

## Message 2

### Being Energized to Fulfill the New Testament Priesthood of the Gospel for God's Move

Scripture Reading: Rom. 15:16, 13; Eph. 1:19-23; 3:7, 16-21; 6:10; Phil. 2:12-13; 4:13; Col. 1:11, 28-29; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:1; 4:17; 2 Pet. 1:3

#### I. **“But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen”—Eph. 3:20-21:**

- A. The power in this verse is the power in Ephesians 1:19; it is the power that accomplishes the spiritual things for the church within our inward being.<sup>1</sup>
- B. The word *operates* in Ephesians 3:20 refers to the inward energizing of this power.
- C. The secret to the operation of this power is that we need to be desperate:
  - 1. We all have this power within us; with some it really works, but with others it does not work; this is because some are desperate and others are indifferent; if we mean business with the Lord, if we are desperate, something within will be energizing us, but if we are indifferent, the power within us will not operate.
  - 2. God needs our human cooperation; if we do not cooperate with Him, He can do nothing.
  - 3. We need to have the deep feeling that we cannot go on being an indifferent Christian; we must consider this a matter of life and death; if we become desperate, we will have the realization that something within us is energizing us and that something from the heavens is constantly being transmitted into our being; then there will be glory to Him in the church—v. 21.

#### II. **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure”—Phil. 2:12b-13:**

- A. The Greek word rendered “operates” in Philippians 2:13 can also be translated “energizes”:
  - 1. This word does not mean to operate outwardly; it means to energize from within.
  - 2. The Spirit with the bountiful supply and the Christ of resurrection are God Himself who operates and energizes in us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure—1:19; 2:5-11, 13.3
  - 3. Because it is not easy for us to experience God's salvation in many situations, He energizes us.<sup>4</sup>
- B. God is not within us in a silent and inactive way; He is operating in us, energizing in us—v. 13:5
  - 1. The divine element is very active; it is energizing, it works, and it is organic.
  - 2. Once the divine life with the divine nature enters into us, it energizes within us; we all have the divine element energizing in us, and in this divine element there is the renewing capacity—Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:16.
  - 3. God is not dormant, passive, or idle; His operating in us is His energizing in us—Phil. 2:13.6
  - 4. We have been born of this energizing God; we have God's energizing life and nature; we are the energetic children of the energizing God!—John 1:12-13.

#### III. **“That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit”—Rom. 15:16:**

- A. In its highest light concerning the gospel, the New Testament shows that the preaching of the glad tidings is the fulfillment of the New Testament priesthood—1 Pet. 2:5, 9.7
- B. In Romans 15:16 the noun *priest* in Greek means a laboring, struggling, energizing priest:

1. We should be the New Testament priests not merely in position or name but in actuality.
  2. We should struggle and be very energetic because we know that Satan's goal is to frustrate the spreading of the gospel.
- C. While we are preaching the gospel, we are the energizing priests, fulfilling our daily duty to offer the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices—v. 16; 1 Pet. 2:5:8
1. If we do not understand that our preaching of the gospel is the fulfilling of our priestly duty, we will only preach the gospel when we feel like it; if something is our duty, however, we do not do it according to how we feel.
  2. This may be illustrated by a sister who is a mother; she cannot tell her children that she is tired and that they need to take care of themselves; she fulfills her duty regardless of how she feels.
  3. In order for a mother to fulfill her daily duty, she must be energizing; in the same way, to fulfill our duty concerning the preaching of the gospel we must be energizing priests.
  4. We have been chosen, saved, regenerated, and ordained to be the New Testament priests of the gospel; now we are not so free because we have a priestly duty to fulfill; to fulfill our duty, we have to learn to be energizing.
- D. In Romans 15:16 Paul says that he was energizing himself:9
1. To energize yourself is to use the last ounce of your strength; it is to pour out the last drop of your blood; it also means to exhaust yourself; in carrying out his ministry for God's economy, Paul exhausted himself.
  2. If we do anything by taking the way of laboring, struggling, and energizing ourselves, we will surely have a success—Col. 1:29.

**IV. The history of God's people on earth is actually the history of the working God energizing among His chosen people in the Old Testament and even the history of the operating God energizing in His redeemed people and having them energize themselves together with Him for the accomplishment of His eternal economy concerning Christ and His increase, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem:10**

- A. We must see and realize that our living, our daily walk, our schooling, our job, and our business must be a part of God's history in His marvelous and excellent move on the earth today.
- B. To be a normal Christian, to be today's overcomers, to answer the Lord's present calling, and to meet the Lord's present need in His recovery, we need to be one with God in His history, moving and energizing in His loving overcomers; that is, we need to be one with God in life, in living, and in our entire doing today on this earth; we need to write God's today's history! We need to march on as one with the energizing God! In Him! With Him! By Him! And for Him! We need to be vital, living, and active!

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**NEEDING TO BE DESPERATE**

[In Ephesians 3:20] Paul says, "To Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us"...[T]his power is the power in 1:19. It is the power that accomplishes the spiritual things for the church within our inward being. The word *operates* in this verse refers to the inward energizing of this power. If you mean business with the Lord, if you are desperate, something within will be energizing you, but if you are indifferent, the power within you will not operate. If you are indifferent toward the meetings and if you are indifferent toward your lack of fruit, how can this power within you operate to energize you? But if you pray to the Lord in a desperate way, you will immediately experience the inner energizing. God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, but He is able only according to the power that is operating in us. How much this power can operate to energize us depends upon how desperate we

are. We all have this power within us. With some it really works, but with others it does not work. This is because some are desperate and others are indifferent. The secret to the operation of this power is that we need to be desperate. God needs our human cooperation. If we do not cooperate with Him, He can do nothing. May the Lord be merciful to us so that, from now on, we would be desperate. We need to have the deep feeling that we cannot go on being an indifferent Christian. We must consider this a matter of life and death. If we become desperate, we will have the realization that something within is energizing us and that something from the heavens is constantly being transmitted into our being. Then there will be glory to Him in the church (3:21). Today there is not much glory to the Lord in the church because of our indifference. We all have to realize our need for the inner operating, the energizing, of this power for the strengthening of our inner man. (*CWWL*, 1970, vol. 2, "The Two Greatest Prayers of the Apostle Paul," ch. 3, pp. 415-416)

### **GOD'S OPERATION AND OUR COOPERATION**

On the one hand, we work out our own salvation; on the other hand, God operates in us. In [Philippians 2:13] Paul exclaims, "For it is God who operates in you." God operates in us, and we cooperate with Him. This means that we work out our salvation according to God's operation. At the very time a sister is murmuring or a brother is reasoning, God operates to enable them to work out their salvation from murmurings and reasonings. When we turn to the Lord and say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You," we are saved from murmurings and reasonings.

The Greek word rendered "operates" can also be translated "energizes." God is energizing us from within. Because it is not easy for us to experience God's salvation in many situations, He energizes us. For example, a brother may be very strong in his reasonings. If this brother is to work out his own salvation from reasonings, he needs God to energize him.

In creating the heavens and the earth God simply had to speak. But to rescue us from murmurings and reasonings, it is necessary for Him to energize us. This indicates that it is more difficult for Him to save us from murmurings and reasonings than it was for Him to create the earth. When God wanted to create something, He simply spoke, and that thing came into being. However, if He tells us not to murmur or reason, we may not pay attention. Thus, there is a wrestling inwardly between us and God. Have you not wrestled with God many times? This wrestling is a proof that it is difficult for God to rescue us. In order to rescue us without damaging us, He energizes within us. The Christian life is a wrestling life, a life of wrestling with the God who operates in us.

The very God who operates in us is the supplying Spirit. Again and again we have pointed out that in 1:19 Paul says that his circumstances will turn out to his salvation through the bountiful supply of the Spirit. If God does not operate in us, it will not be possible for us to experience the supply from the Spirit. God operates in us in order to bring to us the bountiful supply of the Spirit. This is not mere doctrine; it is a fact of spiritual experience. (*Life-Study of Philippians*, msg. 35, pp. 305-306)

### **PRACTICING THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE GOSPEL**

The New Testament revelation concerning the priesthood of the gospel is entirely different from the practice in Christianity. Because the priesthood of the gospel is according to the divine, biblical revelation and not according to human thought, we have to receive it. This divine revelation will revolutionize our entire concept and change our entire practice. We are believers chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Spirit. Now we are priests. A priest is one who is so close to God, who is one with God, and who can have God's oracle to speak to people. Such a one can also bring God to man and bring man back to God.

The Old Testament priests handled only the types of Christ that pointed to the coming Christ, but we New Testament priests have received Christ, and Christ has entered into us. Now we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. We are even one with Christ, so whatever He is and has is ours. We can go out in the condition of the Triune God being wholly one with us. We go out with the Triune God. We go to command the sinners to repent with the authority of Christ. The Lord Jesus said that all authority had been given to Him in heaven and on earth, and then He charged us to go and disciple all the nations (Matt. 28:18-19). We go to disciple the nations with His authority, baptizing them into

the Triune God. We do not just impart the Triune God into them. After they receive the Triune God, we have to baptize them into the Triune God to make them one with God. To preach the gospel is to go out with Christ and with His divine authority to visit our relatives, friends, classmates, colleagues, and neighbors. We have to preach the gospel as priests, making this a part of our daily walk, our daily life.

To go to visit sinners and get them saved that they may be made the sons of God and the members of Christ is the first step of the priestly service, the priesthood. The New Testament priests are linked with the gospel. In the past when we talked about the priests, we never thought about the gospel. We considered that the priests and the gospel were two absolutely separate items. This shows that we were short of spiritual sight, spiritual vision. We did not see that the preaching of the gospel is the priesthood. We need to see that the priesthood is linked with the preaching of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel is our daily life, our daily work, because the preaching of the gospel is the work and the duty of the New Testament priests.

If the offering of the sacrifices were taken away from the Old Testament priests, they would have nothing to do; they would have no daily living. Everything would be meaningless to them. The daily work and the daily living of the New Testament priests is also to offer the sacrifices in reality. While we are preaching the gospel, we are the energizing priests, fulfilling our daily duty to offer the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices. From now on, whenever we preach the gospel to sinners, we must have the deep sensation that we are the energizing priests, struggling and endeavoring to do our daily duty to fulfill our priesthood. This realization will make a great difference in our daily life. If we do not understand that our preaching of the gospel is the fulfilling of our priestly duty, we will only preach the gospel when we feel like it. When we are happy, we will preach the gospel. When we are not happy, we will forget about preaching the gospel. If something is our duty, however, we do not do it according to how we feel.

To illustrate this, let us consider a sister who is a housewife. A good housewife is always on duty. She may have three children—one in kindergarten, one in elementary school, and another one in junior high school. Every morning she is busy preparing breakfast for each one. All three children are different with their particular characteristics, and they may want different things for breakfast. One may want a soft-boiled egg, and another may want scrambled eggs. The third child may want his eggs cooked the way that he saw them cooked in the school cafeteria. Thus, every morning the mother makes eggs for her children in three different, particular ways. After they eat breakfast, she has to drive them to different schools at different times. This is her duty as a mother and as a housewife. She cannot tell her children that she is tired and that they need to take care of themselves. She fulfills her daily duty regardless of how she feels. Because she realizes that this is her duty as a housewife, she carries out her daily duty regardless of her feeling. Do we realize that we have to preach the gospel because it is our duty? Have we preached the gospel with the deep sensation that we are fulfilling our duty? Our preaching of the gospel is to carry out God's New Testament economy, and this is the New Testament priesthood assigned to God's children as priests.

To fulfill such a duty, we must be the energizing priests. To be a mother raising up children, in a certain respect, is a joyful thing, but in order for a mother, a housewife, to fulfill her daily duty, she must be energizing. Paul practiced the priesthood in the same way. In Romans 15:16 he says that he was a minister of Christ Jesus, an energizing priest of the gospel of God. He was an energizing priest to offer the Gentiles to God as acceptable sacrifices. Because Paul saw and realized this, he took this as his daily duty. One day our feelings may be very high, and we may want to preach the gospel everywhere. Two days later we may feel down, and we will not want to preach the gospel. This is why I do not like to see the saints so excited in a natural way. We may be excited one day and down the next day. What we need is a daily revival. We need to live a priest's life. We have been chosen, saved, regenerated, and ordained to be the New Testament priests of the gospel. Now we are not so free because we have a priestly duty to fulfill.

To fulfill our priestly duty, we have to learn to be energizing. The first thing we have to do is to get sinners saved. God has chosen thousands of people on this earth and has ordained them to be

the sons of peace, but we have to go out to visit people to find these sons of peace (Luke 10:1-6). Whether or not someone is a son of peace cannot be determined by only one visit. We may have knocked on a man's door when he was fighting with his wife. When we tell him that we have come to preach the gospel to him, he will not have a heart for it. We should not think that he is not a son of peace. We visited him at the wrong time. We better try to go back to him again after three weeks. Three weeks later he may be happy when we visit him. Then he will receive us and also receive the Lord. In Luke 10 the Lord told the seventy that He sent them out as lambs in the midst of wolves (v. 3). It is hard to say just by one visit whether a person is a son of peace or a wolf. We must go back to visit people again and again. (*CWWL*, 1989, vol. 4, "The Advance of the Lord's Recovery," ch. 10, pp 147-150)

### **[Being One with the Energizing God for the Accomplishment of His Eternal Economy]**

To take possession of God's promised land for Christ and to provide the proper persons to bring forth Christ into the human race are the two major points of the section of the history in the Old Testament in the three books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. These two main points, to take the land for Christ and to provide the bona fide ancestors for Christ, are the spirit of the history from Joshua to Ruth. They are the intrinsic significance of this section of the Old Testament history. We have to have a clear vision concerning this. Otherwise, our life-study on these three books will be in vain, just like the studies of so many historians, Bible students, and Scripture teachers, either Jewish or Christian.

If by the Lord's mercy we see such a vision, this section of the history in the Old Testament will benefit us the same as the New Testament does. Such a vision will help us to see that the history of God's people on earth is actually the history of the working God energizing among His chosen people in the Old Testament and even the history of the operating God energizing in His redeemed people and having them energize themselves together with Him for the accomplishment of His eternal economy concerning Christ and His increase, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

I hope that through the life-study of these three books we all will see and realize that our living, our daily walk, our schooling, our job, and our business must be a part of God's history in His marvelous and excellent move on the earth today. To be a normal Christian, to be today's overcomers, to answer the Lord's present calling, and to meet the Lord's present need in His recovery, it is altogether not sufficient simply to be a so-called good brother or good sister, attending the church meetings regularly, behaving rightly, and living a life which is somewhat perfect in the eyes of men. We need to be one with God in His history, moving, and energizing in His loving overcomers; that is, we need to be one with God in life, in living, and in our entire doing today on this earth! We need to write God's today's history! We need to march on as one with the energizing God! In Him! With Him! By Him! And for Him! We need to be vital, living, and active! We need to be today's Joshuas and Calebs to take possession of the God-promised land for Christ that we may become His possession. We need to be today's Ruths to turn to God's economy, to enter into the land of Immanuel, and to marry ourselves to Christ that we may bring forth Christ to meet the need of men today. This should be the intrinsic life-study of these three books—Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. The issue of this life-study should be the gaining of the God-promised land for Christ and the bringing forth of the excellent Christ to meet today's need of both God and men. (*Life-Study of Joshua*, msg. 1, pp. 2-3)

#### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1970, vol. 2, "The Two Greatest Prayers of the Apostle Paul," ch. 3.

2. *Life-Study of Philippians*, msg. 12, 35.
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1983, vol. 1, "The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ," ch. 8.
4. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1989, vol. 2, "Being Renewed Day by Day," ch. 2.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1991-1992, vol. 1, "Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3)," ch. 8.
6. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1989, vol. 4, "The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today," ch. 10.
7. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1991-1992, vol. 2, "The Practice of the Church Life According to the God-ordained Way," ch. 12.
8. *Life-Study of Joshua, Judges & Ruth*, msg. 1.

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1 CWWL, 1970, vol. 2, "The Two Greatest Prayers of the Apostle Paul," ch. 3, pp. 415-416.

2 *Life-Study of Philippians*, msg. 35, pp. 305-306.

3 CWWL, 1983, vol. 1, "The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ," ch. 8, p. 283.

4 *Life-Study of Philippians*, msg. 35, pp. 305-306.

5 CWWL, 1989, vol. 2, "Being Renewed Day by Day," ch. 2, p. 361.

6 *Life-Study of Philippians*, msg. 12, pp. 101-102.

7 CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 1, "Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3), ch. 8, p. 199.

8 CWWL, 1989, vol. 4, "The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today," ch. 10, pp. 148-149.

9 CWWL, 1991-1992, vol. 2, "The Practice of the Church Life According to the God-ordained Way," ch. 12, p. 621.

10 *Life-Study of Joshua*, msg. 1, pp. 2-3.