

PETER: A PERSON WITH A DIVINE HEAVENLY CALLING

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MESSAGE TWO: THROUGH BEING APPOINTED AS AN APOSTLE, PETER COULD CO-WORK WITH GOD BY REALIZING THE LORD'S GODLY OPERATION IN HIS DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

APPOINTED

As we look at Peter, we see a number of prominent characteristics. First, he was a person with a divine heavenly calling; second, he was a person raised up by the Lord through a variety of people and environments; third, he was a person with vision and revelation; and fourth, he was a person who fervently loved the Lord. Through being appointed as an apostle, Peter could co-work with God by realizing the Lord's godly operation in His divine sovereignty. This operation began from the Lord Jesus' praying to God all night long. Luke 6:12-13 says, "And in these days He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when it became day, He called His disciples to Him, and He chose from them twelve, whom He also named apostles." Here we can see four things: 1) God; 2) the Lord; 3) prayer from the Lord before God; and 4) an operation of God in the Lord. Verse fourteen begins, "Simon, whom He also named Peter..." This verse indicates that Peter was the first apostle, after which came his brother Andrew, then James and John, and so forth (Luke 6:15-16). According to our understanding, verse seventeen should then read, "These twelve apostles were empowered and committed. They went out to preach the gospel, and led thousands of people to the Lord." But the Bible does not say this. Not until chapter nine does the Bible mention that the Lord gave them power. "And He called together the twelve and gave them power and authority over all the

demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God and heal the sick. And He said to them, Take nothing for the journey, neither a staff nor a bag nor bread nor money, nor have two tunics apiece” (9:1-3). Then verse six says, “And they went out and passed through village after village, announcing the gospel and healing everywhere.”

RAISED UP

In Luke chapter six after the Lord prayed all night, He appointed twelve apostles. But right after the appointing, the Lord did not use them. Why? Because this group of people needed to be raised up. They needed the divine attributes sown into them. They needed to be able to see the Lord and realize the Lord’s economy, and even more they needed to be constituted by the Lord Himself. The appointing of the disciples by the Lord Jesus was in chapter six of Luke, but the sending out the disciples was in chapter nine. There are more than two chapters in between these sections. The Lord Jesus spoke many things and did many things in order to raise them up. Today we might like to speak in a conference and then say, “Brothers, you go ahead and do it.” But the Lord Jesus was different than we are. He did things Himself first. Then whatever He would speak to the disciples, He would have already done it with them. Thus, in the next two chapters, the Lord Jesus exercised power and authority. He subdued the demons, healed the sick, and also proclaimed the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus went through all these things with His disciples, and then He spoke all the things to them found in Luke 9:1-6. All of His speaking was a product of His own experience.

EXPERIENCING EVERYTHING THE LORD WENT THROUGH

In addition to the Lord's calling, we need the Lord's appointing. Yet no matter how the Lord appointed us, we still need to learn to follow the Lord through these two and a half chapters. If we cannot follow well, we cannot work for the Lord. These twelve disciples followed the Lord closely. Whatever the Lord experienced, they experienced; whatever the Lord did, they saw; whatever the Lord spoke, they heard; they joined themselves to the Lord completely. When we come to chapter nine, where the Lord spoke about what the disciples should do, they were not unfamiliar with these things. For example, when the Lord Jesus said, "You should heal the sick," they understood.

When He said, "You should cast out demons," they understood. When He said, "You should proclaim the kingdom of God," they understood. When He said, "You should take nothing for the journey," they understood. And when He said, "Into whatever house you enter, you should remain there," they also understood. Whatever the Lord spoke in Luke chapter nine, they had already experienced in chapters six through eight, when they were following the Lord closely.

NEEDING A HUMBLE, LEARNING SPIRIT

If these disciples thought they could work for the Lord just by His appointment, they were dreaming. Today, for example, an elderly brother may tell a younger brother, "Please take the responsibility for the college work." Right away the younger brother may feel, "I am committed." But the Lord would say, "Wait a minute. Not so fast." The appointing of the twelve was a "commission," yet from the time of commission to actually fulfilling the ministry the apostles still needed the experience in chapters six through eight in the Gospel of Luke. A commission is one thing, and the sending out is another thing. To be commissioned does not mean you can be sent; to obtain a position does not mean you can do the work. When we receive a

commission either to serve in the college work or to lead a church, we need a very humble spirit to cause us to follow the Lord more seriously, more absolutely, and more closely. Therefore, we can let Him lead the way step by step. Every one of us needs to learn from the Lord in a different level, and to learn from the elder brothers carefully. In the past, when I heard some brother say, "I am an elder," I had a feeling, "Anyone who can say that he is an elder is not qualified to be one, because he does not know what it means to be an 'elder.' He does not realize how much suffering and frustration an elder confronts, and how many tears, prayers, diligent labors, consecrations and offerings an elder needs to experience. Neither does he realize that an elder needs to become such a pattern to the saints."

If we have never learned the above process, we will think that to be appointed is the same thing as becoming a commander, resulting in our putting on airs of self-importance. I would like to tell you, brothers and sisters, that everyone who serves the Lord not only needs the Lord's appointing, but even more so needs the Lord's raising up.

REALIZING HIS BEING APPOINTED WAS THE RESULT OF THE LORD'S NIGHT-LONG PRAYER

Firstly, Peter realized his being appointed was the result of the Lord's night-long prayer. Today in the churches, for some reason we hardly see brothers and sisters pray all night. Because of our focus on too many arrangements, there is little fear of God and little godliness in our service. The Lord Jesus went to the mountain to pray. After the prayer, He called His disciples and officially appointed twelve apostles. Because the Lord prayed all night and He was filled with the flowing out and living out of God's testimony, there was no complaining, no divisiveness, no jealousy, and no fighting during the whole process of the appointing. It was carried out in a very simple and pure condition.

REALIZING HIS HEALING POWER TO CURE VARIOUS DISEASES OF BODY AND SOUL

Luke 6:17 says “And He came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a great crowd of His disciples, and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.” The Lord here met the most common needs. He testified to His great power in these most common needs. If a man needed healing of his body, He healed his body. If a man needed healing of his heart, He healed his heart also. If you want to be a servant of the Lord, you need to learn to be a person who is rich in life, and you also need to learn to heal people in the power of life. In this way, whatever a person’s need is, whether it is his body or his heart, you can heal them. Brothers, if you want to be the Lord’s servant, you must learn to heal when a person is sick. When a person’s body is sick, you have to heal that; when a person’s heart is sick, you have to heal that; when a person feels empty, you have to heal his emptiness; when a person feels weak, you have to heal his weakness; when a person feels his life is boring, you have to heal it; when a person feels he is bound by sin, you have to heal it; when a person feels it is meaningless to pursue the Lord, you also have to heal that. Here the Lord humbled Himself to “a level place,” even to a most common place, where anyone could see Him, anyone could come to Him, and where He could meet all of their needs. A servant of the Lord should be able to supply God to people and supply Christ to people whenever people have a need. Because he can supply Christ to people, the Christ he supplies becomes the healing. A genuine apostle is sent not only to solve problems, to preach and to work, but also to heal the sicknesses of people’s heart and body. He becomes a healer.

**OBTAINING THE TESTIMONY AND TEACHING
WHICH WERE PRODUCED FROM THE LORD'S
DIVINE ATTRIBUTES AND HUMAN VIRTUES**

Concerning the Lord's teaching on the mountain, the record in the Gospel of Luke differs from the one in the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew gives you a constitution (Matt. chapters 5-7). The Gospel of Luke gives you a principle (Luke 6:20-49). From a level place, the Lord healed the Jews and the people from Tyre and Sidon. Afterwards, the Lord immediately gave them His testimony and teaching, which were produced from His divine attributes and human virtues. At the beginning of this teaching, He said, "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." And then He said, "...Love your enemies, and do good...For there is no good tree that produces corrupt fruit, nor again a corrupt tree that produces good fruit."

**THE TEACHINGS ON THE MOUNTAIN
WERE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LORD HIMSELF**

Strictly speaking, these teachings were descriptions of the Lord Himself. For example, when He mentioned "poor in spirit", He spoke this concerning Himself. Not one person's spirit was as poor as His was. When He was twelve years old, He went up to Jerusalem in a company. On the return home, He was not found among the company. Mary anxiously searched for Him, and when she found Him, she said to Him, "Child, why have You treated us like this? Behold, Your father and I, being greatly distressed, have been seeking You." How calm the Lord Jesus was at that moment. Then He said, "...Did you not know that I must be in the things of My Father?" His meaning was: "If other people cannot understand, can't you, Mary? If others cannot understand, Joseph and Mary, you two ought to understand." But, the Lord was poor in His spirit to the point that He subjected Himself to them and went down with them (Luke 2:41-51).

The Lord was poor in spirit, and He hungered and thirsted for righteousness in His heart. Also, His living was to make peace among people. Now the Lord expects to constitute His divine attributes in us. The result of this constitution is that we would live out His human virtues. Being poor in spirit causes us to be mournful toward ourselves and meek toward others. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness causes us to be merciful toward others and pure toward God. Peacemaking causes us to be persecuted for the sake of righteousness and to be reproached for the sake of the Lord. This is the testimony of the Lord's living out of His human virtues in His divine attributes. When the Lord spoke out this testimony, it became teachings to us.

In the matter of spiritual teaching, you have to be careful not to give legal doctrines or knowledgeable education. Knowledgeable education is not enough, neither is legal doctrine. We have to help people touch the divine attributes and live out His human virtues, because what people touch and what they live out will become a teaching.

For example, I often miss brother Lee. What I miss the most is not his preaching but his person, such as the way he walked, how he sat and talked with me, what kind of tone he used when he talked, and the feeling in that tone. The most impressive part was not how deep his preaching was, but how he was such a person with human virtues.

WHAT YOU LIVE OUT BECOMES THE TEACHING AND HEALING TO THE OTHERS

When the Lord Jesus was training the disciples, He gave them two principles. The first principle is: if you are an apostle, you should know how to heal all kinds of diseases and meet all kinds of needs. A servant of the Lord must be a healer. When a church is in a messy situation, you need to go heal that church. When a brother is weak, you need to heal him; when a brother has a shortage, you need to heal him. Whether it is physical or psychological, you need to become a healer.

Nevertheless, this healing is based on the Lord's testimony, that is, the constitution of the Lord in you. Therefore, the second principle is: all your teachings are from your testimony. If you are not a testimony, you cannot teach. First you yourself have to have the testimony, then you can teach others. What you teach is who you are, what you have been constituted with, what you have lived out, and what the Lord has wrought in you.

REALIZING THAT THE LORD HEALS IN THE OPERATION OF HIS DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

After having the Lord's teaching and testimony, the first thing you must see is the Lord's divine sovereignty. In Luke 7:1-10, the Lord revealed that His healing wasn't merely for healing only, but it was an operation in His sovereignty. In Capernaum a certain centurion's slave was ill. When the Lord was about to go to heal him, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "For I also am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my slave, Do this, and he does it."

When Jesus heard these things, He said, "Not even in Israel have I found such great faith." Why was the Lord so pleased? Because this centurion touched God's heart, that is, the operation of God's divine sovereignty. Here, seemingly God's heart said, "Look, I am God, I need to gain the reality of the kingdom on the earth." What is the reality of the kingdom? The reality of the kingdom is: the Father says go, the Son goes; the Father says come, the Son comes. Then when the Triune God tells us to go, we go; when the Triune God tells us to come, we come. We need to live in such organic sovereignty of the divine life. Here the disciples again had a new lesson to learn: to follow the Lord is not only a matter of healing, not only a matter of testimony and teaching, but also a matter of divine sovereignty.

REALIZING THE LORD'S RICH MERCY AND HIS POWERFUL OPERATION IN HIS MERCY

The Lord Jesus not only brought people to realize His divine sovereignty, He also brought people to realize His rich mercy and His powerful operation in His mercy. Luke 7:11-17 records an incident in the city of Nain about a widow's son who had died. "Nain" means pasture, and it also means grace. This tells us that the Lord healed the widow in grace. The Lord Jesus didn't just pass the city of Nain, but purposefully walked a certain distance to get to Nain for the purpose of exercising His mercy and grace. A widow who has lost her only son is the saddest thing on earth. This widow was so hopeless that she did not know how to pray and speak to the Lord. When the crowd was mourning, the Lord Jesus came. Verses twelve and thirteen read, "And as He came near the gate of the city, behold, one who had died was being carried out, an only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a considerable crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He was moved with compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' " It is amazing that even though there was such a great crowd with her, no one could help her, and no one could teach her how to pray.

The most they could do was to show a little human compassion. But when the Lord Jesus saw her, He was moved with compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He came near and touched the bier, and those carrying it stood still. And He said, "Young man, to you I say, Arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak.

If you want to be a servant of the Lord, and if you want the Lord to cultivate His divine attributes and human virtues in you, then you need to let the Lord teach you step by step. You need to know healing, and then have the testimony, and then realize the Lord's sovereignty. Not only so, you also need to realize the Lord's sovereign operation in His rich mercy. As a servant of the Lord, you must live under the Lord's sovereignty in order for God's power to be constituted in you. Not only so, you must also be a person full of mercy to the same extent as the Lord Jesus

was, who came near and touched the bier, and said to the dead son, “Young man, to you I say, Arise.” You must know that people need your mercy, and that they are not to be the fruit of your work. People are not willing to be your fruit. A person without mercy cannot be used by the Lord.

In principle, a servant of the Lord is a person who heals. His teachings are his testimony, and his teachings are his living. Then he must be a person living under God’s sovereignty, and at the same time he must be full of mercy toward people. Whenever he sees people without the Lord, he has mercy within; whenever he sees people without joy, he has mercy within; whenever he sees people in pain, he has mercy within; whenever he sees people anxious and sad, he has mercy within. Hopefully we can tell the Lord, “Lord, how I need Your grace in order for me to live in Your mercy, and to serve and work in mercy. I want my serving and my work to be in mercy, and to be the outflow of mercy.”

REALIZING THE UNIQUE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS AND THE OPERATION, CERTAINTY AND INCLUSIVENESS OF THE MINISTRY

The Certainty of the Lord’s Unique Ministry

The disciples of John reported to John all the things that the Lord did. At that time, John was already in prison. Therefore he sent his disciples to the Lord and said, “Are You the Coming One, or should we expect another?” (Luke 7:18-19). What John meant was: “If You are the coming One, why can’t You save me out of here?” However, the Lord had the absolute certainty of His ministry. He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel announced to them” (v. 22). When the Lord added the sentence, “Blessed is he who is not stumbled because of Me,” He seemingly said, “John, do not be stumbled because of Me. To save you out of the prison is not My

ministry. My ministry is: ‘the poor have the gospel announced to them.’“ I would like to tell you brothers, if you serve the Lord, you must have the constitution of God’s divine attributes and live out His human virtues. Then you will announce the gospel to the poor. In our serving, the blind can receive their sight, the lame can walk, the lepers can be cleansed, and the dead can be raised, but our commission is the gospel of God, that is, the gospel of the Son of God. We ought to tell out the gospel of the Son of God.

The Inclusiveness of the Operation of the Ministry

Verses 24-26 read, “And when the messengers of John went away, He began to say to the crowds concerning John, What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man arrayed in soft garments? Behold, those who live in splendid apparel and luxury are in royal palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a prophet.”

All the prophets in the Old Testament never saw the Lord Jesus in person, but John saw the Lord Jesus in person, and introduced the Lord Jesus in person. He also rose up and declared, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” Therefore, he was greater than all the prophets in the Old Testament. But we are even greater than John, because we have the Lord Jesus living inside of us.

The Lord Jesus recommended John, “This is he concerning whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John, yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (v. 27-28). There was no other ministry after the ministry of the Lord Jesus, because His ministry was unique. When this unique ministry operates, it is full of power, it is certain, and at the same time it is also inclusive. For example, the Lord did not rebuke John. Perhaps in His heart the Lord Jesus regretted that John didn’t follow Him, “Unfortunately, he did not follow me. If he

did follow Me, he would be in the kingdom of God. Because he did not follow Me, he missed the kingdom of God. But I will still testify for him, ‘Among those born of women there is no one greater than John.’” This shows the proper inclusiveness of the Lord’s ministry.

The Balance Between the Certainty and Inclusiveness of the Operation of the Ministry

Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus had the spirit that you should have through out your whole life. Today you have to lay hold of what the Lord gave you, and turn these into a healthy operation which is full of life, full of power, full of function, full of freshness, full of revelations, and full of rich and life-supplying operations. But no matter how strong, how high and how rich your operation is, you need to have a certain degree of respect toward the servant who is used by the Lord, just as the Lord Jesus respected John. This does not come by your natural self. Only when you allow the divine attributes to be healthily constituted in you will you be able to respect and include servants who are used by God.

A servant of the Lord must learn to heal all the physical and psychological diseases of men. His teachings must be the constitution of his very person. He must live under God’s divine sovereignty and be full of mercy. He should not only be full of mercy toward people, but also have the certainty toward the unique ministry, and inclusiveness in his certainty toward the ministry. Many times we have certainty but not inclusiveness; other times we have inclusiveness but not certainty. We should have this kind of attitude: I am certain of the way of the local churches, yet I include all the saints in all the congregations. At the same time, I will not give up the local churches just because I include the saints in all the congregations. No matter how I love the saints in all the congregations, what I lay hold of is still the way of the local churches. But even though I take the way of the local churches, I do not attack the saints in all the congregations.

Those saints in all the congregations are my brothers and sisters.
I need to have love, acceptance, respect and inclusiveness.

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