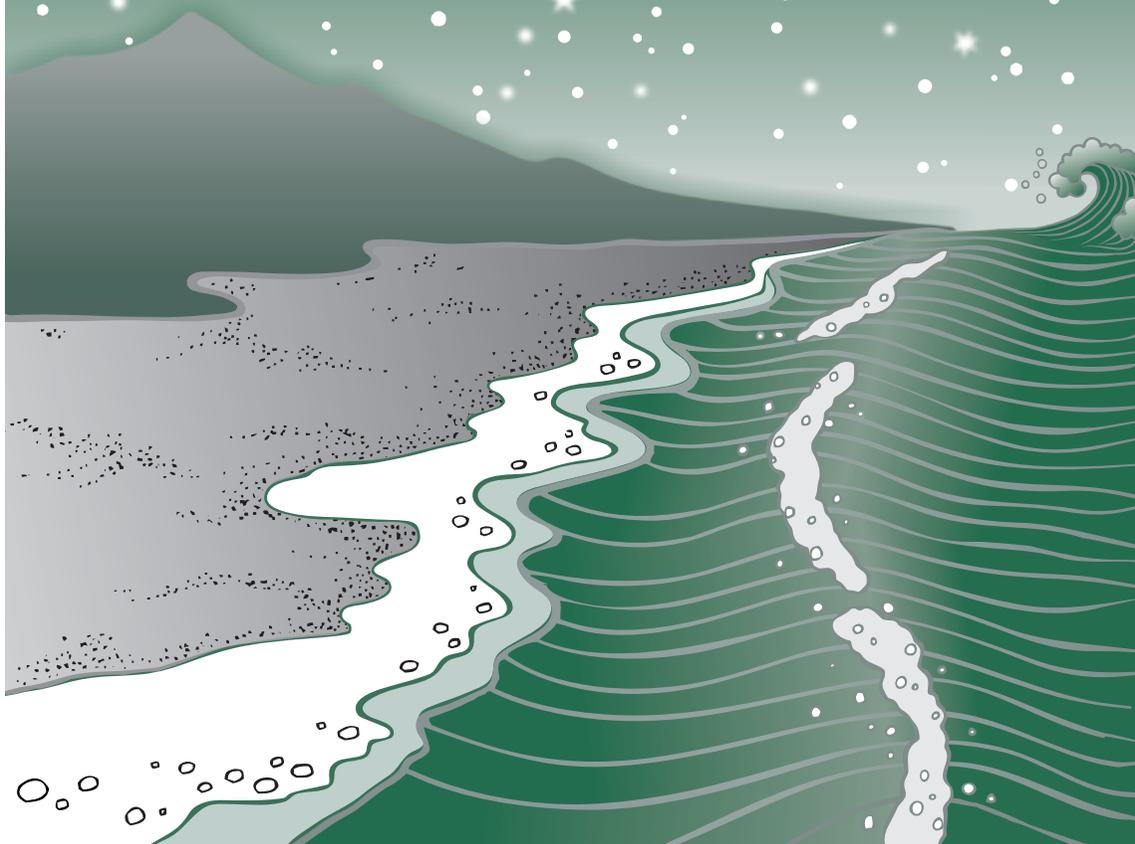


Bible Characters

Volume IV



Bible Characters

Volume IV

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| John the Baptist. | 001 |
| Simeon. | 021 |
| Nicodemus. | 049 |
| Nathanael. | 071 |
| Philip and Philip. | 097 |
| Phoebe. | 117 |
| Zacchaeus. | 127 |
| Martha. | 151 |
| Mary. | 173 |
| Lazarus. | 191 |
| Mary Magdalene. | 207 |



John the Baptist



John the Baptist (1)

More Than a Prophet

*(December 3, 1990 — Message of Bro. Pi
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”

(Luke 1:13–18)

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

(Luke 1:76–79)

John the Baptist was a great prophet, the latter-day Elijah, whose ministry was epochal, historical and unprecedented. He was called the prophet of the Highest, for he went before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins. He was a minister who dispelled the clouds so that people would see the

sun, untying the knots in people's hearts. He caused the Dayspring to shine upon the world from on high, giving light to those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and guiding their feet into the way of peace. Through an angel, God prophesied to Zacharias, John's father, that John would be great in the sight of the Lord and he would also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. All these testify that God had chosen John and sent him to accomplish the special mission of the era. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb, and had gained the spirit and power of Elijah.

We know that our forefather Isaac was born through promise, but very few of us know that John the Baptist was also born through promise. Zacharias, John's father, said to the angel, "I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." To man, this old couple would never bear a child again. But God's promise made it possible. *Born through promise* means not born according to the flesh, or by natural means of birth. It is beyond the knowledge of man. Let me ask, who else was born through promise besides Isaac and John the Baptist? (A sister replied, "All the saints of the New Testament Church are born through promise.") Amen! This answer is worth 100 points!

Brothers and sisters, we were originally not God's children. How, then, did we become His children? We became God's children through promise just like Isaac and John the Baptist did. How do we prove that? By our faith. Galatians 3:14 says, "...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The blessing of Abraham was tremendous! It included all the blessings in heaven and on earth. This blessing of Abraham will also come upon all those born through promise.

How are we born through promise? It is by receiving the promised Holy Spirit by faith. After we receive the promised Spirit, we are like Isaac who was born through promise. Therefore, by faith, we are the seeds of

Abraham — God’s children who will receive all the promises of Abraham. So, we must treasure this promise — the status of an honorable son, the heir of God. Galatians 4:28 says, “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.” Here, it clearly says that we are not born according to the flesh, but through the promised Spirit, just like Isaac was. Therefore, we are blessed because we are children of promise who will inherit all the blessings.

John the Baptist was not only born through promise, his birth was also different from others. God made many prophecies to his father through an angel and they were all fulfilled later. John’s name was given by God. “John” means the gift of God. The birth of John was God’s gift to the Israelites in that generation. John’s very existence showed God’s mercy for that generation. When he came, he turned many children of Israel to the Lord their God. Therefore, the Lord called him Elijah and he was really the latter Elijah.

“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist” (Matt. 17:10 –13). Here, the Lord Jesus spoke of John the Baptist saying that he was the latter Elijah who was to come. John came to restore all things and brought revival to that generation but they did not know him. They did to him whatever they wished and even killed him.

Brothers and sisters, the preachers of the denominations say, “The latter Elijah was John the Baptist. How could the New Testament Church come up with another latter Elijah?” They say this because they have no enlightenment or understanding. They only know the Bible literally. They do not know the principle of multiple fulfillments of the Bible, meaning

that biblical prophecies could be fulfilled many times.

John the Baptist was the latter Elijah at the end of the Old Testament era, and also the last major prophet in the Old Testament. He came to end the Old Testament and brought in the New Testament. He ended the ministry of Moses and brought in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He ended the ministrations of the written code of the Jews and brought in the ministrations of the Spirit of the New Testament. (He ended the law of the Old Testament and brought in the grace of the New Testament.)

God's maidservant Sis. Kong, and the Lord's servant Bro. Hong, are the latter-day Elijah. They are the great prophets in the end times (the end of the New Testament era). Their ministry is to end the tragic 6,000-year history of mankind, putting an end to the human kingdoms and bringing in God's kingdom (ending man's rule and bringing in God's rule). There are differences between the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Sis. Kong and Bro. Hong, but both ministries are glorious and epochal. We are so blessed to be born in the era of Sis. Kong and Bro. Hong — the present latter-day Elijah, and to have a share in paving the road for the Lord's coming. Hallelujah!

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight’”(Matt. 3:1–3). The Bible says that John the Baptist was the pioneer who prepared the way as spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. He prepared the way for the Messiah and introduced Him to that generation. John preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand!” What is meant by *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*? This means that Jesus Christ is coming. When Jesus Christ comes, the kingdom of heaven comes. On many occasions, John testified of the Lord and introduced Him to people, saying, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away

the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). John had become the pioneer who made ready a way and a people prepared for the Lord’s first coming. God’s maidservant, Sis. Kong, and the Lord’s servant, Bro. Hong, are also the pioneers. They prepare the way for the Lord’s second coming because He is coming again. According to someone’s statistics, one in every 25 verses of the New Testament Bible is about the Lord’s second coming.

Preaching the complete salvation of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit is preparing the way and the people for the Lord. Rebuilding the glorious New Testament Church, destroying tyrants and tyrannies, crushing human kingdoms... are all preparing His way. When the Lord’s servant preaches the truth on crushing human kingdoms; overthrowing the thrones of the kingdoms; destroying the strength of the nations; uprooting false doctrines; demolishing denominations and crushing idols — he is dispelling the clouds to let people see the light of the Lord. When he is preaching all these, he is paving the way for the Lord’s return.

When John the Baptist preached the kingdom of God, he made known to the people the kingdom of heaven. But today, when the Lord’s servant preaches the kingdom of God, he brings about the realization of the kingdom of heaven. When John preached the gospel, he was like taking the first step of a staircase. And now, we, together with the Lord’s servant, are taking the last steps of the staircase. Today, the miniature of the kingdom of heaven has appeared on Zion. So, when Zion fills the whole earth, the kingdom of heaven will appear. When this gospel of the kingdom of heaven is preached throughout the world, the end will come. This latter-day Elijah (the Lord’s servant, Bro. Hong) comes to end the 6,000-year history of mankind — man’s kingdoms. Brothers and sisters, it is indeed glorious! So we must not only have the enlightenment, but also faith.

John the Baptist accomplished the special task of baptizing Jesus with water. Today’s latter-day Elijah, however, preaches the complete Truth and helps people receive the baptism of the Blood, Water and Holy Spirit of

the Lord Jesus. Through this Truth, saints will obtain strength to testify for the Lord and become one body of Christ. The latter glory is greater than the former.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ ” (Matt. 3:13–17).

Here it says that a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” God gave His only begotten Son to the world and prepared a salvation for all mankind. His great love is shown and His righteousness is fulfilled. Our Lord came to this world in the likeness of man. He humbled Himself and let John the Baptist baptize Him, saying, “... for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Even our Lord tried to meet God’s demand. The Son of God had no privileges, unlike the children of the kings and rulers of the world. The Lord was baptized in God’s will. His humbleness has become our good example.

When the Lord Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, what did it reveal? It revealed that the ministry of John the Baptist was transferred over to the Lord Jesus. This was a sign of handing over the mission. When the Lord Jesus came up from the water, it indicated that the ministry, mission, and entrustment of John the Baptist had been completed. Now, it was the Lord’s turn to assume ministry. The era of John the Baptist had changed to the era of the Lord Jesus. That was a turning point in history and also the climax of revival. Since then, John, who was a good pioneer,

completed his mission. Soon after that, he was imprisoned.

John the Baptist, the great prophet, had the spirit and power of Elijah. He was dauntless in confronting tyrants and tyrannies. For the sake of testifying for the Lord and His will (truth and righteousness), John feared not the king's wrath or his evil power. He eventually walked into the prison of the human kingdom and stepped on to the way of the martyrs. He was the first martyr after the Lord Jesus was born.

“And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed” (Luke 6:17–18). This passage of the Bible lets us see that a prophet does not only preach the gospel but also rebukes sins and deals with the dominion of darkness. A prophet is not like the cowardly human kingdoms who dare not speak the truth. John the Baptist judged King Herod. He rebuked the king for unlawfully having his brother's wife. Obviously, the mission of a prophet includes upholding justice and rebuking unrighteousness. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, He also rebuked the kings of their wrongdoings, and for this, he suffered many afflictions and persecutions.

“Immediately the king (Herod) sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother” (Mark 6:27–28). John the Baptist rebuked Herod and the adulterous woman Herodias, who then hated him. However, Herod knew that John was a just and holy man, and that he should fear him, protect him, and listen to him. But one day this foolish king threw a birthday party for himself. The daughter of Herodias danced before him, and pleased him. So the king promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist!” What a

wicked generation! They beheaded a great prophet over such a trivial matter. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, “Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wished.” For the sake of God’s will and for testifying for the Lord Jesus, this great prophet eventually sacrificed his life and finished his course on earth.

Brothers and sisters, this latter Elijah was martyred, but today’s latter-day Elijah will be caught up in glory. Will he be caught up alone? (Everyone said no.) This Elijah will make ready all the churches and saints so that we will all be changed and caught up together at the last trumpet. Therefore, let us be faithful like these two latter Elijahs. After we have accomplished and fulfilled God’s will, we will be caught up together with the latter-day Elijah in victory. Hallelujah!

“But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:9–11). This is the witness that the Lord Jesus bore of John the Baptist. He said John the Baptist was more than a prophet, because he was specially sent to prepare the way and the people for the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and to bear witness of Him. This prophet was different from most prophets, for among those born of women there had not risen anyone greater than him. Today, this verse of the Bible will also be fulfilled in us. Therefore, if we have the insight, we will know how glorious and honorable our ministry is! Many people forsook this ministry for a little benefit of the world, such as marriage or fame. What a pity! Therefore, let us respect and honor our ministry.

Although John the Baptist was a great prophet, he also had his weaknesses. He doubted the Lord. “And when John had heard in prison about

the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ ” (Matt. 11:2–3). John the Baptist was bright and courageous, and had knowledge of the Messiah when he bore witness of the Lord Jesus. However, he later doubted Him and said, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” Brothers and sisters, we need to understand the circumstances John was in at that time. He was greatly afflicted in jail. In weaknesses, he may have thought: *Since the Lord Jesus is the Messiah who is omnipotent and can raise the dead, why doesn't He come and save me or visit me in jail? O Lord, how can you be so merciless?...*

Brothers and sisters, men have nothing to boast of. Anyone can become weak and have doubts while in hardships, afflictions and trials. John the Baptist also became weak but he did not stumble. That was God's special mercy and grace. We are no different. Sometimes when God raises up a new circumstance, we tend to be weak and almost stumble. But today, it is all God's mercy that we are still able to walk on this path of the cross and to stand on this position of serving God.

People who were greatly used by God, such as Moses, David, and Peter — all had moments of weaknesses. What more to say of us? Apostle Paul said, “Whenever I am weak, I am strong.” Those who really love God and the truth may also have weaknesses, but they will not stumble. John the Baptist was one of them. He sacrificed his life to bear witness of the Lord and accomplished God's will. He finally completed the work entrusted by God and finished his course. Now, he is waiting for the reward in heaven.

The Lord Jesus said, “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” For the Lord Jesus was destined for the fall and rising of many. Today, the man raised up by God and the mountain chosen by Him in the end-time are also destined for the fall and rising of many. Blessed are we if we are not offended by this man and this mountain. We will eventually accomplish God's will and complete the work entrusted by Him.

John the Baptist (2)

(December 3, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

He Accepted God's Predestination on Him

The Bible speaks concerning the birth of John the Baptist saying: "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist was the forerunner of Lord Jesus. He was able to open the way for Lord Jesus because he had the spirit and power of Elijah. Today, we have obtained God's mercy to succeed the ministry of the latter-day Elijah (John the Baptist), to prepare the way for the Lord's return. Therefore, it is imperative that we possess the spirit and power of Elijah.

John the Baptist was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Matt. 3:3). He lived his entire life in the desert and assumed the ministry in the wilderness according to the prophecy of the prophets. This was God's predestination for him. It is extremely difficult to assume ministry in the vast, barren wilderness, where you have to open up your own way. However, John the Baptist did not reject or escape from God's predestination. Instead, he accepted his fate bravely and willingly. In order that the Lord would have a prosperous way, he dared not hope for an easy or prosperous way. He was ready to face all the adverse circumstances. This is the spirit of Elijah.

Why do people often give up on the way of following the Lord? Because they feel that the way of the New Testament Church is full of battles and hardships. Brothers and sisters, what would you do if you were placed in a desolate wilderness, without a single soul in sight and with nothing there to respond to you? Would you still assume the ministry?

Could you still preach? Not only did John preach, he shouted! Don't you think it is foolish to assume the ministry this way? Why is he shouting if no one is listening? However, this is the way God wants us to work. This is not a theory. We must personally experience it with our lives.

Some people cannot withstand loneliness. For example, some may serve God well at the big churches and even speak eloquently at the Friday conventions in Kaohsiung and Taipei. But say you are a university graduate, and you forsook everything to follow the Lord. If you were to be transferred to a small place with few people, would you still have the interest to serve? The sheep there are not only few and tender, but also sick. Would you feel that it is a waste of your time and your life to shepherd such sheep? You'd have to deal with a handful of sick and unresponsive sheep everyday. If you did get a response, it would be a cold one, just like the one Bro. Reiner mentioned of a few days ago in his testimony. Serving the Lord in this kind of environment is just like being in the wilderness! Can you go on serving in this way?

Brothers and sisters, this requires the spirit of Elijah. That is to accept God's predestination on you. In these past few decades, the environment in which I served and followed the Lord was indeed an extensive wilderness. I often felt helpless and wanted to flee and quit. But God was gracious and merciful to me. Whenever I was about to give up and retreat, God's love would call me back again. The lonely Lord who was crucified would appear to me and say, "This is My way, and it is also the way I want you to take. This is the way I have predestined for you." After hearing such a voice, I would regain my strength.

Brothers and sisters, when we recognize that the way which God predestined us to walk on is a way in the wilderness, and when we are willing to accept it, the Lord's way is prepared and made straight by us. Therefore, whenever I am overwhelmed by hardships, I would come before the Lord and lift up my eyes to Him, who had been hung on the cross. There was a

period of time when I often sang Hymn 255: “If the path I’m treading leads me to suffering, if the way Thou chooseth leads me to hardships, sufficient grace I know will on me bestow. Let the tie with Thee, Lord, closer, sweeter be. Lonely though the pathway, yet Thou art with me. I’ll hear Thy gentle voice, see Thy glorious face. Make my heart satisfied and my spirit rejoice... Mind not less world’s blessing, but that Thou increase. Earthly things once precious, I count them as dung. If Thou take them away, I won’t mind also...”

If the Lord wills that we suffer and if we are able to accept it, we will be blessed. To prepare the way of the Lord, we must have such a spirit. The environment faced by a pioneer is definitely a desolate wilderness, which has no roads. If there is already a smooth road, there would be no need to open one. Therefore, if someone wants to be a pioneer and yet hopes for an easy way, he is opposing God’s predestination.

Brothers and sisters, since we are the pioneers, we have to go to all the difficult and dangerous places that have no roads. Before you build a road, you have to make a survey first. Before the highway of Zion was built, old Bro. Liu and other brothers had to painstakingly survey the land. They faced many dangers just surveying the curve above the Light of All Nations. Opening up the way is no easy task. One has to be prepared to face all kinds of battles and dangers at any time. You are only qualified to become pioneers if you have such recognition.

I often tell the young co-workers that they have to be prepared to suffer hardships if they want to serve God. A person who wants to serve God must be able to withstand hardships, the test of loneliness, and the trial of seeing no result of your labor. Otherwise, you can forget about becoming useful vessels to the Lord. When Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, God did not tell him to go by the way of the Philistines, but by the way of the wilderness and the Red Sea. This is an example of treading out a path when there is none. It requires the will to suffer, not

the ability to give sermons (eloquence). The Lord can never find a way in those who live in ease. In order to let the Lord have a way in us, we must be without our own way, and be able to withstand the trial of loneliness and hardships. We have to be like John the Baptist, who spoke loudly and enthusiastically even in the wilderness where no one listened to him.

I often like to speak of Sis. Sheu because you can say that she and the companions start from scratch in everything they do. They open up a path in the wilderness. The churches in Southeast Asia are able to find so much grace today because of this minister. That day, Bro. Reiner testified saying, "Sometimes, I would think of Sis. Sheu. When I was in Malaysia, I was afraid of her. However, after I came to the West, I missed her." I know what he meant and I could understand how he felt.

Why was Sis. Sheu able to leave people with such a feeling about her? This special trait of a spiritual minister is revealed only after having gone through afflictions. Sometimes, we cannot obey the leading of the spiritual minister, and we even go as far as getting angry with him. When we see him we don't think very highly of him because his words are harsh and severe, causing people to fear him. Nevertheless, it is wonderful. You miss him when you are away from him. You would wish that you could go back to his side even if it means that he might scold you. This is a story of life, a profound mystery of life. It does not come by easy for a spiritual minister to gain such a deep impression from others. He gains it in the course of denying himself to do God's will.

In 1978, God led us to preach the gospel day in and day out by hanging banners on all four sides of the vehicles, going around and proclaiming with a megaphone from the cities all the way to the countryside. We proclaimed through an amplifier wherever there were people. As we left the villages, we turned it off. I remember once a co-worker testified that when they drove through the wilderness, they thought of John the Baptist and turned on the amplifier and cried out to the wilderness. He said that that

was the voice of one crying in the wilderness and that the wilderness should also listen. Maybe someone working there out of sight will also hear the gospel of God.

Brothers and sisters, we must have the same recognition towards God's predestination and possess the same determination. Then we will be filled with the spirit and power of the latter-day Elijah, to assume Elijah's ministry. When I was in Malaysia, there was a period of time when I was so overwhelmed with sorrow that I cried. I went behind closed doors where no one could see me and cried my heart out. At that time, Bro. Pi was in Bangkok and I wrote him a letter. He replied to comfort me, saying, "Servant of God, you are a convict with the death sentence!" When I saw the letter, I thought to myself, "It's true — I have been sentenced to death." With a life sentence, there is still hope of parole. But with a death sentence, there is no hope of ever being freed again. The day he leaves the prison is the day he dies.

Through this letter, God let me see His predestination for me. Since I am a convict sentenced to death, I am prepared to die in Malaysia! So why bother crying? If I die in God's predestination, wouldn't that be glorious? Once I had such recognition, and once I had the spirit of obeying His will until death, I gained strength. Therefore, all you co-workers who have been commissioned overseas, don't be affected by the wilderness-like circumstances. Though your sheep may be few and sick, and though they may give you a cold response, just be faithful to God. When you proclaim by faith, a way will appear in the wilderness.

He Didn't Build Up His Own Image, but Christ's

John knew that he was the voice crying in the wilderness — once it passes, it is gone. It is good enough if the voice is heard. It does not matter how people react to it. Voice is without form or external beauty. So John, just like this voice, didn't build up his own image, but Christ's. He introduced Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who was baptized with the Holy Spirit

and fire, to the people of God. The Bible says, “I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water” (John 1:31).

The purpose of John’s ministry was to let people know Christ. As for himself, he was only a voice that would pass away. He only wanted people to have an impression of Jesus. This was the spirit of John the Baptist. When we have a spirit of willingly losing ourselves in God’s will and having no image of our own, the glorious image of Christ will be manifested, and God’s children will be able to know the Messiah prepared by God. This resembles the burnt offering of the Old Testament era — whether it was oxen or sheep, they had to be killed, skinned, and cut into pieces. And then they had to be burned on the altar into ashes. The original image was completely gone. This was also the way John the Baptist assumed his ministry — all he did was convey (impart) God’s voice and let people hear the voice of the Son of God, while losing his own identity completely. Such ministration satisfies God most.

He Didn’t Stumble because of the Lord

Since John the Baptist was also human, he encountered considerable trials assuming this ministry. When his disciples told him of the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus and the things He had done, he was very tried. He introduced the Messiah to people and because of this, many found grace: the blind saw; the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed; the deaf heard; the dead were raised, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. While everyone was enjoying God’s grace, the one who introduced the Messiah to them had to suffer in jail!

John was so tried that he sent someone to ask the Lord Jesus, “Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?” The Lord Jesus did not say anything except, “Blessed is he who does not stumble because of Me.” Brothers and sisters, if we were John, we probably would have said, “If you don’t save me from the prison, I will be stumbled because of you!” Nev-

ertheless, what the Lord Jesus meant to say was: I save the blind and the lame; as for you, I predestined you to be killed — beheaded.

What would you do? Would you be offended? Thank God that John the Baptist did not become offended because of the Lord. He did not compare himself with others, but accepted what God had destined for him. What would become of others was none of his concern. This was John's mentality: If others find grace because of me, I thank God. If I am not prosperous on earth, I also thank God, because all these are predestined by Him. May the Lord increase and I decrease.

The Lord Jesus was also like this. When He was on the cross, people mocked Him, saying that He could save others but not Himself. Actually, the Lord was able to come down but God predestined Him to die on the cross. Otherwise, the salvation could not be accomplished. This is the way where people find grace. Do we want the Lord's salvation to come upon the world? Do we want the dawn of God's mercy to shine upon the earth? Then we must be like the Lord — able to save others and not ourselves.

From our own point of view, it may seem strange, but if we look at it from God's predestination, it is not strange at all. This is the secret to bring salvation to people. Sometimes, when we look at the circumstances, it seems as though we cannot even save ourselves. So how could we possibly save others? However, the profound mystery of the cross is here — we can't save ourselves. If we do, we can't save others. Therefore, as we have said, Jesus Christ brought about a revolution by shedding His own blood, not others.'

Sometimes, we can lay hands on others and heal them, but we cannot heal our own sicknesses. Lately, many brothers and sisters experienced God's power. Their sicknesses were healed and their problems solved. There are many such glorious testimonies. Ironically, those who heal others often cannot be healed themselves. Have they fallen short of the Lord or offended

Him in any way? It seems as though they preached the gospel to others while they themselves got rejected.

Brothers and sisters, do you imitate the Lord in sacrificing yourself to save others, or do you want others to die together with you just because you cannot save yourself? What would we do if God willed that we endure suffering and death to bring salvation to others? May we be able to say to the Lord, "I believe You will give me sufficient grace. Let the relationship between You and me be more intimate."

John the Baptist finally finished assuming his ministry. He prepared the way of the Lord and let the people of God know the Messiah. May God do on us as He had done on John the Baptist so that we may finish the course God predestined us to walk on and assume well the ministry of the latter-day Elijah.



Simeon



Simeon (1)

(December 10, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Anne Wang during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

(Luke 2:25–35)

The era of old Simeon was a desolate era. They had no prophets and therefore, no words from God. Moreover, the Israelites were a conquered people, suffering under the rule of the Roman Empire. We can imagine how miserable God's people were to be under the rule of a Gentile tyrant and without the guidance of a prophet. We know from the Bible that Paul was a Roman. At that time, very few foreigners could acquire Roman citizenship. When Roman soldiers bound Paul with thongs and were about to scourge him, he had only one phrase, "I was born a Roman." Those who wanted to interrogate and torture him withdrew from him. Here, we can

see how tragic the Israelites who had been subjugated were. Their rulers could do to them as they wished. Not only were they humiliated, the name of their God was also disgraced.

During the time of Simeon, there was no prophet, and therefore, no inspiration from God. Though there was worship at the temple, it was only nominal. So the Israelites were bitter both spiritually and physically. They had neither the light nor the way. Under such circumstances, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and the Bible describes him thus: "This man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him." This was God's comment on (description of) Simeon. One day God will also comment on us and recompense us accordingly. I feel very fearful when I see God's comment on Simeon. He said that Simeon was just and devout. This was not an easy thing to achieve.

Today, we have the leading of the prophet, and we receive equipping and training on this peaceful way. The Lord's servant teaches us everyday, reminding us even in small matters such as eating eggs. He teaches us to be godly in trivial matters in our daily life and to live before God in secret. However, Simeon didn't have anyone to teach him. Therefore, it was not easy for him to be just and devout. He is our role model, especially to us who are overseas, because the circumstances around us are like those of the Israelites of the past. We should imitate Simeon, and exhort one another to be like him.

Simeon was waiting for the Consolation of Israel. The nominal ministration at the temple at that time could not bring the Israelites hope. Nor could it free them from the pain of being conquered. They could only wait for the Consolation of Israel, who was the Messiah promised to them by God in the Old Testament. They would only be delivered from the hands of the enemies when He came. Our era today is just like their era. All nations and peoples are under the rule of tyrants. Where will salvation come from? Salvation is with Christ! For the Lord Jesus is the only Savior. There

is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Concerning the Lord Jesus, the Bible says, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice. From that time forward, even forever” (Isa. 9:6–7). This Child is the Christ of God and He will reign. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. More wonderfully, this Christ of God rules over His kingdom upon the throne of David. He is not ruling upon the throne of any ruler, but upon the throne of David, and His kingdom will last forever.

The Israelites of that time were waiting for this Christ to come and save them. Only He had the power to dispel the dark clouds and untie the knots in their heart. Only He had the power to crush the iron yoke which tyrants used to oppress them and rebuild the kingdom of David for them. He Himself would rule. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His rule. He is the assurance and security of this kingdom. It is no wonder that the Israelites daily hoped for the coming of the Messiah. When He came, everything would be fine. However, when the Lord Jesus was born, very few people knew that this Child was the Christ.

Simeon was one of the few and there was a reason why he had the Holy Spirit upon him and he was just and devout. God was delighted with him. Therefore, God did not conceal the birth of Christ to him but let him become a witness to the birth of Christ. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. One day, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to go into the temple. It was then that the parents brought in the Child Jesus, and Simeon took the Child (Christ) in his arms. The Holy Spirit enlightened Simeon so that he

blessed God, saying, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word!” When he had Christ, he had everything. Christ became his world. He was content and had peace.

Just as how Jesus spoke of Abraham, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” (John 8:56–57). Abraham was of the ancient world, but he also waited for the coming of the Lord Christ. He had seen the Lord in the spirit and was glad. David had also foreseen the Lord. The Bible says, “David... foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” David said, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ ”

David foresaw the salvation which God had prepared for this world, and so his heart rejoiced, and his tongue was glad. What the witnesses of faith in the Old Testament era hoped for daily was the Lord Jesus Christ. They died in hope and in faith and did not see what they wanted to see. Therefore, when old Simeon saw the Lord’s Christ, he was so thankful to God. The One whom people had been hoping and waiting for ages and generations had finally come. We can imagine how joyous Simeon was when he took the Child in his arms. Even though the Lord Christ was still an infant at that time, Simeon was able to see and hold the One that so many prophets had wanted to see and did not see.

Simeon was so content with his life that he felt that he could rest in peace. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that this Child was the Christ, a light to the Gentiles, and that He was the salvation prepared by God for all peoples. The salvation which God had been preparing for mankind for thousands of years had finally appeared! So, this salvation is not only prepared for the Israelites but also for all peoples.

Simeon also said, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many.” This reminds me of John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus said to him, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me” (Luke 7:23, *NIV*). This “fall” mentioned is not because of other matters but because of Christ. When John the Baptist was in jail, he almost fell and stumbled. Therefore, the Lord Jesus told him, “Blessed is he who does not fall away on account of Me!” Here it says that the Child is destined for the fall of many. When I compare these words with what the Lord’s servant said, I really feel fearful.

If we do not have the spirit of obedience and the spirit of walking on the path God that destined for us to take, we will fall because of Christ. We were not born obedient. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered. Therefore, we must pray for the Lord to help us, and to add us the strength and will to suffer, so that while walking on this way, we will not fall because of the Lord. I often hear people say that they stumbled because of this person or because of that matter. Actually, the real reason is always Christ because He is actually the One behind the circumstances. If we cannot take the circumstances that He raises up, then we will stumble because we cannot obey Christ in the circumstances. Let’s exhort one another. Blessed are we if we are not offended because of the Lord Christ.

Simeon (2)

The Lifelong Hope of Old Simeon

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

Luke 2:25–35 says, “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’ ”

Old Simeon lived in Jerusalem. Even though the Bible does not say that he was a priest, he was actually a faithful priest who often went inside the temple to worship God. The Bible also doesn’t say that he was a prophet, but he was really a prophet and had the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He recognized the Christ while most of the people did not know Him. All the prophecies that he made concerning the Child Jesus were fulfilled and accomplished. The Bible says that Simeon was just and devout; not many people could gain such praise. Simeon was like a beam of light that shined in front of everybody. He was a godly man who always

lived before God and served Him in reverence. He didn't dare to do as he pleased; rather, he was one who pleased God.

Simeon always waited for the Consolation of Israel to come. He lived his entire life in a great and glorious hope. What did he hope for? He hoped for the coming of the Savior of Israel, the Light to the Gentiles, and the Redeemer of mankind. This was Jesus, the glory of Israel, the Messiah whom God promised to send. Blessed are those who hope for the coming of the Redeemer!

Everyone lives in hope, except that the hope of the people of this world is different from that of Simeon. They put their hope in worldly things instead of Christ. Therefore, their hopes are vain and unrealistic, and they often end up in disappointment and despair. But old Simeon's hope was from faith and so it had a solid foundation. To hope in faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. These are real hopes that can be fulfilled.

Hope with foundation is based on God's words and the prophecies of the prophets. All the prophecies in the books of the prophets in the entire Old Testament Bible mention about the coming of the Redeemer — the Messiah. Moses also said, "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren." These words refer to Christ. Therefore the hope of old Simeon was based on the prophecies of the prophets. The One whom the prophets of the Old Testament had prophesied about had come and was met by old Simeon in the temple. What Simeon hoped for all his life was realized. He saw the Messiah. Hopes that are based on God's words are glorious. May we be like old Simeon and put all our hopes in the Redeemer. This is real hope that will never fail.

The prophecies of the prophets of the Old Testament are centered on the *first coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecies of the prophets of the New Testament era are centered on the *second coming* of Christ. Statistics

say that on an average, one out of every twenty-five verses of the New Testament Bible concerns the *second coming* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the second coming of Jesus Christ is what we hope for. This is an extremely great and glorious hope.

Brothers and sisters, what exactly what do we hope for today? Are our hopes like that of Simeon? Or are we putting our hopes in the world? If we put our hopes in the world, we will surely be disappointed. What Simeon hoped for was finally realized. Today, we are hoping for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This hope is built on the solid foundation of the words of God (the prophecies of the apostles and prophets). All these years, the messages of the Lord's servant and the other apostles bring brothers and sisters hope with foundation. Brothers and sisters, are you sure of this hope? If you are, then your work, ministration, and livelihood, will be completely different.

When old Simeon's hope was realized, and when he saw the Lord Christ with his own eyes, he said, "Lord, I have seen Your Christ. Now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word." Brothers and sisters, we will also see our Lord Christ with our own eyes. But when we see the Lord, our bodies will be transformed, and we will be caught up in glory. This is an assured hope, and also our glorious hope. This hope is heavenly. It will lift us up to heaven. This hope is anchored in New Jerusalem and is with foundation. So, we are more blessed than old Simeon. Today, it is for this glorious hope that we walk on this way of the New Testament Church and come to holy Mount Zion. May we all live in this glorious hope until this hope is realized.

Concerning Simeon, the Bible says, "The Holy Spirit was upon him... It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit" and "He came by the Spirit." Obviously, this old Simeon lived in the spirit. He had the revelation and motivation of the Holy Spirit. He also spoke and acted by the Holy Spirit, who had a free path in him. Brothers and sisters, we have all

received the baptism of the Spirit, who now dwells in us. So we must always live in the spirit.

If we still live in the soul and act according to the flesh, we will not have the motivation and revelation of the Holy Spirit. If you don't live in the spirit, you will not do what God wants you to do. Instead, you will do what the Holy Spirit does not want you to do. If you are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, you will speak and act on your own, and it will be hard for you to be His mouthpiece. The Holy Spirit will have no way in you and He will not be able to use you just as He used Simeon. The Lord's servant wrote « *Exercise the Spirit and Deal Away with the Self* » to teach us how to exercise and live in the spirit. We should not speak by ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit, just like old Simeon.

Old Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit to enter the temple. His actions and words were completely controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit, so he didn't have his own freedom to act as he wished. He was not like some brothers and sisters on Mount Zion who go down the mountain whenever they want, whose actions are not restricted and controlled by the Holy Spirit. When Simeon was moved by the Spirit to enter the temple, he knew something would happen. And sure enough, as soon as he entered the temple, he saw the Child Jesus and met the Lord's Christ.

Meeting the Lord Christ is the most important matter in our lives. A person's life and ministration will be completely different after meeting the Lord. He will be built upon a firm foundation, and his feet will be set upon an unshakable rock. Therefore, on this path of entering God's kingdom, there is an issue that we must face seriously, that is, whether we have met the Lord.

There are some among us who often meet the Lord in their life. But there are also some who have never met the Lord in their life because they do not know what is meant by living in the Spirit. This is a solemn matter.

If we could be like Simeon and let all our words and actions be controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit, we will meet God everyday.

We can easily meet God on Mount Zion because the Lord appears and speaks to us daily. We can meet our Lord through people, circumstances, and things. If we cannot live under the control of the Holy Spirit, we will have lesser chances to meet the Lord. Brothers and sisters, how come some people don't feel like attending morning prayer to an extent that they even hate services and work? The reason is simple: They do not know what meeting the Lord is, and they do not know how to live in the spirit. It would be meaningless to force someone to attend services because it would make him feel bitter. But for a person who has met the Lord, he will not only attend morning prayer service as early as 4 A.M., he would even be willing to be beheaded for the Lord.

Old Simeon came into the temple, which was the place for serving and worshipping God. There is a big difference between serving inside and serving outside the temple. Those who serve inside come face to face with God at the holy of holies. But those outside don't see Him. Psalm 73 mentions about the difference between entering into the temple and staying outside the temple. (Verses 2 to 16 describe the condition of being outside the temple. Verse 17 is the turning point as one enters into the temple, where his thoughts are completely changed.)

Let's read Psalm 73:2–16: “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore his people return here, and waters of a

full cup are drained by them. And they say, 'How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?' Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me —"

You can say that this was the condition of someone who had not entered the temple. He was very discontent and depressed. He complained to God and man, and was in complete darkness. When he saw the prosperity of the wicked, he became envious. He thought that he served God and cleansed his heart in vain. He was in a pitiful state, living in self-righteousness, self-pity, and with a low self-esteem. In verse 17, when he entered the temple, the dark clouds were finally dispelled and the knots in his heart were untied. In the light, he saw his own condition, and the consequence of the enemies.

Let's read verses 17–28: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works."

The serving inside the temple is important. So, we should not stand outside the temple and remain in the dark condition of the first half. We must enter the temple and let the light of the Lord's face shine on us. Only then will we see our foolishness, ugliness, weaknesses and shortcomings, and feel ashamed of ourselves! At the same time, we will see the Lord's lovingkindness, righteousness and faithfulness.

Maybe you will say, "I would like to go inside the temple to pray." Very good! But we must understand that the New Testament Church is this temple, and so is our body. What is meant by entering the temple? To me, whenever something happens, I come back to the spirit and seek the Lord first. This is what it means by entering the temple. But what is our spiritual condition? Whenever something comes up, we find it hard to enter the temple or to return to the spirit. We tend to respond and deal with things according to our mind and intellect. If we often win in arguments and have good reasons and excuses, what good would it do us? We would lose another chance to learn the lessons of life.

Brothers and sisters, whenever we have a mishap and we are upset, pray that the Lord will let us return to the spirit quickly and enter the temple to entreat the Lord. The Lord will tell us what to say and what to do. From a wider viewpoint, this temple is the New Testament Church. To enter the temple is to enter into the vision of the church, immersing ourselves in the revelation of salvation, entering into the vision of a man and a mountain and doing God's will. If we enter the temple (that is, to be in the vision of the church) and always come face to face with the Lord, we will meet the Lord in the temple. Then our work, life, and ministration will have everlasting value.

Old Simeon met the Lord Christ in the temple, and took Him up in his arms and blessed God. He did not meet Him by chance, much less by luck. This was what Simeon believed in and hoped for. This was also the center of his prayer and ministration. All his endeavors were for the hope of

seeing the Lord Christ with his own eyes. Simeon was born for this and lived for this. God will not let those who wait upon Him be put to shame. Simeon finally saw the Lord Christ.

At that time, there were many priests ministering in the temple every-day, but none of them knew Christ. Physically, they were in the temple, but their spiritual eyes were still in darkness. They did not know that Christ had come, and they failed to recognize Him. They were busy killing oxen and goats and offering sacrifices for people. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus, they did for Him according to the custom of the law, but none of the priests knew that He was the Lord Christ whom Israel had been waiting for. How pitiful!

For these past years, many overseas brothers and sisters met Christ on Mount Zion. They also brought revival back to their respective places, testifying gloriously for the Lord. They are like a cloud of witnesses that surrounds us. They come from far away, paying up a great price. Some of them quit their jobs and others work hard just to earn enough money to buy a plane ticket to come to Zion. The God who searches man's hearts will surely appear to them and bless them.

Recently, several Tahitian brothers have been going to pray at the temple and sleeping there every night. You should know that they have met the Lord. Is Christ partial? Does Christ appear to one person and not the other? No! Christ appears equally to everyone except that some people are just blind. They cannot see the Lord because they are in the dark. They can't see the Lord even when He appears to them.

How can we tell that these brothers and sisters have not met the Lord? If they have met the Lord, how could they not like services, praying, and serving the Lord? Why does the Lord's servant lead us to pray here every morning? He wants to take us into the temple, hoping that during morning prayers every one of us will meet the Lord, receive Him, and embrace

Him, just as Simeon held the Lord Christ in his arms. If you do not attend morning prayer services, how can you meet the Lord? Therefore, we need God's mercy. The Lord searches our hearts to see if we truly long for Him. Do you dearly long for this Lord who is coming back? May we be able to meet the Lord everyday at the temple.

When old Simeon met the Lord, he took Him up and carried Him in his bosom. Simeon was the first one, besides the Lord's parents, to know the Lord and hold Him in the temple. Many people carried babies into the temple everyday according to the custom of the law. However, only Simeon recognized the Lord Christ. He saw and met the One whom many prophets and righteous men throughout the ages longed to see and did not see. Having met the Lord, he was satisfied because he had attained his lifelong wish. At this time, he counted all things as rubbish, in order that he might gain Christ as his treasure. Simeon had a prayer: "Lord, You may now let Your servant go in peace according to Your word." What he meant was, "I have seen the Lord; what else could I want? Since I'm advanced in age, I can now depart in peace."

There is a Chinese saying that goes, "Having heard the truth in the morning, I will not regret to die in the evening." Actually, the "truth" which the Chinese talk about is the rudiments of the world, not the Word of life. But they already treasure this "truth" so much that if they learn it in the morning, it is worth dying that evening. However, what Simeon saw was the real Truth. He saw the Word and he held Him and carried Him in his bosom. This Word existed from the beginning. Simeon lived his entire life for the Word. Now that he had gained Him, he was content and was ready to go in peace.

Brothers and sisters, what we receive today is the Truth, the Word of life, and the complete salvation of Jesus Christ which is Blood, Water and Holy Spirit. We can really say: "We have heard the Truth in the morning. We will not regret to die today or tomorrow." Apostle Paul said, "For to me, to

live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil. 1:21–23).

Brothers and sisters, to gain Christ is more valuable than anything. For to us, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. It is far better to depart and be with Christ. We have already acquired this priceless treasure †the holy Truth, which is Christ Himself. Therefore, let us not only take Him up in our arms but also hold Him tightly in our bosom.

When old Simeon was holding the Lord, he prayed, “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” From his prayer, we know that a person who is devout and fears God looks at death as a relief. As Paul had said, it is far better (a great relief) to depart and be with the Lord.

To most people, old Simeon is a minor character. But in actuality, he is a great man, and our good example. May we imitate Simeon who was just and devout, living in this world to wait for our Lord Jesus Christ’s second coming. May every one of us be able to enter the temple to meet the Lord and embrace Him. We are more blessed than old Simeon, because the Lord is returning very soon. When the Lord returns, we will not be like old Simeon who just departed in peace. We will be caught up to the air in peace. Our bodies will be transformed and we will meet the Lord in the air to be with Him forever. Hallelujah!

Simeon (3)

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

Christ Was His Goal in Life

Old Simeon was very clear about the meaning, purpose, and value of life. What he hoped and waited for all his life was to see God's Christ. He was born for this and lived for this. This is what was special about old Simeon, and also what everyone must recognize. Seeing and gaining Christ is the most important and blessed thing in one's life, because this is the meaning and value of life. We must have enlightenment in this aspect.

If we cannot meet Christ in our life, work and ministration, all that we do will be meaningless and valueless. But if we could meet Christ, then everything will have meaning and value. Therefore, when old Simeon met Christ, he said, "Now, You may let Your servant go in peace." For his eyes had seen Christ. He had seen the salvation of the Lord. Since he had attained to his meaning and value of life, he could now leave in peace. Paul was the same. After he knew Christ, he counted all things as rubbish for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ, that he might gain Him. Therefore, we must also live to meet and know Christ, and set Him as our goal in life.

Today, when we live, work and serve, we often manage to get things done. But during the process of taking care of matters, we do not meet Christ. As a result, our work and service are not very glorious and satisfactory. We may have the external works, but no breath of life inside. We are busy on the outside, but lack the essence of life within. It is just like the ministration of Martha. Martha was very busy on the outside, but she didn't have the Lord within her. As a result, the busier she was, the more empty and lost she became, and the more complaints she had.

However, Mary's ministration was just the opposite. The Lord said to Martha, "Your sister Mary has chosen that good part." Martha was so busy, but she was not praised by the Lord. On the other hand, Mary didn't even move a finger, but she was praised. She only sat at the Lord Jesus' feet and heard His word, and received the *good part*.

Now, some of you will say: "Okay, from now on, I want the *good part*. I will imitate Mary and do nothing." If this is the case, it shows that you have not met Christ. Only lazy people would say that, and imitate Mary on the outside, sitting there doing nothing. But what the Lord wants is for us to imitate how Mary sought for the Lord, met Him, and treasured Him more than anything. If you don't have the Lord when you are busy, you will have complaints. The busier you are, the angrier you'll become. You will blame this and that. But once you have met the Lord, all these problems will be solved.

I am not telling you not to work and be busy, but not to become so busy that we don't have the Lord within us. We have to be busy in the Lord, by the Lord, and for the Lord. Only then will our work hold value. Having experienced that failure, Martha learned her lessons. When the Lord came again, she was as busy as before, but she did not complain. Her serving was full of joy because she had the Lord in her.

He Recognized the Consolation of God

At the time of Simeon, many people waited and hoped for the Messiah. But when God's Messiah came, very few knew Him. Simeon not only waited and hoped for the Consolation of Israel, he also recognized Him when He came. Recognizing Him was the most important. Many people have hope towards the prophecies in the Bible, but when these prophecies come true before their eyes they might not recognize or believe them.

The Bible mentions of a Samaritan woman who said, "I know that

Messiah is coming...” Obviously, many people at that time were familiar with the biblical prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. But when the Messiah came, people didn’t recognize Him. For example, the Samaritan woman knew of the coming Messiah, but failed to recognize Him even when He was right in front of her face. Therefore, having knowledge without the recognition in life is useless.

The Jews were familiar with the prophecy of the Old Testament which said, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given...” However, they could not believe that Jesus was the Christ. Old Simeon met this Messiah a long time ago, but the muddled Jews are still waiting, even until today. How pitiful!

Today, we may also have such a condition. For example, when we sing, “The latter-day Elijah has come!” it seems as though we know the latter-day Elijah. But we may not have the real recognition in life, just like when I still didn’t recognize Sis. Kong in the past. Why didn’t I return to the New Testament Church in the beginning? It was because I didn’t recognize the ministry of Sis. Kong. I thought Sis. Kong was only one among the servants and maidservants raised up by God, just as the Jews thought that Jesus was one of the many babies at that time. They didn’t know that this One was the *One* mentioned in the Bible. And because they didn’t recognize Him, they could not serve according to God’s will.

If we want our life, work and ministration to have spiritual value, we must recognize the one anointed by God. Only when we acknowledge the one sent by God will we be able to serve according to God’s will. Today, there is a very important reason as to why our serving often has problems. It is because we do not acknowledge the spiritual minister.

A person who does not acknowledge the spiritual minister will serve according to his own preferences. He would not discuss with the spiritual minister nor would he try to find out how the spiritual minister feels. Such

a person tends to have his own ideals, and moreover, think that his ways are better than that of the spiritual minister. Such ministrations will result in problems.

At the time of old Simeon, many babies were brought into the temple to be offered up to God. But when old Simeon saw the parents of Jesus bringing in the Child, he took the Child in his arms. He was able to recognize Christ from among so many babies. This speaks of the importance of recognizing the vessel of era — the one sent by God.

The Israelites greatly sinned against God when they made the golden calf in the wilderness. How did the golden calf come about? It was because the Israelites failed to acknowledge the one sent by God, or they took the wrong person as the one sent by God. The vessel of the era appointed by God in that generation was Moses. But because Moses went up to the mountain for a long time, the Israelites went to Aaron. This is taking the wrong leader. Once they followed the wrong leader, they started to make the golden calf (the idol). So it was hard for the people to realize that praying to the golden calf was idolatry. After Aaron made the golden calf, he told the people: “This is the LORD God who led you out of Egypt.” Aaron claimed that the calf was the *LORD God*. This was the consequence of going to the wrong leader.

Today, there is also such condition in New Testament Church. Some people say, “Bro. Hong is an apostle. I definitely have no questions about that, and we will give ourselves to the apostles and co-work with the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade.” What they say is correct, but what they build up are golden calves. They say they give themselves to the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade but they have their own ideals. Their leading is different from the one we have here on Mount Zion. When we lead all the saints up to Mount Zion, they say that going up to Zion is not important. They also say that God is a spirit, so as long as we worship Him in spirit and truth, it doesn’t matter where we are, whether we are in Jerusalem or in Samaria.

Brothers and sisters, this saying is very deceptive. We must pray hard and ask the Lord to enlighten us and let us see the one sent by God just as He had enlightened old Simeon to see the Lord's Christ. Today, there are billions of people in the world. Who is the vessel of the era sent by God? We must recognize him. Many people judge by the appearance. They are like the Samaritan woman, who spoke foolishly in front of the Messiah. Jesus the Nazarene who was the Word that became flesh had no comeliness. When people saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him, and they didn't esteem Him.

Today, many people are not enlightened in the spirit and they do not recognize the one anointed by God. As a result, they live, work and serve according to their own knowledge and understanding. Brothers and sisters, please pay attention to these words of mine. It is not enough just to know it with your mind. You must also be enlightened in the spirit. Otherwise, you will not be like old Simeon, who could recognize Christ at once.

In the beginning, I didn't really know the ministry of God's maidservant Sis. Kong. I thought that she was just another preacher, except she was more devoted, hardworking, diligent and earnest. She was more willing to pay the price and carry the cross than most people, and therefore she received a greater blessing. Such recognition was from my own point-of-view and was inaccurate.

Sis. Kong said that God's will for this era had been entrusted to her and everyone had to co-work with her. If we co-worked with her, God's work would be done. If we did not, our works would not be remembered by God. I really couldn't understand. Was it that serious? Would my fasting prayers, gospel preaching, healing and casting out of demons not be remembered by God? I could not believe nor understand it.

Until one day, I prayed to God earnestly, "Lord, who exactly is Sis. Kong?" I said to the Lord, "I really have a heart to serve You. I will serve

You all the days of my life! But what if I served You all my life and at the end You said to me, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' That would be the end of me. Then I would have lived in vain... You must make me understand."

Later on, the Lord gradually enlightened me, letting me understand that the mission of the era had indeed been entrusted to Sis. Kong. She was the vessel of the era raised up by God in the last days. The entire will and work of God in the end-time had been entrusted to her, just as God had chosen Moses and entrusted him with the work in that era. At that time, all those who wanted to do God's work had to co-work with Moses, this unique vessel. Only then would it count as doing God's work.

After I was enlightened, I knew how to serve God. My serving became well-established and was remembered by God. This is something that God's children must recognize. Whenever we overlook this, problems will arise in our ministration, and golden calves will be made. May we all be enlightened in the spirit and be like old Simeon, who recognized the Lord's Christ, the One sent by God. Only then will we be able to serve according to God's will.

Spiritual Pursuits — Not for Personal Glory but for God's People

Old Simeon's entire hope was for God's people and God's will, because he hoped and waited for the Consolation of Israel. When he saw the Child appear, he said, "O Lord, this is Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." What Simeon waited and hoped for was not merely for himself. It was also for the glory of all Israel and the salvation for all the Gentile peoples. Moreover, his waiting for the coming of the Messiah was his spiritual goal. He did not do it for his own personal glory.

The denominations today have this kind of problem. Many of them seek to progress in their spiritual life just for their vainglory. They want to be more spiritual than others. To them, it would be best if others had less progress and became more carnal, so that they could appear more spiritual and outstanding. These are all frightening expressions of *self*. Brothers and sisters, we should not seek to become spiritual for our own selfish gains. Some of you may think earthly pursuits are bad, and that spiritual pursuits are good, even if they are for one's own self. However, a spiritual pursuit not for the congregation will create problems one day.

Old Simeon was a devout man. He dared not seek for his own glory. Instead, he involved himself completely in God's will. Simeon had such a big capacity that he was concerned for all peoples and all Israel. This is what we should imitate. Brothers and sisters, if we search ourselves closely, we'll surely find such condition in us. We would think: "I have worked so much and I am still not well-known. I might as well work less. It would be better if I get all the credit. If several people were to work together and if somebody asked who did it, then the glory would be divided among everybody. It would not be glorious enough for me. If you do a lot, and I don't do as much, you will catch the public eye and rob me of all my glory." This is the principle behind the building of the tower of Babel — doing things for one's own glory. This is also a personal construction. If we utterly deal with this selfishness, we will be able to coordinate with our companions harmoniously, and our ministration will be pleased by God.

He Knew How People Would Respond towards Christ

Old Simeon also knew the way to exalt Christ. He said that this Child was destined for the fall and rising of many, and for a sign which would be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. He also said that a sword would pierce through Mary's soul. "Christ destined for the rising of many" is easy to understand. But "Christ destined for the fall of many" is not easy to understand. If exalting Christ caused people to fall, would we still exalt Christ? We still must exalt Him! Those who exalt

Christ must know this.

Today, when the New Testament Church exalts Christ, many people fall. Some foxes among the ruins join hands with the rulers of the world to persecute the New Testament Church. They think that Christians should preach on a foundation of love, but the New Testament Church is filled with shouts of killing. They think that the New Testament Church is too extreme, not Christian-like, and is not like a church. As a result, many people fall. However, they know deep down that what the New Testament Church preaches is right, and that she does not disobey the biblical Truth. They also comment that the New Testament Church prays with a strong spirit. They know that the New Testament Church is good, yet they still doubt. If we were to ask them why, they would say, "Because you say that the Kuomintang (KMT) is bad, but we support them. If I were to choose between the Lord Jesus and the KMT, I would choose the KMT. I do not have to listen to what the Lord Jesus says, but I have to listen to what Hao Bocun says." Such people will fall because of the New Testament Church. Of them, I would say, "You deserve it! You will not only fall, you will also shatter into pieces!"

Brothers and sisters, many people will fall when the Lord's Christ is exalted. However, the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed is he who is not offended (fall) because of Me." Today, many apostates say that Bro. Hong is preaching the false truth. What is this "dealing with tyrants and tyrannies"? Sis. Kong only preached on Blood, Water and Holy Spirit, but Bro. Hong does not preach on this. Instead, he preaches on dealing and crushing man's kingdoms. They think that the New Testament Church is only dealing with tyrants and tyrannies instead of preaching the gospel and saving souls. These people fall because the New Testament Church vanquishes tyrants and saves people. Those who think that way deserve to stumble. God destines it to be so. However, those who should rise will still rise. Therefore, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many. Those who stumble do so because they fear the regimes and tyrants of this world. Wonderfully, there are still people who return to the New Testament Church because they are not

afraid of tyrants and despots.

Currently, even the TV stations are interested in the New Testament Church. In the future, God will do even more glorious works. The New Testament Church will suddenly become renowned in the whole world! The prophecies in the Bible are just beginning to be fulfilled, and we are already so amazed. In the future, when the kings of the nations are led to us in procession, what will happen to us? Those with little faith will probably say, "Perhaps it won't be that easy." Or they may say, "It's possible, but not that soon." We do not know when the Lord will lead the kings here, but it is a prophecy of the Bible. You may think that it won't happen so soon, but if the Lord wants to accomplish it quickly, why is it not possible?

Old Simeon went on to say that this Child was destined for a sign, which would be spoken against. He was the Christ set up by God, and yet was going to become a sign that would be spoken against, and a target for attack. Therefore, we should not fear the opposition and slanders of men. If no one slanders us, this might indicate that we are not walking on the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the world praises us, it might mean that we are just like them. Brothers and sisters, if we are walking on the way of the Lord, this world will not welcome us.

Thank the Lord. There are people praising the New Testament Church and there are also people slandering us. Moreover, we have become the center of their attacks, and the focal point of their slandering. This is God's predestination. We are like Mary who gave birth to Jesus. A sword will also pierce through our soul. Sometimes, we may offer up faithfully, working diligently and sparing no pains to serve according to God's will, but all we get is a lot of slandering. It may be as painful as being pierced by a sword. Then we may say to the Lord, "O Lord, who can understand what I have done? When can I lift up my head?" This is a trial that those who love God and who are faithful to Him will encounter. Therefore, don't be surprised.

The rising of the New Testament Church is also to reveal the thoughts of many hearts. You say that you love the Lord, that you want to take up the cross to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and that you will accept anything as long as it is God's will and the truth of the Bible. You make yourself sound so good. But what will happen to you when trials come? At this time, the thoughts of many will be revealed.

While I was in the denominations, many people often said, "As long as it is the truth from the Bible, I will accept." Good. When the time comes, we will see if you really want to accept it. One day, I talked to those who served with me at the Christian Assembly about the Bible, saying, "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays... Do you believe?" They were stunned and they could not believe. Christians from the Christian Assembly often say, "We want to return to the spirit." They seem to value the spirit, but when you want them to pray in spirit, they refuse to. Someone who has not met Christ will not recognize his own condition. When this living Christ appears, all the thoughts of your heart will be exposed. Do you really want to take up the cross and follow the Lord, and forsake everything for Him? Do you really want to do according to the truth of the Bible at any price? When trials come, all the thoughts in you such as not being absolute and devoted enough, and having your own fears and personal glory, will be thoroughly exposed.

When I was in the Christian Assembly, there was someone who was nicknamed "Expert of the Cross" because he often said, "I'll be a faithful, limitless follower of the Lamb. Wherever He goes, I will go." After I received the full gospel, I shared the grace of God with this co-worker who had often helped me spiritually in the past. But at this time, he could not accept this living Christ. He only followed the Lamb to a certain extent, not "limitlessly."

Thank God that today He also gives us the enlightenment like that of Simeon. He lets us recognize the Anointed One of God. May our recogni-

tion not only be in words or knowledge, but in the spirit. Let us be like old Simeon, so that when God's Christ appears, we will be able to recognize and receive Him. Only then will we have a serving that glorifies God, and a life with everlasting value. May old Simeon's experience also become our experience.



Nicodemus



Nicodemus (1)

(December 22, 1990 — Discussion of Bro. Lee Chung Der during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

The Bible describes the characteristics and deeds of Nicodemus. (See John 3:1–10; 7:45–51; 19:38–42.) 1. He was a Pharisee filled with the leaven of the Pharisees. 2. He was a ruler of the Jews. He had the support of the Jews and leaven of Herod. 3. Due to his fear of the Jews, he became an underground disciple who visited Jesus at night. 4. He was a good, but unenlightened man. 5. Together with Joseph of Arimathaea, he brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to bury the body of Lord Jesus according to the custom of the Jews. But he was not like Mary of Bethany who anointed the Lord's feet with costly oil before He was crucified. Mary timely offered up the freewill offerings for the gracious Lord who was about to die for her. (See John 12:3–8.)

I was like Nicodemus in many ways: 1. I returned from the Spark group of the Christian Assembly, filled with the leaven of the denomination. 2. I was a KMT officer for 27 years. 3. My father died when I was eight years old. As an orphan, I was bullied and ill-treated. As a result, I became timid.

From the time I was saved until I returned to the New Testament Church, I lived in fear. I was tried and rebuked three times for not bowing to the political idol. They threatened to throw me to mainland China where Mao Tse-tung was, so that I would fight for my religious freedom there. They also planned to try me with the military law, but the military officer said that there was a lack of evidence. And so, they conspired and set a date for me to bow to the political idol in front of everybody at the weekly meeting. If I refused, I would be prosecuted for disobeying orders.

When I went into the cafeteria, the KMT members shouted, "On a certain day of a certain month, you have to bow!" I was in an emotional

turmoil and I went to see the high ranking officer and said, "I don't want to go against your dignity publicly but I want to be faithful to God to the point of death. Since you dislike me, let me retire for the reasons of health." He hesitated for a while and said, "Ok, give me your medical report." So I went to the hospital and obtained a medical report for having hypertension.

Meanwhile, the party secretary seized the opportunity to accuse me of not attending committee meetings without leave and for not paying party membership fees for three months. As a result, I was expelled from the party. One night, the neighboring chief of political work had a talk with the chief of defense and suggested that I should be disciplined for having thinking problems, which would result in a terrible punishment. But the chief of defense said loudly, "I can't do that! He always attends the political classes and hands in his assignment. He also has excellent results in political examinations. The intelligent officials find no bad records of him."

Later on, all these people who tried to frame me were recompensed one after another. First, the party secretary went home one weekend and died in his sleep. Then it was the commander's turn. He was the one who threatened to throw me to China. At first he was promoted, but then he was punished by Chiang Ching-kuo for neglecting his duty. Finally, he died of a stroke. Lastly, the chief who suggested that I should be disciplined for having thinking problems was also recompensed. He had been promoted as a head official, but his lower limbs were amputated due to diabetes, and he was confined to a wheelchair. God saved me from the snares of the predators and recompensed the ungodly and unrighteous.

After Tang Xing Rong was born, the people of Zion found their household registration altered, and soon after, they were ousted from their homestead. They appealed to the county and provincial government again and again but they were rejected. At the end of 1979, we handed our case over to a lawyer, who is also our brother, to file a lawsuit at the Administrative

court. When I saw his suite number (79 Open Seal Street, 3rd floor), the Holy Spirit moved me to declare, "In 1979, the blockade (seal) set on Zion will be opened, and we will go up to the third heaven." At 10 P.M. one night, I saw our brother lawyer there, still staring at the documents produced by the domicile registration department of the Kaohsiung County Police, pondering over how he would refute the unjust case.

At that time, I laid hands on him and prayed for him, asking the Lord to give him a good night's sleep and to give him the inspiration to write his refutation the next day. Early the next morning, I phoned him and asked, "Did you sleep well?" He replied exuberantly, "Thank the Lord! I finished writing it yesterday ten minutes after you left. The Lord told me to refute them with the People's Law, Article 20." Thus, we won the case!

In the afternoon of April 16, 1980, I rushed from Tainan to Church of Taipei. When I saw the document ruling in our favor, I said excitedly, "We won the case! Quickly deliver this written judgment to Chiahsien, where Bro. Liu and Bro. Tang are. With the judgment now ruling in our favor, the people of Zion can return to Zion!" (Note: Even with this judgment, we still couldn't return to Zion. Instead, on May 1, 1980, the traitor Judas brought plainclothesmen up to Mount Zion and ousted out all the people of Zion from their homes.)

One sister co-worker asked me to deliver this document to Bro. Liu and Bro. Tang. But because I lacked courage, I dared not go to the front-line (Chiahsien) alone at night. I made an excuse that I was very tired and asked her to send the young co-workers instead. I deeply regretted it when I heard the Lord's servant grievously say, "The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle" (Ps. 78:9). This is my unforgettable failure! If I hadn't been afraid of death, wouldn't I have broken free from the bondage of fearing death?

Recently, I had another terrible failure. With the intention of protect-

ing the property of God's house, I tried to process the registration documents quickly and transfer the title to the corporation. But because I did not discuss in advance, I compromised and lowered the standard of God and strayed from the vision. I feel so ashamed! When will my soulish life be completely put to death? When will I be like Peter who said to the Lord, "O Lord, You know everything; You know I love You!"

I am in my seventies now and I am older than Nicodemus was. Two years ago, I fell sick and the medicine I took was ineffective. At that time, I would rather die than live. I went to the temple and repented tearfully and contritely, asking the Lord to forgive and heal me. The God of Zion remembered my anguish. He listened to my supplication and saved me from death. I should have offered up myself a long time ago to live and die for God's will towards Zion. I should have been like the mighty men of David, who were like the selfless Lamb and unrivaled Lion. I should have imitated the Prophet of All Nations and the people of Zion to strive towards the goal!

Now, I feel like a drop of water that dissipates into the turbulent flow of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Lord, I have nothing, I can do nothing, love nothing, and worry about nothing. I could only advance with the Spirit. Whenever I put on the holy robe and stand in the pilgrimage procession singing, "Hosanna to the great King of Zion," I am full of thanks and feel so unworthy. Now I am full of hope!

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi (Master), we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." By calling the Son of God "Rabbi," Nicodemus had unknowingly lowered His position. He took the Redeemer as a teacher of the law.

The Lord Jesus said with a heavy heart, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When the

Lord said this to Nicodemus, He was proving that He was not teaching some advanced laws and ordinances, but bringing him a new life. The Lord Jesus was telling him to lay a new foundation and start a new life. But Nicodemus was unenlightened and said, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:5–8).

Nicodemus still responded with a big question mark: How can these things be? The Lord Jesus spoke patiently and quoted examples from the Old Testament Bible which Nicodemus was familiar with. Jesus illustrated the Truth to him from Numbers 21:8–9 and John 3:21. He spent the whole night clearly imparting the gospel of the kingdom of heaven and the complete Truth. This Truth Jesus preached became the heavenly possession and guarantee to enter God’s kingdom for God’s children for generations to come. The mercy, lovingkindness and kingdom, which the Lord Jesus manifested when he imparted the Truth to those who sought it diligently, were so amazing. He is a good example for us.

Nicodemus was spiritually unenlightened probably because he had too much of the old leaven in him. He was not as simple-minded as those uneducated commoners like the fishermen of Galilee (Simon, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael). Once they came in contact with the Lord Jesus, they said, “We saw the Messiah,” and followed Him and stayed with Him. I hope to be more simple and become like a child, to be of the same mind and spirit with the Prophet of All Nations, the latter-day Elijah, and follow him closely without doubt until that Day!

Nicodemus (2)

Nicodemus' Recognition of the Lord

(December 22, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Let's read John 3:1,10: "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews... Are you the teacher of Israel...?" These two verses of the Bible briefly introduce Nicodemus, who represented the politics, the religion, and the culture of man's kingdoms. As a ruler of the Jews, he represented the politics of man's kingdoms; as a Pharisee, the religion of man's kingdoms; and as the teacher of Israel, the culture of man's kingdom. Politics, religion, and culture are the three weapons used by the kings and rulers of the world to oppose God and His anointed.

Brothers and sisters, who crucified the Lord Jesus? They were the politics, religion, and culture of man's kingdoms. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, there was an inscription over Him written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: "The King of the Jews." Latin symbolizes politics; Hebrew, religion, and Greek, culture. It was really not easy for Nicodemus who had such a noble background to come and see Jesus, particularly since he was a ruler. As we know, worldly glory and fame can easily bind and beguile people. They blind people from knowing God and prevent them from entering God's kingdom. From ancient times until now, Satan has been using the world and her glory to bribe and entice people so that they will not walk on the way of the cross.

In the past, I was truly a present-day Nicodemus, working as a government officer for the Kuomintang for over 30 years. I was also a faithful follower of the Three People's Principle. A brother of the Christian Assembly preached the gospel to me when I was about to go out to play mahjong. I was very furious and foolishly said, "Why do you believe in the western religion? Christianity is a foreign cultural invasion. We have the

Three People's Principle and our national father is Mr. Sun Yat Sen. These should be our faith. Why should I believe in this foreign religion?"

Instead of accepting what he preached, I scolded the brother and chased him out of my house. While he was on his way out, he said, "I will come back one day." I said, "Don't ever come back!" I chased him out just as how Sis. Jael Wu chased me out of her house. I told her, "I'll come back one day." She said, "Don't ever come back. I don't want to see you again!" I was repaid for what I did. How I chased others out of my house, I was chased out in the same way. In the aspect of culture, I was a typical disciple of Confucius. I could recite the Four Ethical Principles and the Eight Cardinal Virtues of China very well. I was an end product of the Chinese culture. Whether it was politics, religion, or culture, I had them all.

When I was walking on the way of the world, the Kuomintang (KMT) controlled and bribed me. My classmates and friends thought that I would have a good future. The high-ranking officials of Chiang Ching-kuo kept bribing me into joining their political and warring system, which was the system of Chiang Ching-kuo. I overcame this temptation and did not fall into their mud puddle.

There was another time when the authority sent me to the U.S. as a committee member of the arms purchase delegation. Because I had already believed in the Lord at that time, the governmental department put this comment on my report card: "He is a Christian. His thinking is unreliable." It was then that I realized that my political future was over.

When I was about to retire, I was tempted again. The KMT came up with another trick: "Please don't retire. We need a major general now, and you can have the position right away, but under one condition: You must not preach the gospel in the army." I found the mercy of the Lord and rejected it at once. "I don't want to be a major general. I must preach the gospel." And so I retired.

My classmates and friends were furious at me and called me a lunatic. They said that I had become a Jesus fanatic. They said, "We wanted you to be a rising star in the political world, but you turned out to be a good-for-nothing. You became a preacher." In the eyes of this world, being a preacher is good-for-nothing. They asked me, "Haven't you been striving all your life for this very day? If you become a preacher, it's all over for you." I told them, "Yes, to the world I am over." From then on, my classmates and friends stayed away from me, but I gained the Lord Jesus as my best friend. This is the mercy of the Lord!

The second verse says that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. It was not easy for this person to come to Jesus even by night, because he held such a high position and was ensnared by the dominion of darkness. He didn't dare come to Jesus by day for fear that his actions might be exposed. There is a Chinese saying that goes, "Exposure means death." If he was exposed, he would be finished. I also went to Jesus by night.

While I was working at the Army Strategic Academy, one of my colleagues preached about Jesus during work. He was considered devoted in the denomination. But whenever he preached about Jesus, I would oppose him. One day, he talked about heaven and hell, and I foolishly argued with him, saying, "Mr. Huang, does heaven and hell really exist? You Christians are so selfish. Every one of you wants to go to heaven and no one wants to go to hell. If hell really exists, I am willing to go there, because if I don't go there, who will?" I pounded my chest as I spoke. I thought myself so high and mighty. At that time, Huang gave me a stern scolding. He said, "Victor Pi, someone like you will surely go to the lake of fire, for it is prepared for people like you. You know nothing about God. Let me ask you, have you ever read the Bible? Do you know what is Genesis? What is Revelation? You still have a long way to go before you can argue and debate with me. Go home and carefully read the Bible. Only then will you be qualified to debate with me."

Thank the Lord. I was awakened by these words. He was right. I didn't know anything about the Bible. What is Genesis? What is Revelation? This was really done by God. He used people to move me and force me to read the Bible. When I returned to my dormitory, I shouted, "Hey! Does anyone have a Bible? Please lend it to me." And someone lent me a Bible. From that day on, I began to read the Bible. At that time, my purpose of reading the Bible was only so that I could argue with those Christians and preachers. (May the Lord forgive me.) Later, when some Christians learned that I was reading the Bible, they tried to convert me. Some of them gave me gospel books and others gave me gospel pamphlets, and I read them all.

One night, when these Christians wanted to go to a family service, they invited me to come along. Since it was a night service, I thought that nobody would see me. I told these colleagues to go first and that I would follow after because I was afraid someone would spot me. People would criticize and say, "Why are these youths so superstitious?" On my way to the service, I took the darker alleys and looked over my shoulders to see if anyone was following me.

Upon arrival at the door of the house where the service was held, I looked both ways to make sure no one saw me before sneaking inside. That was how I attended my first service. Therefore, I dare not condemn Nicodemus, only that I have found more of God's mercy than he did. Actually, during the period of time when I was desirous for the Truth, I was no different from Nicodemus, because I was affected by the politics, religion and culture of man's kingdoms. I was afraid to lose my position, so I was afraid to be exposed.

Brothers and sisters, why was I afraid of people finding out that I believed in the Lord? First of all, I was afraid of cutting my ties with the world because I would lose a lot of benefits of the world. Secondly, I was doing very well and I was afraid to lose my chance of getting promoted,

because I was still thinking of making a name for myself in the world. If I were exposed, my career and future would come to an end. Also, I feared that my colleagues, friends, and superiors would look down on me and call me superstitious. In other words, I was afraid to bear the cross. I was afraid of hardships, persecutions and afflictions. I was a real Nicodemus and have nothing to boast of.

Concerning Nicodemus' recognition towards the Lord Jesus, he called Him "Rabbi," meaning Master or Teacher. His evaluation of the Lord Jesus was so low. Nicodemus' recognition of the Lord Jesus was about the same as that of the Samaritan woman at first. But in the end, he was worse than the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman recognized that the Lord Jesus was Christ in the end and she returned to the city to testify for the Lord, saying that she had met the Christ. But Nicodemus never seemed to recognize that the Lord Jesus was Christ.

Brothers and sisters, there is a huge difference between a *master* and a *savior*. Apostle Paul said that many are teachers, but few are fathers. To Nicodemus, Jesus was only one of the rabbis of the Jews who came as a teacher. On the other hand, he said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." His recognition was very contradictory. Since Jesus was sent by God, then He should be more than a teacher. Brothers and sisters, your recognition of the Lord Christ is very important. Apostle Paul said that for the excellence of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, he had counted all things as rubbish, that he might gain Christ. Nicodemus could not find grace in that he did not know that the Lord was Christ.

We must strive to know the Lord Christ, and know Him even more deeply. For the more we know Him, the more we will gain Him. If we only know the Lord Christ from the words of others, and have no personal experience, then our knowledge is not real knowledge and is unreliable. As for those spiritually great people throughout the ages such as Apostles

Peter, John, Paul, God's maidservant Sis. Kong, and the Lord's servant Bro. Hong, their recognition of the Lord was not only by hearing the word, but even more so from their personal life experiences with this Savior.

What is the difference between a savior and a teacher? A savior saves sinners from sins, death, and the devil, and gives life. A teacher, on the other hand, can only teach people to be good, but cannot make them do good because there is no life in his doctrine. Moreover, not only are some teachers unable to help people to do good, they might even prevent people from knowing God.

The teachings of the world and the knowledge of man cause people to exalt themselves. The wiser a person is, the harder it is for him to accept the salvation of the cross. He considers the salvation of the Lord as foolishness because he may esteem himself equal or even higher than God. When a person falls into a river and is about to drown, what does he need the most? Is it teaching or is it salvation? Even a three-year-old child knows that what he needs most is salvation. He needs someone who can save him out of the water.

Today, five billion souls in the world are heading towards perdition. They are struggling on the verge of death and will soon fall into the lake of fire. What these souls need is salvation. The situation in the Middle East now is so volatile that war could break out anytime. The fear of death seizes the people there. What they urgently need is the complete Truth of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit of the Savior Jesus, so that they may be saved. For he who believes in the Lord, though he may die, he shall live. So, salvation is what they need most. All the religious leaders in the world are teachers, not saviors. Only our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior. Today, the god of this world has blinded the minds of this generation, so that they can't see the light of the gospel.

The people of this world are like Nicodemus who considered the Lord

Jesus as just another teacher. We often preach the gospel to believers of different religions, and their favorite phrase is, "All religions are the same. They teach people to be good." They speak of a devilish theory that all religions will lead to the same destination. This is a deception of Satan. We must wake up the spirit of the people. We do not believe in a religion but in the resurrected Savior Jesus. Religions cannot lead people out of death.

In John 3:4, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus about being born again. Just as Nicodemus did not know what being born again was, many preachers of the denominations today are also unsure about what being born again is. When they talk about being born again, they make it sound mysterious. Actually, a person is born again once he believes in the Lord and opens his mouth to pray and calls upon the name of the Lord. For the Bible says that he who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. However, the denominational preachers do not understand what is being born again. Therefore they are even more confused about being born of water and of the Spirit. They have confused *seeing God's kingdom* with *entering God's kingdom*, saying that once you see God's kingdom, you will definitely enter it.

They also confuse being born again with being born of water and the Spirit. When Nicodemus talked with the Lord Jesus about being born again, he said, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" The wise of the world always love to express their "brilliant ideas," for fear that people would not know their knowledge, but at the end they always make fools out of themselves. The spiritually wise are not so. They always have respect for the words of God and of the prophets. They listen more and talk less.

I remember when the Lord's servant and I went to the prison to visit Bro. Shih Ming Der. He had a special characteristic. While the Lord's servant talked to him about the Truth, he would listen attentively, nodding

his head, and would not interrupt. He always waited for the Lord's servant to finish before asking questions. We also visited another brother in Christ, who was also in prison. He was a preacher of a denomination but different from Bro. Shih. When the Lord's servant discussed with him concerning the Truth, he liked to cut in and express his own "brilliant ideas." He asked irrelevant questions, just like Nicodemus.

However, we should have a reverent heart towards God's words and the teachings of the prophets, to see and hear as much as we can. A spiritually wise person accepts God's words with faith. But the wise of the world like to doubt everything they see, and even attempt to use science to prove the existence of God. This is foolish. God's servant often exhorts us to be quick to listen and slow to speak, and to listen more and speak less. A fool who keeps silent is wiser than a wise man who loves to talk. Likewise, a wise man who likes to talk is more foolish than a foolish man that does not open his mouth.

There once was a man who thought himself to be knowledgeable, but he did not know Einstein. One day, when he met Einstein, he began to express his "brilliant ideas," talking non-stop about everything, from heaven above to the earth below. Einstein was very annoyed and said to him ironically, "You really know a lot of things. I don't know anything. But I know something that you don't know." The man asked Einstein, "What do you know that I don't know?" Einstein replied, "I know how much I hate things, but you don't know how much you make others hate you." Brothers and sisters, let us not be fools as a result of our words, lest we make others hate us. Let us be wise to listen more and talk less.

Although Nicodemus did not understand what it meant by being born again, the Lord Jesus continued to speak on deeper Truth: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." When Nicodemus heard this, he became even more confused. From here we learn that when preaching the complete Truth of Blood, Water and Holy

Spirit, we don't have to worry about how much men can understand.

We shouldn't compromise or lower the standard of the Truth just because they don't understand. We just have to faithfully preach the words of God like the Lord did, because His words carry power. As Apostle Paul said, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The responsibility of a preacher is to impart the Truth to its fullest, and leave the rest to God. The gospel is preached, not by words, but by power.

Nicodemus also had his virtues. The Lord would remember him in certain things. In John 7:50, "Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, 'Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?'" At that time, everyone wanted to capture and kill Jesus, yet he was able to step out and speak boldly for Him. It was not easy. The scribes, chief priests and Pharisees, all conspired to kill Jesus. They had the political power backing them, so they did not need any reason, statement or evidence.

It's just like the unjust case of Mount Zion; the Kuomintang also needed no statement or evidence when they carried out political persecution against the New Testament Church. To condemn the church, they could trump up charges. If they charge you with a crime, you are guilty of that crime. You would not have a chance to defend yourself. Even if you could come up with evidence, the judicial KMT lackeys could use the phrase, "insufficient evidence," and rule that you have lost the case.

I remember once during a trial at the court in Tainan, a judge said, "You don't have to fight for this case because it is political and you are destined to lose." And it turned out to be so. Therefore, during the time of Jesus, no one dared to speak up for the Lord in public except Nicodemus. We can see that not only did this man have a sympathetic heart, he also had a sense of justice.

Finally, let's read John 19:38–42. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, many informers were seeking out those who had been with the Lord while Roman soldiers sought for the Lord's disciples everywhere. All the disciples and those who had followed the Lord panicked and fled in all directions. Even the friends and relatives of the Lord Jesus were afraid to come and claim His body. That was a very sensitive period of time, but it was at that time that someone dared to go to Pilate and ask for the Lord's body so that he could bury it. This wasn't easy.

When Joseph of Arimathea (a disciple in secret) went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus, Nicodemus also came, bringing along myrrh and aloes. They were taking a big risk to come and put up money and effort for the burial of the Lord Jesus because asking for the Lord Jesus' body could provoke the authorities and result in their being killed. How could the Lord not remember what they did for Him?

According to man, Nicodemus was an unenlightened person. However, he had sympathy, courage, care, and a sense of justice. At that time, almost all the people opposed the Lord Jesus and crucified Him, while the rest fled in all directions. But Nicodemus neither opposed nor fled. Moreover, he stepped out and put up money and effort for the burial of the Lord Jesus. When the kingdom of the Lord descends, he will definitely be rewarded.

We do not know whether Nicodemus accepted the Lord Jesus as his Savior, but according to the Bible, he belonged to the category of the sheep. The Lord once spoke using a parable, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). The Lord promised the sheep, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Nicodemus did not do it on the least of the Lord's brethren, but on the Lord Himself. So he will surely be blessed by the Father. What Nicodemus had done is praiseworthy.

Nicodemus (3)

(December 28, 1990 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

He Knew Religion, Politics and Culture, but Not Jesus

Nicodemus was a person of high status: Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a successor of an orthodox religion. He was also a ruler of the Jews, having a high political position. Moreover, he was a teacher of Israel, being well-educated. Nicodemus had a collection of religion, politics and culture on him. Nevertheless, he had his weaknesses. He was such a knowledgeable man but did not know Jesus, who came in the flesh as the Son of Man. He knew all about religion, politics and culture, yet he didn't know the Lord. This tells us that religion, politics, and culture were ignorant of Jesus, the Word that became flesh.

He Humbly Sought the Lord

Nevertheless, Nicodemus had a special point: He sought for Jesus. He humbly sought the Lord and the Truth. Though he had a collection of religion, politics and culture on him, he did not have something that Jesus had, which was the ability to work miracles. Heresies and cults could not work miracles, nor could Orthodox Judaism which worshiped the LORD God. Neither could the teachers or the rulers. Nicodemus knew that there was no person, profession, education or religious theory that could solve people's problems. All these teachings and theories could teach people, but would prove to be ineffective, because the Lord Jesus was the only answer to all problems. Therefore, Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus humbly. This was his special point.

There were many scribes and Pharisees at that time, but not many of them came to look for Jesus. They loved to pray on the corners of the

streets with phylacteries on their garments, and boasted that they gave tithes of all that they had and often fasted and prayed. They had a form of godliness but they could not perform the signs Jesus performed. For that reason, they should have humbled themselves, but they didn't. When they saw that Jesus could do what they could not, they became angry, jealous, and thought of ways to deal away with Him.

The Bible says, "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.' ...Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death" (John 11:47–48,53). This was the mentality of the Pharisees then. Today, the New Testament Church has also performed many miracles which others could not. But, how many have come to learn from the New Testament Church? In this generation, there are not many people who are like Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was really a person who sought the Lord humbly. He knew that he was incapable, ignorant and had nothing, so he humbly came to be taught. He did not become jealous or try to be crafty just because he could not do what others could do. This was Nicodemus' secret to find grace. He is a good example and we should learn from him. When we see others doing what we cannot, or when we see others doing better than us, we should go and learn humbly from them. This is the way to find grace and blessings. As the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in the spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

It was Nicodemus' weakness that he came to Jesus by night, because he was not bold enough to meet Jesus in broad daylight. But we see that he found grace later on. "And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:39–40).

At first, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, but this time, it was not so. He was no longer timid. He arose to testify for the Lord Jesus boldly. At the time when everyone was trying to arrest the Lord Jesus in particular, he was able to speak for the Lord Jesus so concretely. This is what we should imitate.

Today, why do the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang (KMT) of Taiwan persecute the New Testament Church? It is because they are jealous. They see that the New Testament Church is tremendous. They are surprised to see how much the full gospel of the New Testament Church has influenced Sis. Zhang Rui Yu. Not only does she preach what Elijah Hong preaches, she also has full faith in this person whom she has never even met before. They have also seen New Testament Church Christians go to Mainland China, preaching the full gospel and baptizing people. Upon seeing all these, they are enraged and anxious. They think to themselves, “If we let the New Testament Church go on like this, what will happen? Everyone will believe in Jesus, and they will all follow Elijah Hong. Then what will happen to Deng Xiaoping?” Such mentality is similar to that of the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees of the past.

Why does the KMT create more and more blacklists for the New Testament Church? Why were the overseas pilgrims deported after they arrived at the international airport in Taoyuan, Taiwan? Because these overseas pilgrims were not going to Yang Ming Mountain, but to Mount Zion. They came to Taiwan not to meet the president of Taiwan, but to meet the prophet and to entreat the Lord’s grace. “How can we let *this* kind of pilgrimage group in?” The KMT is completely the opposite of Nicodemus. They do not come to seek for blessings and grace. Instead, they are jealous and try to destroy the New Testament Church who is stronger than them.

The KMT has military and police forces, informers, and numerous evil laws. But are they any good? The more the KMT rules, the more chaotic society becomes. We don’t have any forces or laws, but there is no dispute

on Zion. Here, we have freedom, harmony and joy. The KMT cannot attain to such a realm, and neither can the Communist Party. They terrify people instead of attracting people. If they do attract people, what do they use? They use the economy.

After the incident at Tiananmen Square, Deng Xiaoping said, "China is a fat piece of meat. We don't fear that Americans will not come." Such inter-nation ties for gains are unsubstantial and fragile. The New Testament Church and holy Mount Zion do not attract people with earthly gains, but with Truth and righteousness, and with God's love and glory. This is God's tabernacle among men. This is the utopia the world longs for. The New Testament Church has attained what the human kingdoms cannot.

The latter-day Elijah has accomplished what the rulers of the world could never achieve. Therefore, of course they become envious: "How can we allow the New Testament Church to continue on like this?" For this reason, the KMT is still plotting to persecute and destroy the New Testament Church. The Communist Party of China, the Mahathir regime of Malaysia, and the Lee Kwan Yew dynasty of Singapore are also the same. They know clearly that they are incapable of what the New Testament Church and Mount Zion are doing, but they still refuse to come and seek the Lord Jesus. They are destined to be condemned and destroyed.

Now, those apostates (the various factions such as Ruth Cheung, Fan, and those in Soares Ave.) are forming a big union. Why? It is because lately, they've been seeing many brothers and sisters of the Soares Ave. faction leaving for the New Testament Church and some of them have even gone up to Mount Zion. After returning to their respected places, these brothers and sisters testify fervently for a man and a mountain. And so, those apostates start to have the mentality of the Pharisees: "If we let them continue like this, we will have no members left." Since they refuse to humble themselves, they will not find grace and will be rejected by

God.

He Poured Out Everything for Jesus

Because Nicodemus sought the Lord humbly, he found great grace. The Lord Jesus preached to him patiently saying, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15).

From this, Nicodemus acquired an enlightened recognition towards Jesus, who would be crucified. He knew that Jesus was the one who came to bear the sins of the world, die for the people, and also deliver the oppressed from the bondage of man’s kingdom and from the power of death. Therefore, Nicodemus bravely testified for the Lord Jesus, and offered up his all for Jesus Christ who died for Israel and took away the sins of the world. He brought about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes for the Lord’s burial, and wrapped the Lord’s body with linen and spices. This shows that Nicodemus gave his heart and his all for Him. Brothers and sisters, what was so precious about this Jesus, who had been crucified and died? Nevertheless, Nicodemus treasured Jesus who died for the world. He was willing to offer up his all for Him. This is the special characteristic of Nicodemus which we must imitate.

Brothers and sisters, if we want to have a share in the Jesus who ascended to heaven in glory, we must be like Nicodemus, to first treasure this crucified Jesus. We must first have a share in the Jesus who suffered death and invest all that we have in Him. Today, many people hope to reign with the Lord Jesus, but few are willing to be crucified and buried with Him. They fail to recognize that the secret of entering into glory is to have a close union with the crucified Jesus and to offer up everything for Him. Nevertheless, may we imitate Nicodemus to humbly seek the Truth, treasure Christ and His crucifixion, and have a close union with Him. In this way, we will have a share in the resurrection and glory of Jesus Christ.



Nathanael



Nathanael (1)

*(December 29, 1990 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Ruth Kuo's
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

Let us first read John 1:45–51; John 21:2–3 and Matthew 10:2–3.

Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee and was a good friend of Philip. Philip brought this good friend to Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of God. Jesus praised Nathanael saying that he was a true Israelite, in whom there was no deceit.

Nathanael was also called Bartholomew. He is only known as Nathanael in the Gospel according to John. In the other three Gospels, he is known as Bartholomew. In Matthew chapter ten verse three, Jesus chose him as an apostle. After the Lord Jesus was crucified, Nathanael experienced a period of weakness. He followed Peter and five other disciples to go fishing at the Sea of Tiberias. He saw the resurrected Lord appearing to them on the shore of Tiberias. They labored all night but caught nothing. However, when they cast the net according to the Lord's command, they experienced the miracle of a full net of fish. They also enjoyed the abundant breakfast that the Lord prepared for them.

Seeing that the words that the Lord (which were spoken to them before He was crucified) had all come to pass, their faith was once again established. Their spirit, soul and body were revived. The weak became strong and the timid became courageous. From then on, they faithfully assumed the ministry entrusted by the Lord, even when it meant risking their lives. They would not disobey the vision from heaven even to the point of death, until they were martyred for the Lord.

It is said that Nathanael had once preached the gospel in Armenia and India. In the end, he was skinned, crucified, and died a martyr. Superficially, Nathanael had a quiet life. His name was mentioned twice only in

the Gospel of John. He was so pure and faithful to the mission that the Lord entrusted him, to the point of death. He did not disobey the vision from heaven in all kinds of persecutions and afflictions. He is really a good example for us, who share in the same grace and the heavenly calling to serve the Lord.

Let us look at how Nathanael was called. Nathanael learned about the Messiah through Philip. Philip met the Messiah, of whom Moses wrote about in the books of the Law and about whom the prophets also wrote. This Messiah was the King of the Jews that their forefathers had waited and hoped for day and night, and now He had truly come.

Not only had Philip personally seen the Messiah, he was also called by Him to become His disciple and follower. He was overwhelmed with joy in astonishment. Philip was so excited that he quickly went to find his good friend Nathanael to tell him of this startling news. He could not wait to lead him to the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. He wanted his good friend to know the Anointed One of God, so that he could also be happy and find grace together with him. The spirit of Philip was beautiful and pure.

When Nathanael first heard Philip testifying that he had found the One whom Moses wrote about in the Law, and whom the prophets also wrote about, he must have been very joyous and surprised. But as soon as Nathanael heard that He was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, he naturally responded, saying, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” It seemed as though Nathanael had a very bad impression of Nazareth, as if it had a bad reputation. But Philip had a pure and zealous spirit. He ignored his adverse response against Nazareth and said, “Come and see!”

When God’s maidservant Sis. Kong was raised up by God to assume the ministry, she was so full of God’s power. Some people were exuberant and happy to hear that a maidservant was raised up and greatly used by

God. But when they learned that she was an ex-movie star, immediately their natural reaction and concept was, “Is there anything good about a movie star? What is there for a movie star to preach?”

After listening to many slanders and defaming words against the New Testament Church, Mount Zion and Elijah Hong, some people said, “The New Testament Church does not preach the gospel. They engage in politics. The New Testament Church is unpatriotic and anti-government. The New Testament Church holds extreme views. She preaches heresies and likes to attack other religions.” They have negative views towards the New Testament Church (several of my relatives are like that).

We testify for Mount Zion and the Prophet of All Nations, and like Philip, we want them to come and experience (see) for themselves: “Seeing is believing, so don’t believe what you hear. Come and see for yourself whether the New Testament Church is extreme or engages in politics. What the New Testament Church preaches and does is all according to the Truth.” However, because these people are prejudiced and self-opinionated, they refuse to come and see. Therefore, they are deceived and cannot meet the living God and Savior. As a result, they are destined to perish and are not worthy to find grace.

Nathanael was very pure and he feared God. Although he had a bad impression of Nazareth, he was willing to put aside his own personal concepts and feelings and let the Holy Spirit have a way in him. The Old Testament Bible makes no mention of Nazareth, and no prophet ever came from there. But being pure in heart, Nathanael simply wanted God and wanted to see whether the One whom Philip met was truly the Messiah. So he followed Philip to Jesus. He was not self-opinionated. This was the reason why he found great grace.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards Him, He spoke of Nathanael saying, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

Man judges by appearance, but God sees through the hearts of men. Nathanael must have been very shaken and amazed to hear the praises of Jesus, whom he had never met. Immediately he asked Jesus, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

After hearing the reply of Jesus, Nathanael did not try to analyze Jesus with the earthly mind, thinking: "I hadn't even appeared, and you saw me? Do you have a hawk's eyes? Or penetrating x-ray eyes?" No. Nathanael immediately had a heart of reverence and viewed things in the spirit. "Who can possibly see me even before I come, and see through my whole being and my heart? He must be the Son of God, the Messiah whom God anointed. He has the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and the power. He judges not by sight, and decides not by hearing."

When Nathanael viewed things in the spirit with a heart of reverence, the heavenly revelation came upon him just as it later came upon Simon Peter. He was immediately enlightened in the spirit, and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel!" This was how Nathanael came to know the Son of God, the anointed Christ. He did not recognize Christ through knowledge or theory, but through the heavenly revelation. This is recognition in life.

Personally, I have failed miserably in this aspect of recognizing the one sent by God. After Cheung turned apostate in 1976, the Holy Spirit revealed and confirmed in various ways that the Lord's servant Bro. Hong was the chief apostle and the vessel of the era. I knew this in theory, but was not spiritually enlightened. At that time, I was able to eloquently preach, "The Chief Apostle Is the Signet Ring in God's Hand," with perfect biblical quotations. However, I had no true understanding of the anointing and the authority that was upon this minister. Moreover, I was not humble and pure in the spirit. I did not recognize myself, but was self-righteous and conceited. I did not respect the anointing that was on this

minister. As a result, my heart was veiled and my spirit turned dull.

The enlightenment that I had when I preached the message also gradually diminished. It was because all along, I always thought that I was devoted and pious. I used to teach brothers and sisters that we have to be in the same mind with the vessel of the era (the Lord's servant) and to obey him, because he was the representative of the Throne, and that disobeying him was disobeying God. Unfortunately, my words were not the words of life, and they could not withstand the test of fire.

During that period, I had problems in my family and my ministration. I was very bitter. The Lord's servant explained the causes to me in detail. But at that time, I put this *signet ring* of God aside, and held on to my own rational concepts and refused to put away my own thoughts and feelings. I was unwilling to humbly obey and accept the Lord's servant's words. Instead, I felt that the Lord's servant did not understand me. (Actually, the Lord's servant knew me very well. He knew me as well as the Lord knew Nathanael). Now that I recall this, a cold chill still runs down my spine. I had failed to recognize the one sent by God, the vessel of era anointed by God. The holy decrees and the power of God are with him. Failure to listen to him is failure to listen to God, who sits on the throne. (See Luke 10:16.) How solemn and awesome!

I preached on *the signet ring (seal) of God*, but God wanted me to experience with my life the anointing and the power of the seal on this minister. As a result, during the past years, all the words which the Lord's servant spoke to me have all been fulfilled upon me. I offended this anointing and this authority, and was almost shattered to pieces. My condition was just like the message that the Lord's servant preached not long ago, "God has laid in Zion a chief cornerstone. He who believes in Him will not be put to shame. It is a stumbling stone, a rock of offense. Whoever falls on this rock will be broken."

I have vividly experienced these words in my life. Elijah Hong is indeed a prophet. Towards the weak and fallen children of God, this minister shows lovingkindness and mercy, and parental care. Had it not been for the mercy and grace of the Lord and His servant, I would probably not have a share in this ministration. I dare not forget this painful failure. I often give thanks to God, for through this failure, He let me recognize the holiness and solemnity of the anointing that is upon the anointed one of God. With my life I experienced the power of the *seal*. It cannot be mocked and disobeyed.

Therefore today, with tears and my life, I testify before God, the devil, the brothers and sisters and all the nations in all the earth: Elijah Hong is the servant of the living God. He is the head apostle sent by God in this era, and the great Prophet of All Nations anointed by the Throne. He is the signet ring in God's hand.

Nathanael had three special characteristics: (1) He was frank, truthful, and pure in heart. He spoke whatever was on his mind, and there was no deceit in him. He had a bad impression of Nazareth, so he frankly said it out, thus gaining the praise of the Lord. (2) He was humble and objective in the spirit. He did not hold on to his earthly thoughts obstinately. He was soft towards God. He was willing to deny himself and let the Holy Spirit have a free path in him, so the heavenly revelation came upon him. (3) He feared God and waited with a pure heart for the One that Moses wrote of in the books of the Law, the anointed Messiah that the prophets wrote about. God was gracious to those who were pure-hearted in Israel. True enough, Nathanael met the Messiah and believed in Him then and there. May we carefully imitate the special characteristics of Nathanael, so that we can become vessels useful to the Lord.

In the end, Jesus said to him, "You will see greater things than these." He also said, "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Jesus told the disciples that

they would see a greater thing, which was the heaven opened. Nothing is greater than seeing heaven open. Why does the heaven open? It is opened for the Son of God and His angels. The heaven is opened for those who follow the Son of God, the One sent by God. If Nathanael and the apostles had not seen the heaven opened, they would not risk their lives to follow Jesus of Nazareth and walk on the way of the Slain Lamb all their lives.

Today, if the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade and brothers and sisters of the New Testament Church had not seen the vision from heaven, they would not follow today's chief apostle whom God has sent, to be followers of the Slain Lamb amidst great persecutions, afflictions and battles. Not only did heaven open, the angels of God also ascended and descended upon the Son of Man. The body of the Son of Man is the ladder (the way) that reaches heaven.

This was the scene that Jacob saw in his dream when he was sleeping in the wilderness (Bethel) with a stone as pillow, on his way to Padan Aram from the land of Canaan. Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven. This ladder symbolizes the redemption accomplished when Jesus, the Word that became flesh, was crucified. When Jesus was on the cross, He handed His spirit to the Father and said, "It is finished." Then He bowed His head and breathed His last. At that time, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The way to the holy of holies was opened and revealed. Sinners could then enter the kingdom of heaven through the complete salvation that Christ accomplished on the cross.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). God's works and God's will were entrusted to the Son of Man, the Anointed One sent by the Father. Today, if we want to do the work of the God of heaven and enter the heavenly realm (the kingdom of God), we must know the one sent by God. We must know his ministry, respect and treasure the anoint-

ing on him, and have a union with him in our life.

The driving force of serving, work and life of the messengers of God comes from having a close link in life with the one sent by God. Their strength comes from the anointing that is upon this man. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

After serving God all these years, I deeply understand with my life that if I leave God, I can do nothing. If I leave the anointed one of God, my spirit and serving will not progress, but will wither. The heaven will be closed to me. I will not see the light of the Throne. I will also fail to understand God's will and lose my direction. I will even feel insecure and live in fear.

This man (minister) is the center of our ministration, work and life. However, we are not exalting man, nor are we superstitious, and it is definitely not just words or theory. This is a spiritual principle, a spiritual mystery and the heavenly law of life. If you leave this man, heaven will be closed to you. You will have no way, nor can you do God's work.

This man is indeed a messenger who dispels the dark clouds, and who can untie all the knots in the hearts of men. His ministry fulfills the administration of God's kingdom. May the Lord help us live in this law of life, to be a true Israelite with a pure heart and without deceit. May our ministration, work and life be according to God's will. We will then finish assuming the divine ministry of the end-time in the same mind with the Lord's servant — ending man's rule and realizing Christ's kingdom.

Nathanael (2)

The Simplicity of Nathanael

*(January 4, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

Let's read the Bible: "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' And Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!' Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' Nathanael answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you, "I saw you under the fig tree," do you believe? You will see greater things than these.' And He said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' " (John 1:43–51).

Nathanael was one of the twelve apostles called by the Lord. The Bible only mentions about him once after he was called, which is when he followed Peter to go fishing at the Sea of Tiberias after the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross. (See John 21:1–2.) Other than this, the Bible makes no mention of him ever preaching a message, or performing a miracle, or writing an epistle. After Nathanael was called by the Lord, he silently served and followed the Lord. Even though he was not well-known, and did not accomplish anything great, he followed the Lord faithfully to the end.

I read a book about the history of the martyrs of the early church, called *Bloody History*, which mentioned how Apostle Nathanael was martyred. Nathanael preached the gospel of the Lord in Armenia and India among believers of other religions. As a sheep in the midst of wolves, he suffered great persecutions. In the end, he was skinned, crucified, and died a martyr. He imitated the Lord in sacrificing his life for the gospel. He drank the cup that the Lord drank, and tasted the death that the Lord tasted. He faithfully followed the footsteps of the Lamb until the end. He sacrificed himself for the truth. He is our example.

Apostle Nathanael's calling was closely related to the testimony of his friend Apostle Philip. After Philip found the Lord, he quickly went to look for his friend Nathanael and testified to him. Today, we cannot possibly see the Lord with our eyes on earth just as Apostle Philip and Nathanael did, but the Lord still appears and speaks to us through all things. For example, in the morning on New Year's Day of this year, when the praising and worship of the saints reached the climax, a dove flew into the temple. The dove signifies the Holy Spirit. The Lord appeared to us through the dove. If you have spiritual eyes, you will say that you have heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but now your eyes see Him.

Brothers and sisters, if we often live in the spirit, we will meet the Lord and hear Him talking to us everyday. If we really see the Lord in the spirit, we will definitely believe in Him. If we still didn't see God's glorious works and meet Him on New Year's Day, it is such a pity. It is just like the Bible verses which we recited today, about how the Israelites could not enter into that rest because of their disbelief.

A person who has really met the Lord will have actions. That is, he will take concrete actions in testifying for the Lord. Apostle Philip felt that meeting the Lord was a big matter. He could not keep it to himself, so he immediately went to find Nathanael and testified to him. Brothers and sisters, we also have friends and relatives. Do we have the zealous spirit

of Apostle Philip? If we want to be sent to all the world to preach the gospel, but don't have such zealous spirit, then we will be unable to accomplish the epochal mission that God has entrusted to us.

We should carefully study how Philip testified to Nathanael. It was very simple. He didn't need to say much before bringing Nathanael to the Lord. Sometimes, we talk a lot when we testify for the Lord but fail to get to the main point. It is like a layman killing chicken. He would slash the chicken's neck so many times until the head is almost cut off, but when the chicken is let go, it could still stand up and run around. This is because he doesn't cut at the vulnerable spot. However, others can kill a chicken with just one slash.

The words of Apostle Philip were precise. He said, "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote. He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And what was the reaction of Nathanael? He said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That is to say, "I don't believe it." But Philip said one key phrase that turned Nathanael around, "Come and see!" Brothers and sisters, this is the easiest way to lead people to the Lord — tell them to "Come and see!" For facts speak louder than words. Once you see it you will understand.

Some people can testify for this man and this mountain for half an hour and still not get the point across. Actually, we only have to say: "The latter-day Elijah mentioned in the Bible has come." And that will be enough. When we testify for this man and this mountain, some people will not believe and say that the New Testament Church is exalting man. It is a waste of time to argue with them. At such moment, you only have to say, "Come and see!" As soon as they come to Mount Zion, they will understand.

Brothers and sisters, have you realized that most of those who re-

turned to the New Testament Church these past few years have come to Mount Zion and seen for themselves? Indeed, when you see, you understand, and when you understand, you believe. So, it is important to see for yourself. A person who knows how to observe will see mysteries. On New Year's Day, many people came to Zion and saw the work of the Holy Spirit. Even the Gentiles and the friends and relatives of the brothers and sisters were amazed at the works of God.

The black brother from Ghana also saw the scene. Before he came he was very worried, wondering if the New Testament Church was the Unification Church: "Is she a cult? Will I be deceived if I go up to Mount Zion?" When he finally came, he said that he did not need anyone to tell him anything. He could see for himself. Once he understood all, he even sang and praised God at the temple. There were also two old sisters from Hong Kong who came to our midst towards the end of last year. Before they came, they attended the services of the apostates. Sis. Lin was very worried that they might be deceived. One of them said to Sis. Lin, "Don't worry; I am so advanced in age. I know how to tell truth from false." She saw the deathly stillness of the apostates in Hong Kong, but she saw God's glorious works on Mount Zion. When the two sisters saw the two different conditions, they understood everything. They testified endlessly when they went back to Hong Kong from Zion.

Brothers and sisters, we all have many friends and relatives. If you feel that it is difficult to testify to them, you can imitate Philip and tell them to come and see, unless they do not want God. A person who does not want God will not believe, even if he sees someone rise from the dead. But a person who really wants God will see God's works and understand.

The pure and simple faith that Nathanael had towards the Truth was very precious. His faith was the key to finding grace. The Lord said, "I saw you under the fig tree." When Nathanael heard this phrase, he believed in Him. The Lord did not deliver a sermon to make Nathanael believe. A

person who really wants God can be enlightened so easily. Nathanael immediately knew that the Lord was the One who judged not by sight, and was no ordinary prophet. Actually, Jesus had seen Nathanael long before he was under the fig tree. The Lord had seen him even before the foundation of the world and had chosen him. Similarly, God has also seen and chosen us before the foundation of the world.

Nathanael had a great change in life after he met the Lord! Before he met the Lord, he judged people by the appearance and saw things from a human point of view. As soon as he heard that Jesus was a Nazarene, he was prejudiced, because no prophet ever came from Nazareth. Moreover, when he heard that He was the son of the carpenter Joseph, he all the more despised Him.

The Scriptures say that Christ would be a descendant of David, so He should at least come from Bethlehem, or be born in a palace. How could He be a Nazarene? And the son of a carpenter? Apostle Paul also said that he had known Christ according to the flesh. As a result, he persecuted and killed Christians. However, after he saw the great light on the way to Damascus and heard the Lord speaking to him, he no longer knew Christ in the same way.

Brothers and sisters, how come those apostates and the preachers in the denominations cannot believe and obey this man? It is because they know this man by the appearance, and look at Zion from a human point of view. When God's maidservant Sis. Kong was raised up, the preachers of the denominations, especially those of the Christian Assembly, had a prejudice against her. They said that a woman should not be the head. A woman should veil herself and should not prophesy (preach). This prejudice costed them dearly. It prevented them from receiving the complete salvation of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit preached by God's maidservant Sis. Kong. So they lost their chance to enter God's kingdom.

God's maidservant said that not only could women not be the head in the church, men also could not. For only the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. It is no doubt that women must obey, and men should be of no exception. When the Bible says that women are not allowed to teach, it does not mean that women are not allowed to preach (prophesy). Therefore, the prejudices of natural man only serve to blind people and prevent them from finding grace.

After Nathanael met the Lord, his impression of the Lord changed completely. He said to the Lord, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel." These two phrases were not revealed to him by man, nor did they come from his mind. They were revealed to him by the Father in heaven. There were only two apostles who said such phrases in the four gospels. They were Peter and Nathanael. For a person who has truly met the Lord, his recognition towards the Lord comes from revelation. His footsteps of following the Lord are firm, and his determination is steadfast. Therefore, meeting the Lord is the turning point of our lives. Moreover, it is the foundation on which we serve God.

Since meeting God and recognizing Him is so important, what should we do in order to meet Him? Apart from seeing God through all the things around us, we can also see a concrete way of meeting God from Nathanael, which is to come to the one sent by God. After hearing Philip's testimony, Nathanael immediately followed Philip to the Lord (the One sent by God). Thus, he met God. This is the principle by which God works.

In the Old Testament, Moses once made this call, "Whoever is on the LORD's side — come to me!" (Exod. 32:26). The prophet Elijah also said the same thing, "Come near to me" (1 Kings 18:30). When you come to the prophet Elijah, you will meet God and see His glorious works. While the Lord was still on earth, Philip and Nathanael could come to the Lord. Today, the Lord has ascended into heaven. How do people come to the Lord? He appoints a representative on earth. Therefore, if we believe in

the one sent by God, we will see God's glorious works. For the Bible says: "Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe in His prophets, and you shall prosper."

The Lord said that Nathanael was a true Israelite. Since there are true Israelites, then there must also be false Israelites. Who are the true Israelites and who are the false ones? When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He rebuked the Jews saying, "You are of your father the devil." This is to say that they were simply not Israelites, and they were not the descendants of Abraham.

Romans 9:6–8 says, "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed." Brothers and sisters, do you feel that this is weird? Today, if I say, "Not all begot by Darby are Darby's," people would say that I am not mentally sound. To men, all the descendants of Abraham are the children of Abraham. All begot by Israel are Israelites. How could it be otherwise? Nevertheless, the Bible says it very clearly: "In Isaac your seed shall be called." This is a truth. So, those born of the flesh are different from those born of the promise.

Children born of the flesh are not counted as God's children. Only those born through promise are the heirs of God. It is just like how Ishmael was born through man's will, so God did not recognize him as Abraham's heir, and he could not be heir to the inheritance. Only those born of Isaac are counted as the heirs, because Isaac was born through promise. He was given to Abraham by the special promise of God.

The New Testament Church is born through the promised Holy Spirit. Therefore, the New Testament Church is the true Israelite, like the apostle

Nathanael. Formerly, we were not true Israelites, the descendants of Abraham. However, because we received the promised Holy Spirit, we have become Abraham's descendants through faith and received the blessings that God promised Abraham. (See Galatians 3:14.)

Also, Galatians 4:28 says: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise."

"Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman' " (Gal. 4:30–31).

The true Israelites are born through promise and they are God's heirs. Therefore, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the freewoman. We are the true Israelites. Since we have gained this promise, we must treasure it. Let us offer up ourselves to the Lord, to walk on the path of faith — the path of Abraham, and offer up without reservations. Then we will become the real children who are truly born through promise and those that inherit the promised blessings. Although many brothers and sisters have received the promised Holy Spirit, they do not walk on the path of faith (the path of Abraham). They try to hold reservations for themselves. These are not Abraham's descendants, and they will not inherit the blessings of Abraham.

True Israelites have no deceit in them. God is most pleased with those who are pure, and not greedy, who do not have their own gains and losses, who have no jealousy and hatred, but live before God truthfully. "Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Ps. 32:2). What a person reveals on the outside is from the inside. Whatever a man hides inside, God will reveal it before all men.

People judge by the appearance but God looks at the heart. If the Lord judged by the appearance like humans do, it would have been too bad for

Nathanael. The bad comment he made could have ruined his future. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13). There is nothing that a man can hide from God. Everybody will have to give an account before Him.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’ ” (John 1:50–51)

Brothers and sisters, a person who believes will see heaven open. In his message, the Lord’s servant said, “When the Lord Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, the heavens suddenly opened when He came up out of the water. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him. And a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.’ ” The scene of a dove entering into the temple on New Year’s Day is heaven opening to us. This is proof that God delights in His servant and the New Testament Church. For the New Testament Church is the body of His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He loves and delights in. Therefore, we must treasure God’s grace and lovingkindness, and arise to testify for Him.

The Lord said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Brothers and sisters, since the Holy Spirit has descended on us and we have received power, we can be witnesses to Him in Taiwan, Asia, America, Europe, Oceania, Africa, and in the ends of the earth. He wants us to quickly preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to all nations and kingdoms, and bring the history of mankind to an end.

We must imitate Nathanael to have a pure heart in obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit and preach the gospel to faraway lands. May the Lord be gracious to us. May all those who have met the Lord arise and go into all the world to preach the gospel, and make all peoples the disciples of the Lord Jesus!

Nathanael (3)

(January 4, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

In Him Was No Deceit

Concerning Nathanael, the Lord Jesus had a simple comment: “An Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit” (John 1:47). From these two phrases, we can see that the Lord Jesus is so pleased with people like Nathanael, that is, people with no deceit or craftiness. This kind of people speak whatever is on their mind. They will not try to be crafty. They do not think one thing and say another. This kind of people may not speak with pleasant words, but the Lord Jesus does not look at that. What the Lord looks at is whether their heart is truthful.

Brothers and sisters, the nature of the fallen man often has this manifestation — he likes to do superficial work. In other words, it is to *put on a show*. His speech is sweet and flattering, and those who see things according to the flesh will be easily deceived.

Fortunately, the Lord Jesus does not judge people by the appearance. Otherwise, it would have been bad for Nathanael. People like Nathanael will not prosper in the world, but they will prosper and find grace in the spiritual world. It will be bad for those who are deceitful and crafty when they meet the Lord Jesus! For the Lord Jesus will see through them with one look.

Nathanael had no deceit. He spoke whatever was on his mind. What he said was really rude and unpleasant to the ears, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” If we judged Nathanael by the appearance, we would think that he was a rough man. But the Lord Jesus did not reproach him. Instead, He testified of him to everyone. Obviously, the Lord Jesus

does not look at one's appearance.

Brothers and sisters, it is precious if we do not have deceit in us. Some people may look good and sweet on the outside but they are crooked and deceitful on the inside. The Lord Jesus is most displeased with this kind of people. If anyone thinks of pleasing the Lord by his outward performance, he will surely fail. For no superficial work can please the Lord.

Actually, as long as you are truthful and upright inside, it does not matter if your outward performance is not so satisfactory. All you have to do is improve your performance gradually. However, if you are already crooked and deceitful on the inside, no matter how good your outward performance is, you will not be able to be used by God. God will only use those who are not crafty. Even if they are not that good with words, God is pleased with their truthfulness.

Throughout the past few decades, after the New Testament Church was rebuilt, we can see that those who still remain in the New Testament Church, and whose functions are more and more revealed by God, are those who have no deceit in their heart. They are not necessarily eloquent or capable. Our Lord truly looks at the inner hearts of men.

He Was Not Obstinate or Self-Opinionated

The Lord said to Nathanael, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael said, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (See John 1:48–49.) Nathanael was so quick to believe in the Lord's words. This showed that he was not obstinate, and his heart was soft towards God. He was not self-opinionated or prejudiced towards God's words. This was the special characteristic of Nathanael which was praised by the Lord Jesus.

Nathanael's objective attitude enabled him to easily accept the corrections of his companions. When Philip first introduced the Lord Jesus to

him, he had his old concepts and immediately expressed his opinion of Nazareth. But when Philip told him to come and see, he was not obstinate. He did not say, "Forget it! There is nothing worth seeing. It will only waste my time." Instead, he said, "Fine. Let's go have a look." What an objective attitude! He was not stubborn, but readily accepted others' suggestions.

Nathanael was not satisfied with his current recognition, nor did he remain in his present condition. He could open-mindedly accept his companion's testimony. And because of this, he met the Lord. After he met the Lord, he was quick to believe in the Lord's words. These were Nathanael's special traits, and they are the secret to finding more grace. If we want to advance in the faith and find more of God's grace, we must be quick to believe in God's words. And if we want to believe quickly, we must not hold on to our own opinions, but quickly put away our prejudices and our current recognition. Only then can we meet the Lord and find grace. If we are self-opinionated, we will not meet Him and find grace.

The Chinese have a saying, "There is always a higher heaven and there is always someone wiser." You may think that you have reached the peak of perfection, but there is always someone who is higher. Lately, a Bro. Yek from Borneo came to Mount Zion. He is an agriculturist. He helps us a lot in our cultivation and livestock-raising.

One day, we told him about a place in Taiwan that uses a special kind of feed when they raise pigs. They don't have to clear away the pig manure because it doesn't stink. And when the manure dries, the pigs can feed on it again. When he heard that, he was very amazed and went to see it for himself. We always think that when we raise pigs, cleaning away the manure is important because they will surely contract skin diseases if they have a dirty environment. But amazingly, their pigs do not have skin disease, and the manure is even anti-bacterial! If we had not seen it for our-

selves, we would not have believed it.

Bro. Yek also went to see a cattle farm. What did they feed the cattle? Bamboo husks! Moreover, not all of the bamboo husks were fresh. Some were dry and moldy. Can cattle survive by eating that? Won't they get sick? No, they didn't have problems and they grew. We were amazed to see all this. It is hard for us to accept such a new method of raising cattle. If we are not open-minded, we will not be able to absorb new knowledge from others.

Brothers and sisters, many things that we thought were impossible in the past have now become possible. Many things are against our previous concept, but if we objectively accept them, we will benefit from them. For example, we reported about drinking one's own first urine in the morning, which was also against people's concept. Many people found it hard to accept. But facts speak louder than words. Many people have testified that this is truly an amazing therapy. Those who tried were benefited from it.

When I say this today, don't misunderstand me saying, "Oh! Drinking urine becomes the flow of the Holy Spirit, and we must catch up! How disgusting! This flow of the Holy Spirit is too hard to follow." If you find it hard, just do according to the degree of your faith. The same applies to eating brown rice. If you feel that brown rice is hard to swallow, you do not have to force yourself. I say this just to let brothers and sisters know that there are many things which are against our current concept. If we cannot break through our old concept, it will be hard for us to make substantial progress.

Many a time, we replace our eyes with ears and are quick to judge. This is being prejudiced and unwise. Some people doubted the New Testament Church because they didn't see her, but just heard about her. One day, when they come to see the New Testament Church in person, they will

then understand. Therefore, do not replace your eyes with ears. We must try to find out by seeing and experiencing it ourselves. Otherwise, we will not gain real benefit, nor will we benefit others.

Today, the Lord Jesus wants to reveal to us a greater thing. He wants to give us more grace and entrust us with greater entrustments. Therefore, we must be open-minded and sincere in experiencing things for ourselves. We need to be quick to believe in the Lord's words, and be objective towards the words of our companions. In this way, we will become vessels after the Lord's heart.

The Lord Jesus saw Nathanael, and chose him to be an apostle even long before Nathanael knew it because Nathanael had these special characteristics. Nathanael was nothing less than what the Lord saw him as. He could be sent to preach the gospel, and in the end, he even sacrificed himself for the Lord. I repeat, it was due to Nathanael's honest and open-minded attitude, and his sure knowledge of the Lord, that he was able to sacrifice himself for the Lord. May the Lord also be gracious to us.



Philip and Philip



Philip and Philip (1)

(January 7, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Rachel Sheu during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Today, we are going to discuss about the two Philips. I will first discuss about Apostle Philip. “The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’ ” (John 1:43–46).

“Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little’ ” (John 6:5–7).

After Philip met the Lord Jesus, he went to look for Nathanael and testified to him saying, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Philip was very familiar with the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets. When he met the Lord Jesus, he was convinced that Jesus, born in the small town of Nazareth, was the One of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote about. Therefore, when he testified of the Lord Jesus, he quoted the Scriptures to support his real life testimony. His testimony was simple, yet powerful. When Nathanael heard it, he was fascinated. At first Nathanael could not change his concept immediately. He wondered: Can anything good come out of Nazareth? How can the

Messiah come from such a small place? He found it hard to accept. But Philip's words caused quite a stir in him. This was the power of Philip's testimony.

In 1991, the New Testament Church will be sent to all the world to preach the gospel. How should we assume the ministry, and how should we testify for the Lord? Today is a day of fasting. The fasting this time is to equip us for the commission. The Lord's servant wants us to discuss the two Philips. God wants to equip us with their characteristics so that we know how to testify for the Lord.

From the testimony of Philip, we learn a principle: All who serve God must be familiar with the Scriptures, clear about the Truth, and moreover, must have a real life experience of the Truth. In gospel preaching, living testimonies are essential. The testimony that we bear must be our life testimony. When we have a real life experience of the Truth, our testimony will have power. The more life experiences we have, the more powerful our testimony will be.

We thank God that we truly have a good knowledge of the Scriptures and profound life experiences of the Truth we preach today. We can experience with our life all the messages of the Lord's servant such as: "The Complete Truth of Jesus Christ", "A Man and A Mountain"... In fact, we have experienced the reality of all these messages.

Philip said, "We have found Him." Who was the One they found? Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Philip had seen and touched Jesus in his life, so he could not but testify of Him. His testimony was powerful and effective. We don't have to say a lot when we testify. But we must meet the Lord in our lives. In this way, God will confirm our testimony, and power will be manifested.

Today, many people don't recognize that God has chosen Mount Zion

in Taiwan and a prophet in the East. Many people also look down upon Taiwan just as how people despised Nazareth. But when we testify for this man and this mountain — the vision from God in the last days — we can speak boastfully and powerfully to this generation based on the Bible and our life experiences. Like Philip, we will testify, saying, “We have found the one and only true God of the universe, Jesus Christ, who is the God of the New Testament Church, the God of Mount Zion and the God of Elijah Hong. He has made Himself known to this generation through the Prophet of All Nations, Elijah Hong, from Taiwan.

Are you looking for God? Where is God? Where is Jesus? Where is the Truth? Where is the way to salvation? Behold! They are in the New Testament Church and on holy Mount Zion! They are with the Prophet of All Nations, Elijah Hong! Come and see! Come to Mount Zion in Taiwan, to see the prophet and entreat the grace of God from him! This man has power and he can bring you to Jesus Christ. Mount Zion in Hsiaolin, Taiwan, is the mountain of the LORD’s house in the latter days that the prophet Isaiah spoke of!”

People will be surprised and say, “Where? Isn’t Mount Zion in the Middle East? How could it be in Taiwan? Can anything good come out of Taiwan?” We will tell them firmly, “God has forsaken the Mount Zion in the Middle East and has chosen another Mount Zion in the far East, Taiwan. This Mount Zion has power; we have seen and experienced it.” Since this is our real life testimony, it will draw people to respond just as Philip’s testimony had drawn Nathanael. Some people will believe it, and others will not. Whether people believe or not, this gospel will always have power. When we meet someone humble like Nathanael, we will say, “Come and see!” But to those who oppose and slander, we will proclaim that God’s judgment will come upon them. God will manifest His power and confirm it.

When the Lord Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, He found Philip and said

to him, "Follow Me." Very wonderfully, when the Lord found Philip, Philip also found Him. As soon as Philip met the Lord, he knew that He was the Messiah, and as soon as the Lord saw Philip, He knew that this man would be His disciple. So when the Lord called Philip, he followed Him immediately. Brothers and sisters, when we found God, God also found us. Our relationship with God is always mutual.

Just as what the Lord's servant Bro. Hong told us in the recent bread-breaking service, saying, "When we come before the Lord's table, we don't have to beg pitifully. We are here to enjoy the feast of the Lord's salvation. While enjoying the rich salvation of the Lord, we also let the Lord enjoy our love. We let the Lord enjoy the fruit of His labor. So this is a gathering where both God and men share each other's love. The bread-breaking service must reach this realm."

The Lord Jesus loved Philip very much, because Philip served God with enlightenment, not foolishly. He was quick to understand with just a little hint. Once, when the Lord Jesus saw a great multitude of people, He already knew how He was going to feed them, but He especially tested Philip: "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Seeing that there were so many people, Philip answered, "How are we going to feed them? Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

Philip failed the test. Then the Lord Jesus performed a miracle of feeding five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. Having this real life experience, Philip came to know that Jesus is the living bread, for He is able to feed five thousand, and that He is God and Savior of the whole world. He can satisfy the hungry souls of this generation.

On another occasion when the Lord was with His disciples before His crucifixion, He said, "You have seen the Father." Philip asked foolishly, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Philip was like

Nathanael; he had no deceit in him. He spoke whatever was on his mind. The Lord Jesus said to him, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘show us the Father?’ ” What He meant to say was, “How can you be so unenlightened?” These words awakened Philip, who then knew the Father through the Lord.

Thank God that the way, the truth and the life of the New Testament Church are all concrete and not abstract. They are something that everyone can experience. Today, we experience the way of God through the man of God, Elijah Hong, sent by God in the latter days. We can experience God with our life through him. Yesterday, I went to talk to the Lord’s servant about my shortcomings, my failures, and my weaknesses, and to let him know that I needed him to pray for me. He told me the story of *the burning bush*. As I listened, I began to understand, and the anointing of God also came upon me. Therefore, when I am at my weakest, I must come to this minister. Every time I come to him, I see the salvation of the Lord.

The apostles preach the word of life. Apostle John said, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). All the early apostles experienced the Lord with their lives, and for this reason they were able to become martyrs for the Lord. Later, the Lord ascended to heaven and sent to us the Holy Spirit. It seems as though the Holy Spirit cannot be touched and seen; He is a power that can be experienced by man and manifested on people. When the mighty power of the Holy Spirit was manifested on the apostles, they were able to preach the gospel, assume the ministry, and be martyred for the Lord without regret.

Today, when we fast and pray here, we are preparing ourselves to be sent to testify for the Lord. If we want to testify for the Lord, we must experience Him with our lives. Only through life experiences will our words

be strong and our testimony powerful. With life experiences, we will not only be unshakable, but will even sacrifice our lives for the truth. Therefore, meeting God is extremely important, and it is delightful to know that we have a realistic way to meet the Lord.

Concerning meeting the Lord, sometimes we meet Him when we are alone and other times we meet Him in the congregation. For example, on New Year's Day this year, when all the churches saw the dove at the temple, we saw the Lord appearing to us through this matter. We were overjoyed and full of life. During the convention at Bethel this time, the brothers and sisters of Singapore and Malaysia also met God congregationally. They met the God of the New Testament Church, the God of Elijah Hong and the God of Mount Zion. God likes to appear to us when we are united in one congregation. Therefore, we should not neglect our serving in the congregation.

Brothers and sisters should not stop going to service, for God often appears to us during the services. When the Holy Spirit works mightily, we can meet God vividly in the congregation. The basic requirement for meeting God is to walk in God's will and to live before Him. During the convention at Bethel, all the sisters serving in the kitchen could not attend the services, but they said they met God in the kitchen, especially when they heard us singing and praying in tongues. On Mount Zion, Mama Tang also testified to me that when they saw the dove on the television screen while they were cooking on New Year's Day, they were completely drawn to it, and could not refrain from leaping and rejoicing in the kitchen. They also met God in the kitchen. Therefore, as long as we are in the congregation and in God's will, we can meet God in all circumstances.

During the past few years I have been serving God overseas. In the beginning, I repeated the messages of Bro. Hong one by one to the churches. But later I discovered that I could not go on doing that, because I did not have his ministry. I lacked his life experiences and enlightenment. So, I did

not have the power he had, and what I spoke were only theories. How should I serve God? God wanted me to lead the brothers and sisters to experience the epochal messages of the Lord's servant with our lives. It is our greatest delight to experience these messages and to let the words of God take effect in us. We can then meet God and the power of His words. With this background, God will anoint my preaching, which will in turn enlighten and establish brothers and sisters.

Let us now continue to talk about Philip the evangelist:

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

(Acts 8:4–6)

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him... So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

(Acts 8:26–31,34–35)

Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught

Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

(Acts 8:39–40)

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven good men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business ... and Philip...

(Acts 6:3,5)

Philip, the evangelist, was one of the seven ministers who were of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. In Acts chapter 8, the church in Jerusalem was greatly persecuted. The disciples were scattered to all the places to preach the gospel. There were many who preached, but the Bible only mentioned Philip. Obviously, God remembered what Philip preached. What special traits did Philip have? He had miracles and wonders following him, that is, he had authority. Why did the gospel preached by Philip have authority? Because what he preached was the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12).

The gospel of the kingdom of heaven concerns God’s mastership and sovereignty. Thus this gospel has great authority. The name of Jesus Christ is the one and only name, so this name also has great power. The New Testament Church is preaching what Philip preached. Miracles and wonders will also follow us to confirm the truth we preach, so that the name of Jesus Christ is exalted. Therefore, when we fast and pray, we must ask the Lord to equip us in this aspect of preaching.

Because the church of Jerusalem had seven ministers who had great faith and power to coordinate with the apostles, the church greatly prospered and the gospel was widely preached. Today, God wants to send us

to all the world. He will also equip us with His power. How is God's power equipped on us? First, we must have faith in the gospel of God's kingdom and in the name of Jesus. Wherever we exalt this name there, the power of this name will be manifested. Wherever we preach the gospel of God's kingdom, there, the power of God's kingdom will be manifested. The dominion of man's kingdoms will be crushed, man's rule will end and God's kingdom will be realized.

After Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, an angel of the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This road to Gaza was a desert. After Philip heard this, he went immediately. He met a eunuch and he baptized him. Then Philip was caught away by the Holy Spirit. Philip did not preach the gospel at his own will, but advanced with the Spirit. Today, when God sends us to all the world, we must also go by the arrangement of the Holy Spirit. We must not have our own choice. If the Holy Spirit wants us to go south, we will go south. If the Holy Spirit wants us to go to the wilderness, we will also follow. We cannot go wherever we want. As God's messengers, we do not have our own choice.

I remember in 1977, when I was first sent to Borneo. There were no brothers and sisters there, only Muslims and Malays. How could I preach in such a remote place? I went out to preach by faith. That place was a sparsely populated wilderness, where you could hardly see a car pass by on the road. Sometimes, when I got onto a bus, the whole bus was full of Malay men, and I was the only Chinese, and moreover, a woman. Occasionally, I would meet indecent men, and you could imagine my fear and insecurity. The circumstances were like a wilderness to me. During that period of time, I assumed the ministry in fear. Although I did not gain many people in Borneo, the brothers and sisters who did receive the Truth all held fast to the holy and complete Truth. Now, they have all immigrated to Canada.

During the battle in Singapore, four sisters were commissioned to Europe. They later became very homesick and wanted to come home, for they were imprisoned, pursued and lonely. Moreover, the weather was cold. They had to eat chocolate bars everyday to keep themselves warm. They felt that if they continued on preaching in this manner, they would be out of grace soon.

Brothers and sisters, don't assume that to be commissioned is easy. Just getting used to foreign food alone is enough to make us fail! Therefore a commissioned vessel always advances with the Spirit. We shall go wherever the Holy Spirit wants us to. We do not have our own choice and way. The Holy Spirit will equip us to an extent that we don't have our own preferences or feelings wherever we are sent. Whether it is an easy or a difficult place, we only obey and testify for the Lord.

Moreover, those who are commissioned do not have their own future. They neither have a bright nor dark future. If there is any future, the cross is our only future and destination. During the battle in Singapore, when the third group of mighty men was about to go to Singapore to fight, we sang Hymn 237, "This blood path of the cross is my only way..." Despite the fact that jail cells were awaiting us, we still answered the Lord's call and headed towards prison.

That day, the mighty men were prepared to be arrested. They put on two sets of clothing so that they had an extra set of clothes to change if they were in jail. What kind of future is that? The blood path of the cross! So, the cross is the only destination for those who are commissioned and that is to be martyred for the Lord. This morning, the Lord's servant prayed, saying, "May the Lord give us the spirit and power of Elijah, and the spirit of a martyr." This prayer clearly tells us the future of someone who is commissioned.

Philip obeyed the Holy Spirit and headed to the desert where he met an

Ethiopian eunuch. This eunuch was very devout and humble. He immediately believed in the Lord Jesus and was baptized. When the eunuch came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The eunuch did not even have a chance to thank him. However, Philip did not have any regrets or dissatisfaction. Instead, he continued on in his ministry. From here, we see that Philip was equipped by the Holy Spirit to a point where he completely had none of his own works or glory, for he knew that the baptism of the eunuch was made possible by the Holy Spirit. He only obeyed and worked according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He did not take credit for the work, but gave all the glory to the Holy Spirit.

As for us, when we see results from our gospel preaching, our natural man will have a sense of accomplishment. We might say, "Thank the Lord! The great work is done through me. How glorious! I want to stay in this place a little longer to admire my accomplishment."

Brothers and sisters, the more glorious the work is, the more careful we have to be, lest we rob God of His glory. After we have done the work of being commissioned, or shepherding a church, or preaching the gospel, we hope that the Lord will take us away, so that others will not see us. We hope that they will only see the Lord, just as the eunuch saw God, not Philip. Therefore, I also pray that all the churches of Southeast Asia will not see me, but only God. Brothers and sisters, all the works are done by God and the Holy Spirit. While we are commissioned, we do not have our own ideals, joys, and choices to go or to stay, much less our own work, credit, or accomplishment. A vessel who lives in the vision will not have his own position.

When Philip preached in Samaria, many people believed in Jesus, but the Bible only mentions of the eunuch. On New Year's Day this year, after we dramatized the latter-day Elijah going into all the world to preach the gospel to all nations, the African brother from Ghana praised God on

Mount Zion. I have a feeling in me that in 1991, according to this sign, the Holy Spirit might want us to take the road to Gaza, the way of the wilderness. Moreover, the song which the Holy Spirit confirmed on New Year's Day was a native song. So it seems as though God is calling people from places that are considered "native" to come under Him. Maybe some humble people will be gained by God in the land of Ham. May the Lord help us. When the Lord sends us to the wilderness in the south, may we obey Him like Philip did.

Both Philips whom we discussed this morning testified for the Lord. May the Lord equip us with the special characteristics of Apostle Philip and Philip the evangelist, so that we may become vessels who can be commissioned to accomplish His great work of this era, the year 1991.

Philip and Philip (2)

(January 7, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

He Advanced with the Spirit, Not with His Own Choice

Today is the first day of the fasting-prayer for the ministry we are going to assume in 1991. We are praying so that we can be sent to the whole world. It is really the wonderful arrangement of the Holy Spirit that we are discussing about Apostle Philip and Philip the evangelist, for this will help us assume the ministry of the latter-day Elijah in 1991.

Both Philip the apostle and Philip the evangelist had personal life experiences with the Lord Jesus. They were also very zealous in bearing witness for Him. They are our good examples when we assume the ministry of the latter-day Elijah in 1991. The special characteristics of these two witnesses are exactly what we need. I believe that how God had chosen the two Philips, He has also chosen us in the same way today. How the Spirit of God sent and used them, He will also send and use us in the same way.

Just now, Sis. Rachel talked about how there have been many coincidences that have occurred lately. At the beginning of 1991, God brought an African brother to our midst, and the eunuch whom Philip preached to was also an African. There is something even more wonderful. God not only brought an African here, but also many Philips: Philip Lee, the son of Bro. Lee Kam Ping, Philip Chang, the son of Bro. Chang, and Bro. Philip from Tahiti. They all came to Mount Zion recently. These are all the wonderful arrangements of the Lord. He wants us to be like Philip, to always be ready to accept the sending of the Lord and the ministry He wants us to assume.

Brothers and sisters, a messenger of the gospel must have this requirement: He has to obey and advance with the Spirit. He must not have his own choice. Wherever God sends him to, he must go. It is really no coincidence that we discuss about Philip today. Maybe the Holy Spirit will lead us in the same way.

I had the same feeling as Sis. Rachel when she said that God was in full control of not only Philip's work, but also the time and place of Philip's work. When God wanted him to go from one place to another, he obeyed without hesitation. When the Holy Spirit wanted him to preach the gospel to the eunuch, he did. After Philip preached to and baptized the eunuch, the Holy Spirit took him away. This happened as soon as he got out of the water. Maybe he had not even changed his clothes. If this thing happened in the Old Testament, we could assume that this thing only happened in the Old Testament. However, this happened in the New Testament era. This is a fact. How did the Lord's Spirit take him? We don't know. It's a miracle! He is truly Elijah! Through this, the Lord is telling us that we will be caught up when we finish the work of the Lord!

He Did Not Admire His Own Work

The work of a gospel messenger is in the hands of God. Even the locations and time he works in, and the persons he talks to are arranged by God. Philip should not be reluctant to leave the eunuch just because the eunuch had a high position and was very desirous for the truth. Philip shouldn't say, "Let me stay a little longer with this high-ranking person who desires for the truth," or "Let me stay a little longer here, where there are good work results." So, God's Spirit took him away immediately. The eunuch who was baptized by him could see him no more. He did not even have time to thank him.

A gospel messenger must be equipped with this trait: Do not be reluctant to leave your own work and do not admire your own accomplishments. It is not easy to attain these special characteristics of a gospel

messenger. From the beginning of the sending until the work of the Lord is done, every step is difficult. Some people can only be sent to the city, but not the wilderness. Some people can only enjoy the fruit of others' labor, and cannot be pioneers. However, in 1991, God wants us to be like Philip and be able to accept the sending of the Holy Spirit at any time and any place. Therefore, we must carefully learn from Philip.

He Knew that the Work Belonged to God and He Entrusted the Work back to Him

A messenger of the gospel has to go through much molding from God. Whoever God wants you to testify to, you must testify. Wherever He wants you to go, you must go. Whenever He wants you to advance, you must proceed. If the Holy Spirit wants you to continue the unfinished work, you have to keep working until it is done. When will the job be considered done? The Holy Spirit will decide, just as the Holy Spirit decided that Philip would baptize the eunuch and the work stopped there. Philip said "Amen," and boarded the spiritual plane that God prepared for him and was taken to another place.

You may say that Philip was taken away too quickly. The eunuch had just accepted the Truth and had not received any basic Truth edification. How could he grow up? Wouldn't people be worried about him? Yes, people would be worried about him. But Philip did not depart on purpose, for it was arranged by God. Since it was God's arrangement, Philip did not have to worry. Did the eunuch stumble when he went home? No! Instead, he courageously testified for the Lord and preached the gospel in all that area. This shows that Philip knew that these were God's works, and he entrusted them completely to God.

I feel that this is a tough lesson to learn. We either have no burden for God's work or have so much burden that we cannot put them down. We do not know the power of the Lord and we do not know ourselves. The Lord who chooses and calls us is faithful, and this is God's church. We are

only messengers and vessels. If we can entrust our work (the work that God does through us) to Him, then we are truly the messengers of God. I know what I am saying.

This time, God suddenly brought Sis. Rachel back to Zion. It was as though she was taken away in an instant of a moment. After I sent her a fax at Kaohsiung, she immediately went to process the documents, and then she came. She didn't even have time to think it over. Do you think she is worried about the churches in Southeast Asia? Yes! But when God wants her to leave, she is able to entrust them to God.

I think this experience of Sis. Rachel is like the experience I had when I left Southeast Asia. At that time, I had planned to hold a youth convention on Cameron Highland, and did not intend to return to Taiwan. Through my mother, who was then seriously sick, God brought me back to Taiwan in an instant. Because of this, the convention was cancelled. After I returned to Taiwan I could not go abroad again. What to do? I could only entrust the churches of Southeast Asia to God. Did they fall away? No! Their foundation was firm. God will personally give grace, and nurture and look after those whom He has chosen and called. This is the faith that gospel messengers must have. In this way, the work will progress, and the gospel will be preached to the whole earth very soon.

He Testified for the Lord Truthfully

Concerning Apostle Philip, we also ask the Lord to help us to be like him, to personally experience the Lord, and not just have some biblical knowledge of the truth. If we only have knowledge of the Bible, but not life experiences, we will not produce an effective testimony like that of Philip. When Philip testified, he did not seek to please men, or cater to the tastes of others. Since it was his life experience, he could testify boldly saying, "The Messiah whom we have been waiting for is Jesus of Nazareth! He was not born in Jerusalem but in humble Nazareth." This testimony was not made through his own mind, but from spiritual insight. When

Philip testified thus, people responded negatively: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Brothers and sisters, do you think Philip knew what people thought of Nazareth? I think he knew. Since the Messiah he found was truly Jesus of Nazareth, he did not care what people would think, but just testified for Him truthfully.

Just now Sis. Rachel said that when she testified for the man and the mountain chosen by God in the end-time, she also encountered such response. The Prophet of All Nations is from Taiwan? Where is Taiwan? Many people do not even know of the existence of Taiwan. But now, someone says that the latter-day Prophet of All Nations is in Taiwan — this is just too incredible! Who can believe it?

Brothers and sisters, if God wants you to preach a message that people find hard to believe, will you still preach? Will you have the courage to preach? Today, we are not trying to convince people with theories, but with real life testimonies. Some people believe in religions, but we do not believe in a religion. We believe in the Lord of life. Those who believe will experience the Lord in their life. If you don't believe, come and see! What we preach and testify are what we have seen and known. We can also prove it to you. How we have experienced it, so will you. This is not an empty theory, but a rich and real salvation.

May God equip us with the traits of Philip, so that we may assume the ministry of the latter-day Elijah well and accomplish the works entrusted by the Lord. We hope that through us, this generation will come to know the Lord and see the dawn of salvation.



Phoebe



Phoebe (1)

(January 12, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Zhao during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

(Romans 16:1–2)

Phoebe was a servant raised up by God in the church. In the Bible, she is only mentioned in these above two verses. Paul wrote to commend her to the Church of Rome. What are the special traits of this deaconess? What had she done for the church to win a commendation from Paul?

Firstly, she showed the love of Christ at the church in Cenchrea and had helped many saints. She loved God and revealed God's love in many things. She showed concern for the brothers and sisters, many of whom found grace because of her kindness. When I was in Malaysia two years ago, Sis. Sheu received me kindly. Wherever I went, they arranged for cars to pick me up, and they served me good food. There was so much hospitality that I felt so much at home. She was kind not only to me, but also to every brother and sister. She was like Phoebe, a vessel who cherished the flock and showed concern for the testimony of God's house. Because of her zealous serving, revival came upon the churches in Singapore and Malaysia.

Secondly, Phoebe helped Paul, who was the special messenger sent by God, to preach the truth and vision of God. Also, she had a close life connection with Paul, and shared in his afflictions by helping him always. Because of this, Paul praised and commended her. Brothers and sisters, all those who were in the same mind with Paul were in the same mind with

God.

Today, when we are in the same mind with the Lord's servant, we are also in the same mind with God. Therefore, we have to keep ourselves in the same spirit, footstep, and vision with the apostles at any price. Even in times of afflictions and battles, we must suffer together with them and be faithful till the end. In this way, we will find grace and be praised by God.

In my house, I have a very big sign on my window that says: *The New Testament Church executes God's power, terminates man's rule and realizes God's kingdom. Holy Mount Zion is renowned throughout the world.* Some people say that the banner is not a good idea because it blocks out the sunlight. But it doesn't matter to me. For originally, this house was going to become a church premises, but there was a change of plans. Instead, God gave this house to me, so that His glory could be exalted. Just as David was the lamp of Israel, the apostles, likewise, are our lamps. So when we have apostles, we have God's light. The sign may have covered up the window, but it does not matter. When we have God's light, it is more than enough. As long as I can help today's Paul preach God's will, I am satisfied.

Phoebe (2)

(January 12, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Not a lot of people are familiar with Phoebe. To many people, she was not well-known because the Bible only mentioned her in verses 1 and 2 of Romans chapter 16. Though she was not a major figure, she was able to assist the chief apostle and bring him consolation. During Paul's ministration, Phoebe gave Paul a very good impression, because she fervently helped many people, including Paul. So when she wanted to move to Rome, Paul especially wrote to commend her to the brothers and sisters there. From this, you know how precious this sister was to God and to the apostle! It did not mean that Paul was partial, but that Phoebe's performance in the church was praiseworthy. Paul felt that she was commendable.

While serving the children of God, we also have the same feeling. When those brothers and sisters whom we feel precious move to a new place, we feel the need to write a letter of recommendation for them to bring along to the local church they are going to. For they are worthy of the apostles' commendation, and their spiritual virtues are worthy of the praise and imitation of the saints. However, there are also other brothers and sisters for whom we would find hard to write letters of recommendation, even upon their requests. There would not be much to praise them for, and it would not be necessary to write bad things about them.

Paul said that Phoebe had been a helper of many. This was her virtue, and it was not an empty praise. If Phoebe was lazy and gluttonous, how would the letter of recommendation be written? Would there be any point in writing, "This sister is very lazy and gluttonous"? Since Paul was able to recommend Phoebe, this shows that God remembered her faithfulness in His house.

She Served Not by Her Own Effort, but by God's Entrustment

Phoebe was worthy to be called a servant because she had helped many. The ministration of serving others was very obvious on her. Phoebe did not serve according to her own likings and mood. She did not serve without rest or sleep just because she was happy, nor did she become dismayed and unfriendly when she was unhappy. She always served persistently. Also, she did not help those whom she liked nor did she ignore those whom she disliked. She treated people equally, and would serve them as long as they were God's children.

Phoebe's serving was from her life, and she was faithful in the position God put her in. She received this ministry of *servicing* from God. She knew that God appointed her as a *deaconess* so as to serve others, and she was faithful according to God's arrangement. Because God gave her such an entrustment, she honored it by serving others the best she could. And so, she helped many people. Since she had a life of serving, she established many. She did not choose who to assist or when to assist. Whenever God wanted her to serve, she served. Even Apostle Paul was assisted by her. Such ministration is commendable.

Today, God wants us to serve this generation. We must also learn to serve all kinds of people by God's grace. Many a time, whether in the church or among the Gentiles, the scope of our serving is narrow, and the number of people we serve is limited. It seems as though we can only serve certain kinds of people, or a minority of people. We cannot expand our service to include more people. Why? The main reason is that God has not been able to enlarge our life capacity and break our natural character. As a result, it is difficult for us to help all kinds of people. We may serve certain people very well, but not another.

Sometimes we also help people. But whom do we help? Usually, they are those that we can get along with, who have the same interests as we do

or those who have helped us before. They help us so we help them in return lest we owe them favors. Brothers and sisters, don't we often have such impurities in our servings? On Mount Zion, I have seen this situation before. When a certain sister comes, you help her diligently, and not others. Why? Because this sister cooks for you. When she comes, you have something good to eat. Therefore, you like such a sister and you want to help her. Such help is instigated by the desire to eat.

In general, it is easier for a quick-tempered person to help someone who has the same character. They share the same tastes, so they are happy when they are together. But it will kill him if he meets someone who is as slow as a snail. There will be lessons to learn when a quick-tempered person works with a slow person. While one is as anxious as an ant in hot pants, the other could be careless, taking his own time.

I used to be a quick-tempered person, so it was really hard for me to serve a slow person. Sometimes I would jokingly say, "A person like you can probably live up to three hundred years." He acts slowly so that even when he loses his temper, he does it so slowly that his anger gradually disappears. That's why I say he can live to three hundred years. A quick-tempered person, however, often has gastric pain. Man, by nature, has different temperaments and dispositions. Because of the differences, it is hard to appreciate and tolerate one another. Therefore, to better serve all kinds of people with different temperaments, we must accept God's breaking and molding.

If everyone accepts the breaking of the Lord, the quick will slow down when he meets the slow, and the slow will become fast when he meets the quick. He can be fast as well as slow when necessary. He can also talk or be quiet when necessary. Whatever he does is for glorifying God and edifying men. Then he will be a good vessel that can be fast or slow as required. Like a good car, it will move when you step on the accelerator, and stop when you put on the brakes. I think Phoebe was such a person who

could serve all kinds of people, and this shows that she was amiable. This did not come from her inborn nature. It must have come from the breaking and molding of God's hands.

She Sacrificed Herself to Serve Others

Phoebe was a vessel molded by God. Hence, she could serve many in the church and even Paul. Brothers and sisters, do you think it is strange? Since apostles are supposed to help others, why do they need others' help? This is something very wonderful. The saints need the help of the apostles, and the apostles need the help of the saints. This is a story of the Body. This help is mutual, not one-sided. There is not a person in the world that does not need the help of others. Everyone needs to help others and also needs the help of others. Phoebe found much grace in this aspect. And so, when she wanted to go to Rome, Paul commended her to the saints in Rome, requesting them to receive her in the Lord. Because this sister lived for the Lord, the saints should receive her for the Lord. Paul considered this service to be a manner worthy of the saints.

Brothers and sisters, we serve one another in the Lord, receiving and helping one another. This is a manner worthy of the saints, and a duty we must fulfill. Phoebe had fulfilled her duty so Paul requested the saints in Rome to fulfill their duty in receiving her. When we help others, it is for the Lord and not for a return of a favor. If our servings towards the saints are for the Lord, we will be rewarded. Such ministration to the saints for the sake of the Lord is a very glorious virtue well remembered by the Lord and the apostles. Such serving can glorify God, comfort the apostles, and edify the saints.

Many a time, our servings appear imperfect. They are either excessive or insufficient. This is because we often have personal interests. Therefore, we must ask God to help us depart from our old self, that our spirit of serving may become purer and purer. Then we will be able to expand our scope of serving to reach all kinds of people. Today, God gives us a

divine mission, which is to dispel the dark clouds for the people of the last days and to untie the knots in their hearts. This is the ministration God measures out for us. We must be equipped by the Lord in order to serve this generation according to His will.

It is truly God's will that we discuss the testimony of Phoebe today. He wants us to become a diligent and faithful vessel like Phoebe, to pour out (give) ourselves to others and serve people to our best, for the sake of the Lord. It is comforting to know that God will remember us if we pour out our life to serve others and give ourselves to others. He will move the churches and the saints to receive and help us. The apostles will also gladly commend us. This is God's grace. God truly searches the hearts of men. He will reward whoever is faithful to Him.

Today, God wants us to testify for the Light and bring the dawn of salvation to people. If you serve diligently, receiving and helping people faithfully according to the portion God measured out for you, you will become a beam of light. The Spirit of the Lord, the real Light, will shine from you. Through you, the people in darkness and in the shadow of death will receive light and warmth. Then you will be today's Phoebe.

She Was in the Same Mind and Same Footsteps with the Apostles

In order to attain a better ministration, there is something that we should all pay attention to, which is our life union with the spiritual minister. Phoebe was in the same mind and same footsteps with the apostles. She completely obeyed the apostle's leading and understood how he felt (she understood Paul's state of mind). Her connection with Paul was very natural, close and firm. This was why she could be established in God's house and establish others. The more a person understands the feelings of the apostle, the more he can build up the saints and bring the saints the best serving.

Paul was consoled at the mention of Phoebe, because Phoebe had a close connection with him. He was moved to write a letter of recommendation for her although she didn't ask for it. Paul told the saints in Rome: "Phoebe is a servant of the church. Assist her in whatever business she has need of you." I believe that after the saints in Rome received Paul's letter, they received her as warmly as they would have received Paul. All these prove that Phoebe had always been closely connected to the apostles, and that she served others in the feelings of the apostles. We must learn well in this aspect. In 1991, may the Lord give us the spirit of Phoebe so that we can imitate her to serve the saints and this generation for the sake of the Lord.



Zacchaeus



Zacchaeus (1)

(January 19, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Reiner during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

From Luke 19:1–10, we see three things about Zacchaeus: (1) He was short. (2) He was rich. (3) He was a chief tax collector. Being short of stature indicated that he was not good-looking. Since Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, we can tell where his wealth came from. It is just like a Malaysian policeman who suddenly buys a new car. People will think: His salary is so low, where did he get the money? Most people hated tax collectors, whom the Jews considered sinners. Nobody likes to pay taxes, but paying taxes has become a fact of life to the world. For example, in America, you have to pay taxes for everything. In Matthew 17, when the tax collector came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?” Peter immediately answered, “Yes!” Peter was already used to paying taxes.

To many, Zacchaeus was an evil official who extorted the hard-earned money from the people. He was wicked and deserved death. How could such a man believe in God? However, the Lord Jesus Christ is merciful and kind. He did not look at the outward appearance of Zacchaeus, but at his heart. Oftentimes, we are not like the Lord. I remember in a certain consecrated land, there was a companion who was often self-opinionated. Nobody could stand his stubbornness, and we thought that he was hopeless and incorrigible. Nobody wanted to ask him for his opinion. He was like a criminal condemned to death. This is how easily we reject people.

The Lord’s servant would not simply reject a co-worker, a brother, or a sister. There were some who had really veered off this path but the Lord’s servant Bro. Hong still waited, in hope that they might turn around. If we were Bro. Hong, we would have announced their apostasies at once. Because of the tender mercy of the Lord’s servant, many co-workers, brothers and sisters have a chance to return and serve the Lord once again.

When we assume the ministry in the West, our thoughts are also often affected by people's outward appearance. To us, the Westerners are hopeless because most of their hearts are hardened towards the Truth. But God tells us not to be affected by this. Recently, we received good news that a group of people in Switzerland are waiting for the prophet and the holy mountain. When the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong came to Taiwan and preached the Truth to Bro. Hong, many also thought that Bro. Hong was hopeless. They told Sis. Kong to forget about him. But Sis. Kong was very clear that God had chosen this man. How could she rest before God's work was done? Similarly, when Bro. Hong was paying constant visits to Bro. Shih Ming-der, we also heard many say, "Why is Bro. Hong with a person who is involved with politics?" According to them, such a person would not receive the Truth and return to the New Testament Church. But Bro. Hong really has a big capacity. He knew what he was doing. Consequently, Bro. Shih Ming-der received the full gospel.

Zacchaeus was short. When he stood in the crowd, he could not see the Lord. Being short is a natural defect. Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from seeing the Lord. Zacchaeus had a will to conquer the defect, and he found a way to do it. Some physical defects can be corrected, but not all. Whether they can be corrected or not, we must try to overcome them. We often fail to find grace because of our defects and sometimes, we even used them as excuses. When Zacchaeus was determined to overcome his defect, he was able to see the Lord and thus found great grace.

When I first came to Mount Zion, I did not dare to pray aloud during the morning prayer service. I thought my Chinese was not good enough to express my feelings. This deficiency became an excuse for me not to pray. Lately, many companions have come down with the flu, and I have also been sick for over a month. Although this is not serious enough to stop me from working, it makes me feel very uncomfortable. Sometimes, I just want to rest for a day or half a day. I am not like Zacchaeus. I do not have

sufficient determination to overcome my weaknesses.

Talking about the toxic-free enterprises carried out by the Lord's servant Bro. Hong, he is not an expert on agriculture and knows very little about planting. But he refuses to use pesticides on fruit trees, and he leads the companions to catch bugs. According to man, this is foolish, but God remembers His servant, who is determined to obey His leading. Although he is incapable of many things, God does great things for him. Now, we have begun to overcome the obstacle of pests.

Some deficiencies and weaknesses are measured out for us by God. Paul mentioned that he had a thorn in him that the Lord did not remove, but this did not prevent him from serving God. God also allowed Sis. Kong to have tongue cancer. Instead of becoming her stumbling block in serving God, it became the key of revival for the brothers and sisters. When they saw the suffering of Sis. Kong, they wept and offered themselves to God. If we have the determination to find a way to overcome our flaws and weaknesses, God's grace will be sufficient for us. Had Zacchaeus excused himself and given up on seeing the Lord, he definitely wouldn't have found grace and would have died in his sins. Thanks be to God that he found the Lord and the Lord also found him. The dark clouds within him were dispelled and the knots in his heart untied.

“So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way” (Luke 19:4). Zacchaeus reacted fast; he did not take his own sweet time, but ran to see the Lord. This is a way to find grace. When the gospel is preached to some people, they have many excuses: “I'm too busy!” or “I'll come after I graduate from school...” If Zacchaeus had waited, wishing only to see the Lord Jesus when He was on His way back, he would never have had a chance to see Him. For the Lord was on the last leg of His journey, heading towards Jerusalem where He would be crucified.

Very often we are slow in responding to God and in taking action, and fail to offer in time. The Lord's servant just reproached us concerning the matter of the calendar and we felt bad about it. We originally planned to print ten thousand copies of calendars, but because of our slowness, the number was cut down drastically, and we lost this blessing. During the three-day fasting in January 1991, the Lord's servant laid hands on us and blessed us. On the fourth day, he wanted to lay hands on us again but because there were only a few brothers and sisters present, he called it off. Once again, we lost God's grace and blessings.

I believe that on the Judgment Day, many people will regret not having the zeal and determination of Zacchaeus. The Bible says: "The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment... and condemn them." Zacchaeus will also stand up and condemn them.

Zacchaeus was a very enlightened and watchful person. He knew which direction the Lord Jesus was going. Being zealous is good, but we need to know where the Lord is going. Saul (Apostle Paul) was also very zealous, but his zeal urged him to persecute the Lord and kill Christians. Today, many people in the denominations are also very zealous, but it's a regret that they do not have direction. They do not know where the Lord Jesus is, where He is going, nor where His prophet is.

People often cannot find the Lord Jesus because they are not enlightened in the spirit. Some come to Mount Zion empty and return empty. They fail to find the way to see the Lord Jesus and His prophet. The same thing happens in the New Testament Church. While the spiritual lives of many brothers and sisters are thriving, others' are stunted because they lack spiritual enlightenment. Only those who are enlightened like Zacchaeus can meet God.

"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by

false accusation, I restore fourfold' ” (Luke 19:8). When someone was slandering the Lord Jesus, Zacchaeus immediately stood up to defend Him. Actually, Zacchaeus could have talked to the Lord Jesus privately about his personal offering. But in order to defend the Lord Jesus, he said out loud, “Look, Lord...” He wanted everyone present to listen to what he had to say: “I’ve repented because of the Lord; I’m no longer a sinner. Because of the Lord, I will give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” In order that the Lord would not suffer loss, Zacchaeus stood up immediately to defend the Lord — not only in words but also in action.

We will definitely not tolerate anyone who slanders the vessel of the era, for this is a very serious matter. We must defend God’s chosen vessel in words and in actions. In 1986, when the evil Kuomintang (KMT) assaulted the Lord’s servant on the holy mountain, many brothers and sisters came to protect him. This is pleasing to God. However, there were also times when we failed to efficiently protect the vessel of era. Consequently, the Truth was discredited and the ministry of the Lord’s servant was also slandered. In Sis. Kong’s time, there were some co-workers who still laughed and joked around while people were slandering the New Testament Church and the ministry of Sis. Kong. Later, Sis. Kong rebuked these co-workers in the wrath of God. She did this in defense of the Truth.

We should also defend the spiritual ministers whom the Lord’s servant sends out to various places. Some people say that they only believe in God and not in the vessel of the era. Others only obey the vessel of the era and not the spiritual ministers whom he sent. If we do not accept the one sent by God, we are not accepting God. Likewise, if we do not accept the spiritual ministers commissioned by the one whom God sent, we are not accepting the one whom God sent.

In the past, some churches refused to accept the co-workers that the

Lord's servant sent to them, and even openly criticized them. At first, they said they would say "Amen" to Bro. Hong and not to the co-workers. But later, they felt that even Bro. Hong was also wrong. Maybe by now they also say that God is wrong. This is a very solemn matter. This is also the main reason why the Israelites fell in the wilderness. Evidently, God does not tolerate anyone who interferes with His way of working.

Once, David sent his servants to show kindness to the new king of Ammon, but the king shaved off half of their beards, and cut off the lower half of their garments, shaming them greatly. This was equivalent to shaming David and the God who chose David. So God punished Ammon and caused David to send out his army to defeat them. Like the king of Ammon, those "churches" refused to receive the co-workers sent by the Lord's servant. In short, we should not judge spiritual ministers by their appearances and weaknesses. Look at Jesus; He did not have any outward comeliness either. He also had weaknesses but did not sin.

The name "Zacchaeus" means simple and righteous. Before Zacchaeus met the Lord, he was not worthy of this name. But after he accepted the Lord, his actions proved that he lived up to his name. Zacchaeus restored fourfold to those whom he had defrauded. This really met the righteous demand of God. However, the KMT is not like this. After they plundered and destroyed our properties, they told us to forget the things of the past.

There is no righteousness without Christ. The Allied Forces call the Persian Gulf War a righteous war. Is it really righteous? I remember how in the book *Exodus*, someone said, "The kingdoms on earth depend on *oil* for survival, but the kingdom of God is established on *righteousness*. The Persian Gulf War originated from the unrighteousness of man's kingdom. The allies dispatched forces to the Gulf for oil and for their own interests, resulting in the Gulf crisis. Why didn't they attack China for the Tiananmen Square massacre? Why didn't they attack the Soviet Union for the bloody suppression against Lithuania? It's because they could not get anything

out of it. Only God makes righteousness His throne and God's righteousness will reveal the unrighteousness of man's kingdoms.

Zacchaeus (2)

Zacchaeus Completely Denied Himself

*(January 19, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

Luke chapter 19 says that Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho, was a chief tax collector and a rich man. In the Old Testament, Jericho was an accursed city. In those days, the Jews hated and despised tax collectors. Moreover, a rich tax collector gave people the impression that he was rich and heartless — a “vampire” who sucked the people of their hard-earned money. Since Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a rich man, and an inhabitant of Jericho, it seemed very difficult for him to enter the kingdom of heaven. For the Lord said, “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:23–24).

In another chapter of the Bible, the Lord said, “Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it you did not afterward relent and believe him” (Matt. 21:31–32). Tax collectors and harlots here not only enter the kingdom of God, they are the first to enter for they have become overcomers. Why could the rich have two completely different consequences? It is because the former disbelieve while the latter believe. If rich men and tax collectors believe in the one sent by God, both can enter God's kingdom. If they do not believe, no matter who they are, they cannot enter God's kingdom.

In the New Testament, two tax collectors found much grace. They were Zacchaeus and Matthew. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles chosen and appointed by the Lord, and he wrote the Gospel according to

Matthew. So it is “not of works but by Him who calls, in order that God’s purpose of election might stand.” (See Romans 9:11–12, *NIV*.) Zacchaeus not only had a bad reputation among the Jews, his appearance was also not presentable. He was short like a dwarf. But these unfavorable conditions did not prevent him from seeking the Lord, nor hinder him from finding grace. He overcame all these outward and inner obstacles, and ran to the Son of God and threw himself into His bosom. He was not obsessed with the inferiority complex, but willingly came to the Lord just as he was (his true nature), having nothing to hide. He was open and honest to the Lord, without any pretence or conceit. That is why the Lord approved and delighted in him.

Actually, Zacchaeus had long heard about the Lord and desired to meet Him some day. So when he learned that Jesus had come to Jericho, he decided not to pass up this rare opportunity. Unexpectedly, multitudes surrounded the Lord Jesus. And being short in stature, poor Zacchaeus failed to see the Lord no matter how hard he tried. Then a bright idea hit him: “Run ahead and climb up a sycamore tree!” So there, he waited for the Lord to pass by. God did not let him down. He met the Lord and found great grace. For the Lord said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:7–8).

Zacchaeus ran ahead. He ran with a direction and goal, which was to meet the Lord. Today, the whole world is running ahead, but not towards the Lord. Some run for gold medals at competitions; some run for their health; others run after vainglory, and some run for better positions in society. Some ambitious people run to become leaders of the world, even at the cost of tens of millions of lives. These people do not run towards the Lord, nor after God’s will. Even if they get what they want, what is the meaning and value of all this? Isn’t Saddam Hussein leading Iraqis to fight the Allied Forces? Isn’t Bush leading the Allied Forces to attack Saddam, the arro-

gant man? What do these leaders bring to mankind? They bring terror, death and destruction.

Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree to see the Lord. According to his social position as a chief tax collector, this was a very inappropriate and ridiculous thing to do. Nevertheless, his purpose and motive were precious and pleasing to the Lord. In order to see the Lord, he did not care who he was and what people would think about him. It is just as what Apostle Paul said, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:7–8). Zacchaeus’ behavior tells us plainly that he loved Christ and counted all things as loss for Him. That was why he found great grace.

Actually, everyone in this world is thinking of *climbing up*. The only difference is that they are not climbing up to see the Lord, but to strive for fame, gain, status, wealth and worldly success. They endure poverty and humility in order to carve out a career and reputation for themselves. Their determination to strive and *climb up* is commendable, but their goal is wrong. One day, they will discover that their achievements are nothing more than “flowers in a mirror” or “the moon in the water.” All are in vain.

Some people who climb up (strive to succeed) may not bring harm to others. But there are some who hurt others as they climb. They climb by stepping on others’ heads. They make steppingstones out of others’ freedom, fortune, well-being and property. They promote themselves at the expense of others’ blood, tears, and lives. Just as the Chinese saying goes, “A general merits at the cost of 10,000 lives.” While the rulers of this world enjoy their success, fame, and prosperity, do they know how many people have lost their homes because of them? Do they know how many helpless orphans and widows are weeping because of them? Aren’t Saddam Hussein and Bush dramatizing this scene? By the way they climb, the higher they will

go, the harder they will fall, and they will fall into pieces.

Zacchaeus knew where the Lord was going to pass by so he waited there for the Lord. Brothers and sisters, the way of the Lord is the way to salvation, and also the way of His judgments. All those who wait for the Lord on the way to salvation must also wait for Him on the path of His judgments. “And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation’ ” (Isa. 25:9).

“Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night. Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:8–9).

The time has come. Judgment will begin with the house of God, that is, with those who have received the salvation. Zacchaeus waited for the Lord’s salvation on the way that the Lord would pass through. He faced the light in the way of the Lord’s judgments. He convicted himself of sins and righteousness and judgment. “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold” (Luke 19:8).

Today, many desire to find grace, but they refuse to accept judgment and are unwilling to prostrate in the light of judgment. The Lord’s servant Bro. Hong is often moved by the Holy Spirit to utter strong and weighty words of judgment. According to the carnal man, these words are unpleasant and unbearable. However, whoever prostrates in the light of judgment will find grace, and whoever rejects this light will fall into darkness. Zacchaeus was able to find grace because he knew he was a sinner. When he met the Lord, he immediately prostrated in the light of the Lord.

When Zacchaeus climbed up the tree, all that he hoped was to see the Lord Jesus. Then he would be satisfied. Unexpectedly, at that moment, the Lord's salvation came to him and his house. The Lord looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." At this time, Zacchaeus was not only overwhelmed by an unexpected favor, he was practically wild with joy. He was probably thinking: "I am a sinner of sinners, despised and hated by everyone. I know I deserve death. But Lord, You approve of me and want to stay in my house? O Lord, so many people gather around you who are better and more worthy than I am. Yet You have not chosen to stay at their house but mine. How can I thank You enough?!"

From here, we can see that the Lord does not look at the outward appearance, but at the heart. There were many who gathered around Him, but they were all self-righteous. When they saw what was going on, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Their words proved how self-righteous they were. They did not know that the Lord came to save sinners, not the righteous. Only Zacchaeus considered himself a sinner who needed salvation. All the rest thought that they were righteous and did not need salvation. Actually, they were all sinners in the eyes of the Lord. But because they were self-righteous, they could not enjoy the Lord's salvation. Zacchaeus was even more surprised when the Lord called him by his name. To Zacchaeus, it was like music to the ears! It was so heartwarming. Zacchaeus must have wondered how the Lord even knew his name. We are envious of Zacchaeus, who heard the warm and tender calling of the Lord. We will probably not be able to hear the Lord call us on earth. But we hope that we will when He calls the roll in mid-air.

When Zacchaeus heard the loving call of the Lord, he quickly came down and received Him with great joy. The happiness and gratefulness in his heart was indescribable. To him, it was a blessing from heaven. Had Zacchaeus hesitated or come down from the tree slowly when the Lord

called, the Lord would have passed by quickly and he would have lost the golden chance of having the Lord in his house. Brothers and sisters, the main reason why people cannot find grace today is because they have climbed too high. They are unable to come down and are unwilling to come down. The Lord was gracious to me in that my position in the world was not too high, so it was not too difficult for me to come down.

When I was still in the army, I preached the gospel to my superior officers. I gave each of them a Bible and *A Living Testimony to the Truth* written by Sis. Kong. Those more polite officers would avoid me by saying: "I will read them carefully when I retire." As for those who lacked manners, they would jeer at me, saying, "Victor Pi, don't be a fanatic!" To put it plainly, it was because they had climbed too high. They could not come down and did not want to come down. They wanted to climb even higher still. How could they come down? So, all those who refuse to humble themselves will not be able to accept the Lord's salvation.

Zacchaeus not only came down at once but also received the Lord happily. Some people might think: "What's so great about this?! If the Lord appeared before my eyes today, not only would I receive the Lord with joy, I would even kneel down to receive Him." Is that true? Actually, the Lord had knocked on the door of their hearts many times, but they refused to open the door to let Him in. Like many brothers and sisters, they have received the complete salvation of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit, and also pray in spirit everyday. They should have the Lord's Spirit dwelling in them. But because they still live in the flesh, they often quench the Holy Spirit. They shut the Lord's Spirit outside their hearts. In many things they do not like the Lord to rule over them. The Bible says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). This is what the Lord said to the church in Laodicea.

The church in Laodicea also received the complete Truth of Blood,

Water, and Holy Spirit. The Lord said this to them, proving that they locked the Lord outside the door. As a result, the church in Laodicea was desolate, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Some people think that the church in Laodicea refers to the denominations. But in fact, it is not so. The denominations are not churches, because they are not built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Though the church in Laodicea was desolate, it was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. They were desolate because they locked the Lord outside the door. The Lord's Spirit could not reign in the church, but men's flesh instead. If you ask me if there is a Laodicean church in the New Testament Church, my answer will be, "Go and see for yourself, if there is a church that is not ruled by the Holy Spirit but by the flesh. A church ruled by man's hand will be a Laodicean church. They should quickly repent before the Lord, open the door to let Him in, and let Him rule in the church. Otherwise, He will spit them out of His mouth."

After the Lord entered Zacchaeus' house, before He said anything, Zacchaeus stood up and said to Him: "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." Brothers and sisters, Zacchaeus was so honest before the Lord. He did not cover up his faults. He totally denied himself and did not save his face. Such remorseful spirit really touches the Lord's heart, and is most treasured by the Lord. This is worthy of our imitation. Some brothers and sisters cannot find as much grace as Zacchaeus in this aspect. They care too much about their face. In an attempt to hide their ugliness, they wrap themselves in attractive and beautiful packages. As a result, they lose many chances to learn lessons and find grace. This is the wile of Satan.

The day that Zacchaeus met the Lord marked the turning point in his life. When he met the Lord, he saw the light of judgment. He immediately prostrated in the light, being convicted of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. (See John 16:8.) This is commendable and this is

what we need most. There were lots of people around the Lord, but only Zacchaeus could see the Lord's light and prostrate before the light. He took concrete action to take care of the wealth of which he cheated, restoring fourfold to the victims. By doing so, people would no longer despise him. Instead, they would begin to respect him.

Many overseas brothers and sisters come to Zion laden with problems. When they return home, they testify saying, "As soon as I saw the Lord's servant Bro. Hong, all my burdens disappeared, and all of my problems were resolved. I also have a similar experience. When I met God's maid-servant Sis. Kong for the first time, I saw the holy light of God radiating from her eyes. She seemed to see through me. At that time, I felt so ashamed of myself. But unlike Zacchaeus, I did not prostrate at once in this holy light. I was speechless before her. Actually, I had cheated and stolen before, but I did not dare to rip my face and deny myself in front of everybody.

The Lord was very satisfied with what Zacchaeus said. So instead of reproaching Zacchaeus, He comforted and blessed him saying, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Thanks be to the Lord! Today this salvation has also come to the house of Jacob – the New Testament Church. Brothers and sisters, we are the true descendants of Abraham through faith. The Lord has found us. Let us imitate Zacchaeus to desire for the Lord, and open the door of our hearts to receive Him. Let us completely deny ourselves in the Lord's light, and deal with everything not pleasing to Him, so that we can find more grace before Him.

Zacchaeus (3)

(January 21, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Zacchaeus and his entire house found great grace. I think it is such a blessing for the whole family to find grace together. Many brothers and sisters have suffered much because not all of their family members have received the Lord's salvation. So we admire Zacchaeus who had his whole family find grace with him. The first words of the Lord Jesus to him were full of abundant promise. The Lord said, "Today salvation has come to this house." The Lord said this because Zacchaeus was worthy of such grace. There was something in him that attracted the Lord.

Sometime ago, we discussed about Nathanael. He was also a man who found great grace. The Lord Jesus said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." Why did the Lord immediately promise Nathanael that he would see greater things when He saw him? It is because Nathanael was pure in heart and without deceit. This made him attractive to the Lord. Obviously, the Lord likes those who have no deceit in their hearts.

Some people are complicated. They are skeptical about the word of the Lord Jesus and have problems believing it. They often harbor evil thoughts. This kind of people cannot attract the Lord. But Zacchaeus was just like Nathanael. He had something in him that really attracted the Lord. Therefore, the grace of the Lord came upon him in abundance. What exactly did Zacchaeus have that attracted the Lord? This is what we must find out and learn together.

**He Truly Sought the Lord
Paid Close Attention to His Whereabouts**

We know that among the Jews, tax collectors and harlots were rejected and hated by people. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. His subordinates had to give him a share of what they had defrauded. So he must have been the most hated by all. How could such a person have won the Lord's favor? Obviously, our Lord does not look at the outward appearance, but at the heart. And what made the Lord like Zacchaeus so much? It was definitely not because he was a chief tax collector, or that he was rich.

Jesus liked Zacchaeus because He found that Zacchaeus truly sought Him and longed for Him. How did He know? Wasn't Zacchaeus a chief tax collector? Could a chief tax collector continue to be one if he really loved the Lord? Of course not. That is why Zacchaeus felt that he could not continue on as a tax collector. He had heard about Jesus for quite some time, and day and night he waited for Jesus to come. When Jesus was passing through Jericho, he learned about it at once. It is obvious that Zacchaeus paid close attention to the whereabouts of Jesus.

As soon as Jesus arrived, he took hold of the chance to see what the Lord Jesus was like. He must have heard many glorious testimonies about Jesus. To him, Jesus was an indomitable person while he himself was a pathetic loser. Although he had status and wealth, he felt extremely empty in the spirit. What was the use of having so much money and such a high position? They brought him only pain, not happiness. Therefore, Zacchaeus sought the Lord earnestly and sincerely. Once he knew that Jesus would be passing through Jericho, he immediately went to see Him. Unfortunately, he could not see Jesus because he was too short. Nevertheless, he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree, determined to see the Lord Jesus that day.

I think we should diligently imitate Zacchaeus in this aspect. We must find out where the Lord Jesus is and where He will pass by. It is unfortunate that we often miss these chances. Everyday, when the Lord Jesus passes by

during the morning prayer service, we are still sleeping and only wake up after He leaves. And many a time, Jesus passes right by our sides, but we fail to notice Him. When others are gathering around Him, we are still unaware of it. How foolish we have been! Zacchaeus was very alert. Even though Jesus did not tell him that He would pass by Jericho, he still found out about it and immediately seized the opportunity to go see Him. Such spontaneous and earnest spirit won the Lord's heart.

I feel that we cannot find grace today because we are not earnest enough. If you are earnest, you will find the Lord. Because Zacchaeus was earnest, he did many things that normal people would never do. If Zacchaeus was not earnest, he would probably have given up, and excused himself saying, "What is there to see about Jesus? It is too crowded. Since I cannot see Him, I might as well go home." But Zacchaeus did not give up. When he found himself too short, he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree. He was not obsessed with inferiority complexes nor did he feel discouraged because of this. Instead, he tried all means to make up for his natural defects.

He Tried Exceptionally Hard to Overcome His Natural Shortcomings

We often make excuses such as: "Others can memorize the Bible so well but I can't, because I don't like reading books. I don't mind working or fasting for three days, but I just can't memorize the Bible. I am not the studious type and my memory is bad." This is being affected by our natural factors and failing to break through the limitations of the natural man.

Some elderly brothers and sisters are unable to memorize Bible verses in three minutes like the younger ones. So they spend 30 minutes and even three hours to memorize it. They make every effort to overcome their poor memory. Take Sis. Lee and Bro. Bai for example. When I hear them memorize the Bible so diligently during the morning prayer services I am very moved. Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus examines the hearts of people

in secret. Only those who are earnest and truthful before the Lord will find grace.

Some sisters have to do household chores, attend church services and participate in different ministrations. How do they manage all these? Some of them say, "I give up," while others try to think of ways to do them all. This problem lies with their *determination*. If Zacchaeus was not determined to see Jesus that day, he could have made a lot of excuses and said, "Well, God made me a short man! He didn't let me grow a little taller. What can I do? It's not my fault." Had that been the case, Zacchaeus would not have seen Jesus and found grace. Despite his short stature, Zacchaeus did not give up. Instead, he tried twice as hard as others to overcome his defect, until he finally saw Jesus.

Therefore, if we know our shortcomings, we must try hard to overcome them. For example, if you think you are slow and cannot arrive morning prayer service on time, then you can sleep a little less and get up half an hour earlier. If you still cannot make it on time, then get up an hour earlier. I always do that. My alarm clock is sometimes set at 3:00 A.M. and sometimes 3 something, because I always have matters to attend to when I get up every morning. Brothers and sisters, it all depends on where our heart is. As long as we have the heart, we will find the way and have the strength to overcome our natural flaws.

He Repented of His Sins and Desired for Salvation

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who was much hated by people. Being so infamous, he had to pay a heavy price to find his way through the crowd to see Jesus. He had to prepare himself to be cursed at and spat on by others. But he did not mind all this. Regardless of how people would treat him, he grabbed the chance to see the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, it is definitely not appealing for the head of a revenue department to climb up a tree. Obviously, Zacchaeus was deter-

mined to see Jesus, whatever the price. Nobody noticed his sincerity and zeal towards to Lord. While the multitudes were following Jesus, who would have noticed Zacchaeus up in the tree? Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus knew. When He came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down! For today I must stay at your house.”

I believe that those who heard these words at that time found it hard to believe their ears. They probably thought, “So many of us came to You, but you did not say that You would come to stay at our house. Instead, You decided to go to Zacchaeus’, the chief tax collector who swindles?”

Oftentimes, those who are rejected by others are received by the Lord. For the Lord does not judge by the appearance like people do. He looks at the heart. Zacchaeus had done many despicable things, but most people could not understand how he felt at that moment. He was actually remorseful of his deeds and longed for salvation. This is why the Lord accepted him more than others. Many people think that they are good, and that they don’t need salvation. No wonder the Lord Jesus said, “Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you (the chief priests and the scribes of the people)” (Matt. 21:31).

He Thoroughly Dealt with Selfishness and Greed

Many people did not understand why the Lord Jesus went to stay at Zacchaeus’ house. Did He have ulterior motives? If not, why did He choose such a wealthy man? Why did He want to stay at a sinner’s house? They thought they were holier and more righteous than the Lord Jesus. They judged by the appearance. They did not know the mind of the Lord, nor the heart of man. Right then, Zacchaeus stood up by his own will and said, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” He did not return the money with interest, he returned it fourfold! I think Zacchaeus must have gone broke after this.

Brothers and sisters, here was a man who totally came out of his selfishness and greed! This was because he met the Lord and accepted His salvation. Selfishness and greed no longer had a place in him. Zacchaeus no longer thought for himself nor was he self-centered. He no longer extorted nor took advantage of others. Instead, he gave himself to others. This was dealing thoroughly with selfishness and greed. The Lord was pleased with Zacchaeus in this aspect. The Lord wanted everyone to know that here was a person who used to be selfish and greedy, but now he completely emptied himself. In the past, he swindled, but now he gives. For he has gained salvation and great grace!

The degenerate human nature is selfish, greedy, and self-centered. Man, by nature, will take advantage of others, and he himself will not suffer loss. However, the requirement of finding grace is to sacrifice yourself. The more you pour yourself out, the more God's grace and blessings will come upon you. Therefore, we should not fear having weaknesses and infirmities, as long as we are willing to severely deal with them. The more severely we deal with them, the more the Lord will gain glory and more grace will come upon us. This is the secret to finding grace and blessings.

After Zacchaeus dealt away with his natural weaknesses and infirmities, the Lord Jesus immediately said, "Today, salvation has come to this house." Brothers and sisters, do we want our households to find grace? Imitate Zacchaeus to give half of our goods to the poor and return four-fold for what we have taken from others through deception. When we come out of our selfishness and greed, God's salvation will come upon our household abundantly. May the Lord instill the virtues of Zacchaeus in us through the circumstances, people, events and things. May we be people who know how to find grace and vessels who can bring more grace to others.

Zacchaeus had a record of sins, but it was erased through the salvation of God. Thus, God wrote a new and more glorious record for him:

Zacchaeus gave half of his goods to the poor and restored fourfold to those from whom he had taken by false accusation. He completely surrendered himself to God and poured out himself. Hence, God was able to gain glory in him, and His righteousness could be manifested through him. God's love and grace also flowed forth from him.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is looking for people like Zacchaeus. May we be like Zacchaeus, to be aware of the Lord's whereabouts at all times, to always take hold of the chance to meet the Lord, and let Him find us. The Lord can pass by us in any place and at any time, for His Spirit fills all things. The Lord passes by us through the sermon during services. The Lord also passes by us in various circumstances at any time. If we do not discover Him, our life and work will be dry and empty.

I hope that we can see Him, hear Him and meet Him in our spirit, and receive Him into our house. We do not have to be bothered by others' responses, for people always judge by appearance. Only the Lord Jesus looks at the heart. If you regret your sinful deeds like Zacchaeus, the Lord will know. If you come to seek the Lord's salvation, He will also know. The crowd may not notice you but the Lord will notice you. The crowd may reject you but the Lord will accept you. As soon as you have the turning point like that of Zacchaeus, the Lord will say to you, "Today, salvation has come to your house." This is the secret to finding the Lord's salvation. May the Lord let us find even greater grace through imitating Zacchaeus.



Martha



Martha (1)

(January 28, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Karen during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Let's read Luke chapter 10:38–42 and John 11:3–5. From these verses, we know that the village the Lord went to was called Bethany, and the family that received the Lord was the house of Bethany. There were three people in this house: Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. This was a house that received and served the Lord, and found great grace, a family loved by the Lord.

Today, we will discuss about Martha. Martha was diligent and happy to serve the Lord and received Him into her house. At that time, not many people welcomed the Lord into their homes. Through receiving the Lord, Martha proved herself loving the Lord a lot. However, she also had her weaknesses. When she was distracted with much serving, she complained hastily to the Lord saying, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." This is a natural weakness of man, which we also have. When we are not busy, this weakness will not show. But once we become busy, it will appear. I believe Jesus was not the only guest at that time. There must have been many people in Martha's house and she had to rush to serve them all. When a person is busy, he becomes irritable. He will not be calm in the spirit, and will start to grumble.

We are also often busy on Mount Zion. Once I heard someone say, "Is so-and-so dead? How come he is still not here!?" This is being like Martha who became so busy that she forgot to come before the Lord like Mary. The Lord's servant Bro. Hong said, we must work like Martha, but with the spirit of Mary. We really need to come before the Lord. I believe that the Lord Jesus did not mean to tell Martha to sit in front of Him and listen to His word.

For example, when there is a grand convention on Mount Zion, it is impossible for everyone to sit in the temple and attend the services. Some people have to go and serve in the kitchen. So, what is most important is the state of our spirit. For instance, some people attend the service, but they doze off throughout the entire service. This is also meaningless. I remember on New Year's Day of 1991, Sis. Tang and some other sisters who served in the kitchen could not attend the service, but their spirits were at the service. That day, the Lord's servant led brothers and sisters to march around the temple lawn, dramatizing how we would be commissioned to preach throughout the world. When the sisters saw this scene on the TV screen, they also followed suit and marched around the kitchen with pots and pans in their hands. They also enjoyed the same blessing and joy, for God does not show partiality.

When we are very busy while others are having a good time, we may feel unhappy. Martha was very busy serving while Mary was sitting there enjoying the word of the Lord. Martha could have been thinking: "I'm so busy working and you are enjoying yourself? Do you think that I don't know how to enjoy myself?" When we make comparisons with others, it shows how small our life capacity is. We want to keep the perimeter of our work clear, but we forget that we are all doing God's work.

Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Mary chose the good part, which could endure the test of time. The Lord's servant often says that external construction will pass away one day, but internal construction will last forever. In the West, we don't have busy construction work like Mount Zion. But we have another kind of construction, which is going out to assume the ministry. When God works gloriously, we feel very happy; and when we hear these glorious reports, we rejoice. Gradually, we only pay attention to the outward results.

One day, God enlightened us and let us realize that we must pay more attention to things that carry everlasting value. Of course, it is important for us to go out to assume the ministry, and it is also important for God to do great and glorious works. But what God delights in most is the inner construction, such as living before Him in secret and being like-minded with His servant.

I remember when Sis. Sheu was here, I asked her this question: “You read the spiritual flows, and so does every one of us. How come you can touch the feelings of the Lord’s servant, and why can’t we? Not only can’t we understand his feelings, sometimes we even misinterpret them.” She replied, “We must bear in mind that we are co-working with the Lord’s servant to accomplish the work that he received from the Lord. We are doing his work, not our own. Therefore, we must pay attention to his words. So long as we have this heart and seek before the Lord, He will enlighten us and help us touch the feelings of His servant.”

After pondering over Sis. Sheu’s words, I fully agreed. In the future, God will measure our work according to how much we co-work with His servant. He will also determine by this criterion to see whether we are working by our own will.

Let’s read John 11:20–28, 35–37, and 39–40. From verses 3 to 5, we see that when Lazarus was sick, Martha and Mary sent for Jesus because they knew that only the Lord could heal him. But the Lord delayed, and put their faith to the test. So Martha and Mary said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Even the Jews said, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”

Why did they say that? It was because the Lord had not raised anyone from the dead before. They knew that He was able to keep Lazarus alive but they did not know that He also had the power to raise the dead. In

verse 22, Martha said, “But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Her recognition of the Lord was superficial. But her recognition deepened when she saw the Lord Jesus manifest the power of resurrection on Lazarus. The latter recognition comes from life experience, and it is more precious than the superficial recognition.

We also see that Martha and Mary did not have sufficient faith in the Lord. For this reason, they could not establish the faith of others. When they wept, the Jews wept with them. Everyone wept. Today, God’s salvation is great. Through the latter-day Elijah, He dispels the dark clouds and unties the knots of the hearts of the people of this last generation, terminates man’s rule, and realizes His kingdom. When we preach this gospel, we must speak confidently.

For example, when we introduce Mount Zion to others, we must tell them firmly: “Mount Zion is the spring of blessings; in Zion, God will listen to your prayers. Your sicknesses will be healed, your problems will be solved...” If we ourselves do not have faith in this man and this mountain chosen by God, how can we establish the faith of others and expect them to believe?

Similarly today, this world is filled with the shadow of death. The Gulf War has erupted and we can see people weeping in fear everywhere. To assume the ministry of the latter-day Elijah, we must have ample faith in God and in His anointed one. Through the glorious scene at the temple on New Year’s Day, and the wonderful parting of the dark clouds on January 25, God has really established our faith in Him and in the minister who dispels the dark clouds. May the Lord add us faith, so that through the ministry we assume, we can bring the dawn of salvation to the people in the whole world, delivering them from darkness and bringing them into the light.

Another virtue of Martha was her willingness to accept correction.

After the Lord pointed out her weakness, she changed. She no longer complained when she served the Lord, as mentioned in John 12:2. The Lord corrected Martha because He knew that she loved Him and had a heart to serve Him. The Lord's servant often helps us by pointing out our faults, because he knows that we also love the Lord and want to serve Him. May we learn our lessons well by His grace, and let Him be satisfied.

Martha (2)

The Honor of Martha

*(January 28, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi
during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)*

After reading Luke 10, I think most sisters would rather be Mary instead of Martha. Many brothers and sisters name their daughters Mary, but few would name their daughters Martha. If you happen to teasingly call a sister Martha when she is busy, she will be very upset, because she will think that you are mocking her.

I am surprised that Martha is so looked down upon. I feel that it isn't fair for her. The sisters do not want to be Martha because the Lord praised Mary and rebuked Martha. We can see how much brothers and sisters like praises and are unwilling to accept rebuke. This can be considered spiritual vainglory. The Bible says that the Lord chastens whom He loves. (See Hebrews 12:6.) Are there sons who are not disciplined by their fathers? Actually, both Martha and Mary were disciples cherished by the Lord, who is impartial. How ignorant we are to grade them into two different categories.

If all the sisters were like Mary, sitting in church to listen to the preaching of the Lord's servant, then we would all have to go to work on an empty stomach. Similarly, if all the sisters were like Martha, being distracted with much serving, there would probably be no one listening to the Lord's words. Both cases are imbalanced conditions that need to be adjusted. It is just like how some brothers and sisters like attending services, but are idle at work. Work begins at 1:30 PM, but they don't show up even after 2 P.M. They are not like Martha, who was diligent and faithful. On the other hand, some like to work, but dislike attending services. They avoid services whenever they can and they seldom attend morning prayer services. When they do attend services, they rarely open their mouths to

pray and say “Amen” to others’ prayers. Moreover, they doze off during services. They are not like Mary, who desired for the Lord’s word, like a deer panting for the water brooks. We have to be like Mary as well as Martha. We must do Martha’s work in the calm spirit of Mary, and we have to long for the Lord’s words in the diligent and faithful spirit of Martha.

I believe that Martha also longed to sit at the Lord’s feet and hear Him speak, just like her sister. But in order to receive the Lord well, she had to sacrifice that good part. Whenever there is a convention on Mount Zion, all the brothers and sisters will sit in the temple to enjoy an abundant spiritual feast. As for those who serve in the kitchen and the Triumph Hall, they work diligently and willingly so that all the other brothers and sisters can sit in the temple and listen to the Lord’s words without any worry. To them it is a sacrifice. For future conventions, I suggest that Martha and Mary switch places.

It is easy for Martha to be Mary. All she has to do is to bring her ears along. On the other hand, it is not easy for Mary to be Martha. She has to come with her heart, her hands, her legs, her ears and even her mouth, and her mouth should not grumble. She has to see to it that all her cooking goes right. She has to make sure that the rice was well-cooked, the dishes are not too salty, and that everything is ready when it’s time to serve. That would be terrible!

In the house of Bethany, perhaps the older sister Martha always did the cooking, while the younger sister Mary rarely helped. If that was the case, this big sister must have loved the younger sister enough to let her enjoy that good part, and let her do things that pleased the Lord (such as pouring very expensive fragrant oil on the Lord’s feet) while she did all the tiresome work. She must have had an abundant life to be so sacrificial and magnanimous.

Martha's name means "noble lady." She was really an honorable lady. Her recognition of the Lord was both accurate and brilliant. Such a sister is hard to come by. She said to Jesus, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (John 11:27). At that time, only a few of the apostles had such recognition. Other than the Lord's mother, Mary, the Bible makes no other mention of any other sister besides Martha, who had such recognition of Christ. Obviously, Martha was bright in the spirit and had heavenly enlightenment. She received and served the Lord out of true knowledge and insight, not out of personal affections or blind zeal. Due to her recognition of the Lord, she sent for Jesus when her brother Lazarus fell sick.

It is important to recognize the one sent by God. Apostle Paul said, "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). Besides urging people to know Christ, Paul also wanted others to know him. This is something many cannot understand. For Paul also said, "For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (as also you have understood [knew] us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 1:13–14). Paul not only wanted people to know him, but to also boast of him. This seems even more out of line. Didn't he say he would only boast of the Lord Christ and His crucifixion? Why did he also want people to boast of him?

Brothers and sisters, may the Lord give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Otherwise, we will not be able to digest God's words and benefit from them. Apostle Paul considered the knowledge of Christ excellent. At that time, if people knew Paul, they knew the Son of God. If they did not know the ministry of Paul, they would certainly not know Christ nor count the knowledge of Christ excellent. I think most Christians today hope to know Christ. Surprisingly, most of the preachers in the de-

nominations live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame, for they set their mind on earthly things. They are only nominal preachers and the flocks they lead are nominal Christians. These preachers do not really understand Christ. Since they refuse to submit to the leading of the apostles and obey their teachings, it proves that they do not know the spiritual master builder (chief apostle) of today. As a result, they also do not know Christ.

Today, if we do not know the Prophet of All Nations, we are no brighter than the preachers of the denominations and their members. By God's mercy, we have come to recognize the prophet. Today, not only should we recognize the Lord's servant, but also boast of him, so that the Lord's servant may also boast of us on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, knowing the vessel of era and knowing Christ from him is the source of all of our strength in our life, work, ministration, and battles.

Why did the Israelites fall in the wilderness after they left Egypt? What was the key of their problem? They all served the LORD but had no true knowledge of Him. The LORD had entrusted His people, the Israelites, to Moses, but the Israelites opposed him. And actually, in this way, they were opposing God. So they fell in the wilderness. In short, if we know the one sent by God, we will know Christ.

Martha was a hospitable woman. "Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house" (Luke 10:38). The Lord labored much on earth, going everywhere to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, healing the sick and casting out demons, but few received Him. He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Of Him the Scriptures say: "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:10-11).

The Lord was not only tired physically, He was also exhausted in the spirit. His body needed rest and His spirit needed comfort. But the world did not know Him and His own did not receive Him. When the Lord entered Bethany, I believe he was also surrounded by a group of curious people, just as when He was in the city of Jericho. People had heard about Him and must have wanted to see what He was like. Yet none of them wanted to receive Him. Only Martha welcomed the Lord into her house.

Brothers and sisters, you may think that it was no big deal for Martha to receive the Lord, and that you would have done the same had you been there. If you think that way, it shows that you do not know the situation at that time, or the circumstances the Lord was facing. “Jesus” was a sensitive name at the time. Besides being rejected and despised by the Jews, the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees in Judea, He was very much hated by the rulers. In today’s words, many informers were watching Him; many secret agents were following Him; and many lackeys were lying in wait to arrest Him. Even His close relatives and brothers mocked Him and kept a distance from Him. Moreover, some towns and villages drove Him away like a plague. If you were there at that time, would you receive Him? Maybe you would not receive Him, nor would you want to have anything to do with Him, lest you be linked to Him in any way. For who isn’t afraid of death?

Nonetheless, Martha welcomed the Lord into her house and served Him diligently. Was Martha ignorant of the Lord’s situation? I believe she understood it better than anyone else. But because she knew that the Lord was the Christ and the Son of God, she received Him, putting her own life at stake. She considered it worthwhile to suffer persecution and die for the Lord. For this reason, the Lord found rest and comfort in her house. Up to now, people still praise the house of Bethany whenever it is mentioned.

Brothers and sisters, I hope we will have this wish and prayer, “O Lord, let my house be the house of Bethany where You may find rest, comfort

and joy. How You loved to stay in the house of Bethany, may You also stay in my house and be the Lord of my house today!" It is a pity that the Lord is not on earth today. How then do we receive Him into our house? The Lord said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (John 13:20). Now we know how to receive the Lord: Receiving the one sent by the Lord is receiving the Lord.

During those days of our wandering in Kaohsiung, I went to visit a certain church with the Lord's servant. They had just bought a new church premises and the Lord's servant wanted to drop by and see it. It was lunch-time when the co-workers and the brothers and sisters of that local church saw the Lord's servant. They showed him around the new church premises but did not even offer him a glass of water or invite him to take a seat. I was really shocked. Since when had the New Testament Church become like this? We are not concerned with eating and drinking. But rather, we are sad because of their cold spirit.

I remember how the old co-workers used to receive the Lord's servant and the co-workers who were with him, as though they were angels of God and the Lord Jesus Himself. How could they have lost such hospitality so soon? Last year, when Bro. Peter Chen and Bro. Daniel Chen visited the churches in Southeast Asia, they were very touched when they saw how hospitable the brothers and sisters were. When Bro. Peter came back and testified of their warm reception, he felt very ashamed. The hospitality that we used to see in Taiwan churches can now only be seen in Southeast Asia and overseas churches. You can hardly find this in Taiwan. We are full of shortcomings especially in receiving overseas brothers and sisters. May the Lord restore the hospitality of the churches in Taiwan.

The young co-workers, in particular, must follow the examples of the old co-workers. Some young co-workers do not even bother to greet overseas brothers and sisters. They see the overseas saints come and go, and

seem to have nothing to do with them. Having seen the examples set by Martha, we need to make some adjustment today. Brothers and sisters, showing hospitality does not mean spending a lot of money on food and drinks. It is all about the spirit of reception that makes our guests feel restful and at home. Such brotherly love reveals the boundless love of the Lord. And if we love each other, people will know that we are the disciples of the Lord and the sons of the heavenly Father!

Martha knew who to talk to and where to get her problems solved. When her brother Lazarus was sick, she did not send for a doctor. Instead she sent for the Lord Jesus and said to Him, "Lord, behold, the one whom You love is sick." By right, when you are sick, you go to see a doctor. But the Lord Jesus was not a specialist, so why see Him? Martha was a very enlightened sister. She knew that the Lord was omnipotent and that He was a great physician. She had resolute faith in the Lord. This was truly precious of her.

Concerning seeing a doctor, there are two extreme cases which seem prevalent among us. Some brothers and sisters refuse to see a doctor or take any medicine when they are sick. They think this means having faith in the Lord and they boast of it. They condemn and despise those who see doctors. Some are exactly the opposite. When they get sick, they immediately think of doctors and taking medicine even before praying to the Lord. Both conditions are abnormal. The latter have no faith, and the former have no real faith. A person with real faith always waits for the Lord's leading and obeys God's arrangement. No matter what sickness or problem he has, he will always first come before the Lord and tell Him about all his problems. He will also let the Lord be glorified through them. If the Lord wants to be glorified through our sickness or our death, we must not decide otherwise.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified

through it” (John 11:4). If the Lord does not heal you but wants you to see a doctor to prevent you from boasting about not seeing a doctor and not taking any medication, will you obey? Real faith is to obey the new and lively leading of the Holy Spirit.

Martha also had her own weaknesses. Whenever she was busy, she became anxious and troubled. Jesus came only four days after her brother died. She said to the Lord who delayed in coming, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” She meant to say that her brother died because He came too late. The Lord said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” She thought that the Lord was talking about the future, so she replied, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” When the Lord asked someone to roll away the tombstone, she said to the Lord, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” What she said showed how immature life her life was. She spoke whatever came to her mind. She talked too much, and was too quick to speak. But she was very open. After Martha was molded by the Lord, she no longer had any complaints when serving. It is not good to be too talkative and quick to speak. It would be even worse if you hide your feelings from the spiritual minister, and instead dump all your “trash” on those who have nothing to do with it. So, it is always better to open up to the spiritual minister.

“Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil” (John 12:1–3). Martha and Mary were both grateful people. Martha served the Lord to express her gratitude. Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of the Lord, and wiped His feet with her hair. What she did could never be enough to repay the Lord for His great love

and mercy, yet the Lord was contented.

This fragrant oil belonged to the family and the family offered up all they had. But it was the elder sister who let the younger sister do the offering. Martha always let her sister have the good part. She was generous and her love for her sister was real. In all things, she was sacrificial, diligent, humble, and never held grudges. Her virtues and capacious life are worthy of our imitation.

Martha (3)

(January 29, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

She Received the Lord with Joy

The evil rulers of the human kingdoms not only forbid people to return to their homes, they also reject the Creator from coming to the place He created. Apostle John sighed with deep feeling when he said, “That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:9–11).

Today, the whole creation has fallen into such a tragic state because people do not receive the Creator. The Gentiles do not receive Him. The Jews — God's elect, also refuse to receive Him. The Savior, the Word that became flesh, had nowhere to lay His head on earth. So He said sadly, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20).

The Lord Jesus is the Creator, the Lord of life. In Him is the life and this life is the light of men. Men rejected Him and refused to receive Him. So they have cut themselves off from the source of life, and have fallen into darkness and death. When the dominion of darkness and death grab hold of men, there is nothing they can do but cry. God's chosen people are of no exception.

When Lazarus died, Martha and Mary cried. The Jews who were with them also cried. Everyone cried. At this time, the Lord Jesus also cried, but not because He was overwhelmed by the power of death. He cried because the world was under the oppression of death and they helplessly

passed their days in sorrow. He prayed, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me” (John 11:41–42).

Today, the same scene appears again in this generation. All mankind is in darkness and the shadow of death. Everyday, they live in fear. For instance, the current situation in the Middle East has not only brought people darkness, but also death. If they resort to nuclear and chemical weapons, they are bringing upon themselves death. No wonder those Taiwanese who are in the war zone in the Middle East are trying all means to come back, but to no avail.

God has determined to show mercy and salvation to the people of these last days. He will destroy all the tyrants who deprive people of their rights to return home and their rights to live. He will manifest His power of resurrection and with this power He will solve the problems of darkness and death that mankind faces. Today, the salvation of men depends on how much they receive the Lord of life who gives light. This was the turning point for all creation.

Martha received the Lord warmly. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He had no place to lay His head. He could not find rest even in the holy temple, which had then become a den of thieves. The place where He liked to go and found the most comfort was the house in Bethany. This was the home of the three siblings — Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. They received the Lord Jesus with joy, Martha being the most hospitable among them.

The Bible says: “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house” (Luke 10:38). Why did Martha receive the Lord? It was because she recognized Him. Martha said to the Lord, “Yes, Lord, I believe

that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world” (John 11:27). This recognition enabled her to break through all circumstances to receive the Lord.

Today, let us also have Martha’s recognition and hospitality. When Martha received the Lord into her house, this Lord of life manifested the power of resurrection in this house, turning around the tragic fate of death of this family. Likewise today, if mankind wants to depart from the dominion of death, they must let this Lord of life have a place on earth. Mankind has not been able to untie the knot of death for thousands of years. When they encounter death, they can only cry. Today, if mankind wants a change of fate, they must have the hospitality to receive this Lord of life. If they want to receive Him, they must know Him. Like Martha, they need to recognize that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

She Served the Lord Ferently and Was Willing to be Cleansed in the Light of the Lord’s Word

Martha did not only receive the Lord, she also served Him with hospitality. In the beginning, she complained as she served because she was still immature. The Lord said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42). This reprimand from the Lord helped establish her spirit of serving. She was not discouraged after being broken. In John 12:1–2, when someone prepared a supper for the Lord, Martha went to help serve. But this time, she no longer felt troubled or anxious while serving. She had been completely delivered from her off-track condition. Now she served with a broken spirit under the molding hand of the Lord.

Martha was good in receiving and ministering others, which was a special part given by God. The Bible says: “If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies” (1 Pet. 4:11). On Mount Zion,

those sisters serving in the kitchen normally do not have a chance to attend services. But if you have the spirit of serving like Martha, you will also be filled with the Holy Spirit while you are busy working in the kitchen, and you will also have your reward. When you are busy ministering others, you receive the Lord into your heart. But we are often too extreme: We either serve with an over-worried and troubled heart, or we serve indifferently, without the spirit of serving. This is what we need to improve and learn on. When we serve willingly and happily, the Lord will be satisfied and those who are being served will also be satisfied. If our spirit of serving has not undergone God's molding and breaking, and the purification of the cross, those who are served by us will feel very uneasy and bitter.

The spirit of serving has to be in the light of the Lord's word, and that is the spirit of Mary. If your spirit is before the Lord, you will serve naturally and willingly, and those who are being served will feel comfortable and happy. They will not feel any pressure, or feel indebted to you. If our serving makes people feel indebted to us, it proves that our spirit of serving is not pure and abundant enough. We must remember that all our servings are done on the Lord. If we want to gain a reward, gain it from the Lord and not from men.

Through Faith, She Let the Lord Manifest His Power of Resurrection

Because Martha showed warm hospitality to the Lord, the Lord manifested His power of resurrection in her family. And because this family received the Lord of life, the testimony of *life devouring death* was manifested from this family. Today, the world does not receive the Lord, but we do. The New Testament Church is the house of Bethany. If we receive the Lord, who is the Life and the Resurrection, He will manifest His power of resurrection among us. Many people say that they want to receive the Lord. But do they really mean what they say? Let's see if the testimony of resurrection is obvious on them, and if the risen Lord can manifest His power in them. From these, we will know whether they really receive the

Lord or not.

The house of Bethany truly received and served the Lord. For this reason, the risen Lord could manifest His power in this house. Today, the glorious New Testament Church and holy Mount Zion chosen by God also receive and serve the Lord. The more abundant our spirit of receiving the Lord is, the more glorious the life of resurrection in us will be, and the more we will draw people. When the Lord's power of resurrection is manifested through us, we will be able to solve the problems that mankind cannot solve and untie the knots that the world cannot untie.

After receiving the Lord into her house, how did Martha let the Lord manifest His power of resurrection? At first, she complained a lot due to lack of experience. The Lord Jesus arrived at her house only four days after Lazarus died and was buried. Martha said to Him: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Then she said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." At the tomb, again she said, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." All her statements were negative. But Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" He meant to say, "No, Lazarus shall rise again not only at the last day. I am the resurrection. When I come, resurrection comes. It is not in the future but now." Then Martha believed with a simple heart. She was so quick to believe in the word of the Lord. True enough, because of her faith, she saw the glory of God. Through faith, the Lord's power of resurrection was manifested in her house.

Martha's recognition towards this Lord of life was not just in theory, but also through abundant life experience. In order to let her experience His power of resurrection, the Lord allowed her brother to fall sick and die. Her faith in the Lord was put to the test again and again: from her brother becoming sick to his death and burial. Finally, she experienced the Lord's resurrection and came to know this Lord of life. As a result, this

family served the Lord liberally, and the Lord could find rest in this house.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord wants to gain the testimony of the house of Bethany. He also wants to gain vessels like Martha, who are hospitable, bright and willing to be sanctified by the Lord's word in the light, and whose faith grows in repeated trials. May the Lord be gracious to us, and turn every one of our families into the family of Bethany. Amen!



Mary



Mary (1)

(February 2, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Wang Su-yi during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

In the Bible, Mary of Bethany is a very well-known figure. She was most remembered by the Lord for anointing Him with fragrant oil. *Bethany* means the house of figs. A fig tree bears fruit without flowers. This indicates that Bethany was without impressive appearance but it had the reality of life. The name *Mary* has two meanings; one is “to rebel” and the other is “to suffer.” At first, I did not understand why it had the meaning of “rebel.” Later, I realized that Mary of Bethany used to be a sinner. Before she knew the Lord, she rebelled against God. It was only after she found the salvation of the Lord that she became an obedient child of God.

From Luke 7:36–50, although Mary’s name was not mentioned, it is obvious that it refers to her. She was a sinner and a woman whom people despised and disliked. Even she herself did not dare to face the Lord Jesus. While others were eating with the Lord at the table, Mary stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with fragrant oil. This story touches me a lot.

Mary of Bethany was a grateful person who recognized God’s grace. She was a sinner but became a woman who found great grace. She poured out all she had on the Lord. She did all that she could, and she did it in secret, because she felt deeply unworthy. Though people criticized her, the Lord remembered her. Not only was she recorded many times in the Bible, the Lord even spoke especially for her, “Now, I assure you that wherever the gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Mark 14:9, *GNB*). What Mary of Bethany did had earned her a good reputation and others’ remembrance for all times to

come.

The story of Mary reminds me of God's maidservant Sis. Kong. Thanks be to the Lord that by His mercy, I started to correspond with her as early as January 1963. At that time, she was writing *A Living Testimony to the Truth* in seclusion and she asked me to pray for the book. As soon as it was published, I read it. At that time, besides going to work, I used all my spare time reading this book. I could not put it down, and as I read it, I cried. It took me two days and three nights to finish reading it. This book shook me greatly. For I saw that the Lord Jesus was manifested vividly through Sis. Kong. A powerful beam of light shone on me and it made me feel deeply ashamed. Therefore, I had this wish: If I have a chance, I really want to meet Sis. Kong.

Thank the Lord. At the end of August 1965, under impossible circumstances, the Lord brought me to Soares Avenue in Hong Kong, where I met His maidservant Sis. Kong. At that time, there was already a big hole in her tongue, and she could no longer talk. But I could smell a fragrance from her. When I met Sis. Kong, it was as if I had met the Lord Jesus. She had on her the Lord's righteousness, holiness, and evil-hating heart — the form of the Lord was manifested on her. At that time, the Church of Hong Kong was the house of Bethany, for it had no outward comeliness. Most of those serving with Sis. Kong were elderly sisters. They did not outward beauty, but they were filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Church of Hong Kong on Soares Avenue at that time was truly the house of Bethany, where the Lord Jesus could enjoy rest.

Another meaning of Mary is "to suffer." When we come to the subject of suffering for the Lord, it was very obvious on God's maidservant Sis. Kong. Due to God's mercy, I had a chance to be with Sis. Kong for twenty-seven days. I stayed at Soares Avenue in Hong Kong for twenty days, and when she was commissioned to Taiwan, I served at her side for seven days. During those days, she left me a deep impression: She daily offered

herself as a living sacrifice to God, and she glorified God in the midst of the fire. It is hard for others to understand the pain she was going through.

Tongue cancer is a very tormenting and dreadful disease. According to the doctors, victims at such a serious stage would die in half a year. But God's maidservant Sis. Kong was an exception. From the time she discovered the disease in March 1965, to the day she rested in the Lord on August 17, 1966, she lived a total of 17 months. You can imagine how much Sis. Kong suffered!

I remember one night while I was at the Church of Hong Kong on Soares Avenue, all the co-workers got out of bed and knelt by Sis. Kong's bedside, surrounding her to pray earnestly for her. Sis. Kong was tossing and turning on her bed in great pain. It was so heart-wrenching to see this. After praying for a while, Sis. Kong passed a note to the co-workers which said: "Like fire burning, like salt piercing, like nail drilling," to describe the pain in her tongue. Also on it she wrote, "May the Lord add me perseverance and protect His testimony."

While suffering unbearable pain in the flesh, she did not ask the Lord to lessen her agony. Instead, she only asked that the Lord to add her perseverance. She was afraid that because of her natural weakness, she might murmur against God and fall short of Him, so she asked the Lord to protect His testimony. Therefore, God's maidservant Sis. Kong was truly a witness who suffered for the Lord. At that time, all her open letters to the saints in all the world would be signed off with this phrase: "Sis. Kong, the little maidservant who suffers for the Lord." Therefore, when I read about Mary of Bethany, I thought of God's maidservant Sis. Kong. Although she returned to the heavenly home twenty-five years ago, the testimony she displayed in the universe will be remembered for all times to come.

Luke 10:39 says that when the Lord Jesus came to Bethany, Martha

received Him into her house. Mary sat at the Lord's feet to listen to His word, and because of this she was praised by Him. In verse 42, the Lord said, "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Although Martha received the Lord very warmly and diligently, she was not praised by the Lord. Instead, the Lord praised Mary as having chosen the good part, which would not be taken away from her. Why? It was because Mary cherished the Lord and His word. She knew that the Lord would not come to their house often. And so, when the Lord came to their house, she sat at the Lord's feet to hear Him speak. Mary touched the heart of the Lord and was praised by Him.

Speaking of this, I am reminded of God's maidservant Sis. Kong again. I remember when I went to Hong Kong to see her, the large Bible she used was worn out. What astonished me most was that all the margins and blank spaces on every page of the Bible were filled with her notes. These words were her revelations and enlightenments. From her Bible, we can see that Sis. Kong was someone who cherished the Lord and His words (the Bible). Therefore, it was not by coincidence that God chose her and entrusted her the great work of revival in the last days.

Here, I would like to share some of God's mercy and salvation on me. I learned from my mother that I was born prematurely and weighed only four pounds at birth. Therefore, I had poor health and often needed medications. I was so weak that I fainted several times. I felt that living on earth was very bitter. Due to the circumstances, I learned how to smoke when I was six. I smoked everyday and was addicted. But thank the Lord because His salvation came upon me when I was seven. I was born again and saved. Since then I was freed from the bad habit of smoking. Ever since I accepted the Lord, I no longer feared death.

In September 1954, I was in a dilemma and did not know how to live on. Alone, I knelt before the Lord, poured out my heart to Him, and asked Him to guide my way. At that very moment, the Lord appeared to me and

said, “I want you to serve Me *only*.” He said the word *only* with emphasis. I understood in the spirit that *only* meant that I should completely offer up my spirit, soul and body, and serve the Lord as a virgin until He comes. I was startled at that moment and said to the Lord, “May You help me and add me grace.”

As soon as I finished praying this, I felt heat flowing from head to toe and emanating from my body. And so, I deeply believed that the Lord had answered my prayer. I was so full of shortcomings and weaknesses, yet I was called and chosen by the Lord. I really do not understand why the Lord loves me so much. So when the Lord’s servant Bro. Hong asked me to discuss Mary of Bethany this time, I had a deep wish in me: I want to imitate Mary of Bethany and God’s maidservant Sis. Kong to offer up without any reservation.

Mary (2)

(February 6, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

If we can do something that causes the Lord to praise us saying, “You have done a good work,” then we will be so blessed. We have done many things in our lives, but how many of them can be praised by the Lord? If what we do can be praised by the Lord, then our life, work, and ministration will be full of meaning and value. If not, we have been busy in vain.

Today, we work and strive to gain the Lord's praise, acceptance and remembrance. Mary had done such a good work which made the Lord so delighted and satisfied that He said, “Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” This work of Mary was so good that those who preach the gospel in the whole world will mention it.

She Recognized that She Was Not Worthy to Find Grace and the Lord Was Worthy to Gain Man's All

From the good work Mary did, we know what the Lord was talking about when He said “this gospel.” According to our understanding, the gospel is the Lord Jesus Himself. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is the gospel of the Son of God. This gospel is to let people know that Jesus is the Son of God, the true God and Savior. But if you ask Mary: What gospel have you received? I believe that her feeling would have been very special.

Many people have gained the Lord Jesus and His salvation, but the Jesus in Mary's heart was probably different from that of others. She felt that she was not worthy to offer up her all to the Lord Jesus, and that He was more than worthy to gain her all. Brothers and sisters, the gospel does

not only tell people that the Lord Jesus is their all, it also tells people that the Lord Jesus deserves their all. How do we know that the Lord Jesus deserves all things and man's all? These are no theories, but life realities. Why was Mary willing to pour such costly oil of spikenard on the Lord Jesus? Why did she feel it worthwhile to offer up all in this way to the Lord Jesus? The answer is that Mary knew she was not worthy to receive the Lord's grace.

She Knew She Owed the Debt of Sin, which She Couldn't Pay

According to the Bible, Mary anointed the Lord with fragrant oil twice. "A man named Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, became sick. Bethany was the town where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (This Mary was the one who poured the perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.)" (John 11:1-2, *GNB*). The Bible does not give a clear record of the first time Mary anointed the Lord with fragrant oil. However, the second time, which happened on the eve of the Passover, is recorded in more detail. Some people say that first time could have been in Luke chapter seven, and that the woman who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil was Mary. However, others disagree. Let us not argue over whether it was her or not, for we are only emphasizing on the principle of life.

According to Mary, she was a sinner who deserved death. The meaning of her name, Mary, was "betrayer." A sinner or a betrayer like her did not deserve God's grace. Therefore, the first time she anointed the Lord with fragrant oil, she did it in fear. She stood behind the Lord Jesus with an alabaster flask, wanting to pour the fragrant oil on the Lord. But she was so afraid that she kept weeping at the His feet. Why did she cry? Because she knew that He would be the One who would shed blood and die for her, who would deliver her from the punishment of sin. She also knew that she owed the debt of sin, which she couldn't pay. The oppression of sins upon her was so heavy that she could barely breathe. She was unable

to get rid of this yoke of sins. She desperately needed the grace of forgiveness. And so, she wept till her tears wet the Lord's feet. What was such weeping made of? Only those who know their own true nature or who are greatly illuminated by the Holy Spirit can know. I think the tears were composed of sorrow, remorse, self-hatred, and so much more, which every one of us must personally experience with our own lives to know.

She Did Not Give Up on Herself but Contritely Asked for the Lord's Forgiveness

Mary wet the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. At that moment, she was very nervous as she watched to see how the Lord Jesus would respond. She could have been thinking: "A woman's hair is her glory, but He is a holy Lord and I am a sinful woman. My tears are filthy and even my hair is sinful. I have wet the feet of this holy Lord with my filthy tears, and He does not kick me away. So I will try to wipe His feet with my sinful hair, kiss His feet, and anoint them with the fragrant oil and see whether the Lord will accept or not."

Mary was doubtful about whether what she was doing would be accepted. But the Lord Jesus saw everything — He saw her fear, earnestness, sorrow, repentance, and her whole heart. This encouraged and comforted her greatly, so she willingly poured all her love on the Lord Jesus. This was her feeling when she broke the alabaster jar and anointed the Lord the second time. The Lord examined her heart and was pleased. He said to her, "Your faith has saved you. Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." Mary, this greater sinner and betrayer, gained the forgiveness of the Lord! The Lord did not reject her. The forgiveness she received was so great!

While the Lord Jesus forgave Mary, He severely reprimanded Simon. This Simon was a leper according to Matthew 26:6. As a leper, he was unclean, and yet so self-righteous. He felt that he was worthy to invite the Lord Jesus to eat at his house. When he saw Mary do the good work, he could not approve of it. He criticized the Lord Jesus in his heart, "If this

man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is — she is a sinner.” He seemed brighter than the Lord Jesus!

The Lord responded solemnly to this self-righteous man who was dark in the spirit: “ ‘Simon, I have something to say to you... There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’ ” Then Lord Jesus reprimanded him with his own word, saying, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little” (Luke 7:40–47).

Brothers and sisters, all are forgiven in the same way, but some are forgiven many and some little. Is it that some people have fewer sins and do not need so much of the forgiveness of the Lord? Was it that Simon had less filth than Mary? Was it that Simon had fewer shortcomings than Mary? Was Simon really better than Mary? No! In fact, Simon was in greater darkness than Mary. He was not as enlightened as her. Simon did not know himself as well as Mary knew herself. So he was not better, but worse.

Mary received more forgiveness than anyone else because she had light. She felt very sorrowful and remorseful of the sins she committed. Therefore, she came before this holy Lord in lowliness and fear. On the other hand, she was not dismayed at her own weakness. Instead, she came to

the Lord for forgiveness. This is also one of Mary's special traits. Many a time, we are self-confident and self-righteous like Simon. We feel that we are worthy, capable, and good in everything. As a result, we come to the Lord with pride. Otherwise, we go to the other extreme: we are negative, pessimistic, disappointed and dismayed. We even give up on ourselves and are prepared to go to the Lake of Fire! Mary was not so. She knew that she was corrupted, but she was not discouraged. She knew that she could not save herself, but the Lord Jesus could, so she came to Him with her weaknesses and wretchedness. The Lord forgave her and accepted her serving, so she had the chance to pour out her love upon the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, we are all debtors before the Lord. It will be fine if we can pay the debt of sin. But if we cannot pay the debt of sin, then it would become a heavy load upon us. We need to be forgiven very badly. Who can forgive us? The Lord Jesus! Only the One who died for me and bore my sins can forgive me of my sins and pay my debt of sin. With this recognition, we will naturally have real love for the Lord. This is what "more forgiveness brings more love" is all about. When a person is forgiven, his gratitude of love (or his love from gratitude) is real, because it comes from his life.

Mary broke an alabaster flask and poured the fragrant oil on the Lord because she recognized her own true nature and also what the Lord had done for her. She recognized that this was the Lord who solved her problems and the Lord who bore her debt of sin. She was bound to die, but she found the mercy of the Lord, who had paid her debt of sin and delivered her from death. Therefore, she considered the Lord the most precious and the value of her life. She felt that it was worthwhile and only right to pour her everything on the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, why do we fail to love the Lord? It is because we don't feel that the Lord loves us. We don't feel that we have gained much from the Lord. The more sins and shortcomings we have, the more for-

giveness we will receive, and the more love and gratitude towards the Lord we will definitely have. Originally, we were bound to die, but we have been forgiven. Therefore, all our remaining years are the result of His grace. If these days are not offered to the Lord, to whom shall they be offered? Once, a slave was freed after he was purchased by his master. But instead of leaving his master, he willingly stayed to serve him. This is a story of love — a story that stems from the forgiveness of sins.

I repeat: We are all debtors before God. Just as we are, we have nothing good to display. And according to our natural man, we are incapable of doing anything for the Lord and are unworthy to do anything for Him. We are only worthy to be judged and go to the Lake of Fire. But the Lord loves us. He died for us on the cross and delivered us from death. For this reason, we have become the slaves of His love. This grace, which was given to us freely, causes us to offer our all. This is the story of the Lord's love. This is also a natural manifestation of one who enjoys the Lord's love. So, we do not have to worry about how corrupt and wicked we are. We only worry that we do not have enough light to recognize our true nature, and that we do not know how to come before this loving Lord. Someone who never feels that he has shortcomings will never feel that he needs forgiveness. Therefore, it is hard for a "good person" to find grace. It is hard for him to offer up truthfully like Mary.

I often see that some of God's children are so "good" that they fail to find grace. Their natural beauty hinders them from finding grace. They are so good that they do not feel that they have any shortcoming, nor do they feel the need for forgiveness. So, they cannot find grace. However, some people, who have been broken by various unfavorable circumstances and look bad, find grace.

In the process of my serving the Lord, there is a type of people whom I find hard to serve. They are those who have a lot of natural virtues. A person with many natural virtues feels that he knows a lot. He knows

what to do, and is confident that he can do it. Therefore, he doesn't like others to care about him, or give him ideas. Naturally, it is hard for him to accept God's words. Therefore, sometimes I can only pray and ask the Lord to add afflictions and setbacks to such a vessel according to His choice, so that he will be brought to a helpless stage, causing his natural virtues to be stripped away and his natural strength to be used up. Only at this time will the Lord have a position in him.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord needs to gain all kinds of useful vessels in His house. To become His vessels, they must be equipped by the grace of the Lord. And before they can be equipped, they must recognize their natural man. Mary recognized her true nature. Therefore, she did not dare to boast of anything before the Lord. She recognized that the Lord was her only Savior. Without the Lord, she had no salvation. Such recognition caused her to pour out her all on the Lord.

She Offered Up Her All to the Lord without Reservation

Mary recognized her true nature. She also knew that the One who was going to die for her was her gracious Lord and Savior. She knew whom she should love, and what she should love. Therefore she chose that good part. She knew what she needed — the Lord who shed His blood and sacrificed His life to save her. Therefore, she could not leave Him. She wanted to sit before Him and listen to His word. She wanted to pile all she had on Him. When she sat before the Lord, she was not being idle. Instead, her action showed how much she cherished the Lord. Before others knew that this was the Lamb of God, she had already poured out her all on Him.

Just before the Lord Jesus was crucified, Mary once again anointed the Lord with fragrant oil. This was the second time she anointed the Lord. It was six days before the Passover, and Jesus came to Bethany, where someone was preparing a supper for Him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one

of those sitting at the table with Him. Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus. She also wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

At this time, Judas the traitor blamed Mary for being too wasteful. But the Lord Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial." Mark chapter 14 says, "She has done a good work for Me... She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial." This time, Mary broke the alabaster flask and poured all the fragrant oil on the Lord Jesus for His burial. Mary knew that since a sinner like her had received such great forgiveness, her everything belonged to the Lord. This Lord who forgave her was worthy to receive her all. Therefore, she offered up without any reservation.

It was Mary's greatest joy and honor if the Lord would accept her offering. She would not feel that it was a waste. The Lord Jesus said that this was the gospel, and that this was the correct response of those who receive the gospel. All those who receive the gospel must testify thus: "This Lord who delivers me from all sins and death is worthy of my everything! O people of the world, you must know Him! Only He is worthy to save people, and only He is worthy to receive the serving and worship of all mankind."

All the problems of mankind result from their failure to recognize their own true nature. They do not recognize that they are not worthy and that the Lord is worthy. Therefore, when we preach the gospel, we proclaim: O people of the world! Before this Lord of heaven and earth, we are all sinners who deserve damnation in the Lake of Fire!

We have all fallen short of God's glory and are unworthy to come before Him. However, God has mercy and grace. His dawn of salvation has shone from on high onto all the earth, to save those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.

So, people of the world, you must turn around! Like Mary, come to the Savior with your corruption, filthiness and weaknesses! Come to the Savior with remorse and fear, with a trembling spirit of not knowing whether the Lord will accept you! Don't come before the Lord with self-righteousness and arrogance. The Lord will examine and accept you. He hates sins, but He always loves sinners. Sinners should grieve and repent of their sins, but not be dismayed because of them.

People of the world! Why was there a person named Jesus on earth? It is because the Father is full of love. Thus, He sent His Son (the Word that became flesh) to come to the earth to die on the cross for the world and to bear the sins of all mankind. This is the gospel. People of the world! We are all sinners. We have fallen short of the glory of God. Saddam is a sinner, and so are Bush and Gorbachev. Nobody is an exception.

What should we do when we have sins? The Lord reveals our sins, not to destroy us, but to save us. So, we shouldn't be conceited nor should we be dismayed. Instead, we should come before the Lord with our true nature. The blood of the Lord will cleanse us of our sins. The heavier our sins are, the more forgiveness we will receive. We will also love the Lord more, and we will all the more feel that the Lord is worthy to have all that we have.

The Lord Was the Bag of Myrrh that Lied in Her Bosom

Brothers and sisters, may the Lord be gracious to us according to His choice on us. May the grace which came upon Mary also come upon us, so that we can recognize our rebellious nature, and also recognize that the love of the Lord is like fragrant oil that has been poured out. Then, we can be like Mary who offered up completely. Hymn 11 expresses such feeling very well. The second stanza of this hymn says, "Thou art the rose of Sharon, lily of the valleys; a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi. O Lord, o my Beloved, Thou art truly lovely. O Lord, Thou art a bag of

myrrh that lies in my bosom.” Myrrh produces fragrance only after it is crushed. The Lord Jesus was crushed for our sins and produced a fragrance — the fragrance of forgiveness. This is the love of the Lord who suffered death for us. May this love always be like a bag of myrrh in our bosom, so that we will be fast in following Him.



Lazarus



Lazarus (1)

(February 11, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Bro. Joseph during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Today, we will talk about Lazarus, the youngest of the three siblings of a family in Bethany. Let's read the following passages of the Bible:

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

(John 11:1–7)

And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed.

(John 10:40)

It is mentioned that Lazarus was loved by the Lord. When he was sick, his two sisters sent for Jesus immediately. At that time, Jesus was very far away from Bethany. He could be 200 kilometers away if the distance is measured in a straight line. They sent people to inform the Lord, saying, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." This sickness must have been very severe for them to send people from that far away. But when Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." It seemed that Jesus was not very concerned. Actually, it was not so. Jesus knew that his

sickness was for the glory of God. You can even say that Lazarus fell sick in God's will.

The Bible says, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was." The Lord's response was just the opposite of those who had rushed to bring this news to Him. He did not seem to understand how anxious Martha and Mary were, nor did He respond in a way one should have towards his loved one.

Brothers and sisters, it was really hard for others to understand why Jesus stayed two more days in the place where He was. It was really trying to all those who learned about this. Even His disciples thought that His actions and words were strange. But the Lord Jesus said, "I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe." Why did He say this? It was because the Lord Jesus wanted to do great things, so that His disciples, especially Thomas, would all the more recognize and believe in Him.

By the time the Lord Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. The first feeling and response of Martha and Mary was, "O Lord, it's too late! You came too late. We've already put Lazarus in the tomb. It's hopeless now." But Jesus assured them, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Martha's faith towards these words of the Lord was, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She believed that Lazarus would rise, but not now. Mary was the same. Lazarus' death revealed what level of faith people had in the Lord Jesus.

When Mary saw Jesus, she wept. The Jews also wept. When the Lord saw that scene, the Bible says, "Jesus wept." However, the Lord Jesus did not cry for the same reasons. They wept because they were sad and in

despair, while the Lord wept because He saw their disbelief and ignorance. The Lord told them plainly, "I am the life, I am the resurrection, and I have the power of resurrection." The Lord Jesus wanted to do something great and glorious so that they would believe that He was the Son of God and the Christ. Nevertheless, they did not believe.

Then, Jesus came to the tomb and told the people to roll away the stone. He lifted up His eyes, prayed to the Father, and then cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And the dead man did! How amazing! Something that everyone thought would only happen at the last day took place before their eyes. The sickness was truly not unto death, but for the glory of God. They did not have to wait till the last day to see the glory. It was fully manifested that very day.

The resurrection of Lazarus caused turmoil among the people. There were two different kinds of responses towards this matter. Some people (the Jews) came to see the Lord Jesus, and Lazarus, the one who was raised from the dead. When they saw this living testimony, they believed in Jesus. The Pharisees and the chief priests, on the other hand, plotted to put Lazarus to death together with Jesus, because many of the Jews believed in Jesus after seeing the resurrection of Lazarus. From then on, Lazarus, who testified to the Lord's resurrection, had to share the fate of the Lord Jesus. Wasn't it strange? However, although the chief priests wanted to kill the Lord, the power of resurrection had already been manifested, and the Lord of resurrection had been revealed.

Soon after Lazarus was raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus rode on a donkey's colt to Jerusalem. When He entered Jerusalem, the multitude cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!" In The gospel of Mark, it is even mentioned, "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David!" The Lord Jesus said that Lazarus' sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified through it. These words of the Lord had been

fulfilled when He entered Jerusalem. At that time, the name of God was indeed glorified, and God's sovereignty and kingdom manifested.

Today, the glorious New Testament Church and holy Mount Zion have also experienced the resurrection of Lazarus in many aspects. The most obvious example is the time when God allowed Mount Zion to be plundered, and when the New Testament Church was on the verge of destruction. When the unprecedented persecution came upon us, even our existence on earth could be a crime. Many people told us, "There is no hope for you. Don't think about returning to Zion. It's impossible." It was true. Years had gone by and we still did not know when we would be able to return to Zion. Even so, we firmly believed in the words of the prophet, who said, "God will bring back the captivity of Jacob's tents." During our days of wandering, we would say to each other in faith, "See you on Zion!"

One day, someone came and said to Bro Liu, "The authorities want you to process your resident registration now. You may return to Mount Zion!" Hallelujah! Lazarus had come back to life! Now, tour buses come up to Zion everyday one after another. What do they come to see? They come to see the New Testament Church that can never be destroyed! They come to see the unshakable kingdom! This is the risen Lazarus of today! Not only that, God also moved His servant to proclaim on Mount Zion, "God's kingdom has begun; God's kingdom is realized!" According to the Christendom, the manifestation of God's kingdom is something that will happen in the future, not at the present time. However, through the testimony that we display on Mount Zion, people see God's kingdom. Through the New Testament Church, God's kingdom has been concretely revealed in the universe. Hallelujah!

There is something wonderful. From the portion of the Bible that we read just now, we learned that Lazarus did not say a single word throughout the whole course of events. All he did was obey God's arrangement, and the dynamic testimony of resurrection was demonstrated on him.

This miracle drew many people to come see the Lord who raised the dead, and Lazarus, who rose from the dead. After he rose from the dead, he also did not say a single word. This was a special characteristic of Lazarus. All he had to do was show himself to others. And many believed in the Lord Jesus when they saw him. Nevertheless, the chief priests became anxious and the human kingdom began to waver.

Today, the testimony of resurrection demonstrated by the glorious New Testament Church and holy Mount Zion has also become the focus of attention in this generation. Everyone wants to have a look; some have come before and feel that it's not enough, so they come a second time. Some have come to see us seven or eight times, and others even come over a dozen times. After seeing our testimony, they all render glory to the God of the New Testament Church, the Great King of Zion. When they come, they see God's kingdom, a kingdom set apart from all others.

Very often, when the Gentiles come to Zion, they would be stopped at the police checkpoint at the foot of the mountain. The police would ask them, "Did you apply for a mountain entry pass?" The Gentiles would answer, "No sir, the people of Zion told us we don't need one to go up there." The police would then respond, "But you are not one of them, for they belong to a separate nation." Not only do the police say so, even those who formerly opposed and persecuted us have also said, "Mount Zion is a separate kingdom." The testimony we display on Zion is *the resurrection of Lazarus*.

After Lazarus was raised to life, many people believed in Jesus on account of him. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves: "You see that you (the chief priests) are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him (the Lord Jesus)!" (See John 12:19.) They wanted to kill Jesus and Lazarus, but the news about Lazarus' resurrection had spread far and wide. The whole world had gone after Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! Hosanna!" "Hosanna" is an exclamation in praise of God. It also

means “save us now.” In fact, these people were not only shouting praises to God, they also had an earnest plea, “Save us now with the power with which You saved Lazarus!”

Today many people who come up to Mount Zion will shout “Hallelujah!” Some tourists shout “Hallelujah” when they are panting for breath while walking up the pilgrimage steps. When they shout “Hallelujah,” not only are they praising God, they are pleading also from the bottom of their hearts, “O God, who saved the people of Zion, and brought them back from captivity, also save us now!” This is the glorious testimony of the resurrection of Lazarus.

The name *Lazarus* means *the one helped by God*. But its other meaning is *the one without help*. This is really strange. Since it means *the one helped by God*, why does it also mean *the one without help*? To be exact, God helps those who are without help in the world. When Lazarus was critically ill, no doctors could help him. His sisters who loved him also could not help him, and so they went to look for Jesus. Lazarus was helped by God. Just as former Prime Minister of Israel, Begin, said, “When Israel is in danger, nobody can assure the safety of Israel other than the God of Israel.” This principle applies even more explicitly to the spiritual Israel. When the New Testament Church encountered unprecedented persecution, did anyone come to help us? No. But the New Testament Church is helped by God. This is another testimony of the resurrection of Lazarus.

In these last days, God has appointed us as the latter-day Elijah. The ministry we assume is similar to that which the Lord Jesus assumed before the tomb of Lazarus. He called Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Today, the entire generation is like a huge tomb, in which the people of this world are trapped. They are lost and hopeless. But the latter-day Elijah has come. He will dispel the dark clouds for this generation so that they can see the dawn from on high, and that their feet will be guided into the way of peace. Like Lazarus, they will come out of the tomb, experience the power

of resurrection, and enjoy the goodness of God's kingdom.

In the past, the Lord manifested the power of resurrection not only for Lazarus and his family, but also for the people of that entire era. Today, God manifests the power of resurrection not only for the people of Zion and the New Testament Church, but also for all the people of this latter era. He wants them to know that the latter-day Elijah has come and that God's kingdom is realized. All nations, come, see and also believe! When the Jews saw Lazarus, they believed in Jesus. Today, when people see Mount Zion, they will also believe that we are the latter-day Elijah who will restore all things and bring in God's kingdom.

Lazarus and his resurrection were worth seeing. In fact, the more people saw him, the more glory they saw. The Hamite brother who came to Mount Zion said, "When I come here, you don't have to tell me anything. I can see with my own eyes that you are the latter-day Elijah appointed by God." Hallelujah! Today, the New Testament Church — the holy Mount Zion that manifests Christ's power of resurrection, is also seen by all nations. When they come to see Zion they will also testify to us saying, "You don't have to say anything. We can see with our eyes that God's kingdom has been realized!" We render glory to God. When the latter-day Elijah is sent into all the world, may we carry the power of resurrection to roll away the big stone that blocks the entrance of the big tomb. All the dominion of the evil human kingdoms and of the tyrants and despots shall be "rolled away" so that Lazarus of today will come out and God's name be glorified. Amen!

Lazarus (2)

(February 12, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

He Was Willing to Fall Sick, Die, Be Buried, and Even to Rot so as to Manifest the Lord's Resurrection

At the mention of Lazarus, we are reminded of resurrection. That's why some people like to name themselves Lazarus. When the Lord Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, God was glorified and so was the Son of God. Therefore, Lazarus died for the glory of God and the glory of the Son of God. As God's children, the purpose, significance and value of our lives is to glorify God. Paul said, "Christ will be magnified in my body (with my whole being I shall bring honor to Christ), whether by life or by death." This is also the testimony of Lazarus.

It is interesting to note that in the Bible, we don't see Lazarus say a word or do a thing. However, he played an indispensable role in the house of Bethany, which symbolizes the church. The acts of the three siblings, namely Martha, Mary and Lazarus, are the manifestation of the church that satisfies God. This house had abundantly manifested the Lord of life, which is the Lord of the resurrection. The three siblings coordinated as a congregation. None of them was indispensable. This is the characteristic of the house of Bethany, and this is also the testimony that the church should have. Each of the three siblings had a role to play, and they coordinated harmoniously and closely with one another. This testimony satisfied the Lord, glorified His name, and manifested His power. We should learn from them.

Speaking of Lazarus, it is really not easy to play his role. He did not say a word nor do a thing. All he did was fall sick. The Lord Jesus did not come to heal him and so he died. Then he was buried and began to stink.

Throughout his life, whether he fell sick, died, was buried or smelled bad, he was always in silence. Serving the Lord this way is hard to endure. However, if we want to experience the Lord's resurrection and manifest His power of resurrection, our natural old man must go through sickness, death, burial and rotting. Man, by nature (the old man), have to go through this process whether or not he loves the Lord.

People often have a misconception that those who don't love the Lord will have problems, and that those who do love the Lord will not have any. They also think that those who aren't loved by the Lord will have problems, and that those loved by Him will not have any. This concept derives from natural man's piety, and his notion of good and evil, reward and punishment. In fact, which man is perfect by nature? Despite being loved by the Lord, Lazarus also had illnesses. Sometimes, we even discover that the more we want to love the Lord, the weaker we become. The more we pursue holiness, the less holy we become. The more we wish to overcome, the more we fail. The more we want to stand fast, the more we stumble. What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? We truly experience the condition of Romans chapter seven.

In short, those who love the Lord and are loved by the Lord will not always have an easy life. They are not always strong and holy. One day they can also become sick. Once they are sick, all kinds of irregular and off-track conditions will begin to appear. However, as the Lord says, this kind of sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified. This is the surpassing hand of God.

Lazarus had to fall sick, or the Lord would not have gained glory. Why? It is because God wants people to know that all natural men will have illnesses and problems, and that they cannot free themselves from the trouble of sicknesses. When the one loved by the Lord gets sick, he will recognize his own weak nature and he will experience the Lord's power.

When Lazarus fell sick, Martha sent people to look for Jesus. She did the right thing, but the Lord delayed in coming.

Poor Lazarus became so sick that he died. It was a hard test, but it was a necessary process in order to glorify the Lord. Actually, the Lord Jesus had already foretold the outcome of this sickness, that it would not be unto death. However, Lazarus died. And the Lord said Lazarus had fallen asleep and that He would go to wake him up! The Lord did all this in order to gain complete glory in Lazarus according to His plan. Therefore, He had to let Lazarus die first so as to shatter the concept and hope of the natural man.

The Lord's plan was not to heal Lazarus, but to bring him back from the dead. It is not easy to pass such a test of faith. But Lazarus was chosen to play this role. If you were Lazarus, would you not be anxious? Would you not complain? Would you not doubt the love of the Lord? Many a time, when we cannot find answers to our problems, we would start questioning the Lord.

Martha and Mary might have remembered how the Lord Jesus had brought two people back to life: One who had just died (the little girl as mentioned in Matthew 9) and the other, who was at the point of death. But in Lazarus' case, the Lord came only after he was buried. No wonder Martha complained, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." However, the Lord Jesus had already said before, "I am glad that I was not there." The Lord stayed away on purpose so that Lazarus might die, and then He was glad. What? He was glad?! Would you be able to accept such words? Brothers and sisters, the Lord's leading is always so wonderful! Do you want to testify to the Lord's resurrection? Do you want to glorify the Lord? If you do, these kinds of trials will often befall you.

At that time, Lazarus already had a stench. How could the Lord Jesus be glorified through him? If he had just died, there might be some traces

of hope. But he had been dead for several days, and began to stink and decompose. At this stage, Lazarus had no more feelings and was in utter darkness. He was ugly, scary and horrifying! Why would someone who loved the Lord and whom the Lord loved, fall into such a hopeless state? No natural man can answer this question, and no one knows why it would turn out that way.

Now we understand that if no one had died, the Lord would not have been able to manifest the power of His resurrection. Therefore, in order to manifest this power, the Lord chose Lazarus whom He loved, and allowed him to die, rot, and to reek. The Lord brought him to the point of hopelessness and despair, and then gave him a surprising hope! It seems easy for us to narrate the whole incident today, but it is not easy to go through it ourselves. Although Martha and Mary complained to the Lord Jesus, they still feared Him. If we were in their shoes, we could have said, "Look, what's the use of coming now? Forget it!" We might even drive the Lord Jesus out of the house. Therefore, we should not study the story of the house of Bethany as a theory, but experience it with our life.

The beauties, perfections and strengths of the natural man are all worthless. In the Lord's eyes, they are corruptible and cannot withstand the test of death. Once death strikes, everything will be gone. The natural man is so fragile that he cannot withstand trials. The Lord let Lazarus play this role of dying because He wanted to reveal how weak, imperfect and helpless man is by nature. The Lord wants people to have a perfect knowledge of the natural man, so that they will no longer believe in themselves, but in the Lord who raises the dead.

The Bible says that Lazarus was the one *who was sick*. He was also known as the one *who was dead*. (See John 11:39.) The natural man is best described as *sick* and *dead*. When a man dies, what is there for him to boast of? There is a Taiwanese saying that goes, "It is better to be a living beggar than to be a dead king." Therefore, before God could gain glory in Lazarus,

He had to first reveal all of his ugliness, weaknesses, imperfections, incompetence, and helplessness. God had to work until people lost hope in him, and until he also lost hope in himself.

Brothers and sisters, have you ever been brought to a point as hopeless as death? Have you ever experienced losing hope in yourself and others also losing hope in you? This is a profound experience and I know what I am saying. I hope that some day, God, in His mercy, will let you understand this matter in the spirit. When you run into a situation similar to that of Lazarus, and you can still remain firm, and can still calmly commend yourself to the Lord, then the power of His resurrection will be manifested in you and the Lord of resurrection will be glorified through you.

The testimony of resurrection can most glorify God. It gives more glory to God than the healing of sicknesses. Nevertheless, the process of experiencing the Lord's resurrection is full of tragedy, pain, ugliness, hopelessness and fear. However, after someone who loves the Lord and who is loved by the Lord has gone through restructuring and his natural man been brought to the point of death, the power of the Lord's resurrection will be manifested. After Lazarus was brought back to life, he testified gloriously for the Lord. He did not have to say or do anything; his appearance before everyone was already a glorious testimony.

At the supper that others prepared for the Lord, all Lazarus had to do was to sit quietly at the table and God's name was glorified through him. He spoke by keeping quiet, and worked by doing nothing. Actually, he had been speaking and working continuously. This is the wonderful testimony of resurrection. Speaking in this way is tremendous, and working in this way is powerful. As it is written in Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." How can there be a declaration when there is no speech nor language, and where their voice is not

heard? However, God's glory and handiwork are declared without speech or language. This is the testimony of Lazarus.

By sitting there quietly, Lazarus testified gloriously to the power of the Lord's resurrection. This is the testimony of life. The power of sickness and death, hell and tomb, which once had dominion over Lazarus, had vanished. What was seen in him was the life of resurrection. Such a life has immunity to sicknesses and death. In other words, this life of resurrection is a powerful antibody to counteract diseases, and even death. The dominion of sickness and death is no longer a threat to Lazarus. It has lost its grip on him. This is the testimony Lazarus demonstrated. May all the children of Jacob's house desire to have the experience of Lazarus. If we really love the Lord and if the Lord loves us, we will surely have this experience and display this testimony.

Lazarus' role in the house of Bethany was special. He did not say or do anything. When God wanted him to fall sick, die, be buried, and even to rot, he willingly accepted the Lord's training without saying a word. Brothers and sisters, everyone has his part to play in the house of God. Just be faithful to yours. You do not have to envy that of others. If the Lord wants you to testify for Him silently, then be silent. It does not matter if you do not have a chance to go up the pulpit. It does not matter if you do not have a chance to be heard and seen.

In the house of Bethany, every one played his part faithfully: those who should speak, spoke; those who should be silent, kept quiet; those who should work, worked, and those who should move, moved. This kind of ministration is most beautiful, and the testimony that it demonstrates will shake the dominion of hell. For this reason, many people believed in Jesus after seeing Lazarus' resurrection. However, those who were destined to perish plotted to kill the Lord Jesus and Lazarus. This is proof that the dominion of hell was shaken and the adversary severely threatened.

God wants us, the New Testament Church, to become today's house of Bethany, to love the Lord Jesus, gladly receive and serve Him, and to readily accept His molding. After our life has been refined and after experiencing the power of the Lord's resurrection, we will testify beautifully for the Lord of resurrection. Today, we have gone through wandering and returned to Zion. We can say that we are like Lazarus who has risen and come out of the tomb. Even if we do not proclaim that Jesus is the victorious Lord, people will naturally believe that the God of Mount Zion is the victorious Almighty One when they see how we have returned. Thank God. We render glory to the God of the New Testament Church, the God who raised Lazarus from the dead.



Mary Magdalene



Mary Magdalene (1)

(February 27, 1991 — Discussion of Co-worker Sis. Jane Chen during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Sometime ago, the Lord's servant led us to study about the mighty men of David, most of whom were brave and faithful. Recently, he has been leading us to study about the followers of the Lord like Martha and Mary of Bethany, who served the Lord with tender care and followed Him closely. Obviously, God wants to equip us with the strong aspect of having spiritual virtues, and also with the gentle aspect of having a life construction (experiencing weaknesses while learning the lessons of life.) He wants us to draw closer to Him in faith and to serve Him in the holy of holies. Thank God for His kindness. Mary Magdalene was a blessed woman who served the Lord meticulously and followed Him closely. And she was most blessed to be the first to meet the Lord after He rose from the dead. She became the first witness to the Lord's resurrection.

In the Bible, there were at least six women named Mary, and all of them found great blessings. The last one or two chapters of all the Four Gospels gave accounts of Mary Magdalene, because she was the first witness to the risen Lord. What had she done to deserve such a great and unprecedented opportunity? What virtues did she have that captured the Lord's heart and make Him appear to her first? From Mary's life-long story, we can see four unique characteristics: (1) She was saved by the Lord, who cast out seven demons from her. (2) She was a grateful person who always provided for the needs of the Lord and His disciples. (3) She was an overcomer who steadfastly acknowledged the Lord. She loved the Lord with all her heart, served Him with all her strength, and followed Him until the end. (4) Even after the Lord had died, she still followed Him closely. Due to her vigilance and seeking, she became the first witness of the Lord's resurrection.

Luke 8:1–2 says: “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities — Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons.” (*See also* Mark 16:9.) These two verses show the first time Mary experienced the Lord’s salvation. Seven (a complete number) demons were cast out of her, and she was completely freed from the bondage of Satan. Saved and liberated, she decided to follow the Lord all her life. Therefore, the life of serving the Lord naturally appeared in her.

Luke 8:2–3 says that Mary and other saints provided for the Lord and His disciples from their own substance (possession). When the Lord was preaching the gospel in Galilee, she often offered her wealth to provide for the needs of the sacred work. This is a natural act of gratitude of one when he is saved and forgiven. However, Mary Magdalene’s gratitude towards the Lord was not short-lived. In fact, she persevered in serving the Lord all the way from Galilee to Golgotha.

Matthew 27:55–56 describes what happened when Jesus was on the cross: “Many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene.” Mary followed the Lord all the way to Golgotha with the purpose of serving Him. She was prepared to offer up her part if the Lord had any need. How beautiful is this spirit of serving.

Ever since Mary Magdalene was saved, she followed the Lord closely and served Him meticulously. Even after the Lord breathed His last and was placed in the tomb, she still kept watch at the tomb. (*See* Matthew 27:61.) At that time, the authorities were arrogant and the situation was tense. Politics, religion and culture joined forces to crucify Jesus and buried Him. Pilate had even ordered soldiers to seal the stone of the tomb and set the guard. (*See* Matthew 27:62–66.)

At this moment, how many were able to stand firm against despotism? And how many would follow the Lord till the death? Mary Magdalene was one of the rare followers. She was a saved person who did not forget the Lord's grace, and was also a willing giver who served with her life. In the spirit she shared the Lord's sufferings, death and burial. Therefore, she had also become an overcomer who followed the Lord unceasingly and became the witness to His resurrection.

After the Lord Jesus was placed in the tomb, what could one do besides watching the tomb and observing how His body was laid? (See Luke 23:55.) Mary Magdalene thought of fragrant oils and spices, so she left temporarily to buy the fragrant oil. (See Luke 23:56.)

Mark 16:1 says, "Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him." Early in the morning, on the first day of the week while it was still dark, several of the women bought spices and returned to the tomb. They discovered that the big stone in front of the tomb had been rolled away. They saw an angel who looked like a young man, clothed in a long white robe and whose countenance was like lightning. And the guards shook in fear and became like dead men. The women trembled and were amazed, and they ran to tell Peter, John, and the rest of the disciples.

When the disciples went inside the tomb, all they saw were the linen clothes and the handkerchief that had been around His head. Because they did not quite understand the Scripture which prophesied that the Lord would rise again, they went away and returned to their own homes. (See Matthew 28:1–8; Mark 16:2–8; Luke 24:2–12 and John 20:1–10.) Even Mary, the mother of James, and Salome left.

The body of Jesus had disappeared, and Jesus' disciples had also left. The tomb was now empty and quiet. It was an atmosphere of death. "But Mary Magdalene stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she

stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her” (John 20:11–18).

In the section above, the most touching part is the *weeping* of Mary. Why did she weep? Mary wept because she needed the Lord. She relied on the Lord, followed the Lord, and could not do without the Lord. When she couldn’t see the Lord, she became anxious and restless. This is like a child who cannot do without his mother. Therefore, she wept, not for herself, but for the Lord. She needed the Lord as a child needs his mother. When everyone left, she still followed. Her heart and soul relied deeply on the Lord and she wept in her anxiety to seek Him. Her sincerity had not only prompted the angels to comfort her, but had also moved the Lord Jesus to appear to her first after His resurrection. When the Lord appeared to her, He called her intimately by name and she answered Him so naturally, without having any sign of fear. (Normally, people would think that they had met a ghost in such a place.) She was so overjoyed that she tried to cling to the Lord, like a child clinging to his mother. This scene was so touching!

Before the Lord headed for Golgotha, He told His disciples, “A little

while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me” (John 16:16). The disciples did not understand what He said so they asked one another about it. Then the Lord said, “Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy... Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:20,22).

We can say that Mary Magdalene was the first witness to these words of the Lord. When she did not see the Lord, she wept and lamented. After a little while, when she saw the Lord again, immediately her sorrow turned into joy. Her sadness changed to heavenly joy that nobody could ever take away. For the word of the Lord is true. The Lord has overcome the dominion of sin, death and the devil. He rose on the third day and came out of the tomb. When Mary Magdalene first saw the Lord, she went out and testified saying, “I’ve seen the Lord! I’ve seen the Lord!” Her shouts of joy shook the power of hell and defied the enemy. How tremendous! How glorious! How victorious!

When I studied about Mary Magdalene, there were two points about her that moved and enlightened me most: (1) The testimony of having seven demons come out of her. (2) The perseverance of serving the Lord and following Him till the end. Mary was completely freed from the bondage of the devil, for she had seven demons cast out of her. She was saved by grace and through faith.

The more thoroughly the demons are cast out of a person, the more steadily he will follow the Lord. Mary’s testimony reminds me if I have thoroughly dealt with all the demons in me. I had never been possessed by any kind of evil spirits, nor been bound by the demons of smoking, drinking, gambling or pornography. But I know I had countless demons in me, not just seven. Among them, the most stubborn one in me was the demon of pride.

The Lord also let me experience the power of casting out demons. That was over 10 years ago when Bro. Peter first learned how to serve the Lord at the Church of Chung-li. Once, my left eye had a problem. It hurt for over 3 months. The Lord did not seem to answer my prayer for healing. It hurt so much that I had to go to a hospital for check-up. The eye doctor couldn't tell what was wrong with it and the pain worsened by the day.

One afternoon, the Lord diagnosed my sickness through my husband, Bro. Peter, who said, "I think your eye is not healed because you have sins and demons!" I said, "What sins? What demons?" He answered, "Sin of pride and demon of arrogance!" His words were a head-on blow to me. They woke me up from my slumbering heart. I immediately knelt down and admitted that I was proud, conceited, haughty, stubborn, judgmental, and rebellious. I accepted Bro. Peter's laying on of hands and his prayer for me. He prayed to cast out the demon of sickness from me and I was healed without medication. How wonderful!

Gradually, with the help of the Lord's servant and the co-workers, I also began to walk on the path of serving the Lord. However, I still had some little demons, particularly the demon of selfishness. This demon of selfishness has a bunch of siblings and companions, such as the demons of stinginess, craftiness, jealousy, self-centeredness, ease, greed, gluttony, oversleeping, laziness... When these demons come, they come together. They cause people to care for themselves so that they won't love the Lord more. They encourage people to have many considerations and reservations on the path of serving the Lord. In this light of the Lord I feel really ashamed.

Two weeks ago the Lord's servant commented about me, saying, "Sis. Jane is too busy because she is a professor." When I learned about this, I trembled in fear. I knew I could not stand before the Lord because I still had reservations in my service. I asked the Lord to forgive me. If I love my alabaster flask so much that I refuse to offer it to the Lord, may the

Lord crush it for me.

During the offering of the evening sacrifice at the recent winter convention, my heart was once again melted by the Lord's love. I offered myself more deeply to Him, pleading with Him, to skin and cut me to pieces as He wished. May the selfish condition of "bargaining with the Lord" as stated in hymn 273 all pass away from now on. Mary Magdalene was able to accept the Lord's salvation by faith right from the beginning, so all the demons were cast out of her. She was then determined to serve the Lord all her life in the vision of life. She is truly my role model.

The Lord Jesus said, "For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:27). As far as Mary Magdalene was concerned, the reason why her love for the Lord was so absolute; why she could be delivered so thoroughly from demon oppression, and why she was so persistent in following the Lord was because she *believed in God* and also *in the one whom God sent*.

To her, Jesus the Nazarene was not only the Benefactor who healed her, but also the Savior who cast the demons out of her. Therefore, after she was freed from the control of the evil spirits, she believed in the Lord without doubt, and was dead set on serving and following Him. Wherever and whenever the Lord Jesus went, she followed closely and testified for Him. For this reason, she was able to run into the glorious scene of "the Lord's resurrection."

If we imitate Mary Magdalene today, the glory we are going to encounter will be greater than what she saw. For the Lord has risen and ascended to heaven, sent down the Holy Spirit and rebuilt the glorious New Testament Church. How the Lord was taken up into heaven, He will return in like manner. Moreover, the apostle chosen by the Holy Spirit is among us. He is Bro. Elijah Hong, the latter-day Elijah sent by God. He is the man

of God, the prophet, and the true shepherd. For the Lord, he cleanses the church with the washing of water by the word, so that we can be delivered from the kingdom of the devil and be sanctified day by day. We can then be built up together to become the body of Christ, worthy to live in the light of God's face.

Let us obey and follow the Lord and His servant Bro. Hong, the same way Mary Magdalene followed the Lord to the death. That way, we will see man's rule come to an end, God's kingdom realize, and the latter spiritual rain come upon the earth. We shall also be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and reign with Him forever and ever!

Mary Magdalene (2)

Mary Magdalene's Love for the Lord

(February 28, 1991 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Pi during the morning prayer service on Mount Zion)

Let's read Luke 8:1–3; Matthew 27:55–61; Mark 16:1–11 and John 20:1–18.

When we mention of Mary Magdalene, we would naturally recall how the Lord cast seven demons out of her. She was oppressed by Satan and bound by sins. She lost her freedom and lived in despair and sorrow. Nobody likes to come close to a person possessed by demons; a person like her is always rejected by his family and friends. I have seen people who are bound by Satan. Some are bound with chains, and some are locked in darkrooms for years.

Once there was a demon-possessed man in a neighboring village of my hometown. His family members became so distressed that they decided to tie his hands and feet to a rock, throw him into the sea, and let him drown to death. How tragic! But Mary was certainly much more fortunate, because she met the Lord who changed her entire life. She was freed from oppression and lived a new life. Therefore, she offered herself completely to the Lord, followed Him, and served Him. In the past, she was led by Satan to run towards the Lake of fire. But now, she followed the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, to eternal life. She was enslaved by Satan, but then, she became a maidservant of God who consecrated herself completely to Him. This new life was given by God. The gratitude of Mary Magdalene was unparalleled.

Before we found the salvation of the Lord, we were controlled by the devil like Mary. We had all the freedom *to sin*, but did not have the freedom *not to sin*. Most people are oppressed by demons of smoking, drinking,

gambling, lust, fornication, deception, lying, covetousness, cowardice, pride, and so forth. The den of the devil, the stronghold of Satan, is in the minds of men. He has almost absolute control over the soul of man.

The way the Chinese invented Chinese characters in ancient times is very interesting. The Chinese character *soul* is a combination of two characters: *devil* and *talk*. The devil talks in the souls of men, and continually issues orders. Every thought of man is evil. The devil encourages us to sin. Apostle Paul once said with a sigh, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Thank the Lord; we can depart from the power of sins by the Lord Jesus who loves us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we cast the devil out of our soul. The Lord's servant Bro. Hong often speaks of dealing with the soulish life, the old self. Dealing with the old self is dealing with the devil. Only after having the devil cast out from us can we receive a new life, with which we may serve and follow the Lord till the end, like Mary Magdalene did.

What is most touching, admirable, and commendable about Mary Magdalene, is her love for the Lord. Mary's love for the Lord was stronger than death and could never be extinguished by waters. Nothing could separate her from the love of Christ. Her determination to follow the Lord is a good example for Christians who love the Lord.

When Jesus was on the cross at Golgotha, most of His disciples deserted Him and fled for their lives. Only a few of them and some women remained to accompany the crucified Lord. Among them was Mary Magdalene. At that time, darkness reigned. The evil power was searching for the disciples everywhere. The atmosphere was tense and people were in a panic. However, Mary disregarded all these dangers, for her eyes and heart were fixed on the crucified Lord.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it

is written: 'For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35–39). Mary saw no peril, no sword, and no tribulation. Her whole heart and love were on the Lord. Losing the gracious Lord who recreated her would mean losing her purpose in life.

The chorus of Hymn 237 says: "Follow to Gethsemane, follow to Calvary's brow, follow to heavenly Home, no more pains evermore..." To most disciples, following the Lord to Calvary was final. Since the Lord had died, there was no need for them to continue following Him. But Mary Magdalene was different. She started following and serving the Lord from Galilee all the way to Gethsemane and Calvary. She even followed Him to His tomb and kept watch there. Though the Lord had died, her love for Him did not die. She continued to follow the Lord because He lived in her heart. She was such a faithful and unreserved follower of the Lamb.

Both the Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong and the Lord's servant Bro. Hong also faithfully loved and followed the Lord, just as Mary Magdalene did. When Sis. Kong was sick, her pain from her tongue cancer was indescribable. Whenever the pain subsided, she would immediately continue with her literary work and letter writing. She strived to follow and serve the Lord. Her love for the Lord did not change even until she breathed her last. She was a sacrifice that was placed on the altar, where she was consumed by fire to ashes, becoming a sweet aroma that reached heaven.

The Lord's servant Bro. Hong follows the examples of Sis. Kong. In a life-and-death situation, he vowed to return to Zion according God's will. He was almost beaten to death by the Kuomintang (KMT) thugs at the Ornan Threshing Floor, beside the fishpond. At that time, he asked the

brothers and sisters to carry him to “Christ Is the Rock,” to let him die there and to bury him there. Evidently, death could not separate him from Mount Zion chosen by God. This steadfast love for the Lord is a good example to all Christians.

“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My father will honor” (John 12:26). The Lord does not force anyone to serve Him. But if anyone serves Him, he must follow Him. Where He goes, there also His servant will be. The Lord also said, “My Father will honor the one who serves Me.” Mary Magdalene closely followed the teaching of the Lord. When the Lord traveled around, healing the sick and casting out demons, she provided the Lord and His disciples from her own substance. When the Lord was crucified, she stood by the cross serving Him. When the Lord was laid in the tomb, she followed Him to the tomb.

Brothers and sisters, how can one go on following at the tomb? Yet Mary refused to give up, most probably because she could not accept the fact that Jesus was dead. She had witnessed how the Lord raised the dead. She saw that even though Lazarus had been buried for four days and had rotted, the Lord could still bring him back to life. She also remembered the Lord say that He would be killed and that He would rise on the third day. With these words still ringing in her ears, she followed the Lord to the tomb, sitting at the entrance of the tomb to see what would happen next.

Even if the Lord remained dead and did not come to life again, she still wanted to serve Him by anointing His body. She followed loyally and served unreservedly. The way she followed and served the Lord was acceptable to God. So God honored her and used her to be the first witness of the Lord’s resurrection. This was her reward and blessing for following and serving to the end. What reward and blessing could possibly be better, more beautiful, and greater than this?

The Old Testament Bible records two individuals who followed to the end. One of them was Ruth, a Gentile woman, during the era of the judges. She followed her mother-in-law, Naomi, on whom she had seen the God of Israel. Though Naomi repeatedly urged her to go home to her father's land to begin a new life, Ruth chose to follow until the end.

Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:16–17). God remembered her heart and showed her grace. She married Boaz who became the father of Obed, the grandfather of King David. She certainly played an important role in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus.

The other person was Elisha, who followed Prophet Elijah. Just before Elijah was to be taken up to heaven, Elisha followed him from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel to Jericho and then from Jericho to the Jordan. Elijah repeatedly urged him to stay behind, but he did not. That was a severe trial to Elisha. He chose to follow Elijah closely, and even vowed before God, saying that he would never leave his master Elijah. In the end, he was able to see Prophet Elijah taken up to heaven, and he also received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and succeeded Elijah, as prophet over the nations in that era.

Elisha might have seemed to be following man, but in reality he was following God. For he did not follow any ordinary man — he followed Elijah, the man of God. This is the way to follow God. All Christians want to follow the Lord but they do not know how. The denominations also sing "Follow the Lord to Gethsemane, follow Him to Calvary's brow." But because they do not know the way to follow the Lord, they end up following men instead. They follow a different Jesus, a theoretical Jesus preached by their denominational preachers. (See 2 Corinthians 11:4.) Their

Jesus is not the Jesus preached through revelation by the man of God, the latter-day Elijah. This Jesus is the risen Christ. Therefore, they will never be able to follow the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, we thank God, for He has given us the man of God the latter-day Elijah. We want to follow him just as how Mary Magdalene followed the Lord, and as how Elisha followed the man of God, Elijah. So long as we follow him till the end, we will be caught up to meet the risen Lord. This is the way — the only way to God's kingdom.

The Father in heaven will honor and greatly use all those who follow the Lord till the end. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. The Father in heaven will not only be pleased with all those who follow God and those who are sent by God, He will also use them and be gracious to them.

In this past decade or so, many co-workers and brothers and sisters have silently followed the man of God, the latter-day Elijah. They follow loyally in life and in death. They are often in battles, beaten, and imprisoned. With their sweat, tears and blood, they follow the man of God, the latter-day Elijah. But we have not reached the end of our journey. May the Lord give us the firm determination of Mary Magdalene to love and follow the Lord until the end. Let us follow Mary Magdalene's examples to follow the man of God — the latter-day Elijah — unreservedly and faithfully till the end of the journey. This way, we will receive a reward from the Lord.