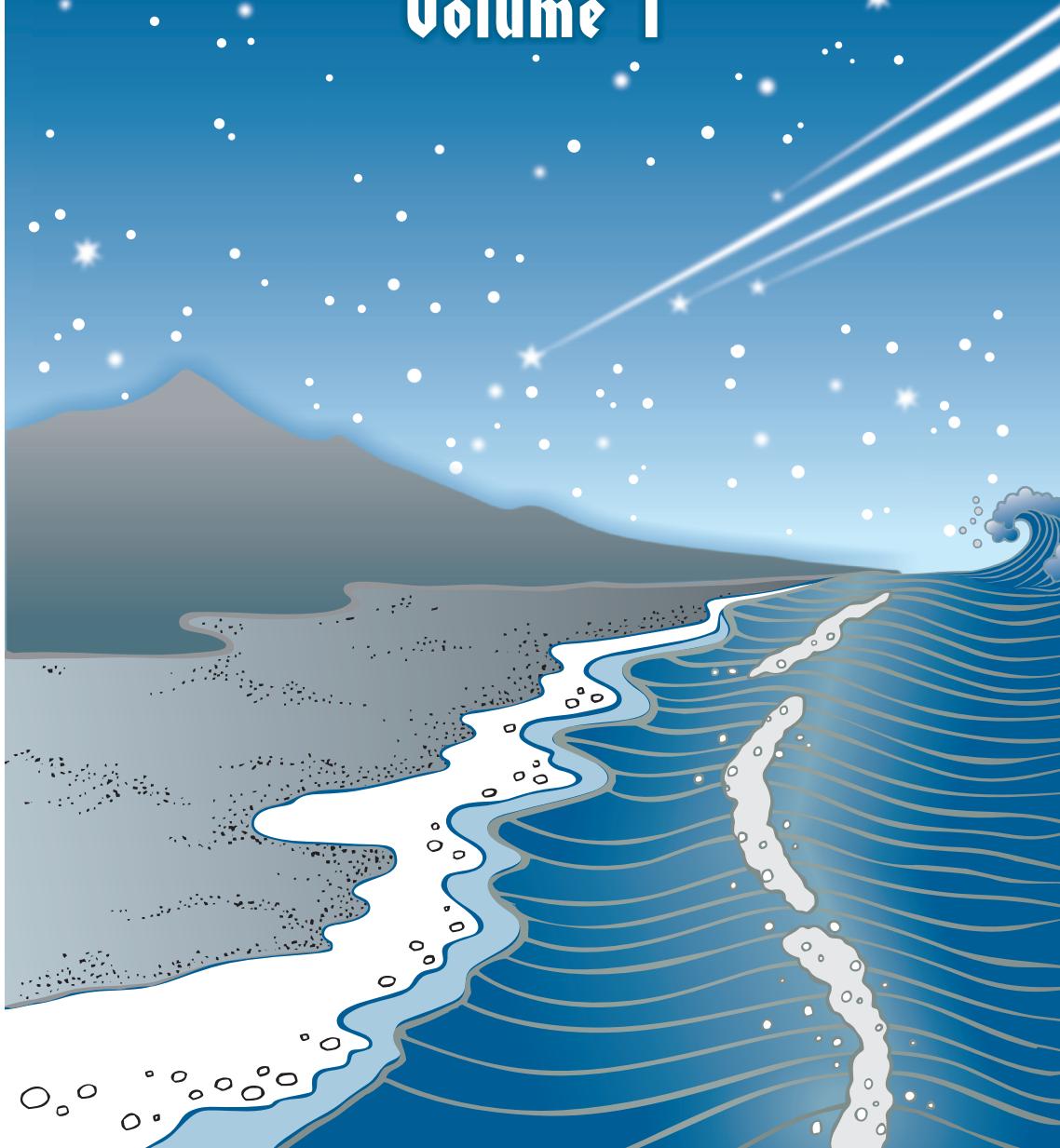


# Bible Characters

## Volume I



# Bible Characters

Volume I



## Preface

In 1990, during the winter convention, God called for vessels that could change the era. Since then, the Lord's servant was extremely earnest in the spirit, hoping that more vessels would be raised up to turn around the fate of this generation. Therefore, he hoped that brothers and sisters would build up in their lives the special characteristics of a vessel that changes the era.

Hence, the Lord's servant decided that the youths should discuss about Bible characters during youth services. He wanted us to learn from the vessels of the past and be equipped. In every era, God's work is always done through the vessel that He has chosen. God's work can only be done when there are workers, and the quality of the work depends on the quality of the workers. Almost every character had his positive and negative conditions. The Lord's servant hoped that from these vessels of the past, all brothers and sisters would learn the lessons we should learn. In order to become vessels that can change the era, we should imitate the positive spiritual virtues of the vessels of the past, and take their failures and weaknesses as our warning.

The Lord's servant taught us how to discuss on these Bible characters. First we listed out all the Bible verses pertaining to a certain character. Then we expounded upon them, and included our own personal experiences in our discussions. Every individual's enlightenment and understanding towards a certain character was different. It all depended on how deep each person learned their life lessons. In other words, our recognition towards a Bible character is based upon our learning in life before the Lord. Therefore, while learning the special traits of these Bible characters, we have to pay attention to how we learn our life lessons. In this way, we will obtain true benefit.

After discussing about Bible characters over a period of time, Christians and churches from around the world responded, saying how greatly they benefited from these discussions. The Lord's servants could clearly see how the Holy Spirit confirmed the discussions concerning the Bible characters. They were greatly consoled when they saw how the churches longed for the will of God and desired to become useful vessels in God's hands. The Lord's servants hope that all the saints would continue to find grace in learning their life lessons, and be trained and established in the Truth. Therefore, the apostles were moved to publish the Truth and messages concerning these Bible characters so that brothers and sisters could read them anytime at their convenience.

The Lord's servants named this book, Bible Characters. May the Lord bless and use this book. May God send down the light of the Truth, and the spirit of understanding, so that all those who read this book will humbly accept God's molding in their lives and be established, until everyone becomes a vessel that can change the era, and accomplish God's end-time will.

Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade  
February 9, 1991  
Mount Zion

# Table of Contents

## Preface

Abel .....	001
Isaac .....	011
Noah .....	015
Jonah .....	025
Enoch .....	035
Abraham .....	053
Jacob .....	063
Hosea .....	069
Joseph .....	087
Gideon .....	107
Barak .....	131
Samson .....	157
Jephthah .....	185





# Abel





## **Abel**

### ***Blood of the First Martyr***

*(April 2, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

Please read Genesis 4:3–11: “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell... Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him... And He [the LORD] said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.’”

Cain’s murder of Abel was the first domestic violence in the history of mankind. It was also the first time the blood of a martyr was shed on earth. This tragedy occurred because mankind had departed from God’s rule and started man’s rule. Since then until now, men no longer have peace. The world is full of jealousy, hatred, strife, killing, warfare, and bloodshed. There is no peace among peoples, races, and nations. Even until today, there are endless battles and bloodshed between believers and non-believers. What should be done to end the chaos, killing, and dreadful bloodshed that have been happening since the beginning of time? The only way is to end man’s rule and return to God’s rule. Returning to God’s rule is the present movement of God. It is today’s message — the flow of the Holy Spirit and the mainstream of the 1990s — that God inspires the Prophet of All Nations to preach to the world.

Cain’s offering represented an offering according to man’s will. His

serving was of the carnal life. It was not according to God's will, nor was it from revelation. Since Cain's sacrifice did not have blood and fat, the LORD did not regard it with favor. Abel, on the other hand, offered the firstborn of his flock, and his offering was respected by God. It had blood and fat that signified the complete salvation accomplished by the Lord Jesus through the death of the cross. For "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

In the Old Testament era, starting from Abel, atonement was made with the blood of the bull and goat. However, in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus accomplished the eternal redemption for us through His own blood. Hebrews 12:24 says, "To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." This verse shows that Abel's serving came from revelation and his offering coincided with God's will. Therefore, God was pleased with Abel's offering and accepted it.

Today, many people are serving God but their offering holds no blood (witness of blood), nor fat (witness of the Holy Spirit). Such offering is not according to God's will or revelation (witness of water). It is like Cain's offering, which is done through man's will, so God has no regard for it. Unlike the denominations, the New Testament Church serves with revelation. Her offering includes *blood* (repentance), *fat* (praying in tongues – spiritual sacrifice), and *water* (receiving water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and giving oneself to the apostles). (See Acts 2:38–42.) Such offering is in God's will. Like Abel's offering, it is respected by God.

Abel was the first martyr in history. He was hated by Satan and his blood was shed because he served and offered according to God's will. The Lord Jesus once testified for the blood of the prophet Abel, saying, "Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of

all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation” (Luke 11:49–51).

The blood of Abel was beautiful and precious in God’s eyes — it captured God’s heart. Through his blood, the will of God was revealed. The blood testimony displayed by Abel had become a beautiful example for all the martyrs in the latter generations; so all martyrs willingly let their blood flow on this path of the cross. Through the outpouring of blood, the flame of revival — the flame of the Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ — has kindled and shone ever brighter. Henceforth, the children of God will be blooming with liberty and glory. Dear brothers and sisters, this blossom of Truth and liberty needs continuous watering of blood; only then will it draw all peoples to it. This flame of revival also needs to be kindled with the outpouring of blood so that it may shine brightly and become a light to all nations. The martyrs of the past have finished their work and rested in peace. Now they are waiting to receive their prize.

The Lord’s maidservant Sis. Kong had also offered up herself for the sake of God’s will and for the end-time vision — the revelation of the *Holy Spirit rebuilds the New Testament Church*. She preached the full gospel of Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit, while her tongue was bleeding profusely from tongue cancer. Under excruciating pain, she completed the spiritual books and literature, which she left for us. It was with her blood that Sis. Kong accomplished her mission, igniting the flames of revival and watering the blossom of glory and liberty.

For over a decade, ever since the Lord’s servant Bro. Hong succeeded the ministry of the Lord’s maidservant Sis. Kong, he has been leading the New Testament Church to continue the work of revival with the sacrifice of blood. He fought with his blood against the evil power and tyrannies of this era to fulfill the revelation of 9.24 — to overthrow the throne of

kingdoms, destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms, carry out righteousness, fight despotism, rescue mankind, terminate man's rule and return to God's rule.

Many saints in different parts of the world lay down their lives to fight in one mind with the Lord's servant for this end-time vision and revelation. Their blood was shed in the streets, in airports, and even in prisons. Moreover, the blood of the Lord's servant and the companions of the Lamb was also spilled on the holy mountain and at the Hsiaolin Police Checkpoint. With the last baton clasped in their hands, the saints strove on the blood path of the cross. They imitated the prophets and saints of the past in pouring out their blood for God's end-time will and vision.

These are the 90's, a time to accomplish God's will. Brothers and sisters, do not cast away your confidence and the spirit of a martyr, which have great reward. For we have need of endurance, so that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise: For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. (See Hebrews 10:35–37.)

The LORD said: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Cain killed his brother, and he thought that no one knew about it. He assumed that no one could do anything to him. However, the eyes of the righteous God run over the whole earth. Nothing is hidden from Him. All creation is completely exposed before His eyes. He will pursue and judge the evil. "So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth" (Gen. 4:11–12).

The punishment of one who sheds the blood of the righteous is severe. The Jews shed the blood of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. As a result,

disasters have been following them even until today. The Chiang Dynasty and the KMT (Chinese National Party) persecuted the New Testament Church and pursued the prophet. Their evil deeds brought about the destruction of their own lives, their family, their party, and even their country and dynasty. This is the evidence of God's righteous judgment. All those who add afflictions to the New Testament Church shall be punished and doomed to destruction. Now it is time for the Lord to settle the final account with this world (man's kingdom). God will hold this generation accountable for the blood of all the prophets, which was shed since the foundation of the world. These words will be fulfilled in the 90's, in this era.

Atheists believe that everything will be over when a person dies. They come up with fallacies that have deceived both themselves and others, "It is too out-dated to talk about heaven and hell, judgment of the soul, or returning God's rule." These foolish words cater to the wishes of evildoers. Since there is no life after death, it gives them the excuse to indulge in the desires of the flesh and in sins. Consequently, pornography and violence are commonplace.

But the LORD said: "...The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." (Gen.4:10) In this verse, we learn that the witnesses of God never die. The blood of the witnesses will cry out, speak, and supplicate. The blood of the martyrs is still speaking to us today. When we read Genesis 4 again today, Abel's blood still speaks to us. The blood of all the martyrs will not stop speaking until the LORD avenges their blood and redeems their bodies.

"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" (Rev. 6:9–10). God wanted the martyrs to rest a

little while longer until the day and time of His vengeance. Now we have come to the 90's; God's day of vengeance has come. The blood of all the prophets and the righteous since the foundation of the world until now will be avenged on this generation.

Why is mankind accursed? It is because men shed the blood of the prophets and the righteous. The people of this generation are the descendants of sinners who shed the blood of the righteous and the prophets. Like their forefathers, they oppose God and His Anointed. They kill the prophets and persecute the church. Therefore, they have provoked God to anger and caused His curses to fall upon the earth.

How can the accursed fate of the earth come to an end? The only way is for men to return the government back to God and submit to His power, which is accepting the rule of Jesus Christ. The mission of the latter-day Elijah is to end the accursed fate of the earth and mankind. He will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, that they may accept God's rule and submit to His sovereignty. Only then will they be able to evade the accursed fate. (See Malachi 4:5–6.)

The New Testament Church has the serving of Abel. Our offering, like Abel's, is according to God's will. However, is there anyone in the New Testament Church who takes the path of Cain? The path of Cain means a self-opinionated serving — to speak, live, work, worship, and interpret the prophesies of the Scriptures according to one's own will. These people offer to the Lord the work of their own hands. They offer what they consider good and seek to have their own glory. This is Cain's serving and offering that God does not respect. Therefore, let us be sober and vigilant, and carefully discern what is the serving of Cain and what is that of Abel. We must drive out the spirit of Cain from within us, but love the offering and serving of Abel.

To our surprise, we recently heard that someone from the church was listening to the sermons of the preachers of the denominations. This is just as what the Bible says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Tim. 4:3–4). These people have fallen into the same condition of Cain and shared his accursed fate. This is a solemn matter, and our hearts are heavy for them. May God have mercy on these people so that they may turn back from the path of Cain to have the serving of Abel.





# Isaac





# Isaac

*(April 9, 1990 — Excerpt of the message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the youth service on Mount Zion)*

When we talk about Abel's serving, it reminds us of Cain's serving. One served according to God's will while the other served according to his own will. In order to serve according to God's will, one must be killed and his blood must be shed. On the other hand, one who serves according to his own will kills and sheds the blood of others. In the New Testament Church, a self-willed and opinionated serving is frightening because it may end in killing. A person's serving will have eternal value if he humbles himself in obeying God's will, even to the point of death.

Speaking of Isaac, we would naturally remember Abraham's offering on Mount Moriah. Abraham offered up Isaac without any reservation. Isaac, who was being offered, was completely obedient. He fully trusted his father Abraham and closely followed him to Mount Moriah. This is a very crucial point. If we do not closely follow the spiritual leader, or if we lose our connection with him, our serving will not satisfy God.

Why do we lose connection with the spiritual leader? Why do we fail to acknowledge the leader? Why does our faith in him waver? It is usually because we do not respect the leading of the spiritual leader. If we do not deal with this indifferent attitude, we will become defiant and disobedient. Following that, we will start to doubt the spiritual minister. This doubt will gradually lead to disbelief and disconnection from him. Once we are disconnected from this minister, our spiritual life will wither and die. Therefore, we must always be aware of our response towards the spiritual leader, and imitate Isaac who closely followed his father Abraham. If we continue to believe without doubt in the spiritual leader, we will become heirs like Isaac.

*14 Bible Characters*



# Noah





# Noah

*(April 16, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

## Walk with God

When we listen to the discussions of the co-workers about Noah, we need to observe their understanding about Noah and how they learned their life lessons from him. After listening to Bro. Daniel's discussion today, you may admire the deep recognition that he has toward Noah. However, if you have never put in effort to learn your lessons, you would not understand all the precious points he mentioned. Just as the saying goes, "Only an expert can tell the quality of the work." We are not making comparisons. Rather, we hope that we will have the determination to reach God's standard and attain the most abundant realm that He has measured out for each person.

Noah had a special trait: He walked with God. The secret to walking with God is to face His light bravely. We don't walk with God by our own righteousness and strength, but by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Be Moved with Godly Fear

Noah possessed another special trait: He was moved with godly fear. Bro. Daniel said that being moved with godly fear was not a theory to him, but an actual training in his life. If you have never experienced *being moved with godly fear*, this portion of the Bible will remain closed to you and have no effect on you.

The denominations also have the same Bible, but why are they unable to display the testimonies that the New Testament Church does? It is

because they do not follow the Bible, or their life has nothing to do with the Bible. Bro. Shih Ming-der said, "I know some Catholic fathers and priests, and some pastors. When they come to see me, they also talk about the Bible. Both these preachers and the New Testament Church refer to the same Bible, but it is only in the New Testament Church that the Bible is living and has life." He feels that we are not merely talking about the Bible, but are actually dramatizing it. Why? It is because we act according to the Bible. We don't just preach and read the Bible; we vividly portray it. If you have never lived before the Lord in reverence, nor received training from the Holy Spirit, you will not gain enlightenment from the Bible.

## **Build an Altar and Offer Sacrifices**

The first thing Noah did after he came out of the ark was build an altar and offer sacrifices. Logically, Noah should have quickly built a house first. If he didn't have time to build a house, he could have at least pitched a tent. However, Noah built an altar and offered burnt offering on it first. Brothers and sisters, this is an important spiritual principle we need to adhere to. In 1986, when the companions of the Lamb returned to Zion from the land of wandering, the first thing they did was go up to *Christ Is the Rock* to pray. Why? To offer sacrifices. This was the first thing Noah did after he came out of the ark.

Noah's new life began with sacrifice. In other words, he began his life, work, and serving with building an altar and offering sacrifices. Only this kind of life, work, and serving can save the degenerated mankind from God's curses and bring blessings upon the earth. Noah possessed such a virtue, what about us? Do we have this kind of life? Do we begin our life and work with the altar?

Brothers and sisters, before we do anything, we must build an altar for God. This is because only sacrifice can stop God's curses and bring in His blessings. Old Jacob did the same thing. God wanted him to go up to Bethel, dwell there, and build an altar for Him. Therefore, when the com-

panions of the Lamb returned to Zion, they imitated old Jacob and started their new life with offering sacrifice. This was a glorious scene that satisfied God's heart. This offering brought about the glorious revival that we have witnessed in these few years. This proves that those who care for themselves first will not be able to bring blessings to mankind.

Why are man's kingdoms always in a mess? It is because the rulers care for themselves. Those in power claim that they do everything for the people, the society, and the nation. Their slogan sounds convincing, but is it true? They are liars! They do everything for themselves. As a result, they can never bring blessings to the people and society, nor can they stop God's wrath and curses. They can only bring endless disasters upon mankind.

When Noah came out of the ark, the first thing he did was offer sacrifices. He pitched a tent for himself only after the offering. This is the spiritual principle that pleases God. With this principle, we will bring about blessings and revival. We will also stop God's wrath and curses. May we imitate Noah and continue to keep this spiritual virtue.

## Complete Trust In God

Among all the things that Noah did in his lifetime, building the ark was the most symbolic. His ministration was powerful because he made the ark according to God's command. He completely broke through the natural concepts of men and made the ark to escape the flood when there was neither wind nor rain. Noah feared God and dared not alter His will. He did not care when people said he was stupid and crazy. He withstood all of their ridicule and contempt.

Noah readily accepted God's leading, even when it differed from his concepts. He would rather listen to God than follow his own feelings and concept. At that time, Noah was already five hundred years old, and should have much experience in the ways of the world. But when God told him to build the ark, he did accordingly. Noah completely trusted and obeyed

God.

Oftentimes, we follow God's leading only when it makes sense to us. When it doesn't make sense to us, we don't do it. This is why it is harder for those who are more knowledgeable to trust and obey God. No wonder the Lord Jesus Christ said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes" (Matt. 11:25). If you are too wise and prudent, God's mysteries will be hidden from you. In our life and in our coordination with others, our obedience towards God is often greatly tested.

For example, during the roadside ditch project, everyone was earnest to build up Zion well, and contributed everything he knew. As a result, there were many good suggestions. Somebody said that it should be done this way, but another said that it should be done the other way. Some even said that he was an expert in this line of work. It would have been easy if everyone had the same viewpoint, but there were differences in opinions. That made things difficult. At this time, everyone would come to me and ask me to make the final decision. All three parties gave reasonable proposals, but because I was a layman, it was hard to decide. What to do? Whose suggestion should I accept?

After much thought, I finally made a compromise decision: This section will be done as you suggested, the next section will be done as he suggested, and so on. The party whose suggestion I adopted was very happy and enthusiastic. But the other two parties whose suggestions I did not accept looked very unhappy. Some said, "Look, it is no use suggesting anything. Bro. Hong won't listen to us anyway." This shows that they were unable to deny themselves and their own concepts. They couldn't accept things that contradicted their wishes. But since Bro. Hong had decided it, they could only obey.

This kind of obedience is pathetic and miserable. It was a painful obe-

dience that almost killed them. They seemed to imitate the Lord Jesus, who obeyed God to the point of death, even death on a cross. However, the Lord Jesus was obedient and at rest. But these brothers were not restful. Moreover, they have decided not to talk or suggest again when they see me in the future.

When I told one of them that the next section of the ditch would be done according to his suggestion, he was overjoyed! But again, the other parties were completely quiet. It would be great if they were quiet and peaceful in the spirit, but that wasn't the case. These examples show how hard it is for us to accept things that go against our concepts. We can only live well when everything goes according to our ideas. Otherwise, we will die.

During the course of this ditch project, many people were put to the test. But it's all right. God has His good purpose in all these happenings. Now we have different sections of the ditch, made with different methods. Each section would face its own test. When the experts saw our work, they really had a good laugh. We have different designs of ditches from the foothill up to the peak. We don't have to argue who is right and who is wrong, or whose is better and whose is worse. When the rain comes, the water will test out which section is more ideal and practical.

The Bible says that each man's work will be revealed and tested by fire. Before the test of fire, there will be the test of water. These few days of rain has already tested the results of some sections. Therefore, before the test, it is pointless to quarrel. Actually, this is a great chance to learn lessons. Having been tested, one should have learned his lesson. My real concern is whether we have actually learned from this.

Only when one puts aside his own perspectives can he accept the leading of God that goes against human concepts. This was why Noah was able to build the ark according to God's command. If you were Noah,

would you be able to trust Him and do accordingly? This is a very practical question. If you cannot deny your *self*, you will not be able to trust and obey. Therefore, the more competent, intelligent, and wise a person is, the more difficult it will be for him to trust and obey God.

Chen Kui-fang, the apostate, is a person of great ability, so it is hard for him to trust God with a simple heart. He wants to analyze the whole world with his mind and knowledge. He said that he would serve the people of the world only after he understood the whole world. According to his logic, everyone has to be versatile and know everything. He doesn't know that man is so minute and limited. Only God is omnipotent and omniscient. If you can trust and obey God, then you will be able to display God's wisest and most glorious work.

In 1979, God wanted me to lead the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade to settle down on Mount Zion. This leading totally went against everyone's concept. We were supposed to go to all parts of the world to preach the gospel, yet we were heading towards the remote mountains. How were we going to spread the gospel? Some said to us, "You won't be able to do it even in a thousand years! You say that all nations will flow to Zion. Who's going to travel so far into the remote mountains?" But now, all nations have come. Those who used to laugh at us are now coming to Zion in chartered buses. When they came, they even asked, "Can we spend a night here?"

Has the gospel been spread? Yes, it has! Have all nations returned? Yes, they have! When we first came up to this mountain, many people laughed at us, saying that we were insane. They said that I was the chief perpetrator, and that the three families of Tan and Liu were the first bunch of fools to be deceived. Now, they no longer say these things because the facts speak for themselves.

Noah built the ark by the same principle — by completely trusting in

God. Because Noah offered sacrifices in faith, and walked with God in godly fear, God gave him power to represent Him to rule on earth. Indeed, this is God ruling on earth. May the special characteristics of Noah become our examples, so that we may gain a more abundant life to rule on behalf of God.





# Jonah





# **Jonah**

*(April 21, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the youth service on Mount Zion)*

## **Flee from the Lord's Commission**

Jonah is one of the characters we are more familiar with. He was not like Noah, who had little weaknesses and many virtues. We are far from being like Noah, but instead, we are often like Jonah. We often flee from God's commission and are afraid to answer the Lord's call.

Abraham had a great virtue of answering the Lord's call. When God told him to offer up Isaac, he brought Isaac with him to Mount Moriah without a second word. Once they arrived on the mountain, he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar. We may not have this experience of Abraham, but we often have the experience of Jonah, only we don't realize it.

I often hear the front office announcing, "We have brought back the plums. Brothers and sisters who are free, please go to the processing house to help process plums." Other times, I hear, "Our trucks are back. Brothers and sisters, please help unload the goods." After the call, I take heed of what may happen. Just as I expected, the announcement was repeated. Not long later, the announcement was repeated for the third time. Through this, don't we have many Jonahs on Mount Zion? We are really good at running away from work. This shows that we have Jonah's weakness. But Jonah did not run away because he was lazy, but because he disagreed with God's leading.

## **Traditional Concept of Godliness Suppresses the Holy Spirit's Leading**

Why did Jonah disagree with God? It was because Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and Assyria was the predecessor of Babylon. They were the accursed race, the enemies of God's people. Jonah would naturally think to himself, "Why does God want me to go and proclaim to them? It would be unfortunate if they repented after my proclamation. Then God will not destroy them. These people deserve death, so I will not go and warn them!" Jonah refused to obey God's command because he was affected by this traditional concept. God's people used to have this kind of concept. Traditional concepts often hinder us from serving God according to His new and living leading.

Apostle Peter also had the same experience. "The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.' And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again" (Acts 10:9–16).

According to the book of the Law, all these four-footed animals, creeping things, and birds of the air were unclean things, and Peter had never eaten any of them. So when the Lord wanted him to eat them, he was unwilling. He couldn't accept anything new due to his traditional concept of godliness. The Lord Jesus especially wanted to break his concepts, so He said to him, "What God had cleansed you must not call common."

We knew that sinning and doing evil would hinder us from following God; make us the enemy of the Holy Spirit; and prevent us from glorifying

God. We also assumed that godliness should be always right. The Old Testament clearly states that all of these animals, creeping things, and birds of the air were unclean things and could not be eaten. Peter should be right when he strictly adhered to the Scriptures. According to the standard of the Old Testament, he was considered God-fearing and devout.

Through the story of Peter, God is telling us that godliness is good, but the concept of godliness is not. True godliness is to obey whatever God says. Our God is a true and living God, and His leading is new and living. If a person fails to submit to God's leading, he is not godly, but is bound by the concept of godliness.

Why did the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong encounter so many battles when she was raised up by God to preach the truth of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues? How come so many Christians in the denominations — whether they loved the Lord or not — refuse to accept the Spirit baptism? It is because they have never spoken in tongues in their chapels, and their pastors have never talked about it. This is due to their traditional concepts of godliness which severely restrict the work of the Holy Spirit and hinder people from following the new and living leading of God.

Our God is full of mercy, but He is also righteous. If one refuses to confess his sins, he will not be forgiven. For example, the Kuomintang (KMT—the Chinese Nationalist Party) will not be forgiven because they never repent of their sins. After Lee Deng-hui came into power, he kept asking the people to forget all those unhappy incidents of the past, such as the February 28 incident. He even quoted from the Bible, saying, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead." Like a dictator, his attitude was, "Yes, I've robbed you of thousands of dollars and I've killed your family. You are angry with me, right? Don't be angry. The matter is over now, so don't mention those unhappy incidents anymore, because from now on I will not rob or harm you."

This is the mentality of the KMT. Only Lee Deng-Hui, the tyrant, dares to say such unreasonable words. If his words make sense, why don't we do to him according to his words? After plundering his properties and killing his family, we would like to say to him, "Don't mention those things of the past and forget about all those unhappy incidents." Then we will see if he is able to forget. Lee Deng-Hui and the KMT are rascals! They will not be forgiven! However, if someone honestly confesses his sins, God will show mercy upon him.

When the king of Nineveh heard Jonah's words, he believed and obeyed God. He arose from his throne and laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. He also issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man nor beast, herd nor flock... eat or drink." How can a fast be so stringent that even the livestock fasts?

"But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?" (Jon. 3:8-9).

This kind of repentance is truly thorough. If this scene were to be put in a movie, it would definitely be a very touching scene. It is already moving enough to see people sitting in ashes and repenting in sackcloth. It is even more touching to see all the livestock covered with sackcloth! Therefore the Bible says, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jon. 3:10).

The story of Jonah teaches us how to serve God and how to advance under the new and living leading of the Holy Spirit. That is, we must break through our traditional concepts of godliness. When Sis. Kong was raised up by God, she did a few things that were definitely revolutionary. One of

the things that she broke through was deal away with the veils that used to cover the sisters' heads. This veil was a tradition that came from the Christian Assembly. We can also say that they inherited it from the church in Corinth. If we do not break through these traditional concepts of godliness, the Holy Spirit will not move freely among us.

The story of Jonah shows us that our infirmities, filthiness, and flesh will hinder us from doing God's will; our traditional concepts of godliness will also hinder us from following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have to pay attention to the new and living leading of the Holy Spirit, and not to remain in our old concepts.

We have to realize that even our experience of victory yesterday may not be applicable today. Hymn 236 says, "Do not indulge in past experiences, but keep moving on." The leading of the Holy Spirit today is different from that of yesterday, because it has moved on again. Therefore, if you remain in yesterday's experience, you will fail in following God. Our Lord is a living Lord, so He may do something different each day. He may even change His leading the next moment.

When our Lord Jesus was on earth, He also advanced by the Spirit. When he was in Gethsemane, someone came with a group of soldiers to arrest him. How did the Lord Jesus react? When they said that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord said, "I am He." As soon as the Lord said, "I am He," the soldiers drew back and fell to the ground. The Lord Jesus asked again, "Whom are you seeking?" They replied that they sought Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way." Then the detachment of soldiers and the captain arrested Him. All these happened in a lapse of just a few moments.

The first time Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. The second time that He said, "I am He," they arrested Him. Why?

These were God's different leadings for Him at different times. For the first time, Jesus displayed the divine light and power from above, which the soldiers were unable to withstand. The second time, GOD did not want the Lord to manifest the divine power. If He did, they would never be able to capture Him. Then the Lord Jesus would never be crucified and the salvation of the Cross would never be accomplished. If we were in the Lord's place, we would probably use this power every time. We don't even need to lift a finger; all we have to do is say, "I am He," and they will all draw back and fall to the ground. This power is so awesome that if you use it a couple of times, the whole world would have no choice but to believe in Jesus.

Fortunately, the Lord Jesus was not like us. Otherwise, we would not have the salvation of the Lord today. We would have to bear our own sins and go to the Lake of Fire. When we serve God, we often hope that God's limitless power could be manifested through us: When we lay hands on others, the sick will be healed, and the devil Satan will be cast out. How impressive! Our carnal man tends to have these kinds of impurities and personal preferences.

Thank God, after Jonah came out of the belly of the fish, the word of the LORD came upon him the second time, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. This time, he didn't dare disobey. This proved that God had broken his old traditional concepts. Obviously, this was not an easy process. He was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, and the stench must have been awful. The gastric juice in the fish's stomach must have eaten away his skin until he looked like a leper. How did Jonah manage to breathe in the fish? This is more agonizing than being in jail. God used an extraordinary way to break this man of his traditional concepts of godliness.

We thank God. Even though the vessels He chooses have weaknesses and the concepts of godliness, they will become useful to Him after going

through His breaking. Like Peter, after seeing the heavenly vision, God could commission him to the house of Cornelius where he preached to the Gentiles. And the work of the Holy Spirit was not hindered. Therefore, in order to let the Holy Spirit work freely among us, we have to, by God's grace, put aside our traditional concepts, even the concepts of godliness.

Since we know this spiritual principle, we have to apply it in our daily lives. Every one of us will have things that we consider excellent and godly according to our own standard. If we do not break through them, the Holy Spirit will not have a clear way in us. For example, Roman Catholics are taught to have concepts of godliness from young. When they pray, they must kneel down with closed eyes in dead silence. If they see us praying on our seats, they would think that we are not reverent. If they see us standing on "Christ Is the Rock" and praying with our eyes open, it would be even harder for them to accept. However, the Bible does not say that we have to close our eyes when we pray, or that we cannot pray with our eyes open.

When I was in the Christian Assembly, I also had the concept of praying as quietly as possible. Especially when I was having my morning devotion to God, I thought that in order to meet God, I had to "return to my spirit" and be quiet. So when I first attended the convention that Sis. Kong held in Taipei, I could not get used to it. Once they opened their mouths to pray, they started to "Da, da, da..." They would sing in spirit, and then pray in spirit again. I thought to myself, "They are so noisy that the Holy Spirit has probably run away." This is because the Christian Assembly depicts the Holy Spirit as a dove — sensitive and easily scared away. Therefore, we had to be careful and gentle, lest the Holy Spirit flew away like a dove.

Later, I realized that if what the Christian Assembly said were true, the Holy Spirit would never have dared to come on the Day of Pentecost. However, on that day, not only did the Holy Spirit come, it also worked mightily. The disciples were praying in tongues loudly to magnify God. However, according to man's concept of godliness, praying too loud will

stop the work of the Holy Spirit, and so men have to be quiet in order to meet God. This concept contradicts the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts of the Apostles chapter two. In short, man's concept of godliness severely blinds people and hinders God's work. This is undesirable!

Brothers and sisters, when the Holy Spirit has a new and living leading, we must discard our own concepts and follow up. We may not learn this lesson well at once, but we have to try our best to learn whenever we encounter this lesson. We have to learn to discard what we think is good, if it does not comply with the leading of the Holy Spirit. We should treasure the new and living leading of the Holy Spirit of today, so that the Holy Spirit will have a free path among us and within us.



# Enoch





## **Enoch (1)**

*(April 30, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Tai-ray  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

(Gen. 5:22–24)

Our God acts and works. He is constantly advancing. “Walking with God,” as the phrase suggests, means acting with God and advancing with Him. When we were in the denominations, we longed to walk with God, but it seemed impossible. This is because God is invisible to the naked eye, so we found it difficult to walk with Him. The above-mentioned verses indicate that Enoch actually walked with God, and they even state clearly when and how long Enoch walked with Him. Moreover, while he walked with God, he also raised children. Enoch did both simultaneously.

We used to think that raising children was real, but walking with God was abstract. We were like playing hide-and-seek with Him. Why was it so difficult to walk with God? It was only after returning to the New Testament Church that we began to understand how to walk with God. Actually, God has set up for His people a guidepost and a way mark — the vessel of the era.

This vessel of the era leads us to walk with God, to act and to advance with Him. The denominations do not believe in the one sent by God, so they find it difficult to walk with God. Ever since the New Testament Church was rebuilt, she has never stopped advancing. In other words, she is always on the move. With our life experience, we can boast that the New Testament Church is truly like Enoch, who walks with God.

The practical way to walk with God is to follow the vessel of the era raised up by Him. Without the vessel of the era, God's people will have no way or direction, let alone experiencing God. In order to let His children understand this aspect of the Truth and recognize the guidepost, God paid a heavy price to let the New Testament Church go through seven years of desolation.

God wants His children to know that they need the vessel of the era, and that they have to trust and obey him. We will be established into the church and be revived only when we believe in the one sent by God. With the vessel of the era, the church will move forward and receive the heavenly power to demolish the denominations and smash the idols. She will even destroy the living idols — the human kingdoms, free all nations to return to Zion, and bring in the kingdom of the Lord and His Christ. This is God's plan, which will soon be accomplished. It has been only a little over twenty years since the New Testament Church was established, and God has done so much. These twenty over years are considered very short compared to Enoch's three hundred years. Therefore, the latter glory will be greater than the former, and soon, we will be caught up in victory just like Enoch. Hallelujah!

Through the vessel of the era, God leads the church to walk and advance with Him. In 1979, many co-workers failed miserably in believing the one sent by God. We could not accept the Truth and the vision of "a man and a mountain" preached by him. As a result, we failed to walk with God. Our condition was dreadful!

Back in those days, as soon as we disagreed with the vessel of era, we immediately failed to touch God's presence in the spirit. We were like Cain, driven from the face of God. I can still remember how I felt in the days of *being driven away*. We knew at once that we were wrong, and that we had deviated from the way of God. In God's eyes, we greatly offended Him when we disbelieved in the one He sent. This sin of disbelief is so

serious that even after having repented and received God's forgiveness, we were still unable to feel His presence nor walk with Him again until a while later.

The new revelation and leading that God gave His servant in 1979 completely went against our concepts and thoughts. At first, we just couldn't understand his leading. But afterwards, we began to disagree — this is where we went wrong. Actually, it does not matter if we do not understand. All we have to do is to seek humbly and diligently before God, asking Him to enlighten us just as how He had enlightened His servant. The Lord will definitely let us understand all these mysteries. However, when we still could not understand, we judged God's revelation according to our own concepts. We trusted in ourselves more than in the one sent by God. So this led to our disagreement with him. Through this, God fully revealed our failure in believing in the one sent by God.

God let us experience this failure so that we would be able to recognize this Truth with our lives, and so in the future, we might really know how to walk with God. Before we walk with God, we have to know where is the way, and who is leading the way. The answer lies with the *one sent by God*. In short, we walk with God by faith, not by sight, nor by feeling and concepts. But faith must have something to base on. God sets up the vessel of the era and wants us to believe in him, so that the foundation of our faith will be solid.

After learning how to walk with God, are we able to follow on faithfully? Genesis 5 says that Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, until God took him away. Enoch walked with God *continually* until the end. Today, in the New Testament Church, we also have to persevere in walking with God until the end. We cannot give up halfway. Moreover, we have to walk with Him according to His pace, not according to the way we like.

Just as it is written, “You shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.” (See Jeremiah 1:7.) We have to do everything according to God’s command, that is, according to the leading of His servant. When God moves His servant to tell us to go fast, we will go fast; when God moves him to tell us to slow down, we will slow down. But we often fail to touch the feelings of the Lord’s servant. Sometimes, even when we do touch his feelings, we tend to mind our flesh and are unwilling to follow up immediately. Therefore, we have to keep ourselves sharp and alert in the spirit, and diligently learn to deal with our carnal lives.

We can’t walk with God by sight or by knowledge, but by faith. Therefore, we must follow Him in the spirit. The Lord’s servant said that he doesn’t like to use laws and regulations to bind us, lest we live before man. God wants us to believe in the one sent by Him. If we follow the one sent by God, we are obeying God, and naturally, we are living before Him. Only then can we be like what the Bible says: “You received the word of God which you heard from us [the ones sent by God], you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). Therefore, today, we follow this man (whom God sends) because we want to walk with God. We know and believe that we are walking with Him.

When Enoch walked with God, he concretely brought God’s judgment to that generation. The Bible says, ‘Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him’’ (Jude 14–15). The New Testament Church is assuming the same ministry today. This ministry is connected to the judgment of the Lord, who will bring ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all.

Enoch was taken away by the Lord after he finished his ministry. Likewise, before we are received by the Lord, we have to assume the same important ministry, which is to judge all the ungodly acts. What is ungodly? Babylon is ungodly. She is filled with corruption and chaos, and is anti-God. Man's rule is ungodly — it rejects and denies God, and even tries to overthrow God's rule.

God's work today is to crush and destroy man's rule, and this is also the ministry of those who walk with God. Since this is God's movement on earth in the last days, we should act with Him. True godliness is returning to God's rule. It is not like the "godliness" that the denominations have. The denominations have the form of godliness, but not the power of godliness — to accept Christ's rule. Through His representative on earth, God has now issued His holy decree, which is to end man's rule and lead all people back to God's rule. If we assume this ministry well, then we are walking with God.

There has never been an era like today, when the New Testament Church represents God to severely judge all the dominion of darkness, causing man's kingdoms (Satan's masterpiece) to tremble. Revelation 1 says, "...the feet of the Son of Man were like fine brass as if refined in a furnace." This signifies that the footsteps of the Son of Man execute judgment, so justice and righteousness may be brought about, and the earth may be cleansed. Since we want to walk with the Lord, our feet must also be like the Lord's. We shall walk with Him on earth, judge all nations, and free all people from the bondage of the human kingdoms.

Ezekiel chapter one says that the soles of the four living creatures' feet are like the soles of calves' feet, sparkling like burnished bronze. These are the feet of those who walk with the Lord and execute judgment according to the Truth and righteousness of the Most High God. Moreover, these feet will trample on kings and rulers like mud, and tread upon snakes and scorpions — the human kingdoms.

In the spirit, we have seen the Lord descending with ten thousands of His saints, to join in the ministry of judgment assumed by His servant. Both heaven and earth will tremble. Therefore, the footsteps of walking with the Lord are definitely the footsteps of trampling on snakes and scorpions. After assuming this ministry of judgment, we will be caught up in victory.

## **Enoch (2)**

### *The Secret of Being Caught Up as an Overcomer*

*(May 1, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

(Gen. 5:21–24)

Through our forefather Enoch, God shows us the way to be caught up as an overcomer. After walking with God for three hundred years, Enoch was taken away by God. He was an overcomer who walked with God all the way to heaven. By faith, he stood firm on the spiritual highland and walked closely with God. Enoch was able to keep himself firmly on this spiritual highland without fail, not only for three months, or three years, or thirty years, but for three hundred years. This was his secret of being caught up as an overcomer. Today, this path to victory has been revealed to us, the latter generation.

Enoch broke three historical records in his life: First, he was the first person who was caught up alive. Second, he walked with God for three hundred years. And third, he offered up himself to God. The name “Enoch” means *to offer*.

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years until he was taken away. This proves that he continually placed himself upon the altar as a perpetual offering. If he strayed from the offering position, he would have lost the reality of walking with God and would not have been eligible to be caught up.

If we want to become an overcomer, we should imitate Enoch to offer ourselves up continuously. We should not be satisfied with our past offerings and stop offering. We should continue to offer up our spirit, soul, and body and walk with God until we reach heaven. This is our lifelong goal. When we continually stand in the position of offering, we are keeping ourselves on the spiritual highland. When we leave this offering position, we will fall from the spiritual highland.

Our forefather Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. This shows that he was an infinite follower. We cannot follow God halfway or be stagnant at a certain stage. Instead, we must persevere until the end. Following God until the end was also one of Enoch's secrets of victory. Therefore, we want to not only offer to the Lord endlessly, but also follow Him persistently. Because Enoch offered himself to follow God unconditionally, he became a perfect overcomer who was caught up into glory.

When I first believed in the Lord, I attended every service. I longed for God's word as a deer pants for streams of water. Once, there was this well-known preacher who took pride in talking about Enoch. He said, "Walking with God does not mean that you can run ahead of God and lead Him. Today, many people often run ahead of God, and before God's time comes, they have already acted. They are faster than God. Others, however, lag far behind God. When God's time comes, they are unable to follow up. This is also not walking with God. What is walking with Him? Do we walk on His right side, or on His left? Or do we walk like lovers, side by side, hand in hand? No, it is not like that either." Since it is wrong to run ahead of Him, lag behind Him, or to walk beside Him, what then is the correct way?

This preacher said, "We must let the Lord dwell in our hearts, and we also dwell in Him. That is the closest and most intimate manner of walking with Him." I regarded him highly, because he spoke so well. Later, to my surprise, I learned that he had not even received the Spirit baptism.

How could he walk with God if he shut the Holy Spirit out? He must be walking with God according to the flesh. We can clearly see that the preachers in the denominations preach mere words and not the reality of life. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Where is God then? And how do we walk with Him? This is one of the most important issues.

There was a great prophet in the Old Testament, who seemed to follow man instead of God: “And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Then Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’” (2 Kings 2:1–2).

Outwardly, Elisha did not seem to follow God. It seemed as though he was following man. He even made an oath saying that he would not leave Elijah but to follow him until the end. That was to say, he would follow Elijah as long as he lived. Don’t you think Elisha was exalting man? Enoch walked with God, but why did Elisha follow a man?

“Then Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’” (2 Kings 2:4). Do you think Elisha had no sense of embarrassment? Prophet Elijah didn’t want him to follow, but he refused to listen and kept on following. Wasn’t he afraid that Elijah would find him annoying? If we were Elisha, we might have our own pride and start thinking, “Since you don’t want me to follow, I might as well forget it. You can go your way and I will go mine.”

Let’s look at verse six, “Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.’ But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’” It was a trial for Elisha, because Elijah had already told him three times not to follow him. If we were Elisha, would we continue to be steadfast? However, Elisha didn’t

care about losing face; he insisted on following Elijah until the end.

“And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?’ Elisha said, ‘Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’ So he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so’” (2 Kings 2:7–10). The mystery was finally revealed: Elisha wanted to gain a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and he knew that he could get it only if he followed Elijah until the end.

There were many disciples of the prophet, but only Elisha followed the prophet until the end. The others just stood far away, watching. In the end, only Elisha received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Having realized the importance of having a double portion of Elijah’s spirit so as to serve that generation, Elisha followed Elijah regardless of people’s contempt and slander. He knew exactly what he was doing.

According to man, Elisha seemed completely different from Enoch, because Enoch walked with God, while Elisha walked with man. However, in the end, Elisha received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. After Elijah was caught up into heaven, Elisha succeeded Elijah’s ministry. Just as how God was with Elijah, likewise God was with Elisha and greatly used him, making him the prophet of all nations.

Brothers and sisters, who do you want to walk with, God or man? If you want to walk with God, you must know the way. From the Bible, we have learned a principle: If you follow the one sent by God, you are following God; if you walk with the one sent by God, you are walking with

God. If the one you follow is not sent by God, you are following man, not God. Therefore, today, when we walk with the latter-day Elijah, we are walking with God, because God's Spirit and entrustment are upon this man.

In all these years, brothers and sisters throughout the world followed the Lord's servant wherever he went. They followed him to Taipei, to the riverbed of Hsiaolin — the land of wandering — and to Kaohsiung. When God's servant returned to Mount Zion, they also followed him back to Mount Zion. They closely followed him through thick and thin, and in life and death. Although some overseas brothers and sisters are still unable to return to Zion now, their spirits are following this man and walking with him. This is according to the example of how Elisha walked with God.

Today, the preachers and Christians of the denominations also want to imitate Enoch to walk with God. But it is a regret that they refuse to receive the Holy Spirit, return to the New Testament Church, and submit themselves to the leading of the apostles. Since they reject the way and the principle of walking with God, they are destined for the Great Tribulation. God has given us this man, so we must walk with him and follow him until the end. In this way, we will be caught up in victory.

Since these spiritual principles have been made known to us, let us offer ourselves up unceasingly and be a limitless follower. Then, we will be a blameless and victorious overcomer. May the Lord enlighten every one of us, so we will understand that following the latter-day Elijah is actually following God. Let us follow him just as how Elisha followed Elijah. This is the secret and key to victory! Brothers and sisters, we have almost reached the River Jordan and the Day to be caught up is at hand. In this last leg of the journey, let us all stand firm upon the spiritual highland, and walk closely with God until we are caught up.

# **Enoch (3)**

*(April 30, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

## **Enoch Walks with God and Gains His Delight**

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. Many God-loving Christians in the denominations desire to walk with God. However, most of them do not know the way to walk with Him. God cannot be seen with the naked eye, and this makes it difficult for them to walk with Him. It seems easier to walk with God if He is physically present in our midst, just as how the disciples followed the Lord while He was on earth — when He walked, they walked; when He stopped, they stopped. But how are we going to walk with the Lord after He has risen and ascended into heaven? Where is the way to walk with the Lord? The answer is in this epochal Truth that God has revealed to us in recent years — to believe in the one whom He sends.

### **The Way to Walk with God: Believe in the One Whom He Sends**

God works and acts, but where and how does He work? If you don't even know where He is, it will be hard for you to follow Him, and let alone to walk with Him. Therefore, if we want to walk with God, we must know His representative on earth. In this last era, God has chosen the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade to be the representative of His movement on earth. Therefore, the practical way to following and walking with the Lord is to be in one mind and one path with the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. This is also the secret to gain God's delight in our life, work and ministration.

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years and was taken away by God. The Book of Hebrews makes a special mention about him, say-

ing, "... Before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). Today, if we affirm the path of walking with God, we will see His pleasure. In other words, if we believe in the one sent by God, and concretely tread upon the way of walking with God, we will enjoy God's blessings, presence, power, and glory. Others will also see God's presence through us.

Today, God is well pleased with the New Testament Church as she walks upon this path of following the one sent by God. At the same time, God is not pleased with those backsliders who left the New Testament Church and renounced the leading of the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. The apostate, fatty Fan, also started a rehabilitation center called "Mountain of Prayer for All Nations" in East Malaysia. But unlike Mount Zion, it is all the work of man, which does not please God.

We really thank God. On Mount Zion, God always dwells with us because we believe in the one He sends. We abundantly enjoy His presence, power, and grace. I even marvel at God's grace when I take my meals. The people down the mountain can hardly find such fresh and pesticide-free vegetables that we eat on the mountain. Recently, we even pressed our own peanut oil. I said, "God! You have truly been gracious to us! I've never dreamed that we would press our own oil on Mount Zion." As soon as we turn on the machine, the oil flows out. You can see that God is pleased with us. Today, by His grace, we have become who we are, and this all results from our walking with God.

In my life of learning how to follow God, the hardest and most self-denial lesson was "to believe in the one sent by God." If the cross is measured by its weight, this cross would be the heaviest. You can say that this is the most difficult cross to bear. A three-day fasting or vigil prayer throughout the night would be so much easier compared to "believing in the one sent by God."

Before I understood the way God worked, I worked as I wanted, even if it meant leaving my home and going to a remote area to preach the gospel. However, one day, Sis. Kong came and said that only what she preached was complete, and she wanted all of us to receive what she preached. She even said that I must be in one mind with her, or else God would not remember my work or be pleased with me. But I did not believe her, so I went to Tainan to start my own evangelical work. There, God let me experience His severe molding for a period of time, until I recognized with my life the Truth preached by Sis. Kong. I then accepted it with true understanding, not as a theory. Now, we are able to tread firmly upon this path because we have accepted the manifold training from God in this aspect.

## **The Trials of Believing in the One Sent by God**

When we believe in the one sent by God, we will face many trials. Since every one of us has many concepts that we used to hold on to for years or even decades, it is difficult for us to let go. It is especially difficult for fervent Christians to deny their *self*. It is because they always serve according to what they consider “good” and “godly,” not according to the way God works. They focus on their own concepts, and stick to their own feelings. It is difficult for this kind of people to live with others, and it is even harder for them to follow the Lord. Outwardly, they are following the Lord, but inwardly, they are following themselves. Sometimes, they even want the Lord to follow them. Therefore, the Lord has no way in them, and they are unable to accomplish the mission God has entrusted them. All the work they do is unfruitful.

Brothers and sisters, in the eyes of man, we are not smarter or stronger than others. We are all weak, lowly, and nothing. However, we have a simple faith which links us to God who surpasses all things. This faith enables us to do things that others cannot do; display a testimony that others fail to display, and enjoy the grace that others have no way to enjoy. With this faith we have shamed the wise and the strong. Therefore, those

who truly walk with God will regard the one sent by God as the standard. To meet this standard, one has to deny himself and this is where the true meaning of the cross is revealed.

Many people wish to take up their cross to follow the Lord, but they do not know how to take up the cross. If you do not believe in the one sent by God, or if you believe in yourself more than the one sent by God, you are not on the path of the cross. God will not remember the work that you do, and you will be unable to be caught up.

## **The Practical Way of Walking with the Lord**

Throughout the past over twenty years, ever since the New Testament Church was rebuilt, God allowed us to experience failures so that we may recognize the practical way of walking with the Lord. It is not by our own will or effort, but by our simple faith in the one sent by God. Thank God, the testimony displayed by the New Testament Church has now been acknowledged and believed on by this generation.

We don't have to stress that the New Testament Church is according to God's will and that the denominations are not. Those who have a pure heart can see it clearly when they come up to Mount Zion. That is why there have been so many brothers and sisters of the denominations coming up to Mount Zion recently. They do not know how we do it, but they can truly see that our testimony is really glorious, something far beyond their reach. We believe that through us, God will display an even more glorious and abundant testimony, and that the proof of His delight in us will be even more obvious.

We want others to know that we are able to display such a testimony because we have a simple and pure faith in the one sent by God. May we desire to be like Enoch, to walk with God all the days of our lives. Wherever the Lord is, there we will be; wherever the Lord goes, there we will also follow. Whatever the Lord does, we will likewise do; whenever the

Lord executes judgment upon the ungodly, we will also judge together with Him.

Today, we look up to the Lord to walk. The Lord's feet trample upon snakes and scorpions, and so do our feet. The Lord is enraged against the nations that are at ease, and so are we. This is the concrete manifestation of walking with the Lord. God has revealed His movements to the vessel of the era. Therefore, we do not care how others feel or how they comment about us. We only care about walking with God by faith. If we believe in the one sent by God, we will definitely enjoy the glorious victory. When we have completed the course, we will be caught up just like Enoch.

# Abraham



# Abraham

(May 7, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)

## Contrary to Hope, Abraham in Hope Believed

The Bible calls Abraham the *father of all who believe*. At the mention of the father of all who believe, we tend to think that his faith must be great and steadfast, up to standard, and complete. He must always be without doubts. Was it true? Abraham's faith was definitely up to standard, but how did he manage to attain this standard?

Faith is living, not dead; it grows from your life, and is not something that you act out. In order to make Abraham an example for the witnesses of faith, God trained him in many aspects. Through various trials, Abraham's faith gradually grew, until he became the *father of faith*.

How did Abraham believe in God? "As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him whom he believed — God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations" (Rom. 4:17–18). God molded Abraham by bringing him to a hopeless situation, so that his faith would grow and become mature. For faith will only grow in despair.

*Faith* is to believe in hope when there is no hope. If you always experience "having" and never experience "lacking", how could you call into existence the things that do not exist? If you are always "alive" and have never experienced "death", how could you experience giving life to the dead? To experience "having" you must first experience "lacking"; and to experience "resurrection", you must first experience "death". It is not easy to understand what is *contrary to hope* if you have never been overcome by despair. In order to let His children grow in faith, God will bring them into

situations where they even lose the hope to live.

*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*

(Rom. 4:19–21)

Abraham was *not being weak* in faith. *Not being weak* means faith. Before God let Abraham experience the power of calling into existence the things that do not exist and of giving life to the dead, God brought him to a hopeless state. He was a hundred years old, and faced the fact that his body was as good as dead. Moreover, his wife was ninety years old, and her womb was also dead. But God said that only Sarah would give birth to Abraham's descendants. This seemed difficult. So at first, Abraham's faith was also weak. How could his wife still give birth after having passed the childbearing age? He had better think of another way. His wife Sarah was even more anxious. She wanted him to get a child through her maid. However, her open-minded thinking was not acceptable to God, because this was man's way of achievement due to lack of faith in God. This was the evidence and sign of disbelief.

God, in order to manifest who He was, deliberately brought Abraham to a desperate state, in which he was as good as dead. This was a necessary process for Abraham's faith to grow. We also need these experiences if we want our faith to grow. Faith does not become perfect in an instant. Faith is not complete or reliable before it is tried.

Once, someone said, "I come to the New Testament Church because I have seen the vision. Here I have also experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, so the New Testament Church is right, and it is pleased by God."

However, after a while, this person disappeared, and not long after, we heard that he turned apostate. This kind of faith was easily obtained, just like how Abraham obtained Eliezer without much effort. But Eliezer was not pleased by God, so he could not be counted as Abraham's heir.

In order to test our faith, God often prolongs the time of fulfilling His promise, so it seems as though the promise will not be fulfilled. God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and receive great blessings. But when would this promise come to pass? This could be likened to a check without a date, so the promise seemed so far away! The more Abraham looked at the circumstances, the less likely it seemed that the promise would be fulfilled.

Abraham might have thought, "My wife is barren and there is a famine in the land, so where are the blessings? It is more like a calamity! What kind of great nation would I become? We have been married for decades, and it is still just the two of us. Moreover, we are getting old, and we are unable to even start a small family, so what more to say of a great nation? Forget it!"

Honestly speaking, if we were Abraham, we would also have doubts: *Are God's words believable? He has made such a great promise, but there is no sign of its fulfillment. Would God go back on His words? Could it be an empty promise?* No, it couldn't be, because God is faithful. But why hadn't Sarah given birth for so long? Why are the circumstances becoming more difficult, and why is the famine becoming more severe? At this time, Satan will say, "God is deceiving you! You are having a blind faith in God. It's okay to believe in Him, but you can't believe so fanatically that you are taken in." It makes sense when you think about it, so at this time, you will try your own methods. This was the case when Abraham took Hagar as wife.

The tests of faith are no theories. We can never understand faith just like how we understand theories. This is something impossible. Some

preachers of the denominations come up to Mount Zion and really admire our life here. But why are they unable to walk on this way? This is because they do not have a simple faith. They are used to receiving salaries in the denominations, and they think that salaries are more dependable. On the other hand, their followers who are more simple say, "This is great! This is the right way — I want to return to the New Testament Church."

The Bible says that Abraham relied on God by faith, but to some people God is too abstract to rely on. Where is God? When I was in the Presbyterian Church, at the end of every Sunday meeting, I would see them collecting donations with a sack bag. I felt that it was not right, because they were like begging for money on behalf of God. At that time, someone proposed that they could just put an offering box there and those who were moved could make an offering. So they tried it for a while, but it didn't work out. The elders and deacons said that when they opened the box, it was empty. They said that it was better to collect donations with a bag; in this way at least they could get a little. To them, using their own methods were more reliable than waiting upon God. This shows that their faith had not gone through trials.

Some people who came up to Mount Zion said, "This place is special. All other places ask for donations but you don't. You don't even accept voluntary donations." We often meet people who look for a donation box because they want to make donations. They thought that it would be at the temple, but it wasn't there. That's why they think we are different.

Brothers and sisters, though we do not ask for donations, God doesn't let us lack anything. He has supplied us in great abundance. For example, the recent projects of paving asphalt road and roadside ditches have cost us over ten million NT dollars, but God has given us more than enough. The preachers in the denominations can also see this, but do they dare to follow our example? No, they dare not.

It's really wonderful, for God will bring all those He loves to the point of hopelessness until they have nothing. This is because as long as a person still has something to depend on, he will neither stretch out his hand in faith, nor rely upon God. Therefore, God has to bring us to the end of our means. When we reach the end of all our means and strength, our only hope will be God.

In the Bible, there was a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years. She spent all her savings on physicians and suffered greatly, but still could not be healed. After she came to the end of her means, she stretched out her hand in faith to touch the edge of the Lord Jesus' garment, and was immediately healed. Therefore, in order to lead a life of faith, we must be led by God to the end of the rope. God has to completely cut away all the things that the natural man relies upon.

## Recognize God's Grace

Many times it seems as though God arranges the circumstances to force us to learn the lesson of faith. In fact, it is all out of His love. He knows that the degenerate man, by nature, will not rely on Him. He knows that we will definitely not stretch out the hand of faith unless we come to the end of our resources. This is why Abraham's experience of faith was so arduous. His wife could not give birth; the famine was worsening; and they were forced to go to Egypt. But thank God. After going through all kinds of trials, Abraham's faith in God and in inheriting God's promise was established.

Abraham knew that he could not serve God by his own means and strength, but by God's promise and grace. He also came to recognize that it was God who wanted him to inherit all the blessings, and that he would surely gain them. God let Abraham experience many kinds of failures so that he would recognize God's grace, and no longer serve Him by his own means and methods. Only then would Abraham serve God completely by His grace. Therefore, recognizing God's grace is a terribly difficult lesson

to learn. God trained Abraham to recognize His grace by making him pray for the women of Abimelech's house. God also trained Abraham to serve Him by His mercy and grace, and not by his own righteous deeds, efforts, or virtues.

Sometimes when we feel that our spiritual condition is good — when we don't have any failures, weaknesses, and when we feel very liberated, joyous and strong in the spirit — we would pray especially loud. It seems as though we have a good standing before God, so we feel qualified to pray. However, one day, if we were to get into a terrible argument with our spouse, so that even the neighbors hear it, we would be unable to open our mouths to pray the next day. We'd think to ourselves: "We had such a heated argument and until now we are still angry with each other, will God still listen to our prayers?"

If we have this kind of feeling, it shows that we do not recognize God's grace. This is serving God by our own deeds and virtues, not by God's salvation. This kind of serving tends to fluctuate and is prone to changes. Abraham lied to Abimelech, but then God wanted him to pray for this man that he had just lied to. Abraham really had to be thick-skinned! Brothers and sisters, Abraham was not being thick-skinned, but rather, he was not saving his skin (face). Our face isn't worth anything. God's glory can only be manifested in us after our face (dignity) is destroyed.

Thank God, Abraham recognized God's grace, so he stood up and prayed for Abimelech. Don't assume that Abraham's skin was too thick, or that he had no conscience. It wasn't so. From this incident, God wanted Abraham to learn this: I am so weak and corrupt, but God still wants me to pray for Abimelech by His grace. Since God has chosen me and wants me to pray for Abimelech, won't He listen to my prayer?

According to our natural concept, we would doubt that God would

listen to a man who had just told a lie. However, the Bible tells us that when Abraham prayed to God, God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants so that they could have children again. Abraham's prayer was effective and powerful. Immediately, the malady of not being able to bear children was healed. From here, we can see that God would not work unless Abraham prayed. Since God's choice was upon him, he enjoyed the privilege of praying. He prayed by God's grace, so God would certainly listen to his prayer.

Brothers and sisters, one has to recognize God's grace in order to raise the dead and cause those who are barren to give birth. You have to go through failures, weaknesses, and stumbling in order to recognize His grace. That is why I say that sometimes it is beneficial to experience weaknesses and failures permitted by God. I am not encouraging you to be weak or to have failures.

Actually, if God doesn't permit, a person loved by God will not fall even if they wanted to. If God permits you to fail, then this is God's hand tearing you down, causing you to lose faith in yourself, so that you have nothing to boast about. Then, you will no longer be so self-righteous. You will humbly prostrate before God to look upon His mercy and grace. At this time, you will not be arrogant when you do something for God, and you will not rob God of His glory when He works through you.

Brothers and sisters, we must first recognize God's grace before we can inherit God's promise or bring His grace and blessing to others. However, the process of recognizing God's grace often doesn't look good. If your life is too peaceful and smooth, God's grace will not be praised in you.

## **Offer Up Without Any Reservation**

I also want to talk about how Abraham offered up Isaac. Abraham's offering was complete and without reservations. He withheld nothing from God. Isaac was Abraham's only son, born to him when he was one hun-

dred years old. Isaac was his life; if he offered him up, he would have no descendants. However, when God wanted Abraham to offer up, he did not hesitate. On the contrary, he offered up without any reservations. Because of this offering, God's promise could be abundantly fulfilled in Abraham, and he was able to bring about great blessings and grace.

Actually, God doesn't look at how much we offer up but how much we keep for ourselves. Some people offer up a lot, but they keep for themselves more than they offer up. When wealthy people offer up a little, that amount will far exceed all that a poor person can offer. Therefore, God evaluates our offering by how much we leave behind for ourselves. It is not easy to offer all without reservations, especially the portion that we need to sustain ourselves. Nevertheless, only this kind of offering without reservations can gain God's limitless blessings. God's children offer up, but not many offer up as Abraham did. We also offer to God, but we always hold back. We will definitely not offer up an especially precious inheritance like Isaac.

Once, there was a Christian who had four sons. He said that the eldest would study medicine; the second would study engineering; the third would study commerce; and the youngest would be offered to God to be a preacher. Why? Because the youngest was the least intelligent. That's why he offered the least intelligent one to God. This kind of offering is completely different from Abraham's offering.

We often offer our surplus to God. This kind of offering is not valuable in God's eyes. May we imitate Abraham, our father of faith, to recognize God's grace and to offer up without reservations in faith. Then we will inherit even more of God's blessings and grace. Through us, these blessings and grace will also be brought to all nations and peoples.

**Jacob**



# Jacob

*(May 14, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

## A Grabber

Jacob's special characteristic was his ability to grab and he grabbed the right things. Unlike Jacob, we often grab for something unimportant, like garbage. We truly need Jacob's special characteristic of being good at grabbing.

Often, we don't know how to grab blessings. Maybe it is because the lentil soup is too delicious and hard to resist. You might think, "The birthright is good, but it is not as realistic as a bowl of lentil soup." This is just like a checkbook that is not as concrete as gold bars. Also, we often don't feel like grabbing, thinking that we are being polite and gentle. We do not strive with others, but give way.

To give away is a virtue, but it depends on what you are giving away. If you give away God's blessings, you will lose everything in the eyes of God! Jacob had this spiritual insight. He knew what was precious and important, and grabbed according to this insight. Regrettably, we are not enlightened enough in this aspect, throwing away treasures without even realizing it. Brothers and sisters, what should we treasure most? We can do without many things, but not the birthright. In God's eyes, the birthright is priceless and this is what we must treasure.

The Bible states that Jacob wanted Esau to sell him his birthright. Because of Jacob's earnest desire, this birthright could even be sold! By right, the firstborn is always the eldest child. How can the second child take precedence over the firstborn?

There is a spiritual mystery in this story that God wants us to know: We

can desire and pursue grace and blessings, just as how we pursue and obtain spiritual gifts by paying a price. If we are desirous and earnestly ask for them, God will give them to us. On the other hand, if we do not treasure and practice the spiritual gifts that God has given us, we will lose them one day. This is the law of nature and the principle of life. It is just likened to a genius: If he is lazy to learn and accept training, he will turn into an ordinary person or even a fool.

## **Treasure the Birthright Above All Things**

Jacob knew how to treasure what God wanted him to treasure. In order to train Jacob and to reveal his special trait of longing for the status and blessing given by God, God allowed Jacob to be born as the younger child. Did Jacob love that bowl of lentil soup as well? Yes. How can we tell? It is because he took the time to stew it. Of course, everyone loves lentil soup, but the key of the problem lies here: When the bowl of lentil soup and the birthright are placed before you, which would you choose? Your choice will reveal whether you are a vessel of honor or dishonor.

All of us know that God's grace and blessings are precious and everlasting. But the red lentil stew is also very delicious. Everybody loves lentil soup: money and wealth, status and fame, pleasure and comfort of the flesh, and the glory and prosperity of the world. But when you have to choose between God's will and the riches of the world, what is your choice?

When our Lord Jesus was tempted by the devil Satan, he was first asked to turn stone into bread. *Turning stone into bread* means satisfying your flesh and having a comfortable life. The last temptation was to choose between the glory of the world and worshipping God. Would you choose to worship God or the glory of the world? Many hope that they could have both God and the world. They want to be prosperous on earth, and also to wear a crown in heaven. They want to be the rich man on earth and to be Lazarus in heaven later. In other words, they want everything in heaven and on earth.

However, God says you can only choose to be one: Lazarus or the rich man. If you want the birthright, you have to give up the lentil stew. If you choose the soup, you have to let go of your birthright. In this trial, Jacob chose the birthright and gave away the lentil stew. This was Jacob's most precious trait, that at the decisive moment, he could sacrifice momentary pleasures of the flesh in exchange for God's eternal blessings. He treasured the birthright and God's blessings more than anything else. This was why God delighted in him. We ask the Lord to add us grace in this aspect, so that we will not only treasure God's blessings, but also pay up the price to willingly discard temporary pleasures to gain the blessings.

As for the exhausted Esau, he fixed his eyes solely on the lentil soup, which he asked from Jacob. Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." Esau replied, "Look, I am about to die; so what good is this birthright to me?" When Esau could not have both, he chose to satisfy his physical need. What is the point of keeping this birthright if I am dying? Once a man dies, he will have nothing. It is just like a Taiwanese saying that goes, "A living beggar is greater than a dead emperor." The present riches of this world are more realistic than the future glory in heaven, so why bother about the future? It is more important to eat the lentil stew now; why bother about the birthright? That was Esau's mentality, so he sold his birthright. He was careless towards God's blessing.

However, Jacob was smart and serious. He feared that Esau might go back on his word, so he made him swear an oath. (In the Old Testament, swearing an oath before God would be effective and acknowledged by God.) But Esau didn't even think twice before selling his birthright to Jacob with an oath. Obviously, Esau didn't really care about God's blessings.

After making the oath, Esau got the lentil stew and bread, and gobbled everything down in no time. The Scripture describes it well, "Then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way." *He went his way*, and that was the end

of him. The Scripture also says, “Thus Esau despised his birthright.” By despising his birthright, Esau not only suffered loss, but had also committed the sin of despising God. This is a serious matter.

Brothers and sisters, oftentimes we also act like Esau because we lust for worldly comfort. We also eat, drink, and go our way. Therefore, we have to remind ourselves, lest Esau’s tragic fate also fall upon us. For we know that afterward, when Esau wanted to inherit his father’s blessing, he was rejected. He could not change his father’s mind, even though he sought the blessing with tears. It will be too tragic for us to be like Esau.

May God give us grace that we will not imitate Esau, but Jacob, who knew how to choose the best blessing. In order to gain the best blessings, we have to willingly discard the temporary comfort of the flesh. This is also what Paul meant in Philippians 3:8, “For Him I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”



# Hosea





## Hosea (1)

(June 4, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)

*You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...*

(Exod. 20:3–5)

*For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it but will be utterly destroyed.*

(Deut. 4:24–26)

The Most High God is holy, just, and jealous. He is a consuming fire, and He will not be mocked. In the ancient times, He chose the people of Israel to be His elect. He loved Israel as a husband loves his wife. He saw Israel as bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. He required that Israel be completely faithful and loyal to Him. They should have no other gods besides Him, and they should not worship false gods, such as Baal.

A man can never tolerate his wife having extramarital relationships with someone, or committing adultery. This was exactly the depiction of Israel in the time of Hosea. God said, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved

images” (*Hos. 11:1–2*).

“My children, plead with your mother — though she is no longer a wife to me, and I am no longer her husband. Plead with her to stop her adultery and prostitution. If she does not, I will strip her naked as she was on the day she was born... They are the children of a shameless prostitute. She herself said, ‘I will go to my lovers — they give me food and water, wool and linen, olive oil and wine’... She would never acknowledge that I am the one who gave her the grain, the wine, the olive oil, and all the silver and gold that she used in the worship of Baal. So at the harvest time I will take back my gifts of grain and wine... I will put an end to all her festivities — her annual and monthly festivals and her Sabbath celebrations — all her religious meetings. I will destroy her grapevines and her fig trees, which she said her lovers gave her for serving them. I will turn her vineyards and orchards into a wilderness; wild animals will destroy them. I will punish her for the times that she forgot me, when she burned incense to Baal and put on her jewelry to go chasing after her lovers. The LORD has spoken” (*Hos. 2:2–13, TEV*). Our God the Father is truly a consuming fire, a jealous God. His love is as strong as death. His jealousy is as cruel as the grave. Who can stand before Him in the Day of His wrath?

God has grace and mercy. His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life. He will not break a bruised reed, and He will not quench a smoking flax. In order to call back the backsliding Israel — the “adulterous woman” to His bosom, God made the prophet Hosea and his household a sign to the house of Israel. God spent much effort to warn, reproach, admonish, and comfort Israel, so as to turn them around. He commanded Hosea to marry a harlot, who would be unfaithful to him. She would give birth to children who would be just as bad as their mother. This harlot and her children symbolized the whole house of Israel, who were unfaithful to the LORD God and turned their backs on Him.

It is truly hard to be a prophet of the LORD. You cannot have your own

likings and choices. Hosea the prophet obeyed God and married Gomer. She conceived and bore him a son. God wanted Hosea to name his son *Jezreel*, because God would punish the house of Jehu for the massacre of Jezreel. He would put an end to the dynasty of Jehu, and destroy the troops of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel. Through the child's name, God revealed that His punishment would be upon the house of Israel, and that the house of Jehu would pay blood for blood.

This name "Jezreel," was filled with God's righteous indignation; calling this name would be an offence to the house of Jehu. Even if Hosea was bold enough to give his son this name, others may not have dared to call it.

Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. God wanted Hosea to call her *Lo-Rubamah*, which meant that God would no longer love or have mercy on the house of Israel. Did the prophet consider his daughter's future? With such a name, who would dare marry her?

Gomer conceived the third time and had another son. God wanted Hosea to name him *Lo-Ammi*, and it meant that Israel was not God's people, and He was not their God. (See Hosea 1:2-9.) According to man, this name was even worse, because this name denounced all of Israel. Wasn't the prophet afraid that the people of Israel would stone this child to death?

The prophet Hosea obeyed God's instructions one by one. In order to satisfy God's heart, he was ready to pay up any price to warn Israel and to turn around their rebellious hearts. He did not care about praise or reproach, gain or loss, life or death. He didn't have his own choices, his own concept of holiness and godliness, and ideals. He placed God's will as the priority, and readily accepted all of God's commissions, commands, arrangements, and instructions — he completely denied himself.

From the prophet Hosea, we learn how to obey. In fact, obedience means death. If our old self does not die — if we do not place our self upon the altar of death to be burned to ashes — our flesh and mind will never obey. Therefore, the lesson of submission is a lesson of learning to die.

Some people can offer up everything, including their lives. But they would rather remain single all their lives than to marry a harlot. Who would willingly be a cuckold? Many would rather die than be one, because it is too disgraceful. You would be despised and become the laughingstock of others. Therefore, people would do anything except for that.

If Hosea also had such an attitude, God's will would not have been accomplished. God will never choose or use a disobedient person. The Bible says, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Only an obedient vessel can let God have a free path in him and accomplish God's will. When there is an obedient vessel, God's work will be done; the rebellious hearts will be turned back, and God's wrath will cease. Likewise today, God needs this kind of vessel.

By God's grace and mercy and the prophet's obedience, the rebellious hearts of Israel were finally turned around. Their backsliding was healed, and God's wrath was turned away from them. Once again, God accepted them and loved them freely as He did before.

The LORD said, "I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim

shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’ I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me. Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the transgressors stumble in them” (Hos. 14:5–9).

Israel is the wife of the LORD. Today, the church is the wife of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:22–24).

Apostle Paul once said, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you (the church) to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2–3). The love between a husband and a wife must be shared solely between the couple and no one else. If a husband cannot gain all the love of his wife, he would rather not have it. Similarly, God was filled with godly jealousy when He found that Israel had many lovers and He could not solely own Israel’s love.

The love of the church towards Christ should also be pure, constant, and complete. Otherwise, she is not a chaste virgin. She will have blemishes and cannot be offered to the Lord Jesus Christ as the wife of the Lamb. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25–27).

Therefore, we must pursue holiness, because without this no one will

see the Lord. “Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17–18). “Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

Concerning obedience, Jesus Christ set a good example for us. “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Therefore, to obey is to die. In the aspect of obedience, the Lord’s servant has truly imitated Christ. All these years, he has learned to obey through the afflictions that he suffered. He has comforted the Lord and let the Lord have a way in him. May the Lord raise up more obedient vessels, so that His end-time will can be done soon!

## **Hosea (2)**

*(June 4, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

### **The Mouthpiece of God's Mercy**

Today we are not going to study some theories from the Book of Hosea, but to learn the special characteristics of the prophet Hosea. Hosea was a prophet who assumed his ministry when God's people had turned away from Him to worship idols.

Let's look at the introduction to the Book of Hosea in the Good News Bible: "The prophet Hosea preached in the northern kingdom of Israel, after the prophet Amos, during the troubled times before the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. He was especially concerned about the idolatry of the people and their faithlessness toward God. Hosea boldly pictured this faithlessness in terms of his own disastrous marriage to an unfaithful woman. Just as his wife Gomer turned out to be unfaithful to him, so God's people had deserted the Lord. For this, judgment would fall on Israel. Yet in the end God's constant love for his people would prevail, and he would win the nation back to himself and restore the relationship. This love is expressed in the moving words: 'How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you?... My heart will not let me do it! My love for you is too strong' (Hos. 11:8)".

Hosea's divine ministry was to turn around the disobedient people of Israel and to heal their backsliding. Disobedience and backsliding are most corrupt and abominable in God's eyes, because they are the filthiness of the spirit. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). According to this passage, there is filthiness of the flesh, of the mind, and of the spirit. We have to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness to become God's people, holy and without blemish. The

Bible says, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Cor. 6: 17–18).

What is filthiness of the flesh? Adultery is filthiness of the flesh. Christians as well as Gentiles know about this sin, which is condemned and considered a disgrace by all. However, the Bible also talks about filthiness (adultery) of the mind.

What is filthiness of the mind? James 4:4 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” Here, it states that friendship with the world is committing adultery. In other words, loving the world and worldly pleasures is adultery of the mind.

Brothers and sisters, if you see somebody committing adultery like the woman in John 8, who was caught in the sinful act, you may think that she is such an abominable and filthy woman who deserves to be stoned. However, if you see someone love the world and pursue worldly pleasures instead of coming to the church or Mount Zion, do you consider this person as filthy and abominable as the adulterous woman who deserves to be stoned? I would not say that you have no feeling at all, but I would say you do not consider this person as evil as the woman caught in adultery. Why do you think in this way? This shows that we do not recognize the filthiness and adultery of the mind, so we do not know how to guard against and avoid them.

There is also filthiness of the spirit. What is filthiness of the spirit? It is apostasy. Forsaking the Truth and going against the Truth are filthiness of the spirit. Forsaking God, not exalting Him, exalting idols, and worshiping idols are all considered to be adultery of the spirit. In God’s eyes, adultery of the spirit is the filthiest adultery because it directly offends

God's holiness. God is a holy, jealous God. He wants us to avoid all types of adultery, including adultery of the flesh, mind, and spirit. We have to cleanse ourselves of all such filthiness. This is God's will.

God's people were rebelling against God. They made idols, bowed down to them and built altars for them. So God sent Hosea to preach to His rebellious people in order to turn their hearts and heal their backsliding. This was God's desire. He said, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him" (Hos. 14:4). God sent Hosea to show His love and mercy to His adulterous and backsliding people, and He wanted to heal them. Adultery is abominable and unbearable in God's eyes. However, God said He would heal their sickness of adultery, because He loved them freely.

How did God heal His people's backsliding? How did He turn around their rebellious hearts? How did He end their spiritual adultery? How did He save these adulterous people? God sent a prophet to them, and through this vessel He sent, He showed His tender mercy. This is the focal point of our discussion today.

God judged and punished these backsliding and adulterous people. However, in the end, God still showed His undying love to Israel. He won back Israel and reestablished His relationship with them. This was God's intention — this was also the theme of the prophet's ministry.

It is easy for anyone to judge and condemn others. The vicious authorities are especially good in judging. They arrest, assault, judge, and execute criminals. They don't require a lot of talent in order to do these. When we see some people turn apostate, forsake God, and turn to heresies, we think they are detestable: How can they turn apostate after seeing so many miracles? How can they leave the New Testament Church after seeing so many glorious works of God? They deserve death! We are quick to judge and condemn. However, our God does not only judge, condemn, and

punish, He also has mercy. Therefore, God keeps trying to turn around the backsliding hearts of His people. He conquers the rebellious with His mercy.

It is easy for us to judge those who backslide, but it is not easy to turn their hearts around. To win back their hearts, we need more of God's grace. Judgment can only passively suppress sins. But without love and mercy, there will be no positive results.

The Bible says, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). This does not mean that we shouldn't judge, or that we can't judge, but that there is something more powerful and glorious than judgment, which is mercy, because mercy triumphs over judgment.

There is also a similar passage in the Book of Psalms, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (Ps. 130:3). What does marking iniquities mean? It means holding a court hearing to judge and to investigate all our sins, and then finding us guilty according to the law. If our God holds a court hearing to investigate our sins, none of us will be able to stand.

"But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Ps. 130:4). Forgiveness can make people fear God.

Brothers and sisters, what is forgiveness? Forgiveness is mercy. When I was in the Christian Assembly, I knew a brother whose father was very strict. When he made mistakes, his father would not correct him on the spot. His father would deal with him only after he had taken dinner, had a bath, and gotten into bed. One day, this brother got into trouble again. That night, he was so scared of his father's punishment that he had no appetite for dinner. When he got into bed and covered himself with the blanket, his heart was pounding hard. As he expected, his father came in,

pulled off his blanket, and called him out of his bed. When this brother stretched out his palm and prepared to take a beating, he suddenly heard his father say, "Alright, I won't beat you this time, but don't ever do that again." His tears immediately rolled down. Later he testified, "My father's words hurt more than the blows of a cane! His words keep shining in me, so I dared not hurt my father's heart again." This is what it means by *mercy triumphs over judgment*. Our Lord's heart is full of mercy. His tender mercy can conquer people's hearts more than anything else.

In John 8, how did the Lord Jesus handle the woman who was caught in the act of adultery? The scribes and the Pharisees said that in the law, Moses commanded them to stone such a woman. The voices around her were full of judgment, condemnation, and destruction. No doubt she deserved death. But who could be the first to throw a stone at her? He must be someone without sin. Was there anyone who could throw a stone at her? No. Clearly, no one was without sin. Since all these people were also sinners, why did they condemn this woman so harshly? It was because they had no enlightenment. Our Lord Jesus said to that woman, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."

Our Lord is such a merciful and loving God. He is righteous and evil-hating, but He is also full of mercy and lovingkindness. God raised up Hosea to be His mouthpiece so that His love and mercy could flow out and heal the backsliding people. I believe that we all desire to be like Hosea, who was a mouthpiece of God's mercy, and to be like Jesus, who was full of mercy and forgiveness. We certainly don't want to have our own mercy and forgiveness, because the righteousness of man cannot accomplish God's will. Only the Lord's mercy can heal God's people of their weaknesses and filthiness, and also turn around their backsliding.

What kind of person can be the mouthpiece and vessel of God's mercy? This generation truly needs God's mercy. Also, this generation surely needs God's judgment. But with judgment alone, we cannot turn around the

rebellious people, nor can we meet the highest demand of God. It can only be done with God's mercy. The whole world is under the control of the evil one and men have gone astray. In God's eyes, all people are filthy. They have committed adultery in the flesh, soul, and spirit. They urgently need the Lord's mercy. Without the Lord's mercy, we cannot stand before Him, and neither can this generation be redeemed.

Our Lord Jesus is full of tender mercy, and you can see it from the way He served the woman of Samaria. We all know the story of the adulterous Samaritan woman. The Lord said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true" (John 4:17–18, NIV). Do you know when the Lord said these words? He said them after holding a long conversation with her. If the Lord Jesus had said these words right away when He met this Samaritan woman, she would have fled from him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus didn't say it right away, but spoke tactfully before getting to the point.

Unlike Jesus, we often beat around the bush when we should speak candidly, thus causing confusion. But when we condemn or judge others, we tend to be sharp and hasty. Our eyes are wide on people's flaws, and our lips are quick to judge. We do not know how to show consideration and mercy.

The Lord Jesus especially went to sit by the well in the middle of the day to wait for the Samarian woman who was going there to draw water. When the Lord saw her coming, He said to her, "Give Me a drink." The woman must be thinking, "This man is just like me, I am thirsty and so is he." At this time, the Lord Jesus hid His holiness and light from her. This is due to His mercy.

If the Lord Jesus had let His light shine strongly at once, that woman's eyes would definitely have gone blind. A person who knows nothing about

mercy will immediately judge and condemn when he sees others' ugliness. He will be harsh and scare others away. However, the Lord Jesus will not immediately let you feel that He is holy and you are weak. Therefore, to turn around the weak, we need to have the Lord's merciful heart.

## No Personal Chastity, But God's Holiness

The Lord Jesus came to save sinners. How does He save sinners? How does He solve their problems? If the Lord had come only to judge and condemn sinners to the Lake of Fire as they deserve, then there would be no need for the Lord to come. But the Lord came to bear the sins of all mankind on the cross according to God's righteousness. On the other hand, His sacrifice fully displayed God's abundant love and mercy. Today, God wants us to have the mind of the Lord, so we may become the mouth-piece of His mercy, to turn around the hearts of the backsliders, and to heal and cleanse this adulterous generation. This is why God told Hosea to marry a harlot.

How did God give Hosea a merciful heart? How did Hosea turn back the adulterous, backsliding, and unfaithful people? First, God let him marry a harlot. Through the marriage, God severely molded and trained this vessel. God did not just tell Hosea to marry a harlot, He made sure Hosea did it. Most people would try their best to escape such a marriage, thinking it beneath their dignity to marry a harlot. Even ordinary people would think this way, let alone the prophet chosen by God. By nature, it is hard for a man to accept such molding from God. Moreover under the strict law of the Old Testament, a person who married a harlot committed immorality and lost his chastity. However, God wanted Hosea to marry an adulterous woman so that he would not have his own purity.

In order to turn back the backsliding and unclean people of God, this vessel could not have his own chastity, but only God's holiness. Only those who have no chastity of their own can recognize God's holiness, and only then will they lead people into God's holiness in the spirit of

thoughtfulness and mercy. God molded Hosea in this way, so that he could have God's mercy and love, with which he turned back the faithless Israel.

Just as God expected, in the end, His people started to turn around. "Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do anymore with idols?'" (Hos. 14:8). Ephraim used to be closely connected to idols. The Ephraimites were so engrossed in idol worshipping that they committed adultery with idols on every hill and under every green tree. But then, when God poured out His mercy through the prophet, their hearts changed. They said, "What have I to do anymore with idols? I will no longer worship idols. I will not forsake God again." This was how God's everlasting love won back the hearts of Israel and restored His relationship with them.

A person who has never failed, stumbled, or experienced weaknesses will not show mercy towards others. In order to let His vessel have His merciful heart, God allows His vessel to fail and fall repeatedly until he is dirtier and weaker than anyone else. Then, this vessel will no longer have his own holiness or strength.

If you have never fallen, you will not have mercy on those who fall. If you have never failed, you will not understand those who fail, and you can hardly save them from failures. This is why God allowed David to commit the sins of adultery and murder. David was incredible before he committed these sins. As he wrote in Psalm 31, "In You, O LORD, I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness... I have hated those who regard useless idols; but I trust in the LORD" (Ps. 31:1,6).

At that time, if David had caught someone worshipping idols or Baals, he might have decapitated him immediately. It was because David was so perfect and his life was filled with glory. He never failed, and he was afraid of failures. So he pleaded with God not to let him stumble or be ashamed. His prayer sounded good, but God knew that he was scared of losing face. So God put him to the test, and purposely let him be ashamed.

Since David was so righteous, so evil-hating, and so faithful to God, God let him see if he was truly like this. So, soon afterwards, David sinned. Not only did he commit adultery, he even killed the woman's husband. One day, the prophet Nathan came and revealed all his ugliness. This was disastrous! His evil was fully exposed. What to do? At this time, he wrote Psalm 51, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." At this time, he no longer dared to say, "Deliver me in Your righteousness." But in the end, with a broken spirit, he said, "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise."

Why could God make David king and shepherd over His people? Because he had gone through the process of God's molding. As a king, David had power. However, his power was for establishing people, and not for oppressing people. He had to shepherd God's people, supply their needs, so that they could have life, and have it abundantly. How did David obtain this heart of mercy? It was after God had deprived him of his strength and chastity, and when he had nothing to boast of. Therefore, it is impossible for a person who never fails to humble himself.

Hymn 378 is a gospel song, which portrays the mercy of our Lord Jesus, "Compassionate, humble, forgiving and meek — He bore shame and the cross to redeem sinners. His blood and life He laid down, to save the lost. This is Christ Jesus, what's your feeling to Him?"

Brothers and sisters, the greatest power that conquers us is not the Lord's righteousness, but His love — His limitless forgiveness and mercy. Today, the Lord wants us to serve this crooked, perverse, evil, and adulterous generation. This generation needs vessels like the prophet Hosea, who did not have his own purity or godliness. Instead, he was filled with

God's merciful heart.

May God raise up more vessels like him to save and turn around this perverse generation. God's heart is earnest. The Son of Man comes not to judge and destroy, but to save and perfect, so that people may have life, and have it abundantly. May we be molded by God in all kinds of circumstances. May God lead us to the environments which we think are filthy and unclean, so that we may be molded by God and experience His forgiveness. We must first be filled with God's mercy before we can have mercy on this generation. Hopefully, we will gradually experience these words in our life.

**Joseph**



# **Joseph (1)**

## ***The One Who Was Separate from His Brothers***

*(June 11, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

When we discuss these Bible characters, we are exploring their spiritual traits and virtues, so that we can imitate them. On the other hand, we also find out their weaknesses and flaws, which serve as a warning to us in our serving. Today, we will discuss about our forefather Joseph.

Please read: “The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of him who was separate from his brothers” (Gen. 49:26).

This blessing was so long that it encompassed *everlasting* — the everlasting hills, and it was so vast that it reached the *utmost* — the utmost bound. What kind of person did such a vast blessing come upon? It came upon Joseph, who was *separate* from his brothers. This “separate” means extraordinary, special, and outstanding. In what way was Joseph so different from his brothers that he deserved such a description in the Bible?

Jacob deeply loved Joseph more than all of his other sons. It seemed that Jacob was being very partial. It is not good for parents to show partiality. However, if one of the parents’ children is especially good in gaining their heart, it is understandable that the parents would love this child more than all their other children.

God the Father once spoke of the Lord Jesus from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). This was because the Lord could really understand the heart of the Father. When He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did

not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come... to do your will O God’” (Heb. 10:5–7). The Lord is dearly loved by God because He came to the world to do God’s will. Moreover, to accomplish the Father’s will, the Lord Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. The Lord said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

Like Jesus, all God’s children should also seek to please God, mind His heart, and do His work. How to do God’s work? “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent’” (John 6:29). It is good to diligently serve God, and make every effort to do the Lord’s work. But there is a prerequisite: *believe in the one sent by God*. God has sent His servant, the Prophet of All Nations, to be the constitution of our faith. If we believe in the one sent by God, we are doing God’s work, and we will please God, just as Joseph pleased his father Jacob.

How do we know that Joseph often minded his father’s heart? The Bible says, “Joseph brought a bad report of them (his brothers) to his father.” According to man’s concepts, Joseph was a tattle-tale. Actually, this was not the case. Joseph reported his brothers’ evil deeds to their father in order to protect the testimony of Israel. This showed that he treasured God’s choice upon the house of Jacob. In order to mind his father’s heart, he became his father’s eyes and ears, telling his father what he saw and heard. His father could then advise, admonish, warn, and teach his brothers, so that they could turn towards good, and no longer disgrace God and their father.

In the New Testament Church, there are also co-workers and brothers and sisters who often tell the Lord’s servant what they have seen or heard. There are also people who have an incorrect concept, and regard this as being a tattle-tale. Brothers and sisters must be able to tell the difference

between “tattling”, and “discussing” or “reporting”. Actually, the difference lies in a person’s spirit and motives. “Tattling” is talking about others while having personal grudges, an impure spirit, or a biased opinion. Their motive is to take pleasure in others’ misfortune. Their act is mean and vile. Even Gentiles would despise this kind of behavior, what more we, as God’s children.

The Lord’s servant is a spiritual man, and a spiritual man judges (understands) all things. If you try to tattle, your spiritual condition and your foolishness will be revealed before the Lord’s servant. In this way, how can you please God? “Discussing” and “reporting” are truthfully telling the Lord’s servant what you have actually seen. When we tell him the condition of the flock, we are caring for God’s will and for the testimony of the New Testament Church. We do not have any personal grudges or impurities.

Some co-workers have been doing well in this aspect. They constantly keep the Lord’s servant and the apostles informed of the conditions of the churches and the flock in all over the world, so the brothers and sisters can gain the required concern and prayers of the Lord’s servants. When discussing the conditions of the church or of the sheep and co-workers, there are two things that we must avoid: first, relying on hearsay instead of seeing it ourselves, and second, listening to only one side of the story.

When you rely on hearsay, you are taking what you hear as what you have really seen. Oftentimes, erroneous messages are spread. In this way, you will fall short of not only people, but also God and the Lord’s servants’ entrustment towards you. Therefore, before you discuss, it is better to check things out and get all the facts straight, and diligently pray about it. Listening to only one side of the story will lead to delusion. There is an ancient saying in China that goes, “Listen to both parties and you will be clear; listen to only one party and you will be deceived.” That is to say, before you can make an impartial judgment, you have to listen to both

parties.

If you listen to only one side of the story, you will tend to accept the only story you hear and fall into confusion and delusion. Even the judges of man's kingdoms know this. After you listen to the prosecutor, you should also give the defendant a chance to explain what happened. Regrettably, justice is still not always served in the court of man's kingdoms.

If we are also overcome by our emotions, and listen to only one side of the story without giving the other side a chance to explain before discussing with the Lord's servant, then we are unjust and unrighteous before God. When God avenges them, we will suffer loss. If the person we wronged knows how to prostrate before the Lord and silently learn lessons, entrusting this matter to God without giving excuses, then the loss we suffer will be even greater. In this regard, we can use the story of Haman as a warning. Once, because King Ahasuerus only listened to Haman's side of the story, he almost sacrificed the entire lifeline of the Jewish people. Luckily, God did not allow Haman's scheme to succeed. He personally arose to take vengeance for His people, and destroyed all the enemies who would have harmed the Jews.

Joseph, who was separate from his brothers, had an epochal entrustment and mission. His dreams of the stars, moon, sun, and sheaves revealed the path and goal of his life. For the sake of this vision, he suffered many afflictions and trials. In order to preserve the posterity of Israel, God chose Joseph to be the vessel that changed the era. Later, his brothers bowed down to him, just as what he saw in the dream — the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. Joseph accomplished the mission of preserving the lives of his kinsmen.

Under God's molding hands, Joseph underwent the test of fire. His unusual experience also made him different from his brothers. He was hated by his brothers, who sold him as a slave in Egypt. He then became

a stranger in a foreign land. Later, he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and was thrown into prison for thirteen years, having no one to turn to for help. He was like a dead man.

A person who walks in God's will is bound to be hated by others. This is his predestined fate, and not something surprising. The Lord Jesus said, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I keep telling it that its ways are bad" (John 7:7, *TEV*). Joseph was hated by his brothers, because he reported of their evil deeds to their father. This is exactly what the New Testament Church is facing today. The people of the world and their tyrants hate us because the Prophet of All Nations leads the New Testament Church to rebuke their evil rule. If we were to conform to the world, this world would definitely welcome us, but we would never become vessels that preserve lives and change the era.

Joseph remained silent and didn't struggle when he was sold to Egypt, where he became a slave. In Egypt, he did not lose God's presence, nor did he sin when he was tempted. During the long, weary years in prison, God made Joseph succeed in all he did.

God's molding hand is surely heavy upon the vessel that changes the era. Most people will find this training hard to endure. It would be hard for a person who does not recognize God's will to go through these kinds of afflictions, hardships, persecutions, and trials. He tends to fall in the face of all these tests. Joseph also experienced weaknesses and failures. He looked upon the butler for help, instead of God. But he was different because he was in God's hands.

Many people may not understand how Joseph, who showed so much care for his father's heart and pleased God, could encounter such unbearably adverse circumstances. Our Lord Jesus encountered the same fate. He is God's beloved Son, but He was despised, scorned, hated, rejected, beaten, imprisoned, and in the end, crucified. This was God's surpassing

method of molding this vessel, in order to accomplish His great salvation and to save the entire human race. Likewise, Joseph encountered all kinds of difficulties so that he could rule in God's name in Egypt, and save the lives of God's people.

In just one day, Joseph turned from a prisoner to the governor of Egypt. He was not only *separate* (different) from his brothers, but also different from all the rulers in history. In fact, sufferings and setbacks are essential steps to God's exaltation.

This was also the path of the Lord Jesus: He was exalted from the lowest to the most high, and from the cross to the throne. Many hope to be exalted, but they cannot endure being lowly. All those who cannot endure God's molding hands will never be exalted.

During God's molding process, many brothers and sisters have procrastinated in learning their lessons. They take decades, or even a lifetime, to learn the lesson that God measures out for them. Some even fail to learn for their entire lives. They work and strive very hard, but in the aspect of learning life lessons, they always remain stagnant. If they do not leave the elementary teachings of Christ, they will never go on to perfection.

They are just like an ox turning the millstone, going round and round in circles, without getting anywhere. One day, they will feel tired and old, and even throw off the Lord's yoke. We have seen many such people, who have lost their way on this path to entering God's kingdom.

Joseph, who was different from his brothers, had a kind and merciful heart. He kept no record of his brothers' wrongs, but was full of grace and forgiveness. When Joseph's brothers found out that the governor of Egypt was Joseph, they were terrified and speechless. It would be easy for Joseph to take vengeance on them because they were right in his hands. How-

ever, Joseph did not take revenge; instead, he comforted them, “But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” (Gen. 45:5).

Joseph truly recognized God and His will. He minded his father’s heart, and knew that it was God who molded him and sent him to Egypt before his people. A person who recognizes God’s hand will know that all things are controlled and arranged by God. This kind of recognition can end the enmity between people.

Joseph was sold by his brothers, but it was all permitted by God, who works and molds His vessels through men. When Joseph fixed his eyes upon God, he could see things (his brothers) from God’s point of view and was filled with forgiveness, compassion, and love. His life was so abundant, similar to that of the Son of God. Likewise, God also molds the New Testament Church through various circumstances, so that we can gain this kind of life.

The New Testament Church is different from the denominations and all the kingdoms of this world. We are a unique people and a chosen race. Like Joseph, we are sent to save lives and to preserve posterity for this generation. Therefore, the hope of this generation lies in the Prophet of All Nations, the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade, and the New Testament Church. May all the churches long for Joseph’s abundant life, so that this generation may be preserved because of us.

## **Joseph (2)**

*(June 11, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

Our understanding of others depends on how much we have learned our life lessons. The more we learn our lessons, the more we will understand others. If we have not learned our lessons in a certain aspect, we will find it hard to understand others in that aspect. This principle applies to us when we discuss Joseph's story today. How much you understand Joseph depends on how many life experiences you have, and how many lessons you have learned from those experiences. Earlier, Sis. Mei-Ling had a good discussion about Joseph's life. She has put a lot of effort into learning life lessons, so what she mentioned were not mere words, but words from her own experience.

Every individual has his own level in the knowledge of the Word of life, depending on how deeply he's learned his lessons. Everything that comes from life is valuable, and only the knowledge from one's life can edify and enlighten people. When we discuss these Bible characters, we are not studying some Bible information like the Bible schools or theological colleges do. Instead, we want to get to know these vessels with our life.

From Sis. Mei-Ling's discussion, I can tell she has some understanding of Joseph, and this is very precious. She has not wasted her past few years in Malaysia, and her "grace of sweating" is very precious. Although she did not have a testimony of bleeding, she had a testimony of sweating. Sweating can be considered the first step to bleeding. Some people's lives never grow, because they have never sweated or have sweated too little — they have never gone through hardships and trials, or they have not endured much affliction. They have sweated too little, so their life is tender. They may look huge in size, but their muscles are flabby. If they bump

into something, they will get bruises all over and hurt for many days. However, those who have gone through training will recover quickly, even if they are bruised. This has to do with practical training. I hope we will desire to be vessels that have concrete life testimonies, so that this generation may find grace through us.

### **Preserve the Lives of God's People And Rule in God's Name**

Joseph was an extraordinary vessel who preserved the lives of God's people and reigned in God's name. A vessel that can preserve the posterity of God's people is important, because the fate and the existence of God's people depend on him. Without Joseph, God's people would have perished. God had dominion over all things, and ruled in the human kingdoms. But His sovereignty could only be concretely manifested through Joseph. Therefore, this vessel was exceedingly great and crucial.

Everyone would love to reign on behalf of God; the Gentiles would love it even more. Today, the entire world is divided and full of strife because people are struggling for power. However, Joseph was set up by God and destined to rule for Him. What had God done on him so that he could represent God to rule? First, God made him recognize His sovereignty throughout his life. Only after Joseph recognized that God sat on the most high throne, was he able to represent God to reign. (If you do not recognize the God who sits on the throne, how can you rule for Him?)

Joseph had a special characteristic: He recognized that God was seated on the throne and His sovereign power dominated all. This recognition is not of the mind, nor can it be easily gained through knowledge. To recognize *the God who rules over all things*, you have to pay up a price to experience Him with your life — not only at the cost of your sweat, but also your blood.

Normally we learn a skill by paying a fee. As long as we have enough money, we can learn it any time without a problem. However, to learn about God's sovereignty and power, we have to pay the price of our life. We learn with a high price — not only with sweat, but also with blood and life. Some people never grow up, not because they do not understand the theory, but because they lack concrete training in their lives.

## **Recognize God's Sovereign Power**

### *Joseph Looked up to Man for Help*

Generally speaking, Joseph seemed perfect and flawless. However, the Bible tells us that apart from the Lord Jesus, no one is perfect. Therefore, Joseph also had his human flaws and limitations. How did God train and mold Joseph to eliminate all his flaws and limitations? How did God make him recognize His power so that he could rule for Him on earth? We will take a look at a portion of his life.

"But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon" (Gen. 40:14–15). A person who has never been in prison would probably not have a deep feeling on this passage. However, a person who has been in prison before will definitely have considerable feelings after reading this passage. When Joseph was thrown into prison, he was not told how long he would be in there. How much longer would he have to stay? No one knew. He was more hopeless than those sentenced to life imprisonment today.

Nowadays, a convict with a life sentence may still have a chance of receiving an amnesty when a new president assumes office. After an amnesty, life imprisonment can become a fixed-term sentence. If your performance is good, and if you're cooperative, you may accumulate enough points to shorten your sentence, or even be released on parole. So it is

hard to imagine how a prisoner like Joseph felt.

One day, an opportunity arose. Two officers of Pharaoh who were in the same cell both had dreams. But they did not know the meanings, because interpretations belong to God. Joseph interpreted their dreams: The chief baker would be beheaded, and the chief butler would have his position restored. God especially arranged that the butler would continue to place the cup in Pharaoh's hand, so he would see Pharaoh every day.

This was a golden opportunity for Joseph. Joseph's earnest desire to get out of prison was aroused. He was unable to restrain himself, so he said to the butler, "But remember me, when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house." What do you read from these lines? Can you see the impurities of human nature that are revealed through these sentences? According to people, there is nothing wrong with these words; they are right and normal. Joseph might have said, "I was wronged and I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews. Even in Egypt, I have never done anything wrong. Yet I am thrown into prison; this is truly a miscarriage of justice! Now that I have the chance, it is right for me to ask someone to make mention of me before Pharaoh. Isn't this the circumstance raised up by God in order to save me?" However, in God's eyes, there was something wrong in what Joseph said. It is like bacteria in the water that cannot be seen with the naked eye, but can be clearly seen under a microscope.

At that time, Joseph was in such a pitiful state that he put all his hope in man. He said to the butler, "Remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house." Brothers and sisters, if you were in God's position, would you be happy to hear these words? Obviously, at that time, Joseph did not recognize God's sovereignty, nor did he know that it was God who had sent him to Egypt.

Joseph did not recognize God's sovereignty until he went through many trials. He was sold and wrongfully imprisoned. He was not sold by evildoers, but by his own brothers. He was wrongfully accused of a shameful crime and imprisoned. Moreover, he did not know how long he would be in prison for. People can hardly understand how intense he had suffered in body, soul and spirit. Obviously, Joseph's suffering was great. If not, he would not have taken this chance to plead for man's help, like a slave begging his master. At that time, he completely forgot that he was one of God's people, so he placed his hope on man. He thought that there was salvation apart from God.

Brothers and sisters, we have no salvation apart from God. He is our only hope, our only refuge, our only salvation, and our only help. Joseph was severely tested in this aspect, and he wavered. He placed his hopes in someone other than God. This is a tough lesson. I know what I am talking about, and what I speak here today is definitely not just an empty theory.

Many times, when trials befall us, we will search for a way to save ourselves. It is easy for us to place our hopes in people, things, and affairs apart from God. At this time, the words, "God is our only hope, help, and salvation," have become an empty theory.

It was obvious that at that time, Joseph placed his hope of getting out of prison on this butler. Joseph was a stranger in Egypt, so his only hope was this person. Joseph thought to himself, "This person is an inmate of the same prison and he knows me very well. He knows that I am a good man and that I have been falsely accused. I have also helped him interpret his dream. Now he is going to stand beside Pharaoh, so this is a very good opportunity. If I miss this chance, it will be difficult to find another one." Therefore, Joseph pleaded earnestly with the butler. God must have responded to him, "Fine, since you are waiting for this butler to save you from prison, I will let you wait!"

Joseph must have been counting his days in prison, thinking, “The butler has been out for two days, his position must have been given back to him. If he is hesitant to speak for me on the first day, he will probably do it on the second day. Now it is nine o’ clock in the morning; he should be in court by now. If he talks to Pharaoh and Pharaoh listens to him, then I will be out of here by ten.” Joseph waited and waited. But after thirty days, three months... there was still no news. The Bible says that this butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. What a terrible friend! He forgot about Joseph until two years later.

### ***Joseph Lost Hope in the Circumstances and Looked up to God***

For Joseph, the two years’ imprisonment was a great trial. But in these two years, Joseph had a big change in life. God’s molding hand on him was so heavy that He took away all his hope, so that only God remained in his heart. Joseph waited day after day, month after month, until he was completely disappointed and gave up all hope. Then, he no longer placed his hopes in anyone, but started to accept his fate — to stay in prison for the rest of his life.

Brothers and sisters, God will start working when a person has lost all hope and begins to solely depend on God. However, he needs God’s immense grace to pass through the *two years’ trials*. It is not easy to place all of your hope in God. Forgive me for saying this, I have paid this price before. It is all by God’s mercy. If I want to boast, I will boast of my weaknesses and of the Lord’s grace.

Through all these years in the New Testament Church, I was often tested in this aspect. God made me lose hope in everything I hoped for. When I lost hope in people and things, God became my glorious hope. He personally reversed the course of events for me. Therefore, I wrote this, “There is glorious hope when Christ dwells in my heart” in the preface of *Spring In The Prison*. This phrase is no theory, but the fruit of my sweat and blood over these years of serving God.

Truly, apart from the Lord, we have no salvation, no hope, and no help. The Lord is our only help, just as the psalmist wrote, “I will lift up my eyes to the hills — from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1–2). God brought Joseph to a foreign land, a place where he had no one to turn to. There, God let him suffer injustice and trials, so that he would recognize that God controlled not only his life, but also the heaven and the earth.

Brothers and sisters, you will often hear me pray, “Lord, You are the Almighty One of Jacob; You are the God who rules in the human kingdoms. You set and remove kings, and You make kingdoms rise and fall. You hold in Your hands the breath of the kings and their ways.” In almost every convention, I will pray in this way. When I see all the things that God has done for us, I have to give thanks and testify for Him with my life.

Today, we can still stand before God, because this Almighty God has been our help and our glorious hope. When we were wandering, He was our strong tower. In tribulations, He was our refuge. When we were scattered and wandering helplessly, He became our stronghold. He drew us out of many waters, and exalted us above all our enemies.

By nature, we have a weakness, which is, in the face of trials and difficulties, we tend to look for help and a way out. I do not mean that we cannot seek for help or look for a way out, but where should we look for these? Where is our hope? For most people, they will get help from their friends. For example, when we tell our friends about the persecution we face, they will immediately suggest that we should go to so-and-so for help. This is man’s natural response. We rarely see someone telling us that we should pray to God diligently.

Brothers and sisters, if we were brought to the same agonizing and hopeless situation as that of Joseph, would we still be calm and wait upon

Him? This is not easy. When Joseph became weak in faith and sought help from man, God molded him until he lost all hope. To his surprise, he received no further news from the butler. Even the promising chance he held on to turned hopeless. This butler was so heartless that he had forgotten him. However, this was also God's plan. God only started to work two years later when He caused Pharaoh to have a dream, which all the magicians and wise men of Egypt failed to interpret. It was only at this time that the butler remembered Joseph.

### **Recognize God's Sovereignty**

God controls all things. When Joseph had completely given up all his hopes in men and things, God began to work for him. After going through a long period of trials, Joseph finally recognized God's sovereignty. With this recognition, he said to his brothers, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life... So now it was not you who sent me here but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout the land of Egypt" (Gen. 45:4–5,8). Now Joseph recognized that God ruled over him, and over all the earth.

Actually, the first step to rule on behalf of God was also the beginning of afflictions. At first, Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him, but later, they sold him. He was not only sold, but was also wrongfully imprisoned. These were the necessary stages that led Joseph to the throne. It was also the afflictions Joseph suffered in order to preserve posterity for God's people.

Brothers and sisters, do you want to free the prisoners? If you do, you must first be imprisoned. Do you want to preserve posterity for God's people? You must first be brought to the land of despair. Joseph preserved posterity for God's people *in the land* he was sold to and imprisoned in.

Matthew 2:15 shows us a wonderful principle of life: The Lord Jesus

was brought to Egypt, so that He could call His people out of Egypt. It says, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called My Son.’” According to this principle of life, before you can preserve the lives of God’s people and represent God to rule as king, you must first be brought to the place where God’s people are taken captive, be imprisoned and enslaved. You yourself must first be a sign. Therefore, we can only help people according the experiences we have.

Theories cannot help or establish people. You can build up people’s lives only after you have been molded by God and experienced His grace. The aspect you are molded in is the aspect in which you will build others up. Therefore, when a person’s weaknesses and flaws have not been completely revealed by God, he will tend to condemn others. For this reason, God will let him fail greatly. God also molded Peter in the same way.

Peter was too self-confident, self-righteous, strong, and courageous. The moment he opened his mouth, he would judge and condemn others. God could not use such a man, so He let him fail terribly. He failed in things that others would not fail in. Others also stumbled, but no one had stumbled as badly as Peter did. God deliberately caused this head apostle to fall greatly. Peter even swore to deny the Lord, “I do not know Him, and I don’t know what you are talking about! Who is Jesus of Nazareth? I don’t know Him.” Don’t you think he had gone too far when he denied the Lord this way? However, God permitted this to happen. After this molding, on the Day of Pentecost, God was able to use Peter to deliver the first sermon in the New Testament era.

In short, Joseph was able to represent God to rule as king because he had been molded to recognize God’s sovereignty. God permitted him to be sold, and then be imprisoned indefinitely. In a state of hopelessness, God continued to refine him. Just as refining gold, the temperature has to be high. For this reason, God kept increasing the heat higher and higher,

until it reached the maximum temperature, and all his impurities were burned away. Therefore, without this trying imprisonment, Joseph's weaknesses would not be revealed and dealt away with.

When all of Joseph's impurities and all his hopes were purged away, he finally came to this recognition: Apart from God, I have no hope. When I lose all hope, God arises to work for me. It was God who sent me here. He allowed me to be sold and falsely accused. God also personally gave Pharaoh a dream, and made me come out of prison to interpret this dream. The butler didn't speak for me — it was God who did all this for me. The God who sits on the most high throne controls all things.

May all of us have this recognition every day in our lives and serving. In this way, we will be able to reign on His behalf.





# Gideon





# **Gideon (1)**

## *Gideon's Success and Failure*

*(June 19, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

*Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezerite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.*

*(Judg. 6:11)*

If we want to know why Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, we must first understand the background of that era. After the judge Deborah passed away, the people of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Midianites, who oppressed them. The Midianites encamped against the Israelites and destroyed their crops. They would take away their sheep, cattle and donkeys, and leave nothing for the Israelites to live on. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of them. Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up Gideon to be their judge and deliverer. God called Gideon when he was threshing wheat in the winepress.

Gideon was a special vessel. He was able to work (thresh wheat) under adverse circumstances. He was a vessel that surpassed the circumstances. Wheat was their life-sustaining food. Without it, the people of Israel would die. Due to the tense situation, Gideon was unable to thresh the wheat openly on the threshing floor. However, he did not give up because of this. He continued to thresh wheat in the winepress, accomplishing the great work of providing food. How large was the winepress, that he could thresh wheat in it? I suppose it wasn't any larger than our plum vats. How could he thresh wheat in such a small place?

A surpassing vessel will accomplish God's work in any kind of environment, and serve God even under the attacks of the enemy. Gideon was a vessel not confined to the environment. In fact, he surpassed the circumstances and even mobilized them. This is also the life experiences of the New Testament Church over all these years — the New Testament Church serves God under unfavorable circumstances.

After the Kuomintang (KMT) plundered Zion, the people of Zion had nowhere to stay, so they temporarily resided in a pigsty in Shiserliao. That place was dirty, stinky, and was rife with venomous snakes, mosquitoes, and insects. However, the people of Zion lived there with joy. In surpassing spirit, they held services, broke the bread, sang praises, and worshiped God as usual. The filthiest place in the world had become their paradise.

The Lord's servant often brought the co-workers to Shiserliao to share in their joy amidst the stench and filth. It was a great pleasure to be there — even dining there was sweet. This is what we mean by threshing wheat in the winepress.

The days of wandering at the Hsiaolin Riverbed were even more difficult! The burning heat of the day and the freezing cold of the night were really a great suffering. When we met with flash floods, our hearts were stricken with fear. Whenever there was a downpour, torrents of waters would rush down from the mountain.

Once, the water was about a hundred feet away from us, but in five minutes, the water rose up to our waists. It was even more frightening at night. Before we realized it, the water had reached the edge of our bed. And unexpected guests like venomous snakes and frogs would come to share our bed (Bro. Lazarus had this experience). However, we still praised God amidst the great waters. This is also threshing wheat in the winepress — serving God and doing His work in adverse circumstances.

When I went to Thailand in 1979, I saw a denomination next to Bro. Lin's factory. The chapel had air conditioning and other high-class facilities. Sis. Lin told me that when you employ a denominational preacher, he would first talk about terms and requirements: a good salary, a new car, and an air-conditioned house. Without having these, he would not accept your employment. I told Bro. and Sis. Lin that the workers of the New Testament Church serve God without terms and conditions. We can even serve without food or a place to live.

Yesterday, Bro. Zhao testified that when he first separated himself from the Mandarin Chapel, he was so poor that sometimes he didn't have food to eat. So he fasted. During the early years after the reestablishment of the New Testament Church, fasting for three or five days straight was a commonplace. There was a long period of time when we took only one meal a day. In those years of hardships, we often served God with empty stomach. This was how God tested us. Nevertheless, all the co-workers continued to serve God as usual. We were not affected by the circumstances — in the winepress, we still continued to thresh wheat.

The Good News Bible describes it even more plainly: "Gideon was threshing some wheat secretly in the winepress, so that the Midianites would not see him." When he was threshing wheat in the winepress, not only the enemy could not see him, even his own people could not see him. Gideon secretly threshed wheat before God, not before men. He did not seek to be known by others. This is a hidden vessel. God examined him in secret, and found him worthy. So God's calling came upon him. God's angel appeared to him and called him a mighty man of valor.

A person who learns to face God in secret is like a plant taking root in the ground. "Taking root in secret" and "surpassing the circumstances" go hand in hand. Only a vessel that takes root in secret can surpass the environment. If you want to know how deep a tree takes root, you can tell by its branches, leaves, and fruit. The deeper the tree has taken root, the

more nutrients and water it will absorb, and the more exuberant its branches and leaves will be. Its fruit will surely be plentiful. If the branches are weak, and the fruit fall before ripen, you know that the roots of the tree are too shallow, and some might have been exposed.

A vessel who has shallow and exposed roots will not stand the test of wind and rain. He will fall down by himself, even before someone touches him. What does “exposed roots” mean? The apostate Chen is a good example. When God slightly used him to deliver some presentable messages, he became conceited. He looked down not only on his wife, Ruth Cheung, but also on God’s maid servant Sis. Kong. He was so arrogant that he thought he was second to none. He was a vessel with exposed roots — shallow, superficial, and vile. Ultimately, his ugliness was completely revealed. In order to make Ruth Cheung turn apostate with him, he held his son hostage and made him cry out to Ruth Cheung over the telephone every day. So Ruth finally gave in. She collapsed even before the wind and the rain came. We must be warned by this example.

A vessel that takes root and learns in secret will always have this attitude, “the more I learn, the less I feel I know.” Before God and man, he will always act with caution, fearing that he won’t be able to accomplish God’s work. He never dares to be arrogant.

God often puts His special chosen vessels in a lonely and friendless environment. God trains him to be alone with Him in secret. For example, the prophet Elijah was brought to the Brook Cherith alone with God. Twenty-six years ago, the Lord’s servant also lived alone on Mount Zion. Most people only saw the spectacular scene brought by the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel — bringing down the heavenly fire to consume the offering; killing the four hundred and fifty false prophets; causing the sky to grow black with clouds and wind, and sending down heavy rain. However, no one saw the prophet being alone with God face to face, doing the work of taking root. Likewise today, many people praise the beauty of

Mount Zion and admire the majestic pilgrimage march of all nations streaming on the highway of Zion, but they overlook the loneliness that the Lord's servant endured during the early years. At that time, he prayed all alone on Mount Zion for all nations and for the end-time revival.

Today, the Lord's servant has become a vessel that surpasses all circumstances because he learned his lessons well in secret. He took root deeply, and was often face to face alone with God. Throughout all these years, after going through countless tempests and waves, he still stands firm, because he takes root deeply and firmly. The Lord's servant has set a good example for God's children. I remember in 1979, when I was living with the Lord's servant in the Tent of Shem, we often got up at midnight to pray. When we uttered forth the midnight cry, the Lord's servant was often filled with the Holy Spirit. He spoke and interpreted in tongues, preaching forth the epochal revelations. Therefore, let us pay the price of taking root, which is praying in secret and being a watchman of Jerusalem.

Brothers and sisters, if you hope to be used by the Lord, you should begin by learning and praying in secret, and taking root in secret. Isn't this also what our Lord has taught us? He said, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6:6). God wants us to do everything in secret — not only to pray in secret, but also offer in secret before the Father. The Father who sees in secret will reward us. Therefore, we must have spiritual fellowship and to walk with the Lord in a hidden place.

Among all temptations, the hardest to overcome are the "glory of men" and the "praises of men." Seeking for these are in fact lethal exposure of the roots. The Lord also said, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable

deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (Matt. 6:1–2). Praying in secret and doing charitable deeds in secret also follow the principle of threshing wheat in the winepress.

“Then the LORD turned to him and said, ‘Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?’ ” (Judg. 6:14). What kind of “might” was this that could save Israel? Apart from threshing wheat, Gideon hadn’t done anything. Everyone knew how to thresh wheat, but could one save Israel just by threshing wheat? No one would believe it. However, in God’s eyes, Gideon, who had the determination to thresh wheat in the winepress, would have the might to save the Israelites.

This might came from Gideon’s determination to prepare food for God’s people and to accomplish God’s work in secret, regardless of the adverse environment. By this might, he answered the LORD’s call and obeyed His commission. In the end, Gideon defeated the Gentile forces, and delivered the people of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites, thus bringing freedom and liberty to God’s people. Today, God also wants His servant and the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade to save this generation by this might, to free the captives, and liberate the oppressed. I hope that we will learn and pray more in secret, so that the Father may see us in secret.

To fight against the oppressors, Gideon mobilized thirty-two thousand people. God asked Gideon to reduce the size of the army, so thirty-one thousand seven hundred people were cut out, and only three hundred warriors remained. For victory does not depend on the number of people, but on the LORD God. God’s standard for reducing troops was wonderful. He picked the mighty men not according to age, stamina, skill, or courage, but according to the posture by which they drank water. All those who got down on their knees to drink water were eliminated, only the three hun-

dred men who lapped water from their hands remained. (See Judg. 7:6–7.)

Why couldn't God use those who knelt down to drink water? When you kneel down to drink, your mouth is very close to the water, and you can drink to your satisfaction. If you are standing, and try to use your hands to cup the water to your mouth, the water tends to leak through your fingers, and by the time it reaches your mouth, there is so little left that you can only lap it up with your tongue. God did not choose the ones who knelt down to drink water because their action showed that they were not on guard against the enemies and had lost all alertness. These people sought for comfort and ease, minded their flesh, and lacked the will to suffer. They could not withstand the test of adverse circumstances. If they could kneel down and yield to the environment, they could also kneel down and surrender to the enemy. This is a spiritual principle.

If there are such people in the ranks of the Christian soldiers of the New Testament Church, sooner or later, they will be eliminated. They might even flee before the battle begins, or they will be like the people of Meroz. (See Judges 5:23.) On the other hand, those who lapped water were vigilant warriors who were filled with the spirit of battle. God could only use this kind of people. Since this battle would decide the life and death of God's people, the warriors could not care for the comfort of their flesh, not even their lives. The New Testament Church has truly gained God's approval in this regard — being alert in guarding against the enemy.

Although we have returned to Zion, we still have to be aware of the presence of the enemy. Since the kingdom of Christ has not been fully realized on earth, the enemies will try to attack and harm God's testimony in every possible way. Therefore, we must remain alert even though we have returned to Zion. We have to arm ourselves with the will to suffer, and become the present-day three hundred warriors of Gideon. Then God will put all the enemies into our hands.

After Gideon won the battle, he did a foolish thing that greatly sinned against God. He gathered all the loot such as earrings, crescent ornaments, pendants and gold chains that the people had taken from the Midianites. Then he used them to make an ephod, which he placed in his Ophrah. Later all Israel played the harlot with it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his house. (See Judges 8:24–27.)

Gideon won the battle and was successful because he searched for God again and again in everything he did. He would not rush into doing anything before he had sought clearly before God. When he was called to fight against the Midianites, he first offered up a goat and unleavened bread in order to seek for God's confirmation. Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. He was still not at peace, so he used the wetness and the dryness of the wool fleece to seek for further confirmation. In order to establish Gideon's faith, God also used the Midianite's dream to let Gideon know that He would deliver the Midianites into his hand.

Seeking God was the key to Gideon's victory. However, after he won the battle, he no longer sought God. Making the ephod was entirely his own idea — with this, he made Israel sin, and it became a snare to his entire household.

After Gideon died, all his seventy sons (besides Jotham) were suddenly killed on one stone. Our God is a jealous God. He abhors spiritual adultery — worshipping idols. This Chinese saying well-describes the life of Gideon, "Having an early success followed by failures." When Gideon sought God wholeheartedly, God gave him victory. When he turned to his own way and did whatever he pleased, he offended God and brought calamity upon his children.

Therefore, we who serve God should look upon God wholeheartedly and seek Him only. We should not act on our own. We would rather wait

before we are clear of God's will. If not, while we think that we are zealously serving Him, we might have offended the Lord instead. Before God, it is better to be passive than to be over active. It is better to wait than to rush into things. Let's seek again and again in our prayers in all things. Once we understand God's will, we should bravely go and do it. This was also the key to the success of the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong and the Lord's servant Bro. Hong.

# Gideon (2)

*(June 19, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

When the Israelites were desolate, God raised up Gideon as their deliverer. He was able to save the Israelites from desolation because he had certain traits that were approved by God. “Then the LORD turned to him and said, ‘Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites’” (Judg. 6:14). God had regard for the might that Gideon had, and sent him to save the Israelites. This might came from Gideon’s special characteristic. Now, let’s take a look at the special characteristics of Gideon that God found worthy.

## Concern for the Needs of God’s People

When the Midianites went into Israel and destroyed the produce of the land, Gideon did something — he threshed wheat. He did this according to the needs of God’s people at that time. Gideon’s action showed that he was a vessel that cared for God’s people and recognized their needs. For some people, they also care for God’s house, but they don’t know the needs of God’s people. The Midianites destroyed the produce of God’s people and took away their food. Without food, God’s people would be annihilated. This was the terrible scheme of the enemy. Gideon was not only concerned for God’s people, he also knew that they were in critical need of food and that the lack of food had become a lethal problem. Therefore, he prepared food to meet the urgent needs of God’s people.

Once, the New Testament Church also suffered the attacks of “the Midianites.” For a period of time, the produce of God’s house had almost been completely destroyed — many spiritual books (the words of God) that Sis. Kong left for us were almost sold off. When the New Testament Church was just rebuilt, we rented most of our church premises from others. When the lease ended, we had to move to another place.

When the apostate Chen came, he felt that it was too bothersome to move all these books, so he wanted to sell them all as scrap paper. One day, Chen asked a brother to look for someone who bought used things. He then sold these spiritual books by kilos. Now that we think of it, we really break out in a cold sweat. Thank the Lord, He raised up Gideon. At that time, the Lord's servant Bro. Pi had the burden of bringing back all of the spiritual produce. He began to lead the youth to study the full truth of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit according to the Bible. Once again, God's people had bread to eat. With food, the spiritual lives of the brothers and sisters grew.

Brothers and sisters, today, we must also be on guard against the wiles of the enemy, who tries all means to take away God's words from our midst. It is just like what the Lord Jesus said in the parable: When the sower went out to sow seeds, some fell by the wayside, some fell on stony places, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good soil. When this seed (the word of life) is sown, it will always meet with the numerous attacks of the enemy. The birds will devour them, and as for the ones that are not eaten by the birds, the enemy will use thorns — the hardened hearts of man — to choke them. The enemy always tries to take away God's words from our hearts, and this is the plot of the Midianites to destroy the produce.

Sometimes someone would say, "Who cares about the teachings of the prophet?" or, "Who cares about the words of the Lord's servant?" Those who say these are the Midianites. The Midianites are specialized in making you doubt God's words, and robbing God's words from your heart. Therefore, when God's words have no place in you, or when you have no interest and disbelief in God's words, you should know that the Midianites have entered your heart. You have fallen for the wiles of the Midianites. The produce in your heart has been destroyed, and gradually, poverty will come upon you. Therefore, we must take heed to guard against this kind of situation. The words of God are our food of life. Let us be vessels that

keep and believe in God's words, and preserve His words in our midst.

At that time, right after the Israelites had sown their seeds, the Midianites came. Even before the seeds sprouted and bore fruit, the Midianites came and completely destroyed it. The Israelites planted but had no harvest. They were so impoverished. Fortunately, when Israel was in extreme poverty, they knew how to call upon God. It would've been hopeless if they had become poor and still did not know how to call upon God.

Gideon's concern for God's people was to counter attack the enemy. He saw to the needs of God's people, so he prepared food for them. This is a special characteristic of a vessel who turns the tides of the era. Our concern will have no value if it doesn't meet the needs of God's people. An irrelevant concern will be like giving a fur coat to a starving person who is about to die. What this person really needs is food, not a coat. It is like a good-for-nothing doctor prescribing his patient a headache medication for a stomachache. Therefore, not only should we show concern for people, we must also know what they need. This is a necessary trait of a vessel who turns the era.

## **Set Up Defenses**

Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress to prepare food for the people. He did this in secret, not out in the open, in order to guard against the Midianites. "Guarding against the Midianites" means hiding from the Midianites. This is setting up defenses in the heart — to always be in the spirit of guarding against the enemy and being on high alert. Such defenses in secret are not noticed by the enemy. This is something very important.

A person who wants to save God's people from the attacks of the enemies must first know how to guard against the wiles of the enemy. If he only provides food and does not know how to be on guard against the enemy, he will surely fail. He will be like a shepherd who raised his sheep

until they are fat and strong, and then went to have a good sleep without a care in the world. At night, while he was sleeping a wolf came and devoured all the sheep. The fatter the sheep, the more satisfied the wolf would be. No matter how long the sheep had been raised, the wolf would eat them all up in one night. Therefore, the spirit of providing food and guarding against the enemy always go together. Both are important qualities for shepherding and caring for God's children.

A person who is not alert and unaware of the wiles of the enemy will not successfully shepherd God's children. Just now, the Lord's servant Bro. Pi said that we should be aware of the enemy, because it is still not a time of peace. The kingdom of the Lord Christ has not been realized, and the enemy is still trying every possible means to attack and ruin God's testimony. Therefore, we cannot lose our vigilance just because we have returned to Zion.

Before we returned to Zion, I kept worrying that we might lose our alertness after returning. Truly, our spirits are not as vigilant as before. Just now, when we saw the pictures of the three families of Tan and Liu at the pigsty of Shiserliao, I think our spirit of guarding against the enemy is much weaker now, compared to our spirits at that time.

During those days, Bro. Liu did not have to arrange shifts for the nightly vigil prayers because everyone was alert. Everyday, the Kuomintang (KMT) police were swarming all around the vicinity of Shiserliao, so we did everything in the spirit of Gideon, guarding against the KMT. Now, we are not as fortified, and we have become naive like Nathanael. We often lose our sense of alarm, and take wolves as sheep. We need to be delivered from this condition. I am not saying that we should treat everyone around us as Midianites, but we should know that the Midianites are still trying to destroy our produce.

May God restore among us the spirit of guarding against the enemy

that we used to have, whether it was when we were in Shiserliao; when we wandered at the riverbed; or when we returned to Zion from the back of the mountain. Don't think that there are no more battles and that everything is in peace just because we no longer see people in uniforms, armed with batons and guns. Brothers and sisters, the enemy will find a chance to attack us at any time, so we must be aware of his wiles and give no foothold for him. We must always maintain the spirit of fighting in the front line, to be alert and on guard against the enemy at all times. Only then can you be a deliverer of God's people. These were the feelings of Gideon as he threshed wheat in the winepress.

## **Depart from Personal Feelings**

When Gideon was called by God, he asked God for signs. In fear and trembling, he sought for God's confirmation and leading. This spirit is very precious. He used the wool fleece to test if God had truly chosen him and wanted to save Israel by his hand.

"So Gideon said to God, 'If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said — look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said' " (Judg. 6:36–37). True enough, God did as he requested. He said again, "Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew" (Judg. 6:39). God also did according to what he said.

I think these signs of the fleece also describe the experience that a person who wants to serve God and His people should go through. Sometimes, we are like the damp wool, having much water inside — we are fresh and full of juice, having the presence of God. However, our surroundings are dry and desolate. We cannot see any results of our labor, and nothing really works for us. This is a training that a person who wants to serve God has to undergo. He must be able to withstand difficult envi-

ronments and desolation. Elijah also went through the same test: the water of the Brook Cherith was drying up and the trees were withering day by day. And it worsened with each passing day. At this time, will you be able to stand firm? Can you withstand this kind of trial?

We always hope to produce immediate results when we work, but God deliberately lets us see no results of our labor. Under such trialing circumstances, will you continue to serve God? Can you be like our dear Sis. Jael Wu who carefully shepherded in Thailand her whole life, but saw no obvious results? After so many years, the number of sheep she shepherded remained the same — just a handful. If you were her, would you continue to shepherd them? Her life was like the damp wool fleece on the dry ground.

On the other hand, sometimes the fleece is dry while the surrounding ground is all wet. This is a wonderful experience. Sometimes, a shepherd may feel that he is weak, full of shortcomings, and lack God's words. However, all around him is a continuous revival, and he keeps seeing his work produce results. I think Gideon really had spiritual understanding when he used these two methods to seek for God's confirmation.

Oftentimes, we dare not work for God when our condition is not normal. We always think that God will work, and our work will produce results only when our condition is normal. However, it is wonderful that God's work often begins when we are brought to the end of our means, or when we feel that we can do nothing. Then we know that we did not do the work, but God did. I also have this experience.

Sometimes, when I feel exhausted and overloaded, I say to God, "Lord, I can't bear the burden, it is too heavy. Please release me, and let me go! I want to take a long break. Let me give up God's kingdom, okay?" I'm not trying to act humble. I really have these experiences. I am not always strong. When trials come upon me, sometimes I would also ask God for a break.

However, the Lord never lets me go. He permits me to remain dry and desolate. However, it is very wonderful. The churches did not collapse due to my weakness. Instead, they were greatly revived.

Actually, God allowed this to happen in order to test and mold us, so that we will dare not rob God of His glory. We will not dare rely upon ourselves, or boast of ourselves. We will only trust in God. Hence, when we feel strong in the spirit, we will not be proud, and when we feel dry in the spirit, we will not lose courage. For this reason, God does not let us see the fruit of our work when we are proud of ourselves. On the contrary, when we feel that we are weak and incapable, our labor keeps producing results. This is God's hand that saves us from our own feelings.

Therefore, a vessel who wants to serve God and save His people must depart from his own feelings. Whether we feel strong or weak, we must assume our ministry by God, and completely surpass the environment. In this way, we will not be discouraged, nor will we be arrogant. Instead, we will trust in God in all things.

### **Give Priority to God's Will**

Gideon knew what kind of vessels God wanted to use, so he chose his companions in battle according to what God wanted. This is the story of Gideon's three hundred warriors: All those who were fearful and trembling were allowed to go home. Only those who did not care for their lives and were unafraid of death could stay. This first test dismissed twenty-two thousand people. There were ten thousand left, and God said that there were still too many and the number still had to be reduced. God wanted excellent soldiers. This tells us that the excellence of the army — not the number — is the key to victory in spiritual battles.

All ten thousand people who passed the first test had the will of "If I die, I die." However, God wanted to test them further by seeing the way they drank water. Consequently, nine thousand seven hundred people knelt

down to drink, while three hundred people scooped the water up to their mouths and lapped water with their tongues like a dog. In terms of the way they look, those who knelt down to drink water looked better than those who lapped water.

However, God wanted to use the three hundred who lapped water, not the nine thousand seven hundred who knelt down on their knees to drink. This was because those who lapped water had a will — battling and killing the enemies was first priority, rather than their physical need. The enemy was just ahead of them — how could they take their time to kneel down and drink to their hearts' content? They didn't care about their satisfaction and comfort, but just took what was barely enough by lapping some water. This is the spirit of battle. They put aside all their personal comforts, prosperity, and enjoyment, and put God's will and killing the enemies as top priority.

In fact, we are constantly facing these tests everywhere. During the days of wandering, we lapped water with our hands to our mouths. But now after having returned to Zion, we think that we could take our time to get down on our knees and drink to our satisfaction.

In the past, when the Liu family was living on Mount Zion, they hardly had meat for food. When they had some, they didn't eat it up at once, but licked it. Once, they caught a hare. After Sis. Tan cooked the hare, she kept some for the Liu brothers who were weeding on the other side of the mountain. The Liu brothers returned only several days later. They did not eat the meat all at once; they ate it slowly by licking it first. Now, we are completely different. Not only do we kneel down to drink water to our satisfaction, we even complain, saying, "What kind of water is this? How can you drink this kind of water?" May God restore among us this spirit of lapping water, and get rid of the spirit of, "I can't survive without this or that."

Our all is in God's hands. Since God has chosen us, His grace will be sufficient for us. If God prepares for us, we can live in big houses or palaces; if not, we can also live in a place like the riverbed. We can live in all kinds of environments. We can live in a palace, or a pigsty. We can praise God in a palace; we can also praise Him in a pigsty. This is a necessary training for all of us, because God wants to use this kind of person to turn around the fate of God's people, delivering them from desolation.

I hope we will remember that God uses those who lap water with their hands, not those who kneel down to drink water. Gideon knew this principle, so he chose his battle companions according to God's standard. Today, we must also know that only those who lap water can go out to battle with us. Those who have to kneel down to drink water will leave us one day. Therefore, you need to be alert when you see this kind of people, lest you will be influenced by them. When you are lapping water, and you see others kneeling down and drinking to their heart's content, will you be affected and follow their example?

Brothers and sisters, as long as you lap your water, you will be highly regarded by God, so do not be envious of others' success and prosperity. It sounds easy, but when trials come, we might not be able to stand firm. We might say, "We are all running on the same path; why am I lapping water, while others are kneeling down to drink? People always like to compare. In fact, you can also kneel down to drink water if you want to. I also wanted to kneel down and drink water before, but God did not allow me. He wanted me to keep lapping water from my hands. Thank God, He didn't let us kneel down to drink water. May God let us always lap water from our hands until His work is accomplished.

### **Bring People Back to God's Rule**

After Israel defeated their enemy, "The men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian'" (Judg. 8:22). The people of

Israel willingly chose Gideon to govern and rule over them. So Gideon was elected and supported by the people. But Gideon said, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you” (Judg. 8:23).

Gideon brought the people under God’s rule, and let God govern the people. He and his sons would not rule over the people and he did not want to start a “Gideon Dynasty.” This is truly rejecting human rule and leading God’s people back to His rule, submitting to God’s sovereignty! This is an important trait of a vessel of the era. Just as Paul said, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

Man will never rule well; only God’s rule can bring men true grace and blessings. God wants all people to recognize His rule and submit to His sovereignty. Therefore, a vessel called by God to save His people has to terminate man’s rule and bring people back to God’s rule.

### **Secretly Rob God of His Glory**

After Gideon succeeded, he did something that greatly offended God. He made an ephod and placed it in his city, Ophrah. Only a priest could wear an ephod. Gideon was not a priest, but he used the spoils of war to make an ephod as a souvenir of his victory. This ephod became a snare to him and his entire house. All those who serve God will also readily face such a test and temptation.

When Gideon made an ephod with the spoils of war to remember his own achievements, he was robbing God of His glory. God was extremely displeased. People could not tell what was wrong, but God knew. There are many ways to steal God’s glory. Some people make a golden calf, but some make an ephod instead. A golden calf is more easily noticeable to people that it is not God. However, people have a different feeling and concept towards an ephod.

Ephods are for the priests to wear, and they have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on them. Usually, when people see an ephod, they connect it to the priest set up by God, a minister who cares about God's people. With this kind of concept, the Israelites naturally accepted the ephod made by Gideon. Gideon had a heart to lead the people to God, but in the end, he failed to overcome the last temptation. Gideon did not exalt himself over the people, nor rule over them, but he wanted them to remember his merit of saving God's people. So he realized his desire in the form of an ephod, and put it in his city as a memorial. This ephod was a spiritual falsehood. It secretly stole God of His glory. This is truly the wile of the enemy.

Today, there are also people who make ephods in God's church. Such person makes brothers and sisters feel that he is capable and spiritual, full of care for others. For this reason, brothers and sisters hope that he will shepherd them, just as the people of Israel hoped that Gideon would rule over them. However, our God searches the hearts of people. His eyes are like flames which see through the hidden thoughts of people's hearts. Just as this self-made ephod became a snare to Gideon and his household, it will also become a snare to the ephod-maker of today. I hope we will not worship the ephod like the foolish Israelites. All the more, we must not make an ephod like Gideon, lest we bring disasters upon ourselves and others.

The Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong Duen Yee is truly our good example. She imitated the Slain Lamb, our Lord Jesus, to offer up her all — sacrificing her life — for God's end-time will. She is indeed the Gideon of this era who threshes wheat in the winepress for God's people. She prepared the food — restored the complete truth of Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit, as well as rebuilding the glorious New Testament Church. Through her, the mystery that had been hidden for ages was once again revealed to God's people.

Now, God's people can become one in Christ, and be planted and established in the Truth. In these last days, Sis. Kong Duen Yee saved God's people from poverty and delivered them from the hand of the present-day Midianites. However, she did not make an ephod. During those days before she was received by the Lord, she was so sick that she was just a bag of bones. She lost all her hair, and she had everything taken away from her. Today, the apostates have even taken away the house at Soares Ave. that she had offered to God. However, we thank God, all this shows that the Lord's maidservant did not make an ephod for us to worship.

May we imitate the Lord's faithful maidservant Sis. Kong to sacrifice ourselves, to never leave ephods for the latter generation to worship. We will not make any snare for the latter generation. Apart from the Lord, the Truth, and God's will, we leave nothing behind for our descendants. If we ever do anything for the Lord, or if the Lord does anything through us, we should render all success and glory to Him. Do not turn our success into an ephod and secretly steal God of His glory. Otherwise we will greatly sin against Him. May we all pay heed to God's will, and pay attention to our purity before Him, so that we can completely bring people before God.





# Barak





# Barak (1)

*(June 25, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Hermon Lee  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

First, we will take a look at the history background of the time when Barak was raised up, “In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, and the travelers walked along the byways. Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel. They chose new gods; then there was war in the gates; not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel” (Judg. 5:6–8).

At that time, the travelers did not walk along the highways, but the byways. You can tell that public order was poor. There were no ministers in Israel, and the people had no goal or direction. The Israelites chose new gods (worshipped idols), and there was war in their city gates. The nation had no defensive power, because none of the troops of Israel were armed. The Israelites were under the oppression of the enemy for twenty years, and they cried out to the LORD. Thus God raised up Deborah and Barak to save His people from the tragic oppression of human rule and bring them back to God’s rule. This was a very difficult mission.

Barak was called a witness of faith, because through faith, he subdued kingdoms, and routed the entire foreign armies. In the battle of Mount Tabor, Barak only had a quarter of Israel’s troops with him. Although outnumbered by the enemy, Barak defeated Sisera and destroyed his whole army. Under impossible circumstances, Barak manifested God’s surpassing power.

Barak’s faith was rooted in the LORD God and the prophet raised up by God. He was wholeheartedly in one accord with the vessel of the era and absolutely submitted to him. Barak could take the action of faith because

he recognized the ministry of the prophet, and had a life connection to him. He also fully trusted in the prophet's leading. During the battle of Mount Tabor, if Barak did not have a true recognition towards Deborah's ministry, he would have been rushing to his death when he charged down to the valley Kishon, because he was outmatched by a powerful army. Even if the people of Israel were brave and willing to die, without Barak's faith and submission to Deborah in leading the troops to advance, Israel would not have been able to set out to destroy the enemies. Therefore, the key to victory was Barak's faith and his submission to the vessel of the era.

The story of Barak reminds me of God's maidservant, Sis. Rachel, who also has the characteristics of Barak. When she returned to Zion at the end of last year, she testified saying, "The Lord's servant Bro. Hong is the dearest person to me, and I cannot live without him..." Although these words are simple, they are her living testimony. She cannot live, work, and serve God without this minister. In Southeast Asia, she often says, "I am not the vessel of the era, so the flow of the Holy Spirit does not come from me. I do not have my own messages. My job is only to bring the brothers and sisters into the feelings and burdens of the Lord's servant..."

Recently when I returned to Malaysia, I had a chance to see how she served the Lord. I noticed that she really paid close attention to the prayers of the Lord's servant, his letters, and Zion's Spiritual Flows. She wanted to correctly feel the burden of the Lord's servant. To her, submitting to the apostles is not a theory.

Every time before we went for a prison visit (when Sis. Cecilia was in prison), she would search earnestly and carefully before the Lord, so that she could lead the battle in the feelings and burden of the Lord's servant. Therefore, whenever we went for a prison visit, the warriors in Southeast Asia felt that they were not fighting the battle alone, but the Lord's ser-

vant was among them and leading them out to battle. It is very wonderful. Because of the life connection between the spiritual minister and the vessel of the era, the saints in Southeast Asia were able to have a direction and gained power to fight.

This time, when God brought me back to Zion, He let me realistically face my own serving. I have been in the West for nine years, but I have never concretely touched the spiritual power. Now I understand that it was due to my lack of faith in the prophet. I was determined to be faithful and diligent in preaching the gospel. Sometimes, I thought I was doing pretty well. I even went out by myself to preach the gospel faithfully. However, I often failed in the matter of connecting with the apostles. I often found excuses for myself: “I am not that familiar with the Lord’s servant, so I don’t know what to write. My matters are too trivial, and the Lord’s servant doesn’t have the time to read my letter. Anyhow, the real connection is in the spirit, so the Lord’s servant should know we are faithful.”

As time passed, my connection with God’s servant became loose. Unconsciously, I began to pay attention to the outward works. I tried to look for God’s glorious works from the newspapers, magazines, TV news, or from my shepherding work to report to the Lord’s servant. Sometimes, I wrote letters as a matter of routine, such as making reports on the ministry we assumed. However, inside me, I lacked spiritual connection with the vessel of the era.

It is good to be faithful and hard-working, but without “believing in the one sent by God,” all our works will not have much spiritual value, because we have neglected the fact that the vessel of the era is the representative of God. If we have fellowship with him, we are having fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. If we depart from the vessel of the era, we are separated from God.

Once, the Lord's servant said to me, "The headquarters of the denominations also send pastors to various places to shepherd the flock..." I understood what he meant, and I was trembling in fear. If a worker of the New Testament Church lost his connection with the vessel of the era, would he be any different from the preachers of the denominations? The denominations do not have apostles, nor do they have the vessel of the era. Therefore, they do not have to learn the lesson of submitting to the vessel of the era. So they are not doing God's work, but man's work.

Barak said to Deborah, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" (Judg 4:8). According to Barak's recognition, they could not do without the prophet in the battle of Mount Tabor. And because Barak *could not do without this person*, he won a great victory in the battle.

Barak had another trait: He did not highly regard himself, but held fast to his own position. He knew his own position, as well as others'. He was not a prophet, nor a judge. He was just someone that God had allocated to Deborah, to be her co-worker. He could never replace Deborah. But Deborah happened to be a woman. She was not like the other judges of the Bible, who were all mighty men in battles. For example, Shamgar, the judge who came before Deborah, killed six hundred Philistines with just an ox goad. It seemed like Deborah only sat under a palm tree and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. How could she command a valiant man such as Barak?

Obviously, Barak had dealt with his carnal life. He had spiritual insight towards the ministry of the prophet, and did not judge her by appearance. He was bright in the spirit. In this aspect of following the vessel of the era, the Lord's servant Bro. Hong has been our good example. He closely followed and submitted himself to the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong and to Ruth Cheung before she turned apostate.

When I first arrived in the West, I was the first consecrated brother there. All the other co-workers there were sisters, and the leading co-worker was also a sister. When I went out with Sis. Fidelia to handle matters, I would be the one actually doing the job, but she made the decisions. At first I felt uneasy within, due to my carnal self. But God wanted me to learn this spiritual lesson, to deny my personal feelings and submit to the spiritual minister. Now I know how Barak felt. Nevertheless, he had learned well in this aspect.

Barak was able to submit to the vessel of the era who seemed weaker than himself. Apart from this, Barak also had another commendable characteristic: He could coordinate harmoniously with the other leaders. In today's terms, he was able to coordinate with all the ministers in God's house. Barak knew that if he wanted to defeat the enemies, not only did he have to be in one accord with the vessel of the era, but also coordinate with the other leaders. "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; as Issachar, so was Barak sent into the valley under his command..." (Judg. 5:15). We can see that Barak had a gentle spirit. Despite his high position, he did not become arrogant and refuse to coordinate with others. God also worked wonderfully. The more humble Barak was, the more the leaders of the other tribes were in one mind with him, and the more they could accept his leading. In the end, they followed him to charge down into the valley of Kishon and attack the enemies.

On the contrary, those who had "great resolves of heart" and "great searching of heart" found the least grace. (See Judges 5:15–16.) Such people had their own ideals and ambitions, and often could not agree with one another. As a result, they failed to coordinate with other ministers and do God's work together. When the armies of Israel won the battle, these people had no share in the glory. This is a warning for us from God.

A leader has his own lessons to learn, as well as those who are being led. Those who are led will have to learn the lessons of humility and

submission. By nature, no one would like to be Barak — to be led by others. When I first came to Canada, Sis. Prisca was leading the church there. She made all the decisions about the church services, assuming the ministry, and other matters. In my heart, I naturally could not submit, because I brought her back to the New Testament Church. Does it mean that just because she consecrated a few months earlier than I, she gets to be Deborah, and I have to be Barak? At that time, in all the letters that the Lord's servant gave us, he always placed her name before mine. It was, "Prisca, Hermon," and not, "Hermon, Prisca." In the beginning, it was truly hard to endure.

From here, we can see that by human nature, we really care about personal glory, and because of this we fail to find more grace in the lesson of coordination. After two months, when we received letters from the Lord's servant again, the form of address began to change. Then it was, "Hermon, Prisca." At that time, I was very happy. Actually, we should have received that letter earlier. The letter had been delayed for two months because the postal department went on strike. God paid up such a price to let me learn how to be humble and to coordinate.

If Barak wanted to make comparisons with Deborah, he had many things to compare with. Why do I have to take away the captives, while you, Deborah, only have to sing a song? (See Judges 5:12.) If we are not cautious, we will often make comparisons when coordinating. We tend to compare with others in terms of skill, education, capability in handling matters, spiritual gifts, etc. However, Barak did not compare himself with others. All he knew was his mission of saving Israel. Therefore, he had to coordinate with all the ministers, and bring all the people to the vessel of the era, so that their hearts would turn to the leader of Israel. Barak's humble spirit of coordination enabled him to lead the people back to God's rule. (See Judges 5:2.)

When the Israelites went into battle, they made a perfect picture. Above,

there was a commander leading the troops in one accord with the vessel of the era, and below, the people followed commands and took action. All of them helped one another and coordinated with one another according to their own role. Therefore, God was very pleased. He even mobilized the stars to fight against the enemies, and the armies of Israel won a glorious victory.

We can't coordinate well with the other ministers usually because we like to claim credit for ourselves. Whenever we do something for the Lord, we hope to be rewarded for our work. There was a period of time when I co-worked with some other ministers, I felt that I didn't get any credit even though I had done a lot of things. When Sis. Li-chu reported, she never mentioned my name, and instead, she gave all the credit to the other companions. The carnal self of wanting to claim all the credit made me fretful and envious. I thought I had done a thankless task. Barak was indeed a good example for us to follow. If we are willing to coordinate with others, others will also be willing to coordinate with us. When we coordinate well in God's house, God will surely work gloriously.

Barak had another special trait: He lived before God at all times, and could be called and used by Him at any time. (See Judges 4:6.) When Deborah sent for him to assume the ministry, he immediately went up, and led the armies of Israel into battle according to God's time. If a vessel usually passes his days in ease, God will not be able to use him even if He wanted to. On the other hand, if a vessel can be used by God, God will reveal him when the time comes. The vessel of the era will also recognize him, so you don't have to worry that he might be neglected.

Sometimes, we have great ambitions in our hearts to do this or that for God, but we do not realize that we need to equip ourselves. We only know how to admire or envy others. Everyday, we dream of the splendor of the day when we can be used by God but are unwilling to get down to earth and enrich ourselves. Instead, we always pass our days worrying about

personal losses or gains. We desire to be used by God, but at the same time, we need to practically equip ourselves and learn our lessons in secret. Then, God will definitely find us worthy.

Also, in success, Barak was not so complacent that he forgot his mission. Instead, he continued to pursue the enemies until they were completely wiped out. This is a precious determination. By right, if Sisera was weary, Barak would be even more so. However, Sisera lost his alertness when he was weary because he fell asleep, and this led to his death. Although Barak was weary, he continued to pursue the enemies. In assuming ministry or learning lessons, if we have the determination of Barak to be thorough, we will completely wipe out the enemies. The will of God will also be accomplished even more concretely and gloriously.

## **Barak (2)**

### *The Forerunner of Blitzkrieg Warfare*

*(June 25, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

The “Blitzkrieg” (lightning war) was the name of a strategy used in the Second World War, and it means a sudden violent enemy attack. The battle is as fast as lightning, so the opponents are caught unprepared. The battle of Mount Tabor was a successful lightning war. In just a short period of time, Barak was ready for mobilization and attack. And in a short period of time, they attacked and annihilated Sisera’s entire army and nine hundred chariots.

Actually, “Barak” means “lighting.” Barak truly lived up to his name. From the battle you can see that he was swift, vigorous, initiative, valiant and surpassing. God bestowed him all these characteristics, so that he could win the great battle of Mount Tabor, and save Israel from the oppression of Jabin and Sisera, the despots.

Barak’s characteristics are also exactly what Jesus Christ requires of His soldiers. Whether it is in a spiritual army or a worldly army, the worst traits to have are obtuseness, sluggishness, passiveness, inactiveness, timidity, inferiority, and indecisiveness. Such kind of vessel will never be a military general, not even a Christian soldier.

From among the tens of thousands of Israelites, Deborah chose Barak and set him as the commander over the battles of Israel. She didn’t choose him according to her own sharp judgment. Instead, because Deborah was a judge and a prophetess, she could foretell which person God had chosen and set up to be the commander that would fight the good battle of Mount Tabor.

The Lord's maidservant came to Taiwan in December 1965 to choose the Lord's servant Bro. Hong to fight the last battle in the history of mankind — ending man's rule and bringing all people and things back to God's rule. The Lord's servant is also a man of lightning. He possesses Barak's special characteristics, and this is the main key to winning the final victory in this spiritual battle. Today, we are fighting together with the Lord's servant, so we need to ask the Lord to equip us with the special characteristics of agility, vigor, mobility, valor, and being surpassing. We need to be built up with these spiritual qualities, so that we can win this final battle of terminating the human kingdoms.

Barak did not recommend himself for the position of commander — it was God's instruction to Deborah. It was not a coincidence that Barak was chosen by Deborah. Before Deborah the prophetess knew about him, God had already known him. Brothers and sisters, we do not worry that people will not know us or fear that God will not recognize us. We only fear that God will not find us worthy because we did not live before Him. If God does not find us worthy, what is the value even if we are well-known to the whole world?

Today, the whole world knows Bush and Gorbachev, but God says, "I do not choose them." Then what is the use of being well known? What we desire is not the recognition of men, but the choice of God. May we have all the traits that Barak possessed.

"Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, "Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's

army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand”? And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!’ So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman’... And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.” (Judg. 4:4–10)

Barak was a typical vessel who believed in the one sent by God. He respected the prophet anointed by God and obeyed the spiritual leader. He did not have even a little doubt towards God’s commands given to him through Deborah. He resolutely answered the call and headed for the battlefield. He initiatively asked Deborah to go with him, not to put away the responsibility, but to hand over the power of command in the battle to the prophetess. He completely accepted her directions, mobilization, sending, and arrangements. He was a simple vessel who had no desire or ambition to lead.

The love of seeking fame and the crave to be a leader has been the source of chaos in man’s kingdoms. In order to overthrow others and to make themselves rulers, many who have wild ambitions in man’s kingdoms will even resort to using military force and causing military disasters. As long as they attain their goal, they don’t care how many thousands of people have to be sacrificed. As a Chinese saying goes, “Thousands have to die for the success of a general.”

When the Lord was on earth, the disciples disputed among themselves who was the greatest, so what more to say the people of the world? Today, there are still factions and disputes in the church. The root of the problem lies in men’s desire for being great and becoming the leader. However, the Lord said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so

among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave" (Matt. 20:25–27). In this regard, Barak was indeed a good example. He had no desire to be a commander or a leader in the battlefield. How unselfish he was! What abundant life he had!

Barak was also a vessel that could take up a mission in times of danger. He submitted to the spiritual leader — the vessel of the era, and fought in one accord with him, disregarding his own life. Let us see under what kind of circumstances he was called: At that time, he was faced with a great enemy who came the entire army. Moreover, the enemy had advanced weapons — nine hundred iron chariots. In contrast, "not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel." (See Judges 5:8.)

The enemy was fully armed and prepared, yet Deborah wanted Barak to lead only ten thousand to fight against them. These ten thousand soldiers were no match for the enemies. Nevertheless, Barak did not harbor any doubts, but immediately answered the call and shouldered up this big job. His faith in the LORD and in His prophet was pure and precious. We thank the Lord, in the New Testament Church, there are also many vessels who can take up a mission in the face of danger. This is the key to the victory of the New Testament Church. If we have Barak's faith in the prophet, we shall soon conquer today's Edom and gain a full-scale victory just as that of the battle of Mount Tabor.

Barak was a broad-minded vessel, who learned the lessons of life. Deborah clearly said to him, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory (or accomplishments) for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." However, Barak did not care about his own glory. He only knew that he could not fight without the prophet. As long as the prophet went with him, the entire army of Sisera would definitely be defeated, and the whole house of Israel would be saved. As long as God's will was done, he didn't have

to claim the merit. He didn't have to enjoy the results of the battle, nor gain any reward — he was so openhearted!

Just now, Bro. Hermon also gave a life testimony. Over the years, he has been faithfully serving and fighting various spiritual battles in America. He often takes up missions in the face of danger, and he has done a lot of work. However, his name was never mentioned in Sis. Li-chu's reports. Instead, the credit was always given to someone else. It seemed as though there was no such co-worker existing in America.

Believing the prophet and submitting to his leading is not only a lesson of life, it is also a lesson which seems as though you will lose your life. Many co-workers have learned the same lesson Bro. Hermon learned. To a person who serves God, it is not hard to overcome all kinds of temptations by the grace of God. However, it is not easy to over the praises of man. When this happens to you, you will feel that your talents are neglected just as a pearl lost in the sea. Outwardly, you may remain silent, but inside, you may be grumbling in misery. You may even complain that the Lord's servants don't really recognize you, not knowing the talent you have. In fact, human glory doesn't have much value.

May we all be like the hymn that says, "I care not whether I gain men's glory, only fear to lose Your reward (only seek to please God)." Whenever you seek man's glory, you are working and living before man. When you seek only for the Lord's delight, you will naturally live before Him. You will pray, work, serve, and even fight before the Lord.

*Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, 'I also will surely go out with you myself.' But the people answered, 'You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you*

*are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city.”*

(2 Sam. 18:2–3)

From the above verses, it seems as though the reaction of the people towards David was just the opposite of Barak’s reaction towards Deborah. The people of Israel asked David not to go out to the battlefield with them, But Barak asked Deborah to go with him to the battlefield. Who was right and who was wrong? The army of Israel had an important reason to stop David from going to the battlefield because this battle concerned David’s life or death.

The people of Israel treasured David’s life more than their own, and they did not want to see the lamp of Israel extinguished. On the other hand, Barak asked Deborah to go battle with him, and it seemed as though he was putting the life of the prophetess in danger. Deborah was a woman, and she would not be able to charge at the frontline. Moreover, if she encountered danger, wouldn’t Israel lose their judge and their protection? For this person was connected to the fate of Israel. Actually it was not so.

Barak and all Israel also respected God’s anointing, and treasured the vessel of the era. Like the mighty men of David, their spirit was closely connected to the prophet, except that the circumstances were different at that time. According to Barak, the battle of Mount Tabor would be a decisive victory. He deeply knew from Deborah’s prophecy that the LORD had already handed the entire army of Sisera into his hands. However, in the case of David’s soldiers, they were facing a powerful enemy, Absalom. It was uncertain who would win the battle, so they could not allow their king to risk his life. In short, both parties acted in the principle of treasuring the spiritual leader.

The Lord’s servant Bro. Hong often mentions how he followed Sis. Kong and Ruth Cheung. It was not easy for him to submit himself to the

Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong. People in the Christian Assembly ridiculed him for following a woman who was a movie star. After Sis. Kong rested in the Lord, Ruth Cheung succeeded her ministry. She was laughed at, and called a "hereditary apostle." Moreover, Cheung was as young as Bro. Hong's daughter. If the Lord's servant Bro. Hong did not have Barak's insight, it would have been very difficult for him to submit to her. However, the Lord's servant was like Barak in this regard. He did not sway because of what people said. He respected God's anointing and treasured the spiritual leader until Ruth Cheung turned apostate. This was truly not easy.

In 1978, the New Testament Church preached the gospel and shook the whole village of Guihou in Wanli. When Sis. Li-chu led the brothers and sisters of Keelung to assume the ministry, they were heavily surrounded by a group of idol-worshippers. They forced Sis. Xiang to kneel down and apologize to their idol. They beat up many brothers and sisters especially Sis. Xiang who refused to kneel down even if she died. The thugs then tried to overturn the gospel van and set it on fire.

According to the news report, that night, thousands of Gentiles had gathered to attack us. When the Lord's servant heard about the battle, he was very anxious, and wanted to personally go to Wanli to share the afflictions of the brothers and sisters. At that time, the co-workers tried their best to stop the Lord's servant from going. The co-workers had the spirit of David's soldiers: "You shall not go out! For if we are injured or killed, the enemy will not care; if you were to die, it would affect the entire New Testament Church, because you are the lamp of the New Testament Church. No matter what, this light cannot be extinguished." This is truly treasuring the life of the spiritual leader more highly than their lives.

Brothers and sisters, today we are fighting this last battle with the Lord's servant, and a full-scale victory is at hand. We should imitate Barak to take the victory of the prophet as the victory of the congregation. The

glory of the prophet is also our glory, and we will also have a share in his reward. Therefore, we will not claim our own achievements, credit or glory. Like a drop of water that merges into the flow, let us join the congregation, and become the turbulent waters of the River Kishon. We will drown the entire army of the present-day Sisera, terminate the human kingdoms, and bring in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Barak (3)**

*(June 25, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

Coordination is an urgent need in our midst. Barak had a special characteristic — he was able to coordinate with the spiritual leader, as well as all the other spiritual ministers. Every one of us needs to carefully learn in these two aspects of coordination, which involve many life lessons.

### **Able to Coordinate with the Spiritual Leader**

Coordinating with the spiritual leader is a very deep lesson, in which the co-workers will often be tested. The test will be especially great when the leader is a woman. I feel that in the New Testament Church, I was most severely tested because the first spiritual leader that God raised up in this last era was Sis. Kong, a woman. When I accepted Sis. Kong as the spiritual leader, many people, especially those in the Christian Assembly, laughed at me. They said, "This Hong does not follow Witness Lee, but a sister who used to be a movie star. He is hopeless."

At that time, I had only endured the trial of accepting the leading of a woman. But my trial was even greater when Cheung became the leader. Sis. Kong was older than me, but her daughter Ruth Cheung was about my daughter's age, and I had to accept her leading. To me, this was the hardest test ever. If it were not by the Lord's mercy, I would have failed the test. However, I thank God, although He tested me in many aspects, He also gave me sufficient grace to pass the tests. Barak had the same test at that time. But he was able to accept the leading of the female leader that God had raised up. Moreover, he also coordinated well with the spiritual leader with deep respect from his heart. He respected and treasured the spiritual leader to a point that he could not do without Deborah. This was a very important point.

Barak had God's entrustment, but he still had to submit to the leader. This was not an easy lesson to learn. This was also one of the reasons why I was unable to coordinate with Sis. Kong in the beginning. At that time, I thought I also had God's entrustment, and also my share of ministry. I felt that my share of ministry was no smaller than hers. With this concept, it was not easy for me to coordinate with Sis. Kong.

Brothers and sisters, it is valuable to receive a portion of entrustment from God, but when your portion of ministry is revealed by God and approved by men, will you still be able to keep to your position and co-ordinate with the leader? If you have learned this lesson before, you will know what a person might think in the process of coordinating with the leader: I will either coordinate as equals or not at all. Just like collective leadership — decisions are made by the majority, not by one single person. This concept is terrible. To put it plainly, the serving in Southeast Asia is able to gain so much grace because they absolutely observe the principle of unitary leadership. The serving in the West has to put in more effort in this regard, so that God's Spirit can freely move among them.

Before a vessel's ministry is revealed and recognized by man, it may be easier for him to obey the leader. However, when his ministry is revealed and acknowledged, it will be difficult for him to keep to his position. He can even serve without the spiritual leader. Since the New Testament Church was rebuilt, the co-workers have been facing this severe test for more than two decades. Many co-workers have been removed from the path of serving because they failed to learn lessons in this aspect.

There used to be a co-worker surnamed Chou. When the Lord's maid-servant Sis. Kong was about to be received by the Lord, he was prepared to be Sis. Kong's successor. He thought that Cheung was too young, and what could a young girl do? So he thought that if the Lord received Sis. Kong, her successor would definitely be him. However, Cheung held a global coworkers' meeting in Tainan, Taiwan, where she declared, "As of

now, the apostles revealed by God are Sis. Kong, Fan, and me.” When this Chou heard this, he almost fainted. Since he could not be the successor, he would rather leave. This was how he departed.

Coordinating with the spiritual leader is a very difficult lesson. The lesson becomes harder when you have an entrustment from God, and when your position has been revealed by God and approved by people. At this time, will you still be able to respect the spiritual leader? Or will you feel that your position is so revealed that you no longer need the spiritual leader?

Barak could not fight the enemy without Deborah. He said to Deborah, “If you go with me, I will go; if you do not go with me, I will not go.” What he meant to say was, “I cannot do without you. Although I have God’s entrustment, I cannot do God’s work without you. God asked you to tell me my entrustment, so my entrustment came from you. My entrustment cannot and will not be greater than yours, nor will it be separated from yours. Therefore, I need you and cannot serve without you.”

Barak was clear about his own position, and he also recognized the order of the spiritual ministry that God arranged in Israel. Therefore, he respected God’s anointing to a point that he could not serve without Deborah: “I cannot go out to battle without you; the army of Israel also cannot battle without you. Without you, we will not win the battle and it will be the end of us.” This is the spirit of respecting and treasuring the leader anointed by God. This is exactly the same spirit that David’s warriors had as mentioned by Bro. Pi earlier. They all respected and treasured the spiritual leader so much that they could not live without the spiritual leader. Barak’s respect was not in theory but in real life.

Once, there was a person surnamed Chen and another surnamed Peng. They said that their revelation was earlier and greater than that of Sis. Kong. Because they were “greater,” as a result, God cast them out of the

New Testament Church. This kind of people will not coordinate with the spiritual leader, because they cannot obey the leading of the spiritual leader and fail to recognize the importance of the spiritual order in God's house. They only want to exalt themselves, and want to be independent. This is a frightening condition.

When Barak's ministry was revealed and confirmed by God, he could still stand firm in his own position and coordinate well with the spiritual leader. He obeyed the spiritual leader, and accepted his dispatching. Moreover, on his path of serving, he had a close bond with the spiritual leader. This was the key to why he could be used by God.

### **Able to Coordinate with All Ministers**

Another lesson is to coordinate with all the ministers. Some people can accept the leading of the spiritual leader, but they cannot coordinate with the other companions. This is also a practical lesson. In the New Testament Church, some people may say, "Did Bro. Hong say that? Apart from Bro. Hong, I will not listen to anybody." One day, people who say such words will end up saying, "Did the Lord Jesus say that? Apart from the Lord Jesus, I will not listen to anyone else." I will not be happy for these people. Instead, I fear for them, because I know that those who say these words prove that they have not come out from their carnal self. It is hard for them to coordinate with more people!

Just now, Bro. Hermon made a very good point on Judges 5:15, which says, "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; as Issachar, so was Barak." From this verse, Bro. Hermon was enlightened to see "the coordination among all ministers." Such enlightenment does not come from the mind, but from the Spirit. This verse displays a great picture: Everybody was in one accord and coordinated as a congregation.

If we have the capacity to accept everyone in the congregation, we will have a successful serving. Brothers and sisters, we have to coordinate not

only with those who have higher ministries than us, but also with all our companions, our fellow members. Only then we will have perfect coordination. We cannot listen to only the leader, as if we are only below one man and above all. We have to be able to coordinate with any person in the body. Let us put in more effort into learning this lesson.

In God's house, He needs someone not only capable, but also useful. There are many people who are capable, but they may not necessarily be useful. What is a useful person? A useful person is someone who can coordinate with others. He can serve in any place God puts him in without having his own choices and preferences. Some vessels (people) are made up of pretty good material, such as superior lumber. But if the lumber is not processed, it cannot become building material, and it will not be useful. A piece of good material must go through the cutting of the craftsman according to the measurements before it can be used.

Today, everyone here has the heart to serve God. But having the heart does not always mean being useful to God. I discovered that some vessels are absolutely enthusiastic and hard-working, but they are also absolutely independent and stubborn. When you hope that he does something a certain way, he would deliberately do it another way. It would be better not to discuss with him, because the more you discuss with him, the more he doesn't do it your way. Since he wants to do things his way, it is useless talking to him, unless Bro. Hong personally comes and talks to him. Sometimes, even when Bro. Hong talks to him, it is useless. Then, we can only wait for the Lord Jesus to come and talk to him. This kind of person will not coordinate with others well, and nowhere is suitable for him. He himself is a worker, a manager, and also a director. If others want to coordinate with him, they have to listen to his orders, or else, there will be no coordination. This kind of serving, which is not in the congregation, has absolutely no value in the spiritual realm, and its spiritual power will not be great. I think I'm too polite when I say this. Strictly speaking, he has no spiritual power at all.

The New Testament Church is the body of Christ that will trample upon snakes and scorpions. Since only the Body can trample upon the enemies, any serving not done in the Body (congregation) will have no share in trampling the enemies. It is human nature to dislike coordination, which is a test to everybody. When we work together on Mount Zion, every group faces this lesson of coordination. When we do not coordinate well, things will go wrong and we fail to accomplish our works. God's blessing will also not come upon us. Therefore, I hope that every one of us will learn this lesson seriously. Before we can co-work with others and accept their position, we must first totally deny ourselves.

### **Seek Not for Personal Glory**

Barak had been learning the lesson of not seeking personal glory; not vying for achievements; and not contending for fame. It didn't matter what happened to him as long as God's will could be done and God's people could manifest His victory. I hope we can imitate Barak, learn the lessons that Barak learned, and accept the same equipping he received from God. Every one of us will face this kind of lesson, but it all depends whether we are willing to learn it.

Deborah clearly told Barak, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking." Nevertheless, Barak did not mind at all. It is good enough as long as God's people are able to be victorious and as long as the entire army of Sisera can be destroyed. This was a great test to Barak, because he also went out to battle, but he wouldn't receive any credit for these achievements. If we were in his place, we would probably quit. By nature, man's capacity is small, and we often fight for credit. Therefore, we are often reluctant to coordinate with others, because once we coordinate, it will be difficult to claim our own credit. If we pay attention to this, we will find that we often meet with these kinds of tests.

When Barak charged into battle, all Deborah did was sing a song. If

Barak did not acknowledge that the battle was in God's will, he would not have been able to agree with Deborah. "You want me to go to the front line of the battlefield to risk my life and become cannon fodder? What is this? I do all the dangerous work, while you get to sing the song of triumph? You really know how to arrange things. We are both God's people, so why do you get such an easy task, while I have to labor?"

Brothers and sisters, we often have this kind of complaint: "I have been working hard, and my work is so heavy. Not only do I have to clean the toilets, I also have to unclog the toilets when they clog up. But other people's work is so clean and easy." The farming team might say, "We work outdoors everyday in the sun and in the rain. And now, we have to make compost with chicken and cow manure. It smells so bad that we have to wash our hands for half an hour just to get rid of the stench. You co-workers who do the literary work can sit comfortably in an air-conditioned room all day long, typing on your computer with your clean hands. We are all God's children who want to enter God's kingdom. Why do I have to suffer so much to enter God's kingdom, while you can make it so easily?" You start to complain. First, you complain about people, then you murmur against God, "Why did You make me like this, and arrange such a position for me?" This is called seeking personal glory.

In our daily life and work, we will have this kind of complaint to some extent. However, Barak did not have any complaints within him. On that day, it was Barak who was on the battlefield chasing the enemies and destroying them. The Bible says that when Barak was chasing Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and told him that she had already killed Sisera.

The Bible says, "Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying..." If we were Barak, we would probably be thinking, "I was the one who led the troops to victory; how come my name is recorded behind Deborah's? I will sing if my name, Barak, comes before Deborah's. I will not sing if my name comes behind Deborah's."

Man is so troublesome by nature. However, Barak learned well in this lesson. He didn't complain, but acknowledged one thing: the LORD caused me to charge forward and lead the enemy captive. This is God's exaltation and so I have nothing to boast about. Deborah is the leader and commander of the entire army. All I did was charge forward and pull the trigger, and together we destroyed God's enemies. When we win the battle, every one of us should rejoice and leap for joy together. When Deborah comes out to sing a song to praise God, I will definitely join her to sing and praise God.

Thank God, through these witnesses of faith of the past, God tells us that if we want to have a share in the spiritual battle, manifest God's victory and deal with the enemies, then we have to be like Barak, who did not seek for his own personal glory. He did not vie for achievements, nor did he contend for fame, but only sought for God's glory. Our gains and losses are nothing to us — only doing God's will is important. As long as the will of God can be accomplished, we are willing to do any dangerous task. We don't have to compare ourselves with others.

Every one of us just has to be faithful according to the portion that we have received from the Lord. We will thank God if He destines that Deborah's job is to do the singing, and appoints me, Barak, to charge against the enemy in the frontline. For we are not doing all this for man, but for God. Since God has entrusted me to do it that way, I will be faithful to God according to what I receive from Him. May we not only have this recognition, but also the practical learning in life. Then, we can become the present-day Barak to annihilate the enemies, accomplish God's work, and return to the heavenly home.



# Samson





## **Samson (1)**

*(June 30, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Yang Yong-yu during the morning service on Mount Zion)*

Please read Judges 13:24–25, “So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.” In Today’s English Version, the last sentence reads as, “And the LORD’s power began to strengthen him.”

Two days ago, Bro. Tan and I drove to Chiahsien to bring some electrical appliances back. On the way back, Bro. Tan testified to me about his experiences in serving God. He related to me how God had led him up to Mount Zion, and how God had molded him from the time he came to the mountain until today. He also related to me his experiences of success and failure throughout these years. I was full of feelings as I listened to these testimonies. I realized that I was often bound by my old self, and was unwilling to learn life lessons. I refused to accept the environment that God raised up to work for me. Therefore, I often remained in the condition of an infant, and I could not help but sigh before God. At this time, I suddenly remembered this part of the Bible. From here, I could see a vessel who was willing to accept God’s molding and training. He did not reject it, nor did he try to escape.

All the power of Samson’s serving came from his submission to God. I remember that the Lord’s servant once said, “If a piece of high-quality lumber does not go through the carving and molding of the craftsman, it still cannot be used in the end.” Samson was chosen by God while he was still in his mother’s womb and was consecrated to be a Nazirite. However, if he had not received God’s power as he grew up, he still could not be used by God.

Samson saw a Philistine woman and he wanted to take her as a wife, because she pleased him. (See Judges 14:1–4.) Please pay special attention to verse four, which says, “But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD — that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines.”

Samson was a vessel whose affections coincided with God’s will. Because Samson was connected to God, God was able to control his thoughts, feelings, and emotions and direct them to God’s will. Unlike Samson, my ministration is not in God’s will. In many aspects of serving, my feelings are different from that of the brother in charge. Therefore, not only do I myself suffer loss (of money, time and effort), but I also delay God’s work. If the feelings and the likings of a person who serves God cannot coincide with God’s will, he won’t be able to serve God, and God will be unable to use him.

When Samson saw a young lion come roaring against him, the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him. (See Judges 14:5–6.) It seems like *a lion roaring against him* and *the Spirit of the LORD moving him* are two different matters. Actually these two matters are related to each other. When Samson was facing the enemy, the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him. There is another kind of condition that we can see in Jeremiah 1:17, “Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them.” What is the key difference between these two?

Let us read Joshua 1:9, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” God’s Spirit (power) is with a person who is strong and courageous, who will not be afraid or dismayed before the enemy. Samson had this special characteristic in him. He was strong and courageous when he faced the enemies and was ready to devour them. God can only use this kind of person to destroy the enemies and accomplish His will.

I especially lack this characteristic of devouring the enemies. Moreover, I am the exact opposite of Samson. I am a very timid person, especially in places where there are a lot of people. I remember in 1983, when I was still working in Chiayi, the company would give me a day off every other Sunday so that I could attend service. In those days, we shouted and proclaimed in the streets to preach the gospel of God's kingdom.

Once, the elder of the church suddenly asked me to lead a group. Moreover, he handed me a microphone, saying, "Bro. Yang, since you are one of the people of Zion, you are the best person to do the proclaiming." When I heard these words, I was really nervous, but dared not refuse. I forced myself to take it, though I got into a panic. Therefore, I was unable to assume the ministry well. Later, I thought of a way out, which was to sneak out from the back door when the service was about to end. If the brothers and sisters caught me, I would tell them, "This afternoon, I have a very important matter that I must attend to. I really fall short of the Lord, because I will be unable to participate in the gospel preaching today. I will join you next time." After that, I rushed to my motorcycle and zoomed off. Although I didn't feel peaceful, I remained stubborn and left anyway. I was often stubborn in this way. After I moved to Feng-shan, I still fled away many times. How can the Spirit of God move a person like me, who is panic-stricken at the sight of the enemies? I hope that the Lord will save me more deeply in this aspect.

*Then Samson said, 'With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!' And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand and called that place, Ramath Lehi. Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant..."*

(Judg. 15:16–18)

Samson acknowledged that it was the LORD's hand that helped him kill

heaps of people with the jawbone of a donkey. It was not by his own might or ability. Without the LORD's Spirit upon him, he would not have been able to do it. Samson was a vessel who denied himself and acknowledged God's power. He was a humble vessel that did not rob God of His glory. He did not believe in his own strength, but in God's. Therefore, he rendered all the victory to God.

I am often tested in this regard. Whenever I accomplish something, I will feel smug. Outwardly, I say to people, "Thank the Lord, this is all done by God, so I give all glory to God." However, I secretly think to myself, "If I had not received certain training in a particular place, how could this matter have been done so well? I am now like a master worker." In this aspect, I need the Lord to give me the humble spirit of Samson.

"And now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" (Judg. 15:18). Didn't Samson just kill heaps of enemies with a donkey's jawbone? How come this verse says that he was about to die of thirst? After this vessel triumphed over the enemies, he was extremely thirsty. After his triumph, he did not feel self-content and capable, or that he no longer needed the help of God. Instead, he needed and thirsted for God even more.

Samson was so desirous that if he didn't receive any living water from God, he would die of thirst and fall into the hands of the enemies. Samson solely relied upon God and he always needed to regain strength from Him. Otherwise, he would die. This kind of spirit is very precious in God's eyes. God let water flow out from the earth. After Samson drank the water, his spirit revived, and his strength renewed. In October 1986, before the first group of the people of Zion returned to Zion, the Lord's servant reminded them again and again that when they returned to Zion, they must go to the big stone hill and pray at *Christ Is the Rock*. These words were truly meaningful.

In Judges 16:2–3, the enemy laid in wait for him all night, planning to kill him when it was daylight. The Bible did not say that the ambush had been exposed. No one went to tell Samson, “You must be careful, there are people surrounding you right now, and they plan to kill you at daylight.” However, Samson was alert at all times. He arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron. He could see through the wiles of the enemies, and he gave the enemies a fatal strike at the right time. Now, we are experiencing the same situation. As the kingdom of God has not come, we are surrounded by the human kingdoms on all sides. We must be vigilant against our enemies, and gird up the loins of our hearts.

“As it came to pass, when she (Delilah) pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart” (Judg. 16:16–17). Why was Samson unable to withstand the pestering and felt vexed to death? It was because he no longer lived before God. A person who does not live before God will definitely be affected by the people, things and affairs around him, and will easily sway away from God’s will. When Samson failed to live before God, he betrayed God’s entrustment, which he used to uphold. He even betrayed himself.

“Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him...however, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven” (Judg. 16:19, 22). At this time, Samson was not as alert as before. He did not guard against the enemies, even when he was completely surrounded by them. Instead, he slumbered and slept so soundly that he didn’t even wake up when someone shaved off the seven locks of his hair. Hence, God’s Spirit left him, and he fell into the hands of the enemies, who gouged out his eyes.

Even though Samson failed greatly, God still had mercy upon him. When his hair began to grow again, Samson called upon the LORD, asking God to remember him. (See Judges 16:28.) How could a person who had failed so terribly dare to ask God to remember him and strengthen him? He truly recognized God's salvation and knew how to enjoy God's grace. He had full faith in His salvation; he believed that God would never forsake him.

Here I would like to give a testimony: A few years ago, when we were planting camellia trees, the sisters of the farming team were in charge of the tending and irrigation, while the plumbing and electrical team was in charge of supplying the water. I thought that camellia trees were drought-resistant plants, so they shouldn't be given so much water after they grew. Therefore, I used small pipes and a small water pump for the irrigation. We didn't even have a reservoir for water at the peak. I told the sisters, "Contact me if you want to irrigate. I will pump the water up and you can start irrigating."

Unexpectedly, every time we irrigated the plants, the pipes would burst. In just one morning, I had to make seven or eight trips running up and down the mountain. When I heard someone shout, "Brother Yang Yong-yu!" I knew exactly what they would say next. It would definitely be, "There's no water!"

Everyday, I was constantly weighed down with work, and I tried to use human labor to make up for the inadequacies of the equipment. Who was to know, after a few days, Bro. Wu announced on the pulpit saying, "Many of our camellia trees at the peak died, because there was not enough water for irrigation." I really felt bad when I heard this. I thought to myself, I used to work in a big factory, and I successfully managed all kinds of machines, electrical machinery, freezers, and all the piping of the restrooms. But why can't I do well in such a minor work of irrigation on Mount Zion? Maybe God is not pleased with my serving here. I might as well go back

and get a job down the mountain. Otherwise, I will fall short of God.

Later, maybe my wife told the Lord's servant about my condition, for the Lord's servant said to me, "It is right for you to feel sorry when you fail, but if your feeling leads you to depart from God's will, that feeling is from the enemy. You must learn to enjoy God's grace." Because of the words of the Lord's servant, I was delivered from my old self until today.

From the Bible, we can see that Samson recognized God's salvation and had full faith to enjoy it. This was his secret for regaining strength from failures. "Let me die with the Philistines!" ...Samson killed more people at his death than he had killed during his life" (Judg. 16:30, *TEV*). At that time, Samson was brought into a temple. He knew that if the temple fell, he would also be crushed to death. However, he was filled with the spirit of, "If I die, I die." He was prepared to fight at the cost of his life! No enemy can stand before a person who is prepared to die. In other words, these enemies who still want to live will fall before a man who is as strong as death.

Samson asked God to give him strength "just this once," which meant 'for the last time.' He was prepared to die. Today, may God also give us this special trait of Samson, so that the enemies will not be able to stand before us!

## **Samson (2)**

*(June 30, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Kuang  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

The main theme is, “Samson was a Nazirite.” Let us read Judges 13:3–5, “And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now, therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.’”

*Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When either a man or a woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to the LORD, he shall not go near a dead body. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.”*

*(Num. 6:2–8)*

In the Old Testament era, all the priests, kings and prophets were anointed. Anointing oil was poured on their heads as a sign of their anoint-

ing. A Nazirite was a person who separated himself to God, and that sign was also on his head. Samson was a Nazirite, who was consecrated to the LORD while he was still in his mother's womb. He had to lead a consecrated life before God throughout his life. At that time, there was no king, priest or prophet in Israel. Samson was a Nazirite, a judge anointed by God. Therefore, he represented God to execute God's sovereignty. The sign of his anointing was the hair on his head. So he should never shave his head. His victory and his defeat were all shown through his hair. When the sign of a Nazirite remained on his head, he could entreat strength from God and gain victory. As soon as his hair was shaved off, he lost his strength, and he failed.

We, as brothers and sisters who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, have the same status before the Lord as Samson. Although we were not separated from our mothers' womb, we have been anointed by the Holy Spirit to be a holy priesthood as we have received the full gospel of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit. The Bible says that we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's own special people. We have been made priests to God to reign on earth. (See 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 5:9–10.)

According to the flesh, while we were still Gentiles, we belonged to the world. We did not have a share in the anointing of Christ, but had a share in all the sins of the Gentiles. However, after we believed in the Lord and were filled with the Holy Spirit, we led a different life. We have become holy and royal priests. Like Samson, we represent God to rule on earth. Therefore, we have a very high status. Our success and failure all depends on whether we are able to stand firm in this position of consecration.

After I believed and gave myself to the Lord, there was a great change in me. The world lost its color in my eyes. I no longer have any interest in wealth, status, and relationships between men and women. All I want to do is to serve God. This is the heart desire and life that God has given me. Before I was filled with the Holy Spirit, I had this desire, but I didn't have

the strength to fulfill it. After being filled with the Holy Spirit, with the power of the Holy Spirit, my desire to be consecrated to the Lord became stronger and stronger. However, I was not victorious very often, because I still had many natural weaknesses and I was not so spiritual.

At that time, I could not understand something about Samson: Since Samson had been consecrated to God, how could he be so careless in regards to relationships, to the point that he married a Gentile? In the past, I could not agree with this. If I could, I would have married earlier. This was because I had some godly concept of my own. Therefore, God's gospel work in me had been hindered in many ways.

When people helped me look for a marriage partner, I would immediately reject if she was a Gentile. I didn't even want to consider those new believers in the Lord. I did not carefully search before God. Therefore, although I had the desire to consecrate myself to God, because of my godly concept, I could not be like Samson, who worked many great works for God through his marriage and relationships with Gentiles. When Samson married a Gentile, his parents could not accept it, because they did not know that this matter was from the LORD. It is not easy for us to understand this.

For many years, I thought that Samson's marriage was permitted by God, but not destined by Him. As we know, God's permitted will is different from God's predestined will. The Scripture says that this matter was of the LORD. Obviously, this was in God's destined will. Of course, if we encounter situations similar to Samson's we must first seek carefully before God. If we clearly know that we are a holy people, but still use Samson's example as an excuse to marry a Gentile, God may allow us to do it, but we will suffer in the days to come.

For example, Ruth Cheung consecrated herself to serve God as a virgin. She testified many times about this, and even wrote a book. Later,

however, she could not overcome the temptation, and got married. When she married Chen, she said the marriage was in God's will, and no one could stop her. Later, reality proved that this was not in the appointed will of God; God only permitted it. At that time, she said that her husband was the head of her household, but in the church, she would be the head. Later, she gave up on this aspect of the Truth, and let her husband be the head. Not long after, she even followed her husband to turn apostate. Therefore, in the matter of marriage, we have to be very clear about God's leading.

Samson married a Philistine woman. Since this matter was from God, it was therefore in God's destined will. For God wanted to take this opportunity to work among the Gentiles. Through the marriage, God allowed Samson to go among his wife's relatives, the Philistines, so that he could deal with the enemy. In this way, Samson manifested God's power.

Whenever Samson wanted to do something, God's Spirit would come upon him mightily. The Bible shows in many places that Samson did not plan to do anything, but when he dealt with the enemies, he was greatly moved by God's Spirit. By God's power he overcame the enemies. We can see that Samson not only had such great power, but also held fast to his consecrated position. When God wanted him to move, he would move; he would do things in whichever way God wanted him to. He did not have his personal preferences.

As long as Samson continued to live alertly before God, he would continue to be victorious. However, everyone has a time of weakness. In the end, Samson failed in the hands of Delilah. He did not hold fast to his consecrated position and told Delilah, "If my head is shaved, my strength would leave me." From here we know that men have nothing to boast about. Samson was the judge of Israel for twenty years. When the Philistines ruled over Israel, by means of his marriage and love relationships, Samson kept on entering among the enemies to deal with them. During

this long period of time, he kept on fighting with the power of consecration, and continued to gain victory. However, he was not careful with his words. Maybe he had been successful too often so he overlooked it. Of all the things he could have said, he revealed the secret of his victory to his enemies. Let's take this as a warning. We must be especially careful when it comes to marriage and relationships.

Samson failed because of a woman. When his hair was shaven off, he lost his consecrated and anointed position. The world had a foothold in him, and he compromised with the world. Because of this, God's Spirit and power left him, and he failed. Therefore, we cannot love the world. It is written in the Bible: "Do not love the world or the things in the world." "Be holy!" (See 1 John 2:14–15 and 1 Peter 1:15–16.) Ever since I believed in the Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit, I have been keeping myself holy by the spirit of holiness. I didn't dare love the world. The things of the flesh and the lust of the world would not defile me.

Brothers and sisters, if the temptation of wealth and the pride of life have a place in us, we will surely fail. Why do we want to receive the Full Gospel? Because the Full Gospel can cleanse us, and preserve us to be holy and without blemish. When the Lord comes, we can then put on the clean white linen garments, and meet the Lord in peace.

In the Bible, all the victorious witnesses were preserved because they put in effort to stay holy. Although they might fail, they all the more preserved themselves in holiness. And with this, they encouraged all the saints to be holy. The apostle Peter failed before — he denied the Lord three times, and after that, he left the Lord to go fishing. However, after the Lord turned him back, he walked in holiness all the rest of his life. Both the epistles of Peter also admonish people to be holy.

Throughout these years of serving God, I have been asking the Lord to preserve me in holiness. I sincerely hope that all the brothers and sisters

are established by this holy truth, because the Day of the Lord's return is at hand. May the Lord preserve us from loving the world. The Bible says that God will attack Edom and judge the mountains of Esau. It also says that God loves Jacob but hates Esau. Why did God hate Esau so much? Because he loved the world, and he gave up his birthright and blessing, he went against Jacob whom God loved. Why did God love Jacob? It was because Jacob consecrated himself to God and served Him wholeheartedly.

The Lord is coming soon. Let all the children of God who have received the Full Truth stand on the position of holiness, be edified and equipped by this holy truth, and live a holy life. Of course, before our lives are mature and before we grow up, we will still have inaccurate understandings, just as the "godly concept" that I used to have. However, if we have a pure heart for God, He will protect us, and we will not be too far off.

For example, many young people in the church are worried about their marriage and finding a life partner. Some brothers and sisters want to offer themselves to serve God, but when they cannot find a life partner in the church, they make friends with the Gentiles. They know that it is wrong, but they cannot overcome it. When we help them in this matter, we cannot readily give our consent unless they are like Samson, who truly knew that his marriage came from God. If it is not God's will but their own idea, they will leave the position of holiness, and will lose the power to overcome the enemies. They will fail to serve God as holy priests, and will not execute God's sovereignty together with Him on earth. Therefore, we have to live before God in reverent fear. If we are not sure of our own feeling, whether it is from our own concept or from the will of God, let's wait for the Lord. In short, we must always stand on this position of holiness.

We shouldn't be like Esau, who loved the world. Esau not only loved the red lentil stew, he also loved the Gentile girls. When Esau saw that his

father had blessed Jacob and commanded him to take a wife from his mother's family, he also went to his relatives and took a daughter of Ishmael as wife, even though he already had two Gentile wives. He did all these according to his own desires. He didn't even have the concept of godliness.

May the Lord protect us from loving the world. Instead, let us stand on the position of holiness, and be His holy children. Only those who have anointing oil on their heads can serve God and triumph over the enemies. When God's Spirit and His power leave us, we will become like Samson, who failed at the crucial moment, despite having twenty years of victory. Therefore, the Bible teaches us to pursue holiness and serve God with reverence and godly fear. (See Hebrews 12:14,28.) With this godly fear, God will preserve us and let our life grow in holiness. We will then walk in God's will, and advance on this path of holiness, until we reach our destination — the holy city New Jerusalem. May the Lord be gracious to us and bless His words.

## **Samson (3)**

### ***Samson the Nazirite***

*(June 30, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

*And after your son is born, you must never cut his hair, because from the day of his birth he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite. He will begin the work of rescuing Israel from the Philistines.*

*(Judg. 13:5, TEV)*

### **What it Means to Be a Nazirite**

*Nazirite* means *separated from the world*. Therefore, a Nazirite is someone who is not defiled by worldliness, and is completely dedicated to God. Samson was consecrated to God when he was still in his mother's womb. When he was in his mother's womb, the angel of God commanded his mother (Manoah's wife) saying, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I have commanded her let her observe." This was what God wanted the wife of Manoah to do for the child.

Today we would call this prenatal instruction. This prenatal instruction was consecrated to God. In his mother's womb, Samson began to lead a consecrated life. From the time he was born until his death, he was a Nazirite unto God, because he was chosen to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Brothers and sisters, all the saints of the New Testament Church are spiritual Nazirites. From the day we received the full salvation of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit, we have been completely consecrated to the Lord.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which*

*is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

(Rom. 12:1–2)

To *not be conformed to this world* means that one should wholly offer his body to be a Nazirite, one who is separated from the world. The denominations have a misconception. They think that complete dedication only concerns the preachers, not all the believers. In the New Testament Church, some brothers and sisters also have inaccurate concepts about consecration. They think that to consecrate yourself, you have to live on Mount Zion and become a companion of the Lamb. They also think that your spiritual life has to grow to a certain point before you can completely consecrate. Actually, this is not so. All those who have received the Full Gospel should be determined to become a companion of the Lamb — to completely offer themselves to be Nazirites. Unfortunately, not all people have this insight, nor are they willing to offer themselves completely. Some are not clear towards the vision and are unwilling to pay up the price. It is a pity that although they are in the New Testament Church, they still don't understand the Truth.

## **The Mark of Consecration and the Sign of Offering**

The angel of God especially commanded Manoah and his wife not to shave Samson's head, because his hair was the mark of God's covenant with the Nazirite. It was also the seal of Samson's consecration to God. In the following days, God kept His eyes on this mark. According to this mark—his hair, God's Spirit was with Samson and His power filled him. As long as this mark remained, it proved that Samson was still standing on the position of consecration and that he had not left the post of complete dedication.

Brothers and sisters, we also have this mark of consecration. “From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord

Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). These marks were the wounds that Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, suffered for the sake of the Truth. He also said, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance —" (Eph. 1:13–14).

The mark of Samson's covenant of consecration with God was his hair. The mark of our covenant with God is the three-in-one testimony of *Blood, Water and Holy Spirit*. The witness of Blood is the light. So when you are in the position of the witness of Blood, you are in the light. If a person says that he walks in the light but still commits sins, that person is a liar, and he has lost the witness of Blood.

The witness of Water is death — to deny self and to deal with the carnal life daily. That is to always be delivered to death for Jesus' sake, always carrying in us the death of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us. We must put ourselves on the altar of death daily so that the sweet-smelling aroma of our sacrifice can come before God's throne.

And the Holy Spirit bears witness for the Blood and the Water. The stronger the witnesses of Blood and Water are in us, the stronger the witness of the Holy Spirit will be. If a person loses the witness of the Blood and the Water, they will also lose the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's maid-servant Sis. Kong said that tongues (tongue utterance) is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Those who turned apostate forsook the Truth. They lost the witness of Water, and at the same time, the witness of the Holy Spirit. In the end, they didn't even pray in tongues. No wonder they became weak and desolate.

## An Ever-Victorious General

*So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to*

*move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

(Judg. 13:24–25)

In which place did God's Spirit move Samson? It was in Mahaneh Dan. Mahaneh Dan was not a city, but one of the campsites of the tribe of Dan, situated between Zorah and Eshtaol. Samson belonged to the tribe of Dan. God chose Samson and moved him with His Spirit at the campsite of Dan. Through Samson, God wanted to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines. Therefore, God moved Samson with the militant spirit, endowed him with power, stirred up his will to fight, and commanded him to carry out military actions. Since then, Samson set out a series of attacks against the Philistines.

First, he tore apart a young lion without much effort in Timnah. (See Judges 14:5–6.) Through this matter, God strengthened his faith and spirit of battling. God also made him realize the vastness of God's power upon him. This realization became the base of his victories amidst the fierce battles in the following days. From then onwards, Samson was victorious in many battles and was invincible. During his first battle, which was at Ashkelon, he killed thirty Philistines. (See Judges 14:19.)

Next, he used flaming foxes to avenge his father-in-law's house. (An ancient Chinese general named Tian Dan used the flaming oxen formation to defeat his enemy, but actually, Samson had already used the flaming fox formation long before the Chinese.) Samson was a resourceful warrior. He caught three hundred foxes and tied torches to their tails. After he set torches on fire, he set the foxes loose in the fields of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves. In this battle, Samson slaughtered many Philistines, and he even broke their hips and thighs. (See Judges 15:1–8.) Following that was the battle of Ramath Lehi. With a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he struck down a thousand Philistines. (See Judges 15:14–16.) Moreover, Samson always charged into the enemy by himself, without

losing a single soldier.

## Samson's Degeneration and Failure

The main reason of Samson's tragic failure was not his carnal desires. He did not lose his strength when he went in to a harlot and cohabited with the woman Delilah. Of course, as a consecrated person he should not commit adultery. The main cause of his failure was that he was "weakened by his emotions."

There is a saying that goes, "It is hard for a hero to overcome a beautiful woman." Samson became weak because he could not withstand a woman's pestering and sweet words. Satan knew Samson's weakness, so he tried to ensnare him with the "pretty woman strategy" again and again. In the end, Samson fell into the charm of the most prominent harlot of that era, Delilah. He finally revealed to her the source of his power—the secret of his hair. This was like divulging a secret.

In today's words, Samson's hair was the top state secret of Israel. Not only did it concern Samson's life, but also the survival of the nation of Israel. Obviously, Delilah was a female spy bribed by the Philistines with a high price. (See Judges 16:4–6.) She tried to steal Israel's top state secret from Samson. Samson also knew that he could not reveal this top-secret information, and he lied many times to put them off. Samson was a judge of Israel, the highest-ranking general in Israel, so he should have sentenced this prominent spy Delilah to death. However, he was easily weakened by his emotions, and he could not withstand the seduction of beautiful women. In the end, he revealed his roots, and sold the top secret to Delilah for free, betraying himself.

The Bible said, "And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, 'No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am

shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man' " (Judg. 16:16–17). After Samson revealed the secret, he still could have saved the situation if he left her right away. However, he fell asleep on Delilah's knees, giving her the chance to shave off his hair.

There is a saying that goes, "Love is blind." Once a person falls in love, he cannot tell right from wrong; good from evil or enemy from friend. Love made Samson blind, deaf, and caused him to lose feeling. Once he lost his alertness, he was bound to fail. The Philistines gouged out his eyes and bound him with bronze fetters, making him a grinder in prison. He was pulled down by Delilah. This serves as a dire warning to us who are consecrated to God.

Young people are full of vigor and vitality, but are weak in guarding against lusts. Those who are unrestrained in having relationships will ruin their moral integrity. Many precious vessels in the New Testament Church failed because of their wild emotions. They failed to overcome their emotions, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. In the end, they were pulled away by Delilah from this road of entering God's kingdom. They have lost the glorious hope and fallen into darkness, just like Samson. How can we neglect such a warning?

## **Losing the Witness of Consecration is Losing Power**

Samson's hair was different from that of other people, because his hair was the mark of God's covenant. When he shaved off his hair, he destroyed the covenant that he had with God. He no longer belonged to God, but had already left the position of offering, and no longer had the testimony of consecration. Therefore, he lost God's presence and the power he had from God, becoming a captive of the enemies.

God did not look at Samson, who was a person, but at the mark of his consecration. If the mark of consecration remained, God's power would

be upon him. If the mark of consecration was not there, God's power would leave him. This is an important principle. Therefore, since we have already offered ourselves to the Lord, may He protect us so that we will never leave this position of offering, lest we lose the presence of God.

### **Restore the Mark of the Covenant and Regain God's Power**

The dark and agonizing days in prison were definitely also the days that Samson repented before God. He only had one goal in mind, which was to take vengeance on the enemies. God does not despise a broken and contrite spirit. Samson's hair gradually grew back, restoring the mark of the former covenant that he had made with God. He once again returned to the position of offering, and restored the testimony of consecration. God, who has grace and mercy, will not break a bruised reed, nor will He quench the smoking flax. In the end, He fulfilled Samson's wish and let him take vengeance on the enemies. God's power once again came upon him.

When the leaders of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god and to rejoice, they brought Samson out from the prison so that he could perform for them. At that time the building was filled with people, and there were three thousand men and women on the roof watching. Samson prayed to God, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"

After he prayed, Samson took hold of the two central pillars that supported the building, and pushed with all his might. The building collapsed on the leaders and all the people who were in it. In this way, Samson killed more people in his death than he had killed while he was still alive. Samson judged Israel for twenty years, and completed the epochal mission that God entrusted him, delivering the Israelites from under the control of the Philistines.

## **Samson (4)**

*(June 30, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

### **Stand on the Position of Consecration to Manifest God's Power**

People usually recognize Samson as a man of mighty strength. However, today, we will recognize him in the spirit as a witness of God's power, a vessel that manifested God's greater power through failures.

Samson was consecrated and offered to God from his mother's womb. Therefore, he was filled with God's power since he was in his mother's womb. This power came from his consecrated status and from the position of offering. God wanted him to be consecrated and gain power so that he could deliver Israel from the control of the Philistines.

From Samson, we can see that consecration is power. Consecration is the way to manifest God's power. In other words, consecration is the requirement that one needs in order to manifest God's power. When we talk about consecration, some people may think that you have to be like the people of Zion to be considered consecrated. This is an inaccurate concept. In fact, consecration means offering. A life of consecration is a life of offering up. In other words, it is a life rendered to God. Consecration is the secret to gaining strength. By standing in the position of offering, Samson obtained power from above to deal with the enemies of God's people.

### **Unable to Withstand the Temptation of Lust**

The supernatural power that Samson obtained from God was incredible. He could easily tear apart the young lion that roared at him. He could also kill a thousand Philistines with just the jawbone of a donkey. The enemies could not endure his power. So they thought of every means

possible to deal with him.

First, they had to know the source of this power. They tried many times to find out the answer through Delilah. Samson failed before this temptation, but he did not fail at once. When he was first tempted, he was still able to stand. But after Delilah's repeated pestering, he gave in and told her all that was hidden in his heart. This shows that Samson could not withstand the test of affections, and he ended up falling for the plots of the enemies.

Satan keeps eyeing us, thinking of every means to destroy us. He has many ways of destroying God's vessels. He always targets at man's weaknesses, of which we all have a fatal one. We may not even know about it ourselves, but Satan knows it very well. Some people love money, some love food, some like clothing, some like fame...

Samson's weakness was that he valued affection and lusts of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is the most common method that Satan uses to deceive and destroy people. Samson happened to have this weakness, so he gave the enemies a chance to attack him. Samson's mark of consecration was in his hair. He had long hair that he would never cut, and this was also the secret. However, Samson could not withstand Delilah's daily pestering, which vexed his soul to death, so he finally revealed the secret. When he revealed the secret, it was over for him. His hair was shaved off while he was sleeping on Delilah's knees. This story tells us that: When a person falls into temptation and fails, he loses the position of consecration — the position of offering up. He will also lose the power that he gains through offering. So spiritual weakness will be shown in him.

Following that, Samson's eyes were gouged out. He became blind and could no longer see! Finally, he was put into prison to do the grinding and became a slave of the enemy. This is what will happen to a person who cannot withstand the temptation and enticement of the enemies, a person

who cannot hold fast his position of offering until the end — how tragic! Therefore, by God's grace, we shall stand on the position of offering at all times.

## **Regain the Spirit of Consecration**

Thank God that He has mercy and grace. After Samson's hair was shaved off, it gradually grew back, and his strength was gradually restored. Brothers and sisters, when our hair gradually grows back, we only have to remember this: not to shave it again. This means that we have to once again nurture this spirit of offering — the spirit of consecration. Since God's grace and mercy have come upon us, we should not lose heart, but be warned and cultivate the spirit of offering. The hair will surely grow long if you don't shave it off again. Because it was shaved off and not pulled out, the hair will have a chance to grow.

Brothers and sisters, this will become our life experience! When we are tempted, we may fail and turn our backs to God, but God's Spirit will always work in our heart to make us remember how we were in the beginning. Gradually, our love for the Lord will start burning again, and we will once again turn to God. When this spirit has just been restored, it is like the little hairs that have just grown out. However, if you nurture it and don't shave it off again or destroy it, it will grow longer and longer, until you regain your power. However, if we shave it off, we will suffer again for a period of time. Although the Holy Spirit will still work in us, our days in weakness will be prolonged. Therefore we must treasure the spirit well. Samson was stronger than us in this aspect. Despite his weaknesses and failures, he let his hair grow back again, until he was finally able to take vengeance on the enemies.

## **Stand up Again in God's Mercy**

Samson's enemies were not smart enough. Why do we say that? Because after they gouged out Samson's eyes, they forgot that his strength

came from his hair. They put Samson in prison and made him grind their grains so as to wear down his strength. However, they didn't know that as his hair grew longer, his strength grew greater with each passing day. Until one day, his opportunity to take vengeance came. Samson prayed to God, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" He pushed the pillars with all his might, and the building fell on the rulers and all the people who were in it. In this way, Samson killed many more people when he died than while he lived. This tells us that although Samson failed, he was not discouraged. He could withstand the test of failure and stood up by God's mercy to testify for Him. This is something we should imitate.

A person who has a mission and entrustment from God may have weaknesses and failures. Although they experience failures, they will not forget the entrustment that they have received from God. Only this kind of vessel can be used by God in a deeper way.

At first, Samson married a Philistine woman because God was seeking an occasion against the Philistines, who had dominion over Israel. But Samson never forgot the entrustment he received from God. At all times, he looked for opportunities to fight against the Philistines, not just in the beginning, but also after his failure. After Samson stood up from his failure by God's grace, his testimony was even more glorious and powerful than before.

God is pleased with the God-fearing attitude of a person who has failed. Samson came back to God in fear and trembling, and once again nurtured his spirit of offering. Therefore, God gave him power as before. Moreover, the testimony of this power was even greater. Of course, we should not deliberately fail, for God is not pleased with that. But God may allow us to fail in order to reveal our natural weaknesses, so that we will be more alert and trust in Him more. If we know how to learn lessons, our

failures will become a blessing in disguise.

### **Alert, Courageous, No Self-Admiration**

Samson was not dismayed before the enemies for he was equipped by God. He was a vessel that willingly accepted God's training. He was a watchful vessel, filled with God's courage. Therefore, when the enemies secretly laid an ambush in plot to kill him, he woke up at midnight and left the city. Moreover, he was not complacent nor did he admire himself when he succeeded.

We often tend to secretly admire our own accomplishments, thinking, "It would be so great if someone makes mention of my achievement." When people happen to mention it by chance, you will feel so good inside. How we hope that people would know about our virtues, but not our flaws. All these are the natural reactions of man. Nevertheless, Samson did not have this thought in him.

Once, Samson used a donkey's jawbone to do something tremendous — he killed a thousand Philistines. If we were him, we would probably bring back the donkey's jawbone to boast about it, saying, "Look! This was the weapon I used to kill a thousand Philistines! I will place this in my house as a souvenir throughout the ages." However, Samson threw the bone away. This is not an easy thing to do, and it is worth our imitation.

All these mentioned above were Samson's special characteristics. May his special characteristics become our example, and his failures serve as our warning.



# Jephthah





# Jephthah (1)

*(July 9, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Ming-wei  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

*Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead's wife bore sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, 'You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.' Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him.*

*(Judg. 11:1–3)*

The Bible says that Jephthah was a mighty man of valor. It also says he was a harlot's son. Although Jephthah was a vessel used by God, he had a shameful mark — he was the son a harlot. Later he was chased out of his house by his half brothers. Since then, he wandered in the wilderness, and became a bandit.

Man can choose many things in life, but not the parents he wants. Otherwise, everyone would choose his ideal persons to be his parents and no one would choose to be a harlot's son. Jephthah could justify himself by telling his brothers, "It was not my fault, it was our father's fault." However, Jephthah did not justify himself. Instead, he ran away from his brothers. Because to him, being the son of a harlot was an indignity that he was born with, and it was something he could not change. It was God's hand and His predestined will of molding him through this environment. We also have certain weaknesses or defects which cannot be changed by human effort. However, this is God's wonderful love, so that His great and abundant salvation can be manifested through our weaknesses.

Jephthah was despised and rejected by men. However, God's thoughts

are different from men's thoughts. His works surpass what man can comprehend. He chooses and uses people in order to manifest His surpassing wisdom and work.

When God's maidservant Sis. Kong was raised up by God, people also despised her due to her uncomely background. She was a woman and a former movie star. Moreover, she had married and divorced twice. If you judged her by moral values, she would be considered immoral. There are so many people in the world. Why didn't God choose a better person?

God does not judge people as we do. We tend to judge people by their appearance, but God looks at man's hearts. Jephthah was the son of a harlot, but God knew that he had an honest and reverent heart. The New Testament Church is also uncomely in the eyes of those who disbelieve and go against God. Most of our brothers and sisters are neither highly-educated nor good-looking. Our pastors shout and roar on the pulpit; they are not gentle at all. However, God knows that the New Testament Church is pure, reverent, and steadfast to the Truth. Therefore, in the last days, God has rebuilt the New Testament Church in order to save His children from the oppression of the enemy, and bring them true peace.

Judges 11:4–6 says, “It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. Then they said to Jephthah, ‘Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.’ ” Obviously, God's vessel will not be neglected forever. In the beginning, although people despised him and did not recognize him, when the time came, God revealed him through circumstances. In peaceful times, the Israelites did not care about Jephthah, but when the war began, they remembered him. The elders of Gilead even personally went to the land of Tob to ask him to lead them to fight the battle.

*Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”*

(Judg. 10:17–18)

When the Ammonites arrayed themselves for battle, none of the people of Israel dared to be the first to go and fight against the enemy. They all knew that this was a time of war, not of peace. Without true skills, they would die if they charged forward. Fortunately, the people of Israel knew who the mighty men of valor were, who could lead them to fight. Although Jephthah was a harlot's son who banded with worthless men, the people of Israel had to find him to save their lives. Apart from that, they had no other way.

Today many people are oppressed by the Kuomintang (KMT). Some, in their distress, heard about the testimony of Mount Zion, came to seek help from us. They knew that only the God of Mount Zion could save them. Therefore, we do not mind if people do not know us, or if they reject and despise us. When the time comes, all those who want to live will come. This is the wonderful wisdom and work of God.

“So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?’” (Judg. 11:9). Jephthah recognized that everything depended on God. The arrangement of all things depended on Him, including their victory in war. Therefore, when the elders of Gilead came to him, he made clear to them, saying, “If God delivers the enemy to me, will I be your leader?” What he meant was, “In the past, you judged me by my outward appearance, rejected me, and drove me out. Nevertheless, this was in God's will. Today, let God be the witness between us. If He delivers the enemy to me, and shows His delight in me, will you obey God?”

Jephthah exalted God, and God's delight was his standard of judgment. This pleased God. The elders of Gilead promised to do as Jephthah had said, so Jephthah went back with them. Jephthah presented his message before the Lord, and let God be his judge.

From Judges 11:12–27, we see that the Ammonites made an excuse, saying that the Israelites had occupied their land, so they came to attack Israel to reclaim their land. This was a lie. It was the wile of the enemy in fighting against God's people. However, Jephthah immediately saw through the enemy's scheme. He sent messengers to the king of Ammon and skillfully told the enemy the history of Israel and God's works.

From Numbers 21:24, we learn that after the Israelites came out of Egypt, they passed by Ammon but did not occupy their land because the borders were heavily fortified. With God's words, Jephthah testified for the works that God had done among His people in front of the enemy, thus revealing their wicked scheme. Jephthah also testified how God led Israel to fight and defeat their enemies with great power, and said, "Are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab?... Whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess." When God's standard and His will were revealed by Jephthah, the enemy could not stand before Jephthah. Indeed, God's words are the key to triumph over the enemy.

When I was young, I carefully read all the spiritual books written by Sis. Kong, such as the *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Vol. I and II); the *Golden Lampstand* (Vol. I and II); *Entering God's Kingdom*, etc. I kept firmly in mind the history of the New Testament Church (NTC), God's choice of the NTC, and His will towards the NTC. Later, although I was weak and left the church for a period of time, I did not go to the denominations, because I knew that God detested them and wanted to demolish them. God's words are so powerful that they establish our faith and help us overcome the enemy. If we carefully read all the books of the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade, and

keep them firmly in mind, we will be steadfast on this way of entering God's kingdom.

The KMT persecuted Zion in the same way the Ammonites persecuted Israel. They tried finding false accusations with us in order to plunder God's possessions. They say, "Ever since Taiwan was recovered, Mount Zion has been in the Sanmin Township... Hong San Chee violated his contract by subleasing the land to other people, so the government has the authority to take back the land... The New Testament Church belongs to the Communist Party." However, when we testify of God's glorious works on Zion and of her history, the KMT's lies and wiles fall apart by themselves, and their wickedness is exposed.

Therefore, Jephthah said to the enemy, "Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon" (Judg. 11:27). The Ammonites knew that they were in the wrong, and that they could not stand before God's words. However, they still refused to listen to Jephthah and did not withdraw their army. Like the KMT, they refused to admit their wrong. In the end, they were doomed to destruction. God destroyed the Ammonites through Jephthah's hand.

Some people may think that our God is authoritative and cruel; He destroys all that is not in His will. However, the Bible says, "Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. For he repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way. Surely God will never do anything wicked, nor will the Almighty pervert justice" (Job 34:10–12). Through Jephthah, God displayed His justice and righteousness before the Ammonites, hoping that the Ammonites would repent. However, the Ammonites were stubborn. They knew they were lying, but they were unwilling to give up their wicked scheme. Hence they received what they deserved. God was more than

righteous to destroy them.

*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah...and Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”*

(Judg. 11:29–31)

Jephthah’s will of offering was pleasing to God. He knew that he was weak and unworthy. To repay God’s exaltation, he was willing to offer the best to God. When Israel forsook God to worship idols, Jephthah took the lead to offer himself and recovered the serving of sacrifice. By doing this he had gained God’s heart.

*When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.”*

(Judg. 11:34–35)

It was a joyful thing for Israel to defeat their enemy. However, Jephthah was greatly troubled when he saw that his only daughter was the first to come out to welcome his triumphal return. This was because Jephthah had made a vow to God, to offer the first person that came out of his house to welcome him. I think this tragedy happened because Jephthah did not fully understand the meaning of burnt offering.

According to the Bible, the sacrifices offered to God are cattle, sheep,

turtledoves, or pigeons, which are used to make atonement for men. (See Leviticus 1:1–17.) To offer a human being as a burnt offering is cruel and inhumane, and it goes against the Truth of the Bible. Many times, God commanded the people of Israel through Moses not to let their children pass through the fire to idols, which is detestable. (See Deuteronomy 18:9–10 and Leviticus 18:21.)

In Genesis 22, God asked Abraham to offer Isaac. However, this was because God wanted to test Abraham. In the end God returned Isaac to him. On the other hand, God did not ask Jephthah to sacrifice a living person as a burnt offering. It was Jephthah who had the will to offer out of gratitude. The time of the judges was a dark era for God's children. At that time, the Truth was concealed and God's will was obscured. "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Even so, Jephthah's heart to offer was still pleasing to God. So just as Jephthah asked, God delivered the Ammonites into his hands and let him return in victory.

Jephthah is among the witnesses of faith as recorded in Hebrews 11. He is listed with Abel, Enoch, Abraham, etc. Hence we know that God does not look at how imperfect a person's serving is. Rather, He remembers his spirit of serving and offering. Since Jephthah tried his best to serve God faithfully, the line of the witnesses of faith could continue on. Now the line of the witnesses of faith has been continued to this end time: God's maidservant Sis. Kong first succeeded it, followed by the Lord's servant Bro. Hong, as well as we who are in the New Testament Church.

In this era, the Christian world is divided into numerous denominations, and God's children have lost their faith and have become desolate. This is an era of darkness, like the time of the judges. God raised up Sis. Kong in order to end the time of the judges in the New Testament era. Through the Prophet of All Nations, God wants to educate His children and bring His teachings to this generation. When the light appears, all the

darkness will dissipate. We are indeed blessed, because we don't have to experience the helplessness, darkness, and oppression of the enemies, as God's people had suffered during the era of the judges. Today, we are full of joy, hope, and victory, because the New Testament Church has a spiritual leader — the Prophet of All Nations, Elijah Hong. If we have fellowship with him and entrust all things to him, we will surely find accurate answers from him, and God's blessings will come upon us abundantly.

"Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over towards Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, 'Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!'" (Judg. 12:1). When Jephthah led the Israelites to return in triumph, the men of Ephraim, for their own selfish gains, gathered together and reprimanded Jephthah. During the time of Gideon, when Gideon defeated the Midianites, the men of Ephraim also contended with Gideon, saying, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" (Judg. 8:1).

The men of Ephraim were self-centered and they wanted to be the chief of all Israel. Plainly speaking, what they said to Jephthah was: Why didn't you inform us when you went to the battle? They sounded as if everything had to be approved by them in advance. When we leave home to take care of some business, it is reasonable to inform our parents, the head of the house, and we accept their love and concern for us. This is to show respect to the head of the household, in hopes that they would not worry for us. However, at that time God set up Jephthah to be the leader, not Ephraim. Therefore, the men of Ephraim were rebellious by saying such words. They did not understand the order of God's house. They did not respect the leader set up by God, and tried to intervene in the administration of God.

Ephraim's arrogance resulted from his background. Their father was Joseph, who was separate from his brothers. Joseph had been the governor

of Egypt, and the entire house of Israel had to rely on him. Ephraim was Joseph's son, but he received the birthright of the son of Jacob. Thus, he was equal to his uncles. Moreover, although Ephraim was the second son of Joseph, he was blessed by Jacob as the firstborn.

Since the men of Ephraim were separate from others and exalted higher than all, they could not obey the leaders set up by God. Not only did they go against the leaders during the time of the judges, they also went against the king of Judah. Jeroboam, a man of Ephraim, led nine tribes of Israel to rebel against the king. Moreover, Jeroboam made golden calves in the mountains of Ephraim, and made Israel sin. (See 1 Kings 12.)

If we do not deal away with the desire of wanting to be the leader, we will suffer grave consequences. We are often proud of our "good" backgrounds or qualifications, thinking we deserve certain positions. But little do we know that these will become our snares or traps. God permitted Jephthah to be born a harlot's son, so that He could refine him in this aspect. Throughout history, all the servants and maidservants who were greatly used by God, such as Moses and David, had great talents. However, before God could use them, He would severely break and deprive them of everything they could boast of.

In Gideon's time, the men of Ephraim sinned against the leader chosen by God. In Jephthah's time, the men of Ephraim made the same mistake. This reminds me of the words of Hosea: "Ephraim is a cake unturned" (Hos. 7:8). God raised up fiery circumstances to mold Ephraim, but he was unwilling to be turned. As a result, he was like a cake burnt on one side but uncooked on the other. Such stubbornness of the carnal life is so terrible that it blinds people from seeing their own mistakes.

I often recall how the Lord's servant Bro. Hong used to admonish us, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have to

come to need milk and not solid food" (Heb. 5:12). Hence I am all the more afraid for myself. The longer we are in the New Testament Church, the more challenging this lesson will become, and the more careful we must be. May the Lord have grace and mercy on us, lest when we have preached to others, we ourselves should become disqualified.

In Judges 8, when the men of Ephraim contended with Gideon, Gideon pacified them with gentle words. However, in Judges 12, when the men of Ephraim argued with Jephthah and threatened to burn him and his house, Jephthah killed forty-two thousand of them with swords. It seemed that Gideon had greater tolerance for the rebellious Ephraim, and Jephthah had less. However, we believe that God permitted this killing.

Outwardly, it seemed cruel to kill one's own brothers, but in this killing, we can see God's salvation. Although Ephraim was stubborn and rebellious, God's love for him did not diminish. Just as it is written, "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD" (Jer. 31:20). Sometimes we sin again and again. God's tolerance and longsuffering cannot change us or turn us around, so He has no choice but to strike (kill) us, so that we can be awakened by His punishment. No matter what, it is best to be in His hand, because He has great mercy.

The response of the Ephramites also reminds me that to love what God loves is a difficult lesson. According to the Truth, we know that we should be happy as long as God's name is glorified and His people gain the victory. We also know that our personal gains or losses are not important. However, our carnal self does not feel this way. We may think: It is good for God's work to be done, but it would be even better if I were the vessel that God used to do the work. It is not easy for us to completely disregard our carnal self and wholeheartedly love what God loves and hate what He hates. The longer I serve in the New Testament Church, the more I

feel that this is a very basic, yet difficult lesson to learn.

When I was young, I learned lessons quickly and easily. But as I grew older, I had more of my own concepts, and it became increasingly difficult for me to learn lessons. Although I did not argue like the men of Ephraim, I still murmured in my heart. The desire to be the chief made me think that God's servants didn't respect me enough, so sometimes I would have grievances. If I harbored the grievances for a long time, I would end up disbelieving and going against God. Such condition was dreadful.

Nevertheless, I thank the Lord. The fact that God blesses Zion lets me realize that the testimony of a man and a mountain is greatly pleasing God. Mount Zion cannot do without the Lord's servant Bro. Hong. I often think that if the Lord's servant had not faithfully held fast the Truth and boldly stood firm for the faith, the New Testament Church (Mount Zion) would not be here today. We also learn many spiritual merits from him. God has raised up a spiritual leader in His house. This is a great thing which deserves our praises to Him.

In the time of the judges, although God's people didn't have a complete understanding of the Truth, and though the judges didn't do a perfect job when they assumed their ministries, God still used them to do great things, such as destroying God's enemies and delivering God's people. Today our environment is much better than that of the past. In the aspects of the Truth and the vessels, we are much stronger than them. I believe that God will use us to accomplish greater things. May the Lord help us.

Let us treasure the spiritual leader raised up by God; willingly follow him in one heart and one spirit and be the witnesses of faith in this era. The Lord will then have a way in us, and manifest His power through us. The people of this generation will be delivered from the control of sins, human kingdoms, death, and the devil. In the end, they will enter God's kingdom.

## Jephthah (2)

*(July 10, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Kuang  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

When Jephthah was raised up, the Israelites had been oppressed by the Gentiles for 18 years. The Israelites suffered oppression because they forsook the one and only true God and followed the Gentiles to worship idols. In great distress, they cried out to the LORD, who had mercy on them, and sent them a deliverer. Beyond their expectations, God raised up Jephthah, who was despised and rejected by many. Even his half brothers rejected him, because he was the son of a harlot.

There are many things that we can learn from Jephthah. Today, we are also despised by many people. If we were honored by the world, we might not be used by God. Jephthah was like the stone rejected by builders, as written in 1 Peter: “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed” (1 Pet 2: 4–8).

The Lord Jesus is the living stone rejected by men, but is precious and chosen by God. Like the Lord Jesus, we are also rejected by men, but are chosen by God to be living stones of the spiritual house. We are saints who have received the complete truth of the Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit, and have been built in the New Testament Church. So we are dif-

ferent from the members of the denominations. The denominations are not necessarily rejected by men, but we are. For those who sincerely believe in the Lord, the stone will establish them. But for those who disbelieve, the stone will become *a stone of stumbling* and *a rock of offense*.

Until now, many people still disapprove of us. When we preach the gospel and assume our ministry, they say to us, “Christians should love one another, why do you preach the gospel by yelling at people?” However, we thank the Lord. All those who are chosen by God will treasure us the living stones. But those who disbelieve will be stumbled. Similarly, some people were strengthened and established because of Jephthah, while some were stumbled because of him.

When Jephthah was in the process of God’s molding and testing, how did he face people’s rejection, learn his lesson, and receive the equipping he needed? He went into exile and became homeless. Those around him were bandits, and he was their leader. However, unlike other bandit leaders, Jephthah was not corrupted by his environment and he didn’t do evil. Instead, he secretly learned lessons in the forlorn land. Jephthah did not become a leader of God’s people just because he used to lead bandits. It was all because he had learned his life lessons, received God’s training, and was called by God to be a mighty man to save God’s people.

During those 18 years of oppression by Gentiles, the people of God could only sigh in sorrow. They did not know how to learn their lessons in secret and so God could not use them.

Jephthah’s encounters were more tragic than others’, so his learning was outstanding. When it was time, God chose him to be His precious stone, which He used to deal with the unbelieving people of Ammon and Ephraim. No matter what family background we have, let us learn our lessons well, be equipped in secret, and wait for the day when God can reveal and use us.

After winning the battle, Jephthah offered his daughter as a sacrifice to God. This matter is also worthy of our deep contemplation. Jephthah was no longer young at that time. Offering up his only daughter would mean giving up all he had. His heart of offering was right, but the only pity was that God did not prepare a lamb for him, as He did for Abraham, to take the place of Isaac. Thus Jephthah had to endure the pain of offering up his daughter as a burnt sacrifice to repay God's kindness to Israel.

All the witnesses of faith throughout the ages, starting from Abel, to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc., offered sacrifices to God. Hence, offering sacrifices is a necessary service of a witness of faith. However, only livestock should be offered as sacrifice, not humans. Since God did not stop Jephthah from offering his only daughter, we dare not blame him for anything. Nevertheless, we should take warning from this incident. The Book of Judges repeatedly mentioned that the Israelites suffered many tribulations because they had forsaken the LORD to worship idols. Therefore, it is right to imitate the witnesses of faith of the past to offer sacrifices in front of God's temple. But we cannot offer our children to idols and let them pass through fire as the Gentiles do.

It is amazing to learn that Jephthah's daughter, who was offered to God by her father to be a virgin for life, did not oppose her father's decision. Although she had never enjoyed the love of marriage, she willingly fulfilled her father's wish by offering up her body as a sacrifice to God without reservations. Her will was indeed commendable. In the New Testament Church, devout parents who are moved by God may also imitate Jephthah to offer their beloved children to the Lord. When their children grow up, they will also be moved by God's love to offer themselves on the altar. It will be beautiful and pleasing to the Lord when they consecrate themselves to be used by God.

The people of Ephraim suffered a great loss, but they still did not learn from their failures. This serves as a warning to us. Jephthah was only a

stone used by God. To those who disbelieved, he was a stumbling stone. Out of all the blessings, Ephraim had obtained the status of the firstborn. (See Jeremiah 31:9) Joshua, who led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, was from the tribe of Ephraim. The territory that Ephraim received was the area around Bethel, where Jacob offered sacrifices to God. Hence, the people of Ephraim were proud. Although God promised Ephraim to be the firstborn and gave him many blessings, the people of Ephraim suffered many disasters.

We should take this as a warning in godly fear. When God blessed Ephraim with the birthright, he should have learned to be more humble. However, after the tribe of Ephraim entered the land of Canaan, they were arrogant and disobedient to the leaders raised up by God from other tribes. When all the tribes of Jacob advanced into battle, Ephraim often refused to cooperate. For example, when Gideon gathered all the tribes to fight the Midianites, Ephraim did not go until the battle was almost over. Gideon still let them seize the fords of Jordan, thus winning the greatest merit and receiving the best share of the spoils. Later, when Jephthah called for all the tribes to fight against the Gentiles, the Ephraimites responded in the same manner as they did in Gideon's time — they didn't participate. Instead, they came to find trouble after the battle. Jephthah was the honorable stone chosen by God, the spiritual leader God raised. The people of Ephraim went against him, so God let Jephthah be their stumbling stone, the rock of offense.

The tabernacle was originally in Shiloh, a land that belonged to Ephraim. Later God chose Jerusalem to be the site of the temple, and chose Zion to be His dwelling place. Ephraim could not accept this, and refused to go to Zion for the Feast. Not only did he despise God's choice on Zion, he also built two golden calves, placing one in Bethel, and another in Dan. They asked the ten tribes of Israel not to go to Jerusalem and Zion to worship the LORD God, but to worship the golden calves instead. They provoked God to wrath. Finally God forsook them, and allowed them to be taken

captive to Assyria. Thus Ephraim was driven to Assyria one hundred and fifty years earlier than the men of Judah were taken to Babylon. Since they forsook God, God let them have their way. They liked to worship idols, so God let them worship idols in the land of Gentiles to their hearts' content.

After they worshipped idols and endured untold sufferings for over two hundred years, God had mercy on the Ephraimites and brought them back. I have a deep feeling about this, because this is also our experience. In the past, when we were living on Mount Zion, we did not treasure this man and this mountain chosen by God. Consequently, God allowed us to be driven from Zion.

Thank the Lord for His love and mercy. After two hundred and twenty years, He brought the Israelites back to Canaan. After seventy years, He brought back the sons of Judah to the Promised Land. In these last days, God has loved us even more. In less than seven years, God brought us back to Zion under impossible circumstances. The people of Israel and Judah had been scattered for so long, but after they were brought back, they still did not treasure the spiritual leader and Mount Zion chosen by God. For this reason, God forsook them completely.

After we returned to Zion from wandering, we learned to treasure the spiritual leader raised up by God, and the holy Mount Zion that He has chosen. This is why God has blessed us even more. In the past, the ten tribes of Israel refused to go to Jerusalem for the Feast. Today, all tribes throughout the world desire to come to Zion to keep the Feast of God. So God is more than happy to bless us. Let's take these Israelites as our warning, and all the more love the man and the mountain chosen by God. Let us also learn from the witnesses of faith, so we can find more grace and gain greater blessings.

## **Jephthah (3)**

### *A Mighty Man of Valor*

*(July 11, 1990 — Discussion of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

As seen from Jephthah, a special vessel always receives God's special training in order to accomplish His special mission. We are all God's vessels, so He will mold us. However, He has different ways to mold different vessels, depending on how He wants the vessels to shoulder different missions and entrustments. Therefore, you can say that those special and epochal vessels are His masterpieces. Take Jephthah for example. He had three different statuses. (See Judges 11:1–2.)

First, he was “a mighty man of valor.” This title is full of glory and grandeur. It is respected and admired by men and remembered by God. Let all of us be mighty men of valor in God's kingdom, because only mighty warriors can protect their country.

Mighty men of valor are always admired by others. Even soldiers in the world have a sense of superiority. When I was a military officer, I was always proud to be clad in my shining uniform. However, Jephthah did not have this kind of superiority complex. It was due to his humble background.

Secondly, according to the Bible, Jephthah was the son of a harlot. I think nothing in his life could be more agonizing and shameful than being called a “harlot's son.” He would probably rather have a disabled mother, or even a leprous mother, than to have a mother who was a harlot. Because of his ignoble birth, he was despised by men and kicked out of his house by his half-brothers. How could he be proud?

God's molding hand was heavy upon him. Jephthah's origin was like a

thorn in his flesh, to keep him humble. Apostle Paul also had a thorn in his flesh, which God did not remove from him, lest he become conceited because of the abundance of his revelations. In the same way, God molded Jephthah so he would realize that it was all by God's grace when he was greatly used by God. In fact, it was not Jephthah's fault that his mother was a harlot. As Bro. Ming-wei said, we cannot choose our parents. We may choose our husbands or wives, but not our parents.

The third status of Jephthah was even worse — he was a friend of bandits. A group of bandits gathered together with Jephthah, and he was their leader. Being a harlot's son was already bad enough, but he was also a bandit leader, causing people to despise and detest him even more. He could not choose his mother, but at least he could choose his job.

Actually Jephthah became the bandit leader due to his environment. This was also another method of God's molding on him. Hence, he had these three statuses — the head of bandits, the son of a harlot, and a man of valor. This was the good pleasure of God so that His purpose in choosing people could be revealed. As it is written in the Bible, "... that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls" (Rom. 9:11).

Jephthah reminds us of God's maidservant Sis. Kong, the Prophet of All Nations. She began life as a movie star, a job despised by men. She led a dissipated life. She married and divorced twice. However, God did not choose anyone else but her. This means "not of works, but of Him who calls." Do we despise her now? No, instead we respect her. She was once corrupt and degenerated, but her life became so abundant and holy after she served God. For this reason, we all the more thank God for His election on her. A woman like her finally became the Prophet of All Nations! Isn't this the wonderful work of God? Had God not raised up this great prophet, we would still be in the denominations today and would be no different from the Gentiles.

Some people lead a good life but they may not have a good end, and vice versa. The outcome of a person's life depends on whether his path is in God's will. If he walks in God's will, his outcome will definitely be positive. If a life is not in God's will, what value or meaning does it hold? When Jephthah was called by God to do His work and won a victorious battle for Israel, people recognized him as a mighty warrior and the deliverer of Israel. Who would bother that he was the son of a harlot and the head of the bandits?

In people's eyes, Jephthah was the son of a harlot who hung around with bandits. How could he save Israel? How could God use such a man? Could he be the leader of Israel? However, Jephthah did not have self-pity or self-esteem. When God called him through the elders of Gilead, he answered the call right away. Brothers and sisters, it is an important life lesson to disregard our own sense of inferiority or superiority. When there is a calling from God, we shouldn't have our own humility, but fully offer ourselves to God disregarding men's response, unfavorable circumstances, and our uncomely past.

When Jephthah was called to defend Israel, he did not quickly go to recruit an army or to forge weapons. The first thing he did was to come before God. It is written, "Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah" (Judg. 11:11).

Coming before God was Jephthah's secret to victory. Jephthah knew that it was God's battle so he fought for no one else, but God. He also knew that he had to fight this battle by God's help. Without such recognition, he would definitely fail. Jephthah came before God with a simple heart, and related everything to Him.

What does this show? Jephthah let God hold the position as Commander. He dared not be the commander of Israel. Rather, he rendered

the command of this battle to God, while he himself stood in the position of receiving orders. He knew that the outcome of the battle did not depend on him or the army of Israel, but on the LORD of hosts. Jephthah had a very clear insight in this aspect, and he held fast to it. Many brothers and sisters often fail because they rely on themselves. We must not only entrust great battles to God, but also bring our family and personal matters before Him.

Over these years, I have noticed that God's servant Bro. Hong never judges or makes decisions on any matter by his past experience. He always tells his co-workers to handle all things with prayers. Brothers and sisters often have a wrong concept: We should entrust great things to God, but we can handle small matters ourselves. We don't have to bother God with trivial things. However, according my experience, problems often arise from small matters. For this reason, I will not forget to pray even for trivial matters, in which I have often experienced God. Hence, we should bring all our matters to God, including the problems of our families or children, and let Him decide and solve the problems for us.

If we trust in Him and look up to Him in all things, we shall overcome all problems. Why don't we do that? Throughout these years, the Lord's servant has also been leading us in this way. Therefore, under most adverse circumstances, things started to turn around because of our prayers, and we returned to Zion in victory.

The second thing Jephthah did after he came to power was to send messengers to question the Ammonite king. (See Judges 11:12–28.) What does this show? This shows that Jephthah was not just a mighty warrior, but also a bright vessel. As seen from his words to the Ammonite king, he was very familiar with the battles between his forefathers and the kings in the East Jordan. He knew all the routes and strategies of the battles, as well as Israel's history and territory. He gave detailed accounts of the history and pointed out the false accusations made by the Ammonite king,

who was left speechless under questioning. In this diplomatic battle, Jephthah forestalled the enemy by declaring justice.

If Jephthah was not familiar with Israel's history and geography, he would not have successfully foiled the unreasonable demands of the king of Ammon. One cannot fight without a just cause. Without knowing the history, the people of Israel would not know why they were fighting. They would fail to execute God's justice and manifest God's power. This point is very important.

Some youths in the New Testament Church are not clear about the history and the Truth regarding the rebuilding of the New Testament Church. They do not know how to answer when people challenge them, saying, "Our church has a history of hundreds of years, but your New Testament Church has only been built for a few decades, so there is no comparison. Sis. Kong was raised up just twenty years ago, so you are only a newly founded religious faction." How can we fight a good battle for the Truth if we do not know the history of the New Testament Church? Therefore, we should be like Jephthah who was familiar with the history of God's people.

Today we need to know how God raised up Sis. Kong to preach on the full truth of Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit, and the epochal vision of *the Holy Spirit rebuilds the New Testament Church and demolishes the denominations*. To acquire this knowledge, we need to carefully read through all the books and pamphlets written by the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong, the Lord's servant Bro. Hong and the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. Otherwise, we will lose in spiritual battles and will not be able to stand before the enemy.

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." As Christians, we should let the word of God dwell in us richly, so that we can fight a good fight for Him. Because Jephthah was clear about Israel's history and geography, and was enlightened towards God's

words, he won the first diplomatic battle against the Ammonite king. A Chinese military strategy teaches that one must “first defeat the enemy’s schemes and then his wiles.” The pamphlets of the New Testament Church are to defeat the schemes and disclose the wiles of the human kingdom. Therefore, if we can disclose the wiles of the enemies from the start and frustrate their plots, we will defeat them. Since the enemies are not standing on the ground of the truth, they are weak in their stance and can never stand before us. Then we can win this battle without a fight.

“The Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah” (Judg. 11:29). This was another secret and key to his victory. God’s Spirit always comes upon those who fight for His kingdom. Over these years many brothers and sisters have been on the battlefield holding banners, passing out pamphlets, and proclaiming God’s will. The more they battle, the stronger and more revived they become, and the more abundantly God’s Spirit comes upon them. On the contrary, those who hide in their homes become more and more scared as they think of the Kuomintang’s secret agents, gun barrels, riot squads, and prisons. Since their hearts have already melted, how can they assume the ministry on the battlefield? As they become weaker and weaker in faith, they can no longer walk on this path. Why? Because God’s Spirit has left them. God’s Spirit will not come upon someone who does not fight for Him. Rather, God’s Spirit will only come upon those warriors who fight for His kingdom.

God is pleased when men make a vow or an offering to Him, but Jephthah’s vow was not in accordance with God’s will. What kind of vow did he make to God? He said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering” (Judg. 11:30–31).

Offering a human as a burnt sacrifice involves manslaughter and blood-

shed. In the Bible, other than Abraham offering Isaac, which was done at God's command, God never, asked His people to offer human beings as burnt offerings. How was Jephthah's offering different from Abraham's? Abraham offered Isaac according to God's will, whereas Jephthah's offering was from his own will. We have to see the difference. God would be pleased if Jephthah vowed to offer a thousand cattle and ten thousand sheep as sacrifices to God upon his glorious return. It would be even better if he vowed to build an altar for Him. However, Jephthah made a strange vow: to offer as a burnt sacrifice whomever that first came out of his house to welcome him. This was a dead sacrifice.

Romans 12 tells us that it is holy and acceptable to God if we offer ourselves as living sacrifices. What is the difference between a living and a dead sacrifice? A living sacrifice is giving ourselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles by the will of God. When Abraham offered up Isaac by the will of God, he was offering a living sacrifice. So God returned Isaac to him alive, not dead. On the other hand, since Jephthah's offering was not in God's will, it was a dead offering. This is also the difference between our offerings and that of the denominations. We offer living sacrifices, which is giving ourselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles. Our flesh does not die when we offer ourselves. It would be much easier if our flesh died right away. However, when we offer ourselves on the altar, God will use all kinds of circumstances as refining fire to consume us everyday. All the hardships, afflictions, sicknesses, pains, and setbacks we encounter are the fires that are continually burning the living sacrifices.

A living sacrifice will have feelings and his carnal life will be put to death daily until he gains an abundant spiritual life. The denominations also offer sacrifices, but their sacrifices are dead. Why? It is because they do not give themselves to the apostles by the will of God, nor do they have apostles, who supply us with spiritual food that nourish and renew our spiritual lives. This is similar to Jephthah's offering of his daughter as a burnt offering. His daughter died in vain because God did not remember

her death.

Secondly, Jephthah's vow was impure. How do we know? When he made the vow, he never expected that the first person who would come out to welcome him would be his beloved daughter, his only child. Jephthah tore his clothes when he saw her come out to welcome him. This action shows that Jephthah was extremely regretful and mournful. Since he willingly made a vow to offer a sacrifice, why did he tear his clothes? If the first person who came out to meet him was not his daughter, would he have torn his clothes? No. He might have even said, "You deserve death. Didn't you know that I made a vow?"

A Chinese saying goes: "Monks punish their disciples — other people's sons." In other words, it does not hurt to beat other people's sons. Therefore, Jephthah's sacrifice was impure, as revealed by God in this incident. In fact, he could still turn around the situation if he confessed and repented of the wrong vow he made. God is rich in mercy and grace; He would not be so cruel to force him to fulfill the vow. To err is man, but as long as man repents of his sins, God is righteous and will forgive him.

According to the truth, making children go through fire is abominable in God's eyes. When Jephthah vowed to offer a sacrifice to God, he never expected that such a tragedy would happen. After a victorious battle, he was supposed to rejoice, but unexpectedly, he had a miserable and mournful ending. His daughter had done nothing worthy of death. She went to the mountains to wail for herself for two months. The more she cried, the more bitter she felt. After she died, all the daughters of Israel went out yearly to lament for her for four days. Because of Jephthah's one mistake, not only did he himself mourn for the rest of his life, his family and tribe, and all the generations also mourned. How tragic! This was all because Jephthah did not seek God carefully.

Both Gideon and Jephthah failed to seek God after their victory. After

Gideon won the battle, he made a gold ephod from the spoils out of his own will. This ephod became the idol of the Israelites and a snare to Gideon and his whole family. Jephthah made a wrong vow, and he obstinately offered up his daughter, adding one more mistakes to another. This was not pleasing to God. However, Jephthah still did not fully understand the truth. He should have held fast God's words and pleaded for His mercy, saying, "O God, You have commanded us not to let our children go through fire. My vow is wrong. Please forgive me. In order to observe Your words, I will keep my daughter." As the Bible says, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). Then God would have had mercy on him.

# Jephthah (4)

*(July 11, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong  
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

## An Altar of Death

Jephthah was a judge raised up by God to deliver God's people from the enemies. The Bible says when the Ammonites gathered together and encamped in Gilead, the Israelites encamped in Mizpah. Surrounded by the Ammonites, the people of Israel and the leaders of Gilead discussed among themselves, "Who will begin to fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Many Israelites came out to encamp and to prepare for battle, but they could not find a leader who could begin the fight against the Ammonites. Facing the enemy, everybody's reaction was, "Either we all go together, or else somebody goes first and I will follow." However, God wanted to find a vessel among His people who would charge in the front line and take the lead to fight against the enemy. This vessel would be a mighty man of valor and a man of true courage.

Brothers and sisters, when everyone is trembling in fear and hesitating to charge against the enemy, a person who dares to risk his life and take the lead to charge at the enemy is hard to come by. Such a person is definitely not trying to show off, but is offering himself to do God's will. He is fighting for God's testimony. Many people like attention and want to be first in everything. For instance, they want to be in the front line when taking group photos. This is to seek the limelight. However, Jephthah was not like this. He put dealing with the enemies as his first priority, and went before the Israelites to fight against the enemies. This is the spirit of offering one's own life.

The New Testament Church is able to manifest the victory of Christ because we have Jephthah in our midst.

All brothers and sisters have the spirit of Jephthah — the spirit of dealing with the tyrants and tyrannies, not willing to be left out. We know that we are risking our lives, but still charge forward and strive to be the first to fight the enemy. The most precious thing is the spirit of “going up first.” Therefore, more and more people approve of the New Testament Church and give us a thumbs-up when they hear our testimony. They say, “You are incredible! We need to learn from you.” Some people even want to come to Mount Zion to receive training.

The New Testament Church has been revealed to be the leader of the time. This is definitely not because of the message that the New Testament Church preaches, but because the New Testament Church was first to take practical actions in fighting against the tyrants and tyrannies. When all people are afraid of the tyrants and tyrannies and dare not speak out, the New Testament Church arises to assume the ministry of vanquishing tyrants and saving mankind. No wonder many people look up to us with great respect.

Recently, and quite wonderfully, my old classmates whom I haven’t seen for forty years came looking for me one by one. One of them said, “Once, at a certain place, I saw a group of people holding flags and banners on the street, and I was really worried for them. It turned out to be you!” Obviously, the testimony of the New Testament Church has been revealed in men’s hearts.

Chinese people say that a wise man will play it safe, and will not seek the limelight. The Japanese also say that a nail sticking out will be hammered down. In other words, do not appear to be more special than others, lest you encounter danger. If we try to be smart in protecting ourselves in the face of dangers and the enemies, we can never be a leader of God’s people, nor can we be used by God.

## **Humble but without Inferiority Complex**

Jephthah possessed another trait which is worthy of our deep consideration. Jephthah had great courage, but he was the son of a harlot. It was by God's mercy that a person of this background could manifest the power of God. Another important reason why Jephthah could be used by God was because he overcame his own sense of inferiority. He was humble, but did not have an inferiority complex.

A degenerate person has either a superiority complex or an inferiority complex. God can use neither of these personalities. One who has a superiority complex will rob God of His glory. He tends to exalt himself higher than God. But a person with an inferiority complex will conceal God's glory. In other words, he cannot fully manifest the glory of God. Therefore, we have to overcome both the emotions of inferiority and superiority. God can only use those who overcome their own feelings. These people do not have their own honor or lowliness. Our lowliness is not commendable, but our own honor is also worthless before God. God wants us to completely overcome these feelings, come before Him with our true nature, and seek for His grace.

Jephthah is a good example for us to follow. He was not bound by his own feelings, and had no lowliness of his own. He was not influenced by his environment and background, but only minded the will of God. This is easier said than done. Degenerate men have a tendency to look at their own background as a factor and compare with others. When they think they are more honorable than others, they will feel more superior and will try to show off their strengths. When they think they are lowlier than others, they will feel inferior and discouraged.

God cannot use a person who is easily influenced by feelings. God has to mold him until he has no superior or inferior complex, nor honor or lowliness of his own. Then he will no longer focus on himself, but on God's choice and mercy on him. According to God's calling, he will courageously assume his ministry. He will say what God wants him to say, and

do what God wants him to do — and become the present-day Jephthah.

## **Bravely Shoulder Responsibility**

Man, by nature, is troublesome. He often falls into self-pity and thinks that he is good for nothing and unworthy. But strangely enough, oftentimes he also thinks that he is capable and worthy. For example, after I appointed some brothers and sisters to be the elders and ministers in the church, some who were not ordained started to murmur, saying, “Bro. Hong does not know me. He is unfair!” But when you praise them, they will say, “Not at all, I am not worthy.” Therefore, these people who always say that they are not worthy are actually pretending to be humble. In fact, they are filled with hidden arrogance.

Jephthah found much grace in this aspect. He did not have false humility. When God revealed him to be the leader of Israel, he bravely took the responsibility. This is also what Paul said, “I magnify my ministry.” Brothers and sisters, if you are a leader, you have to stand in the position of a leader by God’s grace. Only then can God’s will be done. God wants us to denounce our inferiority complex, and assume our ministry well as the leader of all nations.

In the past, I also had many of my own feelings and dared not declare my ministry. I dared not say certain words. Even when I said it, I was without confidence. God was not pleased with me and His Spirit kept reprimanding me, “If you dare not make clear your ministry, you are not being humble, but timid. You have no reverence for Me because you disrespect the ministry that I have given you.” I struggled for a long period of time. At the end, I obeyed God and spoke out bravely, “I am the servant of the living God. God’s Spirit has moved me to say this!” When I first proclaimed my ministry in this way, I felt a great relief. God was pleased with my proclamation, and He confirmed it. I started to realize that men’s inferiority complex would obstruct God’s work.

In recent years, God has been revealing the ministry of the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade before all nations. We are assuming the ministry of the Prophet of All Nations. Through us, the epochal will of God will be preached to all nations so that they will come to believe in the word of the Lord. Therefore, I ask the Lord to add me grace that I may bravely proclaim the ministry that He has given us. Such a proclamation may contradict our moral concepts, as if we are exalting ourselves. However, since God has chosen us, we shall gladly imitate Jephthah to magnify our ministry, and shoulder the entrustment He has given us.

### **Solely Rely On God**

When God revealed Jephthah to be the leader of Israel, he bravely arose to assume his ministry. At the same time, he dared not go beyond God's instruction. The higher God exalted him, the more he revered God. Therefore, he came to Mizpah to speak all his words before God.

Mizpah means "watch tower." Jephthah lived before God with a watchful spirit, because God made Jephthah the leader of Israel to watch over His testimony, and to save His people according to His will. Jephthah knew that it was by God's grace and mercy that he dealt with the enemy, not by his own ability. God wanted to use him to save His people.

Without God, Jephthah could do nothing. Hence he came before God to say everything to Him. Jephthah was a vessel who possessed the special trait of relying upon God, and this is one of the reasons God approved of him. Therefore, God gave him all kinds of wisdom to fight against the Ammonites and eventually subdue them.

### **Remove the Spirit of Disbelief and Disobedience**

Jephthah not only defeated the Ammonites, he also dealt with the men of Ephraim. The men of Ephraim had a detestable and wicked spirit, which was the spirit of disrespecting the one sent by God. They refused to

obey the spiritual leader set up by God in His house. This was the spirit of disbelief, disobedience, and rebellion. If such a spirit is not checked, the person concerned will eventually offend God's administration, just as Korah's company. God detests such rebellious spirit. If he refuses to repent, he will surely suffer God's punishment. When Gideon was the judge, the men of Ephraim made this mistake. God gave them a chance to repent, but they still did not learn their lesson. In Jephthah's time, they still made the same mistake. Since they refused to learn their lesson, God's punishment came upon them and they were killed. Let us take this as a warning.

By God's power, Jephthah defeated the intruding enemy. And by God's grace, he dealt with the men of Ephraim and wiped out the spirit of disbelief and disobedience among God's children. Let us find God's grace to imitate the witnesses of the past and become His witnesses of today.

