, Jacob became Israel. A grasping person (he was named "heel grasper," or Jacob, because he was born trying to hold on to Esau's heel) became someone who could walk with God. But what God desired was that the Israelites would become His own testimony. After perhaps 250 years, God still did not have such a testimony among Abraham's descendants. Instead, by the end of Genesis, Abraham's descendants ended up defeated in Egypt, because they could no longer trust God in the

land of promise, and went instead to Egypt for their care.

Personal spiritual growth is the focus of so many Christians, but it is not what is ultimately on God's heart. God desires a testimony! In the Bible, this corporate testimony begins with Moses.

THE NEED TODAY: TO RAISE UP THE LORD'S TESTIMONY

The many believers in Christ are God's people today. Their ability to bear the Lord's testimony is what will bring the Lord back. In one sense, you are quite blessed, for you are living in the generation that should see the Lord return, for according to Biblical chronology, we are near the beginning of the "Sabbath Day" of a thousand years. The problem is, our condition is pretty poor, so I question whether the Lord will be able to come back in my lifetime. Perhaps many of you will be alive to see the Lord's coming. I do see a glimmer of hope in your generation. The problem is that many are still in bondage in Egypt!

BORN FOR THIS

I have been accused of allowing "rock music" to be sung in the young people's gatherings. I don't know if this is true, but I have heard you sing "O love that will not let me go," and I was quite impressed by your enjoyment in that hymn. We must realize, however, that this is an age in which Egypt and Pharaoh are working to carry you off as spoil. I see so many young people occupied with

so many high tech "boxes," such as computers, cell phones, and handheld gadgets. All these boxes can bring trouble, oppression and anxiety. Egypt always ends up making people feel uncomfortable and sad, using what it has to cheat people and take them captive. Moses was one born into such an environment.

Still more, Pharaoh had decreed that all baby boys were to be killed! The Lord prepared two midwives, however, who were good at misleading Pharaoh and keeping boy babies alive. (Perhaps the fact that there were only two midwives among all of the Israelites indicates how many of them had been killed. It is hard to imagine that only two midwives had originally been able to meet the need of six hundred thousand people!)

Both of Moses' parents were Levites. Levi was the tribe uniquely separated unto God for His service. After his birth, his mother hid him for three months (Exo. 2:2; Heb. 11:23). This indicates that all the young people can survive by hiding for a period of time!

Where was Moses' father in all of this? We do not know. It was Moses' mother who hid him and made the ark of bulrushes for him, covering it with tar and pitch. Then she put Moses in it and placed it in the Nile, while his sister stood at a distance to see what would happen.

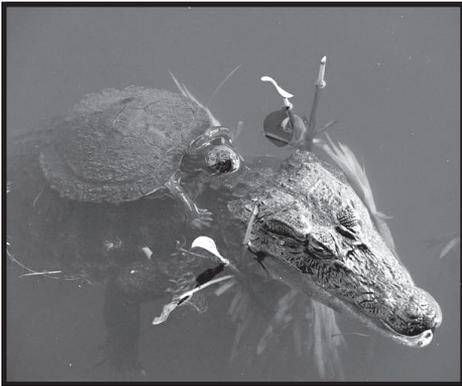
DO YOU DESERVE A NAME?

Up until this point, we have not been given the names of anyone. We can infer his sister is Miriam, but

we are not told this. We are not given any names in this story. Why? The fact of the matter is, no one yet deserves a name.

Many young people ask, “When will I have a name?” You do not deserve a name yet. Instead, just seek to grow and be trained.

The fact is, if Miriam had any value it was because Moses did, and before Moses could have value, God had to first become his God. This is why the record only tells us what is significant—that Moses was born to a Levite family, and that he was hidden for three months, which is significant because it indicates his mother only had the faith to hide him a certain amount of time. After a period of time, her faith that she could keep him ran out. Therefore she made him the little boat and placed him in the Nile, which is also significant.



DRAWN OUT AND NAMED BY
PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER,
BUT RAISED BY HIS MOTHER

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river with her maids,

where she saw his little boat in the water and had him taken out. Then the Bible says, “And behold, the baby cried” (2:6). Thus, we know Moses cried at least once in his life! He cried just at the right time, too, because it caused Pharaoh’s daughter to be drawn to him. God is so much in control! Instead of being killed, Moses was saved by the daughter of the very one who desired him dead.

At this point, Moses’ sister (Miriam) approached Pharaoh’s daughter and offered to find a Hebrew nurse for him...his own mother! Perhaps this is one reason why Miriam later felt that Moses should have acknowledged her more, for if it were not for her, Moses may not have been raised up as an Israelite at all! Pharaoh’s daughter, for some reason, was unable to see through the matter, so she agreed.

I like what the daughter of Pharaoh told Miriam. She instructed her to go and get such a person, and that she would compensate that person for caring for Moses. In other words, this Hebrew mother would be paid by the Egyptian government to raise her son! Therefore, Moses, who should not have even been born, was instead raised with the best possible care. This was all arranged by God.

Moses was still unnamed, because he was not yet ready to receive a name. He was raised by his mother but he still had not been given a name. We are told however “the child grew and she brought him

unto Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son, and she named him Moses ["drawn out"], saying, "Because I drew him out of the water" (2:10).

RAISED UNDER GOD'S CONTROL

In all of this, we can see how God was in control, even in the midst of a dark and cruel environment. God was able to raise up this boy through His own arrangement. There were only two midwives for all of God's people, but God did not even seem to need them. Due to God's arrangement, Moses grew up knowing he was one of God's people, and that Jehovah was his God. Then he was raised in the palace, and acquired the highest knowledge of the Egyptians. Egypt by this time possessed the most advanced culture on earth.

The two most highly educated servants of the Lord in the Bible were Moses and Paul, and it was Moses and Paul that became the two men most used by God in their service. I encourage all the young people to get as much education as possible, because education is crucial! It will be of use in developing your ability to serve the Lord.

FORTY YEARS A PRINCE OF EGYPT

Moses lived in the palace forty years. He was considered the son of Pharaoh's daughter, meaning he may have been in line for the throne itself. He possibly could have become pharaoh himself one

day. It is strange that there is no record of his being married. How is it that he was not yet married by forty? I believe it was due to his feeling that he could only marry a Hebrew bride. He was totally clean in this matter. There is no record of his having any children when he was in Egypt. His record is totally clean. If the Lord desires to use someone, He has the ability to render him total protection.

AN EVENTFUL DAY: MOSES KILLS AN EGYPTIAN

By the time he was forty (Acts 7:23), Moses had certainly developed into quite a man! Then one day as he sauntered forth he noticed an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew. After looking around to make sure no one would see, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. He then returned to the palace, probably quite pleased that he had finally struck a blow for Israel, for God's testimony! The only problem was that he had to look around before he did it.

Many of us "look around" too much! Often people declare they are for God's testimony, but there is a condition. They may say, "I am for Christ and His testimony alone" but they spell "alone" with a "g" at the end instead of an "e". They are for Christ and His testimony *along* with so many other things. Many love and pursue other things, taking Christ along. It is hard to find a young person who gives himself to the Lord regardless of the consequences. Are



you a disciple of Christ alone, or along *with*?

Moses acted strongly. He surely realized he was special. Among all of God's people, only he had been so saved and elevated and educated. Now he felt it was time to finally act on it and do something for his people. So he killed the Egyptian, but only on the condition that no one would see it. You too may be willing to give yourself to the Lord, but only if certain conditions are met! May the Lord gain us absolutely!

FOUND OUT

Perhaps after performing this deed, Moses felt thankful that the Lord had raised him up and had given him such a strong body so that

he might "carry out the Lord's will". The following day, however, Moses came upon two Israelites fighting, and reproached them for it. One of them replied, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? What are you going to do...kill me like you did the Egyptian?" (2:14) When Moses heard these words, his heart must have turned to lead. He realized the deed was known, and fled for his life. It is a good thing he didn't have a wife or children! (He had probably been waiting to marry until he had freed the people and could marry an Israelite wife.)

God needs us for His testimony. God also needs to tell us, "I need you so much that I cannot allow you to do anything for Me." It is just the opposite of what we think. We think

we are going to serve the Lord, but the Lord says, "I need you so much that I don't want you to do a THING for Me!" He says this because He loves us this much. This is much harder for us to handle than being trained and equipped to become a powerful servant for the Lord. The Lord appreciates this, but eventually He asks, "Are you ready? You have so much, but all your strengths will not be for *you* to do something with, but for *Me* to do something with. This will require a long process, and during this process you are going to have to seem to lose everything you think you have."

Young men dream of being heroes. Many would like to have been Moses at the end of this first stage—living a life of luxury and sophistication as God's secret agent in the palace. But then, after you decide to exercise your fist for God, you discover your foolish act has totally blown what had taken forty years to achieve. Moses found he had stretched out his fist too early, and had ruined everything! He must have hated that stupid fist of his.

Now Moses found himself on the run. To a young person, this may not seem too drastic a thing. You would perhaps grab a backpack and stay in youth hostels, enjoying the experience. Moses, however, realized how much he had lost. He must have felt like he had spoiled everything, including God's plan to release His people. He had been born when he should have been killed; he had been miraculously accepted into Pharaoh's household

and yet retained his Hebrew identity while he lived as an heir to the mightiest kingdom on the earth. God had arranged so much for him. He was in place to do something great for God, and apparently in one brief act he had betrayed it all, totally letting God and the people of Israel down.

FLEEING TO THE WILDERNESS AND LIVING IN MIDIAN FOR ANOTHER FORTY YEARS

Pharaoh had heard what Moses had done, and was seeking to slay him, so Moses headed out to the wilderness and ended up in Midian. The priest of Midian had seven daughters, who happened to come by to water their sheep, but had some trouble with the local shepherds. Moses, being probably a big man and muscular, as well as bearing an aura of authority, easily drove them off and helped the girls water their father's flock.

Midian was a "cousin" to Levi, for Midian was Abraham's child through Keturah, his second wife (Gen. 25:1-2). Therefore, the Midianites were relatives, for both they and Moses were descended from Abraham. The Midianites therefore had a certain amount of knowledge of God. The flocks that Moses helped to water belonged to the priest of Midian.

It is interesting that the people Moses ran away to also knew God. Many who run away from among us often find such people to live among. They feel, "We can go any

place, can we not? Are we not all believers?" Such saints forget about the principle of the Lord's testimony. This is the significance of Midian.

A STRANGER IN A FOREIGN LAND

The daughters of this high priest told their father that they were able to return early because they had been helped by "an Egyptian"! To the Egyptians Moses had become someone they no longer recognized as one of them, but to these people he appeared as an Egyptian. Moses was content to stay with them, and even married one of the daughters, named Zipporah. (I believe God was able to use Moses to such a great degree because he, unlike Jacob, was the kind of person able to keep himself to one wife. Moses was an upright person.) Eventually he had a child and named him "Gershom" for, he said, "I am a stranger in a foreign land" (2:21). Even though his people were in bondage in Egypt, Moses felt his home was there with them. He was well-situated in Midian, and he even had gained a son. That should have been the happiest moment in his life, but his feeling was, "I'm nothing but a stranger in a foreign land." He was no longer considering the situation from the perspective of a powerful prince living in a palace. He now considered the plight of the Israelites from the perspective of a man living far from home, and utterly powerless to do a thing about it. To his realization it was all over; there was no hope.

GOD'S TIMELY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CRY OF ISRAEL

Eventually, the pharaoh that sought Moses' death died, and we are told that the cry of the Israelites came up to God. The people of Israel realized they were God's people, and that they were being held in bondage. They knew that they, as heirs of Abraham's promise, should not have been in that situation. They knew they were meant for the Lord's testimony. We also should have this realization. Regardless what the situation is in the church life, we should identify ourselves with God's testimony. Then, when things are prevailing, you rejoice, and when things are difficult, you still stand firm. Too many act as though they are outsiders, remaining as long as the situation fits them, and deserting when it does not. God, however, heard those who were remaining in that situation, groaning, longing to be delivered. He remembered His covenant with Israel and acknowledged them (2:23-25). He realized they had been there long enough, and it was time to do something.

PSALM 90

At this point, Moses was also ready to enter into the third stage and final stage of his service. In the first stage, he had been trained and raised up in Egypt for forty years, and for the second stage he had been in the wilderness of Midian for forty years (see Acts 7:23 and Exo. 7:7).

In the first stage, God did so much to prepare Moses. His birth, survival, upbringing, education and operation were all due to God. God controlled everything. As soon as Moses tried to do something for God, however, God rejected it. He then sent Moses to a place just so he might be emptied of everything for forty years.

Moses' prayer at this time can be found in Psalms 90. In this psalm, Moses writes, "For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (vv. 9-10, NKJ). When Moses wrote this, I believe he was nearly at the end of this second stage of forty years in the wilderness. Being a strong man, he had lived eighty years, therefore he supposed his life was about over. He was ready to die. I believe it was soon after he wrote this psalm that the Lord appeared to him.

**THE THIRD STAGE BEGINS:
GOD APPEARS TO MOSES**

Moses had taken his father-in-law's flock around to a remote part of the wilderness, even to Horeb

"the mountain of God" (3:1). There he saw a bush on fire. What was striking was not that in itself, but that the bush was not being burned up! In such a desert, the vegetation is extremely dry. If something catches fire, it is burned up quickly. This bush, however, held the flame. Therefore Moses turned aside to see this great miracle. When the Lord



He saw that Moses had turned aside, He called out to Moses from out of the bush, and told Moses to take off his shoes, for God Himself was present there, making it holy ground. This surely reminded Moses that he was not qualified to enter into God's presence.

From this point in Exodus, the Lord who was known as "Elohim" (translated "God") becomes known as "Jehovah" (or "Yahweh"... "I AM"). Moses had known Him as God, but now he

encountered Him as Jehovah. Many today only know Him as the powerful One we must worship. Moses now came to know Him as the One who was so close to man, and who would be intimately involved with him.

It seems God was being repetitious when He said, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (3:6). Moses, however, realized that this indicated just how serious God was about His promise. God's emphasis pointed Moses to the fact that He was not a God who played around. He was saying, "I am the God of your birth, the God of your childhood, the God of your youth, the God of your zenith, the God of your twilight years, the God of your everything." We should desire to hear God say such a thing to us: "I am the God of your yesterday, the God of your today, and the God of your tomorrow." Many say, "Lord, be the God of my life," but how many say, "Lord, I take You as the God of my now, even the God of this moment"? How we need to know Him as our God in all our situations! God does not play around. When you tell Him you love Him, He may reply, "If you really mean it, I will never let you go!"

It may seem that the Lord had forsaken the Israelites. Consider what a long period of time that they were in Egypt. It seems God had forsaken them for four hundred years, nearly twice the age of this nation we live in! Surely many of the Israelites would have begun to

wonder whether the promise God had made to their forefathers was real! Perhaps only a few godly ones among them still clung to the promise. Now God finally acted.

Moses may have felt, "This is too much for me! You are the God over that little basket, the God over Pharaoh's daughter, and the God over all things. I never realized how much You mean what You say. When You make a promise, it can never fade away!"

The Lord remembered all the times the people had been before Him. He is the God who remembers all, and His promise is ever before Him. I can testify I have not always been so firm in following the Lord, and have at times "chickened out," but the Lord has always had a way to bring me back. No one is trustworthy; only He is. No one is in control; only He is. He is the Lord, and all things are in His hands. We must worship Him. This should become our rest.

THE LORD NEEDS OUR VOWS BEFORE HE CAN MAKE THEM REAL

We may make vows to the Lord, but it is the Lord who enables us to keep them. If you were to ask me, "Are you going to be able to keep all your vows to the Lord?" I would answer, "Yes, because He is the one who is able to make it so." There is hardly one thing we can speak with one hundred percent truthfulness, although we may give others the impression we mean what we say. Yet God is happy to hear us say, "Lord,

I love You and I give my whole life to You," because He will make sure we are eventually able to love nothing but Him! God says, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I will make your prayer My promise! I will do it!"

EVERYTHING IS MEASURED BY THE LORD;
NO TIME IS WASTED

This is why God appeared to Moses in such a way. He was saying that He knew exactly what He was doing. To some, it may seem like the Israelites had to waste four hundred years, but to God, not one year in Egypt was a waste. He knew exactly what He was doing. He did not carry out His promise during Abraham's lifetime, nor in Isaac's, nor even in Jacob's. From generation to generation, however, He was working out the fulfillment of the promise. Shouldn't we all be at rest, realizing God is such a God?

We may have prayed many things, and wonder if they will ever come to pass, not yet seeing the desired result. There is time yet for the Lord to make it our reality. The time is in His hands, not ours.

Message 3

**THE INITIATION OF THE THIRD STAGE:
SEEING THE FLAME IN A THORN BUSH**

While in Midian, Moses had two sons. The first's name was Gershom ("outsider"), meaning Moses' heart was not at home

away from God's people. Then, as he was shepherding, he saw a thorn bush burning, yet not consumed. That was the first sign God revealed directly to him. Thorns are associated with curse due to man's failure (Gen. 3:17-18). The thorn bush implied that Moses was simply a cursed human being, without value. Yet it also indicated God would use him to burn upon, although not using him as the source.

Often people come up to me and tell me they were blessed by something I ministered. I, however, am merely a fallen human being. God is able to use any fallen human being to bring out something of holy fire; you can be sure it was not the thorn bush that was the source. Some may wonder, "Why, Lord, do You even need a bush?" God would reply, "I will not burn upon the dirt. I need a bush, even a thorn bush to burn upon—someone who seemingly has no value, and who is even so common among all the other many thorn bushes...yet I will pick one among them to use for My purpose!"

After Moses turned aside to look at the wonder, God told him to take off his shoes, for He was present, making that portion of earth holy. (A meeting hall, for instance, has no value until the saints are meeting within it. For that period of time it becomes a holy place, because God is there with His saints for His testimony!) God told Moses that He was the

God of his father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (3:6). When God really comes, it is a fearful thing. It may be easy for you to tell God you love Him today, for you have not really met Him yet! You need to love God, but while you love God, you must also know Him as Jehovah. When you have Jehovah, you realize, "God is so close to me." When you come into such close proximity to God, you realize how inadequate, poor, and sinful you are. Yet God will have mercy upon you.

In the immediate presence of God, Moses sensed his unworthiness to look upon Him, so he hid his eyes. He had known of God all his life, but once he was able to see God face to face, he dared not look upon Him. When you really sense God's presence, it is normal to experience such a shamefulness. The more you touch the Lord, the more deeply you sense how low and unworthy you are.

GOD'S GREAT COMMITMENT AND MOSES' RESISTANCE

THE TIME HAD COME

The Lord told Moses, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows...the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them"

(3:7,9). I hope we might all learn from this to always let the Lord hear our prayer, and to cause Him to see what is going on. In response, the Lord said "I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites" (3:8).

THE PROBLEM: WE ARE HAPPY WHERE WE ARE

What a great thing! Could you believe the Lord has something so great in store for you? The problem, however, is that no one likes to leave their present land, regardless what God has spoken to them. Would you like to be brought out of your locality? Perhaps if you were from Buffalo, you would say, "But I love all the buffalo wings!" The Lord says, "I will release you and bring you out of where you are into a large, good land!" But we are so small. We feel so satisfied with the little things we have or experience. Many of you are for your city, and unto your city. That city is even your Christ! Yet the Lord wants to bring us into the land that is great, wide, and open!

The Lord doesn't really care much about the little things we bring to Him, about where we should live, and so on. What he wants to do is to carry us upon His wings to a wide,

broad, open, spacious land! The majority of my life has been in Cleveland, but my Cleveland is different than others' Cleveland. Although I live in Cleveland, I have allowed the Lord to bring me all throughout the globe! Right after I am done here, I will go to Detroit, and then to China. We all must realize the Lord's desire to lead us out into a great land! **

THE LAND OF MILK, HONEY AND ENEMIES

God also described this land as the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites (3:8). On the one hand, He was bringing them out of Egypt, where they were oppressed, yet on the other hand He was bringing them into a land where they would have to live right among enemies, in order to take over new territories for the Lord. God was not after the land of Egypt; He was after the land of the Canaanites. Both were enemy domains, but only one was to become their land. Therefore, they had to be overcomers! It was a land of milk and honey, but it would not be an easy road to occupy it.

The Lord then told Moses, "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (3:10). He referred to His people as the children of Israel. Jacob's name was changed to Israel because he had prevailed with God and man (Gen. 32:28). This indicates

that God desires a transformation work for the sake of His testimony, and that this testimony should prevail. You young people should have the heart that says, "Wherever I go, I will see a prevailing testimony raised up for the Lord!"



MOSES' RESPONSE

God was sending Moses to deliver His people out of bondage in Egypt. Isn't that what Moses wanted forty years earlier? Surely he should have said, "Hip Hip Hooray! Now I understand. I have been here all these years to prepare me for the sake of Your testimony! I will go!" Aren't you waiting for that? Are you ready? You have watched your parents faithfully follow the Lord. Now you feel you are ready, and say, "The elders never have appreciated

what a great brother they have in me! They don't let me do anything!" Wouldn't you jump up if God came to you in such a way and say, "Hooray! God has called me (and not you)!" You would think so, but when God comes to us to finally do something great we say, "But I am here in my town, where I was hoping to be buried."

Many times young people do pray, "God, use me! See, I have already read the Bible more than once, and have even gotten one person saved!" You have no idea what you are praying for. God will say, "I WILL use you so much...by working ON you! Eventually, however, when you can be used by Me, you may not even realize it! You must become Israel, because I want you to be able to be someone so prevailing WITH ME."

FIVE LEVELS OF RESISTANCE

1. WHO AM I?

Moses, instead of shouting "Hooray" when the Lord appeared to Him, raised a number of issues. The first was "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (3:11). He did not feel deserving. He had made a big mistake in the past, and did not see how God could trust him with such a great matter. In other words, he told God he was not qualified. God answered that He would be with Moses. That was all the qualification he needed.

2. WHO ARE YOU?

But Moses asked again, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" (3:13). So the first problem he had in accepting God's commitment was, "Who am I?" and his second was, "Who are You?"

Have you never asked God, "What is Your name?" You have heard about Him in the meetings, but have you ever asked Him, "Who are You, really?" I had heard of the love of a parent, but I never knew what it was until I held my first child for the first time. Afterwards, my attitude towards my parents totally changed, because for the first time I really understood who my parents were.

God answered Moses once more with what to tell the people His name was "...I AM THAT I AM...say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (3:14).

3. WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE?

Moses raised yet a *third* question. He asked, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you?'" (4:1). In other words, "What about the people? Will they really believe me?" God again answered him by giving him three sign (his staff turning into a serpent, his hand becoming leprous

as snow, and the water poured upon the ground turning to blood). These signs were for the people's recognition that God had sent Moses to be their deliverer.

4. I AM NOT QUALIFIED.

Still, Moses protested a *fourth* time, saying, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). God was patient, so He responded, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say" (4:11-12).

So, Moses' concerns had been answered repeatedly by the Lord. First, "Who am I? At least I am who I am and where I am now. I am happy with that; why must I change?" Yet God insists, so we feel to ask, "Who are You anyway? Can I trust You to be there where You send me and make it work? Will it really happen as You say?" Regardless, I am not able to do what You ask... I am slow of speech!" (Actually, to be slow of speech is a virtue! Those with a quick tongue are the ones that cause problems.) Moses said, "I'm not qualified!" God, however, assured Moses that He would be with him in this matter.

5. PLEASE, JUST USE SOMEONE ELSE.

Moses could now say: OK, I'm qualified...OK, I know who You

are now...OK, the people will listen.... OK, You will be with me. You have settled that. Therefore, in conclusion... O Lord, please send... whomever *else* You may send! (4:13). After all his objections had been answered with the utmost assurance from the Lord, Moses' word was, "Please send someone else!"

GOD NOT RELEASING MOSES

If I were God I would have been more upset at this point. "I answered all your objections, and after all this you say, 'I cannot go'!?" Isn't that discouraging? Moses was thinking, "I already paid for my burial plot. Don't you know I am eighty, and ready to die (Ps. 90:10)? You tell me now, after I have my coffin prepared, that You will use me? Don't You know I *am* eighty, and have been getting things prepared for my funeral? Now You come to me with this? I can barely move; I'm an old man...Please, get somebody else!" If we were in his position, perhaps we would also search for reasons not to obey. Some might say, "I am just a simple man. Wouldn't you rather pick someone more capable?" Yet God would not let Moses go. What a mercy!

May none of us remain bound in our small, limiting world. Let us become the Lord's companions and co-laborers, fully released and available to fight for His great plan!

Message 4

THREE STAGES:

“I CAN”

“I CAN’T”

“GOD CAN”

The Lord attracted Moses by appearing to him as the fire burning upon the thorn bush. It was at this point that Moses realized that the desire he had forty years ago was going to be fulfilled. He had been in the palace, enjoying all the riches of Egypt as a prince of Pharaoh. At that time, his desire was to save the Israelites. When he was forty, he thought it was the right time to do something. He had the equipping and the position. But when he stretched out his hand to do it, he discovered he was totally off. So his forty years of “I can” was followed by another forty years of “I can’t”!

In this second stage, he married and had a family and got settled in Midian. I can understand a little, because at a certain age, your view of what you can do becomes very different from when you are young. For instance, the Lord is doing so much in Uganda. I am very clear that I should go there next year to hold a one-week training. But just thinking about going to Africa causes me to feel tired. I used to go two or three times a year for a month at a time, and it didn’t bother me at all, for that was thirty years ago. But now, even thinking about things such as this makes me tired.

Moses considered that the Lord should have used him long ago, ac-

ording to the way he was born, brought up and educated. In Pharaoh’s palace, surely the entire known world was under consideration, and Moses was there learning. He must have possessed a grand perspective. And he knew the Lord had prepared him to be the savior of the Israelites. With such clarity, he must at first wondered about how long he would have to stay in Midian. For the first few years, he may have waited for something to happen, but after the years passed, he must have gotten used to his life there, and learned to forget who he was. This is why he wrote Psalm 90. He recognized that God was God from generation to generation, but he felt he had reached the final days of his life (90:10). His meeting with God at the burning bush possibly took place soon after he had written this psalm. In other words, in his mind his was preparing to die.



Then suddenly God appeared and commanded, “Bring the people out of Egypt and to a land broad and great, flowing with milk and honey, and occupied by many people who will have to be driven off or killed”. It is hard to imagine how Moses felt

when he heard this. First, he was no longer forty. He was ready then. But now his feeling was that it just wasn't possible. So he said, "Don't You know who I am? And can I really know and represent You? And would the people listen to me? And, I am not that gifted. Anyway, I don't want to go."

Everyone who thinks they can serve the Lord must experience this. Every servant must pass through the stages of "I can," "I can't" and "God can". Then you will be able to join yourself with this able God, and He will have a way to accomplish His desire!

So now, at the end of Moses' forty years of "I can" and another forty years of "I can't," God stepped in to work with Moses for another forty years, a third stage, during which time Moses led the Israelites around in that desert until he died. Joshua then finally led the people into the good land.

THE SIGN: WHEN YOU HAVE BROUGHT OTHERS INTO WHAT GOD HAS APPEARED TO YOU

What was the turn from the second stage of "I cannot" to the third stage of "God can"? It was the appearing of God to Moses at the burning bush. In particular, God told Moses, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain" (3:12). Brothers, your serving is based on what kind of mountain

you are in. The mountain is where God appeared to you. You can only help people to serve God according to what He has shown you. The place of God's appearing is the root of your service. How do you know that you are proper and that God is with you? The secret is this: You are able to bring someone else into the same place that God has shown to you.

If God has only appeared in the matter of the gospel to you, are you able to get someone saved? If you are, that is bringing that one to the mountain which you are in. If I am a consecrated person, I am able to produce people who are consecrated. If I am able to give everything to the Lord, then I will bring others who are able to give everything to the Lord.

The Lord said the sign to Moses would be that the people would serve Him in the way that Moses himself saw Him. The way Moses saw God would become the way they also saw Him, so that they would serve Him according to how He had appeared to Moses, and He would appear to them so that they might serve Him as Moses did. This was to be the sign to Moses that God was with him.

I AM THAT I AM

God's response to Moses when he asked what he should say His name was is hard to understand, because the Israelites already knew the name Jehovah ("I am"). It is used frequently before this point in the

Bible. We must see the significance of this. There is only One in the universe who is able to say "I am that I am". Everything else and everyone else changes. For instance, how I did things forty years ago and how I do things today is not the same, for I am an old man now! Every day I am changing. My mind changes, my ways change, and even my cells change. Years ago, if I had to sit down to give a message it would have meant I was sick. Today I cannot always stand to speak. I am not "I am that I am," and neither are you. You are always changing; therefore everything about you and around you is changing. But there is one in this universe who never changes! Everything He is and has, and His desire and means, His intention and His operation, all are eternal. He is the only One who can say, "I am that I am, from eternity past to eternity future. There will be no shadow of changing with Me. Everything I have and do is for eternity! I am that I am!"

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF
ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB

So for Moses to tell the people "I AM" had sent him to them was very meaningful. Whatever you need, HE IS. This I AM was also "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". Why does He give such a name as His memorial to all generations (3:15)? Because if He can be the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob to a group of people, His purpose is

satisfied. This name denotes the Triune God, His marvelous purpose and the means of achieving His purpose, including His rich provision and transforming work. When He can be such a God to a people, He is totally satisfied.

A LAND OF ENEMIES AND A LAND OF
MILK AND HONEY

God then told Moses, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and have seen what is done to you in Egypt"' (3:16). He said, "Go tell them I have visited you and have seen what is going on." When things seem unreasonable, we should learn to pray and ask the Lord, "Do You see what is going on?" Then He will answer that He has been with us, and is coming to do something about it. He further said, "And I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey" (3:17). This was His promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-20. He said this to prepare them for the fighting that would come, but in this context He also promised that it was a land filled with milk and honey.

It is hard to interpret the significance of milk and honey. These two items are used to represent all the

riches of this land. You can say that the land itself is Christ. It is also a land that we must occupy. But in order to occupy it, you must have the rich enjoyment of what is typified by milk and honey. Both are produced by something of the vegetable life going through the animal life, whether the cow or the bee. Milk is mainly for nourishment, while honey is mainly for strength. Milk and honey indicate that in your life you will never be short of nourishment, and, as you follow the Lord, you will never be short of strength! You will be saturated with the divine strength and nourishment. After having the high nourishment you enjoyed while you served at Mountaintop, you will enjoy such a high strength as you serve during Gospel Odyssey. In these days you are so busy serving, but remember that the Lord is your milk and honey, your nourishment and strength. As you enjoy the strength and nourishment, you will be able to fight for this land. So go, preach the gospel, because this land is such that it even produces the strength for you to fight for it!

TELL PHARAOH, LET MY PEOPLE GO!

God also told Moses to tell Pharaoh, "Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God" (3:18a). Years ago, the phrase "Let My people go" (5:1) was applied to the elders by some who wanted to

see the young people do a certain thing. This was really a travesty, because elders are those who love the saints and act with their well-being in view. They should never be associated with Pharaoh!

KNOWING PHARAOH WOULD NOT

God told Moses, however, "But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go" (3:18b-19). God wanted to exercise His government over Egypt in punishment for how they had mistreated His people: He would allow them to harden their heart so He could deal with them. I can give you many examples of this. Many who desire to break free from everything to follow the Lord experience some form of opposition. In principle, when you say you want to serve the Lord, those around you will say, "Don't you have something better you could do?" When you say "I want to serve God," the world rises up to say, "No!"

THREE SIGNS

THE ROD

When Moses said, "God, I know now who I am and who You are. But what of the people? Will they believe me?" God patiently replied, "OK, what is that in your hand?" Moses replied it was a rod (4:2). A

rod represents something you rely upon and which supports you. If you are a scientist, your knowledge is your "rod". If you are skilled in carpentry, that is your rod. God told him to cast his rod on the ground, and it became a serpent. Then God told him to pick it up by the tail. What Moses had been admiring and leaning on was actually a serpent.

If you have a degree in biology, you feel it can hold you up for a position somewhere. One day, you realize it is actually a snake! But then you pick it up by the tail, and it becomes a rod again.

I love to read. I enjoy books on history, psychology, philosophy and so on. Eventually, such books can help you to become rich in a certain kind of knowledge. You should realize that such education is a snake if you put your trust in it. Many, when they eventually see this, flee from it. What you have learned, however, can also be used by God! It is based upon how it is handled. If you hold it so it can control you, it is a snake. If you hold it from the "tail," you control it and find it can be very useful. So, eventually, after the Lord helps you to use what you have gained as a support, it becomes a ruling power. You become someone able to dispense life, to be a life-giving brother, because that very thing you had first as a rod and a snake has come back to you to become a rod again! God can use what you have depended upon and admired, but only if it is under your authority, and not the other way around.

LEPROSY

Then the Lord told Moses to put his hand inside his cloak, to his bosom. When he took it out, it was leprous! Then God told him to do it once more, and it again appeared normal. To put your hand to your bosom is to touch your real being.



But do you know who you really are? Girls think they are beautiful and pleasant, and young men think they are handsome and smart. If God would say, "Well, let Me open you up a little," what would be seen? We are lepers! Dare you really put your hand to your bosom? It exposes who you really are. Do we possess anything that should cause others to listen to us? We are all leprous. We are under curse. This is not for our judgment, but rather for our realization. We should not live a life saying, "I am terrible, sinful, and leprous!" God does not want this. If you lament in this way, God would say, "Yes. Everyone knows you are leprous. Only a blind person would call you holy! Every human being is leprous." Yet God can use even such a leprous person as you to serve Him and bring His word to His people. Hallelujah! So the

first sign is related to God, for the rod is something for His operation through you. The second sign has to do with a realization of who YOU are.

When you see yourself in this light, realizing you are nothing but a leprous person, you are unable to be proud when others thank you for your service, for you realize what you are. Yet at the same time, you realize God can still work with you. And, when things go so well when you serve, you must realize there is still something within you that is not so healthy. Madame Guyon said, "Even the tears of my repentance need Your blood." Why? Because something impure is still present. Even in our repentance there is often self-pity. Therefore, how would they believe Moses? First of all, Moses had the authority. "I was saved in the basket. I was raised in the palace. I was a prince. I have the Egyptian education." Perhaps he had also been given authority over something like an army. He was successful and powerful. That was a boast, a rod he relied on, so it was of Satan. But then he was able to use it by picking it up by the "tail." Then, secondly, Moses had to realize what he was. He was leprous. He had to realize how decayed and decrepit his condition was. If you have a little hope in yourself, you could never serve God. You should be able to present yourself in a very dignified and authoritative manner, yet without any feeling of pride.

People who can be like this are understood to be men of God.

THE BLOOD-WATER

Yet if they did not believe these two signs, or listen to Moses, God told him to take water out of the river and pour it out on the dry land, and it would turn to blood. Water here refers to the world. We appreciate water, but we do not appreciate blood. We drink water, but not blood. We have a saying that thousands have to die for a general to become somebody. General MacArthur was treated like a god by the Japanese after WWII, but only after so many lives had been sacrificed. He helped rebuild that country. Yet every success involved blood. A millionaire becomes a millionaire upon the blood and sweat of many other people. The world is nothing but blood. Look at this campus. It is very beautiful. You have to see, however, that it is bloody. When you really see the world, you see it has nothing but blood. Until you can see this, you do not appreciate the real situation in the world.

God was telling Moses, if you are the right person, others will hear you; if not, they won't. How can you become the right person? First of all, do you know what I've given to you is useful for Me if you have the ability to pick it up by the tail. Otherwise, all the things you pride yourself in and rely upon will all be snakes to bite you. It is based on how you handle it. You must, however, have authority from God. Everything given to you must be useful for God's purpose. Secondly, you must know yourself. Those who

don't know themselves can never be respected. If you are either too timid or always act "too big for your britches," who is going to respect you? Whether or not you can have others' respect depends upon whether you recognize your real situation. Do you know who you are? You are leprous. Dare you allow anyone really open you up? No. Don't you know what is inside? This why a servant of the Lord can never be proud. A servant of the Lord does not even have the qualification to be proud, for he realizes he is merely a sinner saved by grace. And, thirdly, if you want to serve with effectiveness, you must know the world, and yet no longer appreciate it!

Do you still want to have a job? One brother is so spiritual as to say, "If I get a job, fine. If I don't get a job, fine." That is not a small thing. Another laments, "How could they turn down my resume?" Aren't you happy all the bloody companies turned you down? Do you not see them as blood? If you don't, you can never see the Lord. The whole world has nothing but blood. If anything is produced, it is produced on blood. Many become poor so others can become rich. One person was so rich he could buy the currency and ruin that country's economy, affecting so many countries. After bankrupting so many families, he set up a foundation for the poor! He built his happiness on others' blood, but that is the world's principle: either I live and you die, or you live and I die. We take each other's blood!

When you see the world, you

see blood. Every university is a bloody university. The river, the water the people rely upon when poured out and exposed on the dry land, becomes blood. Now Moses has become a genuinely spiritual man. First, he has authority. Second, he has the full realization of who he is: just a leprous person. Third, his view on the earth is so clear. No more admiration. When you see a senator, he sees Senator Blood. No exception. The whole world is nothing but blood. Until you see this, you cannot serve the Lord properly, because you cannot handle the world properly. Once you see the world is blood, then you know you do not belong to it. The Lord said we don't belong to the world, but He hasn't taken us out of it, so we still attend Bloody University so we might gain something that might become that "rod," but we are not attracted to it. Your education and your job will no longer attract you as it once did, for you will realize only serving God has any value.

NOT TRUSTING HIS ABILITY TO SPEAK

Now we come to Moses' next objection: he was not eloquent, but rather slow of speech. I admire this, because such a person never misspeaks. When I come to this, I would say, "That's great." But Moses is bothered by it. I even doubt whether it was true, since eventually he and not Aaron did the speaking. In front of Pharaoh.

In front of you brothers, I have to pray, "Lord, be with my mouth." Why? Because so many things are

going on, and I have not had not enough preparation. But the Lord has been with us.

Eventually, Moses simply asked God to get someone else. As far as he was concerned, he was finished. He didn't realize God had to wait until Moses had written that psalm before He could come in. Now He could come to Moses and say, "Don't you realize who I am? I am the resurrection. Now, walk with Me." God was still not angry with Moses. It should seem Moses would have been killed by God's wrath. Instead, God said, "OK, you love something so much, but I don't want you to be with that. . . I will give you a helper. Is not Aaron, the Levite, your brother?" The Bible says God's wrath was kindled against Moses, but all He did in His anger was to give his brother Aaron as a helper!

RELEASED TO RELEASE

Then Moses went to his father-in-law, and said, "Please let me go and return to my brethren in Egypt." If you do not get yourself released, you can never lead others to get released!

GOD WANTING TO KILL MOSES BECAUSE OF HIS SON'S LACK OF CIRCUMCISION

We still need to cover one more incident. "And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you

are a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision" (4:24-26). This is hard to believe. You have a very spiritual Moses now. After two stages of forty years, he was indeed ready to be used by God, but God had to nearly beg him to go. Eventually Moses nearly backed out. After he was finally going, we are told God sought to kill him! I don't believe Moses was taking this matter lightly; he must have been very sober at this point. But it was not Moses who was the problem; it was his son, Gershom, his firstborn. Gershom had not been circumcised. For some reason, it was Zipporah and not Moses who recognized this.

THE NEED TO DEAL WITH THE FLESH

We may be right, but our fruit may not be. The Lord demands for His testimony that everything be done in spirit, and be spiritual. Circumcision means to abandon the flesh, the fleshly life. Therefore God was satisfied, for He now saw a spiritual man working together in a spiritual family. Brothers, be careful. Do you realize that God will not allow the flesh to operate? Your thought may be, "What's wrong with doing that?" God would reply, "It is not a matter of what it is, it is a matter of whether it is spiritual or fleshly." What is done in ignorance may be tolerated. Something done in simplicity may be overlooked, but what is of flesh is not. To do something because you are young is one thing; to do something because you know it will attain a certain purpose

is not another. If you purposely do something that is against God, God will come in to absolutely judge it.

This verse is a very sobering one, because it tells me, "Titus, it is not only you who must be OK; none with you can live a fleshly life. Make sure all your co-workers do not operate in a fleshly way. They should all be divinely, piously living before Me." This is why sometimes I seem to be very picky. If you ask me, "Titus, is the Lord really telling me to get out of my city?" I must say, "The Lord must tell you." Then when you say, "I am ready!" I must say, "Can you pray a little more?" There should be no maneuvering among us; only the leading of Christ. Among us we must also have no operation of fleshly ability; but instead the operation of God's anointing.

Gershom was possibly speaking nonsense, thinking he was going to

be somebody as the son of Moses. This caused God even to seek to terminate Moses. This verse is such a warning to us. I may know how to be before the Lord, but what about those with me? We are a team, a family, in which we must all be purely following the Lord for His testimony's sake. How good this is!

As His church, let us all take care of this matter. We must serve the Lord in spirit and in truth, not according to anything of the flesh.

God was finally satisfied when Gershom was circumcised. Now Moses was ready to meet Pharaoh to bring the people out of Egypt.

- Titus Chu

*What was edited out of Message One on the apostle John can be found in the first 2005 Labor Day message, see www.clevelandonline.org.

** Titus sharing to the full-timer serving ones in the third message can be found on p. 44.



THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN: SEVEN MOUNTAINS IN PHILIPPIANS 3:1-12

In the previous message, Titus Chu addressed the first “mountain” that confronts us as we struggle to enter into what is revealed in Philippians 3: that we might pursue Christ and lay hold of Him even as we have been laid hold of by Him (v. 12). In this message, he presents an overview of all seven “mountains” that must be passed before we can enter into such oneness with Christ.

At the end of the second chapter of Philippians, Paul commended Timothy and Epaphroditus to the saints. According to the usual pattern, this would have been the end of the epistle, but because the church in Philippi was so healthy, and because Paul was so burdened for them, he wrote, “Finally...” Why? Because he wanted to advance further in his writing to this church. What was it he wanted to tell them about? It was the top point of God’s economy: our entering into such oneness with Christ that we lay hold of Him to the same extent that He desires to be laid hold of by us (v. 12). What an incorporation! Paul wanted to tell the believers in Philippi how to live the life where we and Christ fully lay hold of one another. We must have such a oneness with Christ in our Christian walk. Why? Because as His believers, this is our goal!

OUR TRADEMARK : REJOICE!

Paul begins this new portion with “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write these things to you, for me it is not irksome, but for you it is safe” (v. 1). As believers, our life-long trademark should be that of rejoicing! The problem, however, is that by nature, most Christians are not joyful people, or else they would never have come to Jesus to be saved! Believers tend to be moody and sensitive. Yet we must be rejoicing people. How is this possible? We have to experience being incorporated with our Lord, Jesus Christ! Whoever knows Jesus as Paul knew Jesus would surely be a rejoicing person, and Paul writes this word to us to let us know that if we are not experiencing such joy, then we have not yet arrived at what the Lord has gained us for. If you are rejoicing in the living person of

Christ, you can surely know that you are healthy, and ready to advance along the route Paul portrays in this chapter.

THE FIRST MOUNTAIN: RELIGION

In the previous message we considered the first “mountain” Paul presents that we must get past in our pursuing after Christ. That mountain is religion, clearly implied in verse 2. (“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision.”) People respect religion. Even in China, if you are a proponent of a religion, you are respected for that. There is something in our blood that seeks to be confirmed that we are right. When we feel we are right and are doing what we should for God, we feel at rest. The problem is that in religion, there is only “I am right and you are wrong.” Even in politics people are balanced by the other party. If you are, ideologically speaking, a Republican, there is another group called Democrats to balance and watch you (and vice versa). If you are caught in religion, however, there is no such balance. Once you identify yourself

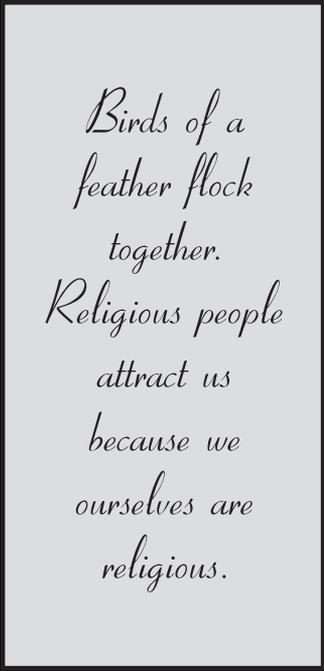
with a religious ideology, no one can touch you. There is very little room for argument.

Of course, there should be no argument concerning Christ being the unique Savior. All true believers follow Him. Concerning this, we all should be one. But there should be a lot of flexibility when it comes to following Him. Therefore, concerning the Person of Christ and His accomplished work, there must be unity. But concerning the manner

in which the believers follow Christ, there must be liberty. And, over all, between believers there must be love.

Allowing such liberty and practicing such love, however, become difficult when we are caught up in religion. Once religious ideology takes over, there is no longer any room for such freedom. Instead, something “extra” to the common faith, such as a certain practice or teaching, becomes a measuring stick for fellowship. This prevents

people from pursuing Christ. Therefore Paul refers those who bring others into such a way “dogs,” “evil workers,” and “the concision”. We must remember, however, that birds of a feather flock together. Religious people attract us because we ourselves are religious. There is something in all of us that desires to hear



*Birds of a
feather flock
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such things, because religion is in our blood. We want someone to tell us what to do, thinking that by listening to what they say and doing it, the religious need in us will be satisfied, and we will find rest. This is why we respond to religion. When we hear someone who wants to give us a “way,” we think, “Now I have found it.” What we haven’t realized is that when we receive such teachings, we are finished as far as entering into oneness with Christ is concerned. We won’t be able to reach even the second mountain, and yet there are many more to go!

THE SECOND MOUNTAIN: CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH*

Paul writes in verses 3 through 7, “For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless. But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.”

The first three things he mentions in verse 3 (“the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh”) are in direct contrast to the three things mentioned in verse 2

(“the dogs,” “the evil workers,” and “the concision”).

In verse 4, Paul says he has something to be confident of in the flesh, even when compared to others who may have something to boast in. “The flesh” here does not mean so much the fallen body as the physical. He gives us seven points to consider. He was (1) circumcised on the eighth day, (2) of the race of Israel, (3) of the tribe of Benjamin, (4) a Hebrew among Hebrews. (5) As to the law, he was a Pharisee. (6) As to zeal, he persecuted the church. (7) As to the righteousness which is according to the law, he had become blameless! Each one of these points should cause us to be impressed. Paul was not a convert; he was born a Jew, and not just any Jew, but a Benjaminite. Furthermore, not only a Benjaminite, but also a Pharisee, which was the strictest sect. And Paul was not just any Pharisee, for he was so zealous that he even took it upon himself to stamp out the Christian faith. No one surpassed him. If that were not enough, he had even, in the eyes of those who watched others’ behavior, become perfect according to the law. To all of this we should respond: “Wow, Paul, you were really something!”

Paul, however, says, “What things were gains to me, these I have counted loss on account of Christ” (v.7)! This is the second stage we must arrive at. We must come to the point that we have no confidence or pride in what is of the flesh. Inwardly, Paul put no stock in such things. He placed no confidence in them.

Even if we are able to see through religion (the first mountain), we can still easily become caught in self-confidence (the second). Young people may secretly think, “Young as I am, I already love Jesus so much. I surely am becoming someone the Lord can greatly use in the church life!” Do you realize what is happening in all the promising young brothers? They feel assured of themselves. They know what they are doing, and they know which way to take, and they don’t doubt they are capable of doing it. I see many such young “generals” so self-assured that one day they will be able to take the recovery on! Whoever has such a thought, however, will not be able to go on, for they have not yet seen the second mountain, which is to place confidence in the self and the flesh.

Sometimes it is a blessing to have nothing. When I was in high school, one time I found out that a number of other young brothers had been taken by the leading brothers for a week of special fellowship. I, however, had not been asked to go, since I was not regarded as one of the “hopeful” ones. Praise the Lord! I may have been bothered at the time, but perhaps if I had been chosen, I would not have developed in a healthy way. Instead, perhaps I would have become someone who crushed

others with my self-importance! Oh, how we need to be aware of the self-life!

THE THIRD MOUNTAIN: TO COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS

In verse 8, Paul even wrote, “Moreover, I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ!” Praise the Lord! Paul did not merely count the things that others might admire and think positively of as loss; he also counted ALL things to be loss on account of Christ.

What are the “all things”? “All things” here refers primarily to any and all things that might become our calling other than

Christ Himself. For instance, all people are ambitious after something. Some are ambitious to excel in sin. Some are ambitious to pursue a career. Some are ambitious to become useful in the church life! Paul could say, “I count nothing else in my life to be of any real value except Christ. Therefore, nothing else will ever be able to replace Christ as my unique calling.”

I knew of a brother who once was so ambitious that he became

Paul could say, “I count nothing else in my life to be of any real value except Christ. Therefore, nothing else will ever be able to replace Christ as my unique calling.”

concerned when he did not have enough time left to share after a younger brother. Why? Because he felt afterwards that he would no longer have enough "face" to appear before the churches he served, since he felt he had been overshadowed by that younger brother. What is this? This is not counting all things loss on account of Christ. To this brother, what he counted gain was being able to minister in the meetings. Sometimes the

What are gains to you? Your career? A fortune? A name? Success in 'the Lord's recovery'? As long as you have something in view other than Christ as your gain, you will be unable to know Christ in full.

brothers who are younger even try to figure out what I like to hear so they can gain some kind of advancement. Brothers, we must count all things, even things such as this, as loss. I've seen people come out on top in the "Lord's recovery," but I've never seen a ministry produced by coming out on top. Ministry is never produced by coming out on top. Ministry is produced in those who only desire to gain Christ. If you seek anything else as gain, ministry will not be yours. You may become a famous preacher, you may become a top executive, and you may become revered to the point people even treat you like Jesus, but in the sight of the Lord, it is not sufficient.

What are gains to you? Your career? A fortune? A name? Success in "the Lord's recovery"? As long as you have something in view other than Christ as your gain, you will not be able to know Christ in full. At most, you will have a limited Christ. Paul counted all things loss that he might gain Christ. There is no way you can gain Christ and gain a career. The secret of gaining Christ fully is letting go of everything else, and even counting all other things that might tempt you as refuse,

garbage, something fit only for dogs.

THE FOURTH MOUNTAIN: TO BE FOUND IN CHRIST

The person who really follows the Lord counts all things loss. Why? So that he might gain Christ and be found in Him, not because of his own personal righteousness, but instead by the righteousness that is out of faith in Christ, righteousness which is out of God based on faith (v. 8b, 9). In other words, it is being found in Christ based upon Christ's accomplished work.

How marvelous it is to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and even more, to gain Him and be

found in Him! When I find you, where is it that I find you? Just sitting here in the hall? When people see me driving my car, do they merely find me in my car? How wonderful it would be if when people found us, they found us in Christ!

Paul did not say we are found in Christ by virtue of our own walk. It is not by our ability to walk so properly before the Lord. Our being found in Christ is a matter of the marvelous things HE has done, not because of anything marvelous we have. Being found in Christ is something that is through faith in Christ; through the righteousness that is out of God and based on faith. When others find me, they find me healthy, yet when they look more closely they should be able to see that I am not healthy due to my own ability, but rather because of what Christ has accomplished for me. We need to be found in Christ by applying what He has done for us.

THE FIFTH MOUNTAIN: LIVING IN ORGANIC UNION WITH CHRIST

If we are someone who is gaining Christ and is being found in Christ, we have arrived at a very marvelous level of Christian experience. We are now able to live in organic union with Christ. That is why in verse 10 Paul can tell us, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection, being conformed to His death." Perhaps in our thought, however, it should be, "To know Him, and the power of His resur-

rection, being conformed to His *glory*." It does not mention glory here, though. It mentions being ultimately conformed to His *death*. Therefore, if you love the Lord, you must realize that you will never become anything hopeful in the eyes of man. So many listening to this message are "hopeful" young men, but you must know that your destination is the tomb. We must be willing to be conformed to the image of Christ's death if we truly desire to enter into oneness with Him. Do you look forward to going through this mountain? No matter how you feel about it, it is necessary.

Thus, eventually our life is not only a life of being joined to Christ by applying His accomplished work of redemption; it also becomes a life of being mingled with Him organically.

THE SIXTH MOUNTAIN: STRUGGLING TO HAVE THE OUT-RESURRECTION

Eventually, you will enter the struggle of an overcomer. This will be your desire. Your focus will be on attaining to the out-resurrection from among the dead (v. 11). Everyone will be resurrected, but you will be one that seeks the resurrection that is superlative, and outstanding.

THE SEVENTH MOUNTAIN: PURSUING TO LIVE THE INCORPORATED LIFE

Eventually, Paul wrote of himself, "Not that I have already obtained or

am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Possibly in church history, no one has been more spiritual than Paul. Even during his lifetime he was caught away to the third heavens and to Hades (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Paul even stated that the Lord appeared to him last of all, meaning that Paul was the last person to see the Lord in such a way. Furthermore, Paul produced so much through his labor, even though he only labored for a comparatively brief number of years. It is hard to imagine that anyone else in church history could have been more deserving of "out-resurrection" than Paul was. Even so he writes, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected." He still struggled to pursue Christ. Why? Because the riches of Christ are unsearchable. There is no limit to them. No matter how much you have gained of Christ, there remains so much more!

What is this? This is our life. By the Lord's mercy, this is the point we also must arrive at. Many, however, never make it through the first mountain; they remain caught in religion their entire life. Possibly

ninety-five percent of Christians are like this. Others, who are able to get through religion, are never able to give up what they have that appears to be good. Still others are able to give up what good things they can claim, but are unable to count ALL things loss.

When the pope dies, a new pope is chosen from among all the cardinals. Many from among the cardinals will be unable to count being pope as loss! Do not think they are not spiritual men. For the most part, I believe they are. Yet among these spiritual men, how many shall be able to count such a thing as being pope to be loss on account of Christ?

Even among us, after giving a good word in a meeting, are we able to count that loss? Instead, we may think, "Praise the Lord, I really made it this time!" This indicates we are still a ways off from the experience of laying hold of Christ in the way we are destined to. How we need to advance in our experience of Christ! And what a hope has been placed before us in Philippians 3!

- Titus Chu

No matter how much you have gained Christ, there remains so much more! What is this? It is our life. By the Lord's mercy, this is where we must arrive.

ACTS:

Flawed Pattern or Highest Divine Standard?

“We are for the Lord’s recovery of the local church” (*Hymns #1255*). This was our joyful declaration during the early days of the church-life in North America. In this context,¹ “‘recovery’ means the restoration ... to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred.”² “[B]ecause the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God’s original intention.” An obvious question arises—How do we know God’s original intention concerning the Church? Our unequivocal answer was³ “by [God’s] unchanging standard as revealed in His Word. We regard the New Testament revelation of the church... as the norm for church practice in the present day.” This includes both the teachings and examples in Scripture. The Church portrayed therein, especially in Acts, provided both *the standard* for evaluating the current situation and *the norm*, which was to be restored. While not alone in adopting this view in our day, by the Lord’s mercy we have been among the most committed to its application.

THE NEW TESTAMENT NORM & THE STANDARD FOR THE CHURCH

This stance places us firmly at the forefront of a long line of believers. “Ever since the Reformation ... reformers... have turned to the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular, **on the presumption that the earliest was the purest form of the church**, and have attempted to revive its radiant faith,” says⁴ one writer. Many consider that it was the early “Plymouth Brethren,” led by John N. Darby, who first “applied the issues of scriptural sufficiency and authority to [church] order.”⁵ They held that “Christianity in the days of the apostles must function as the norm for [the Church today]... and that any evaluation of the church must be measured against this standard.”⁶ Hence, the early Church, described in Acts, provided both the norm and the standard for the Church. Brother Nee held the same view.

ACTS—THE “DIVINE STANDARD FOR ALL TIME,” THE “HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF GOD’S WILL”

Watchman Nee championed this view, expressed in his famous

maxim,⁷ *“The Bible is our only standard.”* He applied this criterion to the Christian life and the Church life. Concerning the Church, his axiom was,⁸ *“what God has set forth as our example in the beginning is the eternal will of God. It is **the divine standard for all time.**”* He regarded the Acts record as the normative standard concerning the churches, the ministry and the work. It was not merely the earliest phase of Church history; it was the “blueprint” for today. He wrote,⁹ *“God cannot lead a man one way in Acts and another today....[I]n principle the will and ways of God are just the same today as they were in the days of Acts.”* Based on this, Brother Nee issued the challenge of recovery:¹⁰ *“we must return to the beginning, to the ‘genesis’ of the Church,...[I]t is there we find the highest expression of His will. Acts is the ‘genesis’ of the Church’s history.”* If Acts represents the “divine standard” and the “highest expression of [God’s] will,” it cannot be improved upon. Any divergence from that pattern is not an advance but a deviation and degradation. Watchman Nee applied this “divine standard” unflinchingly to topics¹¹ such as the apostles and their labors, ministers and their ministries, the local churches, the work and the churches, etc. From the New Testament record he derived such principles as one church, one city; the church is local and the work regional; ministry is for the church; elders (not apostles) administrate the local church; apostles labor together in various worker-companies. Concerning the last point, Brother Nee says,¹² *“It*

*is a scriptural fact that God’s servants are formed into companies, but they are **not formed into one single company.**”*

*“**More than one company of apostles — not satisfactory**”*

Recently, however, the LSM-brothers declared the Acts-pattern to be seriously flawed. The precedent of multiple worker-companies, led by different apostles, is called into question. One of the LSM “blended brothers” writes,¹³ *“In the first century,...there was more than one company of apostles...If we view that situation in a natural way according to the letter of the Bible, we may think that it was satisfactory according to God’s ordination.”* Certainly based on Brother Nee’s writings, this was indeed “satisfactory.” The derogatory terms, “view in a natural way” and “according to the letter,” suggest, however, this writer holds a different view. The LSM-brother continues,¹⁴ *“if we are governed by the revelation of the Bible under the light of the ministry of the age, we will realize that the situation in the first century was **not satisfactory.**”* The Acts-record is “unsatisfactory,” not simply due to minor incidents involving Barnabas or Apollos. The LSM-brothers claim multiple worker-companies, led by different apostles, were the problem. Acts is flawed because¹⁵ *“Peter and James should have joined themselves to Paul’s company and worked together with Paul under the vision the Lord had given him....**All the workers,...should have served together with Paul in**”*

God's move at that time." In their view, what did God really want? One global company of workers, under one leader—Paul! The LSM-brothers' phrase—"all the workers,"—includes more than those recorded in Acts. W. Nee says,¹⁶ "I believe that... in Acts... many people were omitted.... History shows us that a group of apostles went to Africa.... Thomas went to India." The LSM-brothers have a grandiose global scheme!

The LSM-brothers also apply their view to today's situation. They say,¹⁷ "We may think,... that today it should be acceptable to have a number of leading co-workers, each with his own company of workers laboring under his leadership in a certain region of the earth." Again, according to Brother Nee, this would indeed be "acceptable."¹⁸ "Not so," say the LSM-brothers,¹⁸ "**we must serve in one company,** even in one Body, under the proper leadership in the Lord's move...." Along the same lines the recent LSM training made reference to "one band of co-workers."

**THE NEW PARADIGM—ONE "WISE
MASTER BUILDER," ONE GLOBAL
COMPANY OF WORKERS**

What's behind this drastic change? Why are multiple worker-companies not satisfactory? It's an implication of the "one wise master builder" teaching. Under this new paradigm, God's "one wise master builder" supervises God's work on the entire globe and leads one global band of co-workers. One "blended brother" from LSM explains,¹⁹ "God does not give His

vision,...to two men; He gives it to **only one man**. ...the wise master builder; he is the minister of the age. In God's unique work of building...only the word of the master builder counts." Hence, "the situation in the first century was not satisfactory" because "God's way is to have **all His people serving Him...under the supervision of one master builder**"—Paul.²⁰ Based upon this, the LSM-brothers depreciate the Acts-record of two ministries (Paul & co. to the Gentiles and Peter & co. to the Jews), two regions²¹ and two companies of workers. To them, multiple ministries, regions and companies are "flies in the ointment," flaws in the biblical record.

Naturally, the LSM-brothers also apply their new paradigm to the present day. They assert, "This is a strong principle that holds in every age, including today."²² Based on this view, the "blended co-workers" directed a senior co-worker that he,²³ "...would join yourself and those co-workers loyal to you to the blending co-workers, with the continuation of your previous work left to their coordinated oversight."

**A PARADIGM SHIFT – THE "ONE WISE
MASTER BUILDER" TEACHING**

The change from Brother Nee's perspective to the LSM-brothers' view is a fundamental paradigm shift, adopting a drastically different perception of Scripture. No longer is the biblical record of the early Church the "divine standard for all time," and "the highest expression of [God's]

will," the norm governing our present practice. Rather, under the new paradigm, Acts records a blemished history, short of the divine ideal for our practice. This difference is not trivial. According to the LSM-brothers, the apostles' failure to form one company had serious consequences. As a result, history records a "less-than-best" outcome, compared to what might have been. An LSM-brother even speculates:²⁴ *"If all the workers had served under Paul's vision and had taken Paul's leadership, the churches in the Jewish and Gentile worlds might have been brought fully into God's New Testament economy and rescued from the influence of Judaism.... Furthermore, the church in Jerusalem might have been spared the destruction ...in A.D. 70."* Evidently the whole course of Church history and Jewish history would have changed if only the apostles had applied the "one wise master builder" teaching promoted by LSM!

WHO SWITCHED THE "BLUEPRINT"?

These two perspectives—of Brother Nee and the "blended co-workers,"—are mutually exclusive. They are two entirely different "blueprints." Either Acts records "the highest expression of [God's] will" and the "divine standard for all time," or it does **not**. Either the New Testament account represents²⁵ "God's unchanging standard as revealed in His Word" and "the norm for church practice in the present day," or it does **not**. Up until today, the Bible has been the standard of the early Brethren, Brother

Nee and the local churches in the recovery (see *Beliefs & Practices...*). Now the LSM-brothers teach that Acts is a "blemished account," providing a less-than-adequate pattern. In their eyes, it is an inferior "blueprint," adherence to which produces an "impaired building." We cannot have it both ways! The LSM/"blended co-workers" new paradigm directly contradicts Watchman Nee's foundational axiom. It is contrary to the basic principle of recovery—"to return to the beginning" as recorded in **Scripture**. Previously our goal was to "return to the beginning," to recover the early church-life as it is revealed in Acts. Now we are being urged to pursue the hypothetical "will o' the wisp" of an "idealized utopian state," never seen in Church history, nor attained even by the early church in Acts! In fact, such a paradigm most closely matches that held by the Roman Catholic Church.

Do the LSM-brothers really take "Brother Nee as the unique master builder"?

The LSM-brothers recognize,²⁶ "Brother Nee as the unique master builder.... The design came from Brother Nee. He was the superintendent..." But, if Watchman Nee was indeed "the unique master builder," how can the LSM-brothers teach in a way so contrary to what he taught? Brother Nee said²⁷ "Scripture... **does not imply** that all the apostles formed themselves into **one company**.... [O]ne company is not shown in the Word of God." He denounced the

concept of one company of workers, saying,²⁷ “That is Romish, not scriptural.” Yet, the LSM-brothers say,²⁸ “**we must serve in one company...**” These differences are not minor, nor can they be finessed using semantics. The LSM-brothers pay lip-service to Brother Nee as “*the unique master builder,*” yet teach differently from him. If they indeed recognize Watchman Nee as the “unique master builder,” saying “*the design came from Brother Nee,*” they should implement his “blueprint.” If (on the other hand) the LSM-brothers reject Brother Nee’s “blueprint” and substitute another, it is misleading and even hypocritical to refer to him as the master builder who produced the design! Let’s look at what Watchman Nee taught about master builders.

ONE WISE MASTER BUILDER – WHAT DID WATCHMAN NEE TEACH?

Brother Nee recognized Paul as a wise master builder, saying,²⁹ “*he was indeed a wise master builder who had laid a foundation upon which others needed to build.*” However, Paul was not unique in this regard. Watchman Nee says,²⁹ “*whoever lays a foundation is a wise master builder.*” Peter and others in Jerusalem did this, as Brother Nee recognizes,³⁰ “*In the Bible there are not that many **people who have been raised by God to lay a foundation.** No doubt, there were **some brothers in Jerusalem** who were raised up by God. Paul was also raised up by God.*” Hence, according to Brother Nee,³⁰ “*When Paul said that he did not want to build upon*

others’ foundation, [Rom. 15:10] *he was specifically referring to the work of **the brothers in the region of Jerusalem.** Paul did not want to **build upon their foundation.***” Thus in Brother Nee’s view: Paul was a master builder, but so were others (Peter & co.). Watchman Nee did not deprecate their role as master builders. Brother Nee’s “blueprint” did not entail **one unique** “wise master builder,” supervising one global company of workers. This difference in appreciation towards God’s work is the root cause of divergent views about multiple bands of workers.

WHO’S “BLUEPRINT” – WATCHMAN NEE’S, OR THE “BLENDED CO-WORKERS”’?

Today the saints in the recovery face a choice—embrace the “blended co-workers’ new paradigm” based upon one unique “Minister of the Age - Master Builder” and seek the hypothetical goal it offers **OR** retain the “former paradigm,”—the blueprint for recovery as taught by Brother Nee³¹—“*we must return to the beginning, to the ‘genesis’ of the Church, ... [I]t is there we find the highest expression of [God’s] will. Acts is the ‘genesis’ of the Church’s history.*” The implications of this choice are not trivial; there are far-reaching repercussions. For those who choose the latter, a good starting point is to prayerfully study *The Normal Christian Church Life* and to re-examine our current situation in light of such teaching from the Word of God. - Nigel Tomes

(Notes found on pp. 46-48)

**A WORD TO THE CO-WORKERS
SHARED DURING MESSAGE 3 OF THE
COLLEGE TRAINING IN MONTREAL
ON THE LIFE OF MOSES**

THE LORD IS SEEKING TO BRING US INTO
A MUCH GRANDER LAND

Some of you have been coached into smallness. You also have been taught that you must be for your local church first, for if you



cannot be for your local church, you cannot be for something of a larger work. There is truth to this, but the problem is that you like to stay in your small situation, not realizing that God's promise and intention is to bring us out of our "world" into a broad and large place. He wants to bring us into a good land and a large land. Your life is not for one locality; your life is for a good land and a large land. When you see this, you will be so happy that the Lord has chosen you to take you out of your situation and put you into what He has prepared for

you. You will no longer shrink from it; you will joyfully embrace it!

COMMITMENT VS. PROFESSION

God is asking you to be a person of commitment, and yet many are more interested in being a person with a profession. If you are a full-time serving one, it seems your job becomes something from meeting to meeting and from conference to con-

ference and even training to training. For instance, I hardly have time to prepare for anything anymore, for there are no breaks in my schedule!

The full-timer can also deceive himself with the respect others show for his seeming level of "commitment". All the full-time serving ones should tell the Lord, "I don't just want You to bring me OUT of my "Egypt"; I also want You to bring me INTO that land that is so great and broad that I can even FLY within it!"

THE DANGER OF BEING SMALL

I want to exhort you all. Brothers, there is a great land waiting for you to explore! Go out and discover the great, broad land the Lord has prepared! Often I hear, "Yeah... but" as in "Yeah, but I have two brothers I am caring for!" Wouldn't there be at least two brothers who need you wherever you go? We should treasure those we serve, but do you really believe that if you go as the Lord desires, He will not be able to take care of the situation and bless those you must leave? At such times it

ply. They do not see much return from their labors, and they are not even considered "in the flow"! It seems they sow much and reap little. My word is simple: "Come out of the domain you are in and into the land the Lord desires to show you!" Do you realize how great that land is, how broad it is, and how much can be done there? Pick up the burden for the Lord's testimony and explore the whole earth for the Lord's burden! Don't just sing, "We'll stand right here till Jesus comes"!



seems we trust our own ability to handle things more than we trust God's.

How often I find myself confronting this smallness in those the Lord is trying to bring out! So many are like big genies content to stay confined in their little bottles. Very few am I able to move.

Those that serve with me are lovely. They serve without much encouragement, and live very sim-

In this matter, I do not know how many co-workers I really have, for everyone seems happily occupied. So I say, "Brothers, do you want to come out of what holds you back, and be brought into a great domain that is wide, that is broad, and in which you can do so much for the Lord?"

(Note: Much of the burden during Titus' sharing in Message 3 was directed towards his co-workers. - Ed.)

NOTES for pp. 38-42

1. "The co-workers in the Lord's recovery," *The Beliefs and Practices of the local churches*, 1978, p. 5

2. *The Beliefs and Practices of the local churches*, pp. 5-6

3. *The Beliefs and Practices of the local churches*, p. 6

4. Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. 4, p. 140 quoted in Callahan p. 68. Along the same lines Gordon Fee says concerning Acts, "It not only tells us the history of the early church, but it also serves as the **normative model for the church of all times.**" Gordon Fee, *How To Read The Bible For All It's Worth*.

5. James P. Callahan, *Primitivistic Piety: The Ecclesiology of the Early Plymouth Brethren*, p. 42

6. James P. Callahan, *Primitivistic Piety*, p. 34

7. The quote in context says, "The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it." Watchman Nee, *The Christian*, Issue No. 1, 1925, in *Collected Works*, vol. 11, p. 1231

8. Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 30, p. xvi

9. W. Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, p. xv

10. W. Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, p. xvi

11. See W. Nee's *The Normal Christian Church Life*, *Church Affairs*, *Further Talks on the Church Life* etc.

12. W. Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, p. 129. Similar statements

include: "That all the apostles should combine into one company is not shown in the Word of God." (p. 128). "There is a company of apostles, but it is not great enough to include **all** the apostles. That is Romish, nor scriptural." (p. 128) "[T]he Word of God does not warrant the forming of one central company;" (p. 130). "Peter and his associates, and Paul and those with him, were appointed to different spheres." (p. 131).

In his seminal *Life-study* messages, Brother Lee is **not** critical of multiple co-worker companies. W. Lee says, "In Acts there are two companies of ministry: Peter's company and Paul's company.... Both companies carried out the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension." (*Life-study of Acts*, p. 43). Concerning Titus 3:13, W. Lee writes, "Artemas and Tychicus were intimate fellow-workers of Paul; Zenas and Apollos worked independently of him. Yet Paul still charged Titus to care for them, showing there was no jealousy between the two groups of co-workers." (*Life-study of Titus*, p. 51)

13. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*" In "Contributions" on the LSM-sponsored web-site: **AFaithfulWord.com**. We assume that the opinions expressed reflect the views of the "blended co-workers." Moreover, we assume all the items posted on this website have passed through LSM's "discerning check" and qualify as part of the "one publication" in its internet version. For simplicity, we refer to all the contributors to **AFaithfulWord.com** as "LSM-brothers," or "LSM blended brothers."

14. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*"

15. Bob Danker *“On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder.”* Consider the repeated statement, “All the workers ... should have served together with Paul in God’s move at that time.” “All the workers,” presumably means **all the apostles, including the original 12 apostles**, Paul, James & others. In the text the author refers only to Peter, James, Barnabas, & Apollos. Yet, what about the others—especially the original 12 apostles? The writer implicitly assumes that Acts is exhaustive in the sense that it records all the work done by all the workers (apostles) in that era, at least all the work that counts with God. This implicitly assumes that (in that era) anything not recorded in Acts has no value before God. These are strong assumptions. W. Nee didn’t hold this view (see below).

16. Watchman Nee, *Church Affairs*, pp. 243-4. W. Nee views Acts as exemplary, rather than exhaustive. In other words, Acts records the ideal, the best examples, rather than comprehensively reporting all God’s work in that era. He says, “I believe that all the history in Acts was for teaching; therefore many people were omitted. Hence, we are clear concerning Peter in Jerusalem and Paul in Antioch. There could have been many other beginnings. History shows us that a group of apostles went to Africa. According to the tradition of the church, Thomas went to India. ... [T]he Bible did not bother to mention them all. Therefore we cannot say that in Acts there were only two centers; we can only say that the Holy Spirit only mentioned two. ... [O]nly what is useful for teaching is recorded, and what is not useful for teaching is not recorded.” W. Nee, *Church Affairs*, pp. 243-4.

17. Bob Danker *“On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder”*

18. Bob Danker *“On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder”*

19. Bob Danker *“On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder”*
A similar statement by the “blended co-workers” appears in *The Ministry*, v. 7, No. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 34, which says, “In every age there is a particular vision. This vision is released not through many persons but through one person who is the minister of that age. There is the vision of the age, and the one who receives this vision becomes the minister of the age. All the others who are with him are led through this one, ... they speak ... according to the leading of the one whom the Lord has chosen to give the vision of the age.”

20. Bob Danker *“On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder”*. Recent speaking by the “blended co-workers” emphasizes Paul as the one “wise master-builder,” For example, “If we would do the work of the divine building, we must be one with the wise master builder, who is the acting God. ... The apostle Paul. ... surely was the acting God.” And “...the architect, the wise master builder, was the apostle Paul.” *The Ministry*, v. 10, no. 1, p. 213

21. Recent ministry by the “blended co-workers” still acknowledges the existence of multiple regions in the time of Paul. For example, “Paul also had the capacity to oversee the work. He was clear that there were only two regions of the work ... the work among the Jews and the work among the Gentiles. He [Paul] was the wise master builder overseeing the work in the Gentile world, which was most

of the inhabited earth." *The Ministry*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 213. In brother Bob Danker's piece it is difficult to find any acknowledgment of "two regions."

22. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*"

23. This quote is from an unpublished document. Perhaps a precedent is provided by *Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery* which quotes from unpublished documents: For example, "Brother Lee said, "...I am the continuation of Brother Nee; I would like to have a continuation of me, and this needs a corporation... The Living Stream corporation will continue this ministry." (from unpublished notes...)" "Blended Co-workers," *Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, LSM, 30 June, 2005, p. 5

24. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*"

25. *The Beliefs and Practices of the local churches*, pp. 5-6

26. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*" endorses this view, quoting Witness Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, p. 98

27. Watchman Nee, *Normal Christian Church Life, Collected Works*, vol. 30, p. 128

28. Bob Danker "*On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder*"

29. Watchman Nee, *Church Affairs*, p. 165

30. Watchman Nee, *Church Affairs*, p. 164

31. W. Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, p. xvi

