

Recovery and God's Own Possession

God's Recovery Work

This hymn ought to be always our prayer: "Open my eyes that I may see." Ben called me and said he and June were coming to the conference. I was thrilled. And we talked about that 51 years ago, in 1975, the first family conference. How precious, how enduring our fellowship, how grateful we are to have been together with brothers and sisters from all over the world, hearing the deep things of God. How blessed we are.

Opening Acknowledgments and Scripture Readings

Well, I will read some verses as we begin. Oh, by the way, I do need to say this. It is not an announcement. There is another, I will call them ancient brothers, because I am getting into that category. There is a dear brother, and we thank Lenwood Wiggins for coming here from North Carolina and driving all the way up. He was at Roslyn, the conferences before the family conferences. Lenwood, thanks for coming.

I will read Isaiah 11:11 in the first part. This is the verse Dana shared with us about his burden. "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people."

I will read verses from Exodus 19:4–6. This is one I will be majoring on in my two sessions. "Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have borne you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. [Please remember that.] And now, if ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples—for all the earth is mine— and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak to the children of Israel."

That verse is repeated in the New Testament; I Peter 2 verse nine. This is the New American Standard Bible: "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Joshua 1:11b: This is the command of Joshua to the people "To go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it."

And finally, Obadiah 17. A young brother shared this with us, and it became one of the theme verses. This is the New American Standard Bible again: "But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, And it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions."

Let us pray. *Lord, we thank You for Your mercies in gathering us these so many years. We are thankful for opening the things You have opened to our hearts, to our ears. In our spirit, we tell You once again, we come utterly dependent on You because You alone have the words of eternal life, no one else. And we are saying, Lord, speak to us. Do indeed open our eyes, do indeed open our ears, do indeed open our hearts, that we may be those that*

are possessed by You as Your own possession, and we may be counted among those who possess their own possession in Christ Jesus. These things we ask in Your only and precious name. Amen.

How the Conference Burden and Theme Emerged

Well, everyone knows by now the conference theme: God's Cry for this Hour, Recovery and Possessing. This is the whole burden. Now, this burden did not come from us here in Richmond. We had several meetings. We had a meeting in Richmond with the assembly, where we talked about burden for the conference, capacity for the conference. Can we do it? What the Lord's thought might be. And at that time, many wonderful things came out. It seemed like Jeopardy to me on TV: "Name all the Bible verses with the R word." And so, people were saying, remember, refresh, refocus. Others were saying, rebuild, revive. That was the big thing that night—R words everywhere.

And then a young brother spoke up about that, Obadiah 17, and shared that verse with us. And how wonderful that is, that the house of Jacob, and not only the house of Jacob, but the church of God, will possess their possession. This is the burden the Lord lays on us. And then we had a family meeting. We had a meeting where we brought in all the thirteen assemblies that helped share the responsibility. Do not ever think this is a Richmond conference. If you do, you will miss it. And again, we shared a few thoughts. And then all these R words started spilling out, and the riches of Christ and remember and all these things. And then Dana shared that wonderful verse. He was on Zoom. And he said, "I have got this one verse on my heart," that Isaiah 11:11 that he shared about last night. "The Lord will again recover." And we knew immediately what the theme was going to be: recovery and possession.

And then we had one more meeting. It was the few of us, the leading brothers in Richmond. We met and we said, "What do you think the Lord's burden was?" You brothers and sisters made this very easy. I can tell you from years past, sometimes we have looked at each other and said, "What is the burden?" But not this year. We knew. We knew this was the Lord's heart. And a brother among us said, "It has got to be more than just words. It has got to be a cry from God. "The Cry of this Hour, Recovery and Possessing."" And that is how the burden, for you that need a little inside baseball, works, okay? It was a contribution of many, it was the sharing of many, and it was a convincing or being persuaded that this is indeed the Lord's burden.

Two Messages: God's Possession and Our Possession

Now, I have been asked to share two messages. These messages will be this first one today and then another one later in the week. The first one is Recovery and God's Own Possession. My own emphasis. Make sure you hear me: Recovery and God's Own Possession. If we do not see that, we are lost as far as God's purpose from the beginning. Often, as believers, we start with ourselves and we say, what is our possession? But the Bible does not start with that. The Bible starts with; I want something for My own possession. This is the perspective we need.

The second message will be Recovery in Our Own Possession. You will need, in this lifetime, to possess more of Christ if He is going to have His recovery work done. Every one of us is called to possess Christ, to lay hold of Christ, to apprehend what we have been apprehended for in Christ Jesus. And this short lifetime is what we have. I am seventy-five in a few months. I used to always say, life is long. I was wrong. Life is short. What will you do with your life? What is your ambition? What is your burden? What is your heart? Is it set upon this world and all that you can accumulate? Is it set upon your career? Is it only your family? I love families. I could talk to you about grandchildren all day long, and children. Is that your goal? Is that your aim?

I would like to ask you one question as we come to this day: What are you here for? Are you not here to possess your possession in Christ? And when we go before the judgment seat of Christ and we look into the face of our beloved Master, that is the one question I think He will ask: Did you possess all that I made available to you in Christ Jesus? So, these are the burdens that are on my heart, and I hope to share a little bit in this time.

God's Recovery Work: Its Nature and Our Cooperation

First of all, we are going to look at God's recovery work. God is the one who does the recovery work. We need to understand that, lest we somehow think we are the ones that do the recovery work. Now, it does say the Apostle Paul said, coworkers with God. Right? We are. I would like to reword that as cooperators with God, because He is the one that does the work, God's recovery work. We will look at that. We will look at the recovery work of His own possession. There is a significant emphasis in the Old Testament on that one phrase. And I hope to share a little bit of that one phrase. And then, finally, we will look at the privilege. The privilege of God's own possession. You cannot even begin to estimate the privilege that you and I have been given. Eye has not seen, neither ear has heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him. Unimaginable. May we see that great privilege? It will change your life.

So, we will begin with God's recovery work. Recovery is the vehicle God uses to accomplish His work. He is a God of recovery, and that is the vehicle that He uses to accomplish His work. You can never understand God unless you understand that God is first of all a God of recovery. That is what He does. What did Dana say last night? Repo. Repo God. He did not call Him Repo God, did you, Dana? I do not remember, but Repo Man. Yes. I think the Repo Man, they have a lot of that going on in New York. We do not break any laws here, brother.

You can never understand the Bible unless you understand that the Bible is a sacred record of the recovery work of God. You need to read the Bible in a different light. From the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, what you see time after time and again after again, you see God's recovery work. Even in the complete failure of man, of Israel, and of the Church, you cannot understand the eternal purpose of God. That phrase is important to this conference. Unless you understand that God is a God of recovery, those things are essential. Those things are vital. How we need to see that and ask the Lord to help us.

Well, I hope I have a little encouragement for you this morning. First of all, God's recovery work is wholly His own work. I hope I get an amen. Oh, that was a weak amen. I think the lack of air conditioning has gotten to you. I want to hear an amen. You did not know I was charismatic, did you? God's recovery work is wholly His own work. The most we can do in this short period of life is cooperate with Him and allow Him, by the Holy Spirit—I heard it last night for the first time, the left hand of the Holy Spirit—and allow Him to do His recovery work. This is what we need to do in this short space called life.

It is beautiful. The phrases that are in Isaiah 11:11a. It says the Lord will recover again. Is that not encouraging? Are you not so glad it did not say Dana will recover again? And I know you are glad it did not say Kenny will recover again. The Lord will recover again. It means He has done it before. He will do it again. And I want to tell you, if you read the Bible in the right light, He will do it again and again and again because He never gives up. That is the encouragement. Notice the phrase “with His hand.” That whole thing last night from Dana of right and left hand came out of this one phrase. With His own hands, He will recover what is of His interest. And we will be filled with joy at what we see Him do, filled with wonder, filled with delight. And then the last phrase, the recovery work He will do on that day. On that day, which is the day of the kingdom, I believe, and the start of the millennium, a second time. He will do it. That is that latter, final, full, complete recovery of God's work on that day. How wonderful. We are looking forward to a day that is beyond anything we could ask or imagine. According to the book of Ephesians, may the Lord open our eyes so we can see.

Habakkuk 1:5. There is a verse, it is a wonderful verse, one of those minor prophets, greatly visible and greatly used during the last recovery of the Old Testament. And it says in Habakkuk 1:5, “See ye among the nations, and behold, and wonder marvellously; for I work a work.” Is that not wonderful? Oh, I am so glad He did not say Habakkuk works a work, or Isaiah works a work. He said, “For I work a work.” Beautiful encouragement in your days, which you will not believe. That is how wonderful they will be when He does His work, though it be declared to you and accompanied with that.

Let me just read Habakkuk's prayer. There is that statement, that grand statement as a matter of fact, in Paul's first recorded sermon, first message in the book of Acts. That is the verse he quotes from the Old Testament. And he quotes it in light of the work of Christ, that great recovery work, that greatest recovery work. And he quotes it in relation to salvation and justification as he was speaking in that synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia in his first recorded message. How wonderful. God does that work.

I will read you this prayer because you have God's declaration: I will do that work. But there needs to be something else. There needs to be a cooperation where we offer up a prayer and say, Lord, do what You said You will do. Speak. Move. Come down. Visit us. And that wonderful prayer of Habakkuk in chapter three, verse one and two, it says, “A Prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.” And I do not know the first time how to pronounce that. This is what he said. This is his prayer. This has to be our prayer. “Jehovah, I heard the report of thee, and I feared. Jehovah, revive thy work.” We ought to remind Him. He is waiting for us. The one thing He is waiting for us is to say, Lord, do what You

said You will do in our day, in our generation. "Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known." This is so precious.

Remember in Joel 2:25, I do not know that I will say this verse, but it says of God, "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm." I do not even know what a palmerworm is. "I will restore." This is the one who is the God of recovery. The Bible is an encouragement to us that "I am. I am." Remember when Moses was at that burning bush and it is a story that "I am the God who recovers. I am everything you need." Well, I think you may be getting the point.

New Testament Assurances: Author, Finisher, Alpha, and Omega

New Testament. I think of Philippians 1:6. This is one of those wonderful verses of the Apostle Paul, that grand divine assurance. He said in 1:6 of the book of Philippians, "Having confidence of this very thing, that he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day." Is that not wonderful? Oh, I do not know about you. I get excited about these verses. These thrill me, that I know that this God who has saved me and who began that work is this very same God that will complete that work. I know Dana said that last night. I remember him saying that last night. He said it, I think, in context to Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." And then he said, "Make sure you read all the verse. Remember, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." We like to leave that part out. Brothers and sisters, if you are going to possess your possessions, you, in fact, need to know the one who is the author and the finisher of your faith.

Oh, I would be so depressed. I will tell you, I am not a depressing person. I think you know that, I do not think I am. You may disagree with me. I am not a melancholic person. But if I, if the writer that anointed and that anonymous writer of Hebrews said, He who begins the work, the author, oh, I would be so depressed. But thank God, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the divine message from the Word of God was the author and the finisher of our faith. That is who is doing the work.

And then finally, on this matter about God being the God of recovery, I do not know how many of you noticed and have read. I did not mention these verses, as a matter of fact, from Revelation: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." It is four times in the book of Revelation. You know that, right? And now that is if you do not have the Bible. I use; it is in the King James Version that it is in the second spot. But this is the extreme assurance at the end of the Bible, as He closed out this divine record of recovery, He had one last thing to say.

And it is, I am the Alpha and the Omega. Those are the beginning of the Greek alphabet. You know this. This is Bible Elementary 101, and the end of the Greek alphabet.

But what you may not know is the only places in the Bible that the Alpha and Omega occur are in the book of Revelation, in these four verses we will read. And this is only about one person, if I can use that—our Lord Jesus Christ, He alone. This was the

concluding assurance. You get ready to talk about plagues and vials and bowls and wars and destruction and all that. But He said, keep your eye on the ball. This is the ball. You do not get lost in all of these things. Dana said that last night, right? Do not get lost in all of these things. Stay on the immediate. And the immediate is I am the Alpha and the Omega.

I do not want to take so much time, maybe not to read those, but look at those sometimes. Look them up. This Revelation 1:8, in the beginning, it is Revelation 1:11a. That is the one that occurs in King James. It says I am the Alpha and the Omega and the first and the last, the beginning and the end. In other words, the Holy Spirit was more repetitive than I am. He wanted to make sure you got this. Know how that is a favorite phrase? Drives me crazy. And I do it all the time. So, I must drive myself crazy. I say to people, “Do you get this? The Holy Spirit is saying, did you get this four times? To close out the divine record. This is the divine assurance. I will tell you in every way. Alpha and Omega, first and the last, beginning and the end, how wonderful that is.

The Bible as a Record of Recovery

God's Recovery Work in Creation

Now, the second thing about recovery work, God's recovery work, is the Bible is a divine record of God's recovery. It is. I read it in that light because every time I see something new, God is always recovering. He may discipline; He may judge. He is a righteous God. He may send His people into captivity, but it is always with one single thought in view at the end. It is for recovery. It is not to destroy. I hope you understand that.

Well, let me go to Genesis 1. We will have a debate on this later. No debates during the ministry. Okay? No debates. I do like the senators and congressmen. This is my time. This is my time. You can argue with me later if you disagree. But Genesis 1:1 and 2, the Bible begins with recovery. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was waste and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” I do not know how much you thought about that verse, but there always seemed to be a disconnect to me between verse one and verse two. Now, this is the point where you might want to stand up and say, I object. Please do not do it. There are some that call this “the gap theory.” Something happened, something terrible happened, and God had to begin this holy record that we have with a recreation, not a creation, a recovery.

I tell you, brothers, and sisters, this is very, very clear. I know there are different strong opinions. You can keep me up all night. Linda will push me out on the sidewalk and debate with me. But God's work, this Bible, begins with recovery. It begins with it.

What convinced me? Isaiah 45, verse eighteen. I do not know if you know this verse. He (Isaiah) was quoted a lot of last night. “For thus saith Jehovah who created the heavens, God himself who formed the earth and made it, he who established it, —not as waste did he create it.” Oh, that opened my eyes. I said, I am a gap theory person. I think

I can show you. I have a tattoo. No, I tried, you know. I am kidding. Linda would not let me get a tattoo.

The gap theory. Something diabolical happened—Satan's primordial rebellion. You read about it; you know about it in the Bible. So dark we see it in Isaiah 14. We are not going to read all those verses, but Satan said, "I will ascend to the heavens. I will be like God." Can you imagine? That was this cataclysmic event. All of creation, original creations were affected if you want to use that word, was because of this rebellion with a third of the angels.

And we come to Genesis 1:1 in Moses' record and we hear about a time in the past when God created the heavens and the earth. And then we have what I call that gap. And the earth was waste and empty. God did not create it waste and empty. I hope I win the argument. A few people are nodding and others are going, "Well, we want to."

God is a God of recovery. The Bible begins with recovery. And instantly, instantly the Godhead had this idea that He would create man in His own image and likeness and use mankind to overcome and to destroy the enemy. Now that was ultimately done in the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus. He made an open show publicly of the enemy. He destroyed him. And at last, when we come to the end of the Bible in Revelation 20, those overcomers, those ones who have possessed their possession, are linked with the Lord Jesus in heaven. And Satan is thrown into the fiery furnace and ultimately defeated eternally because of God's recovery work.

Recovery Through the Ages

Well, that is the story of creation. Remember Eve and Adam's sin. You would have thought maybe God would give up. He thought, the angels did not make it. Now Adam and Eve, created in Our image, they did not make it. Oh, you better be glad I am not God. I know you are. I would have given up, two strikes. What are you, baseball? You Dodgers fans? Two strikes, you are almost out. Three strikes, you are out. Well, we had many more than three. But the God of recovery never gives up. That is the encouragement He said to Satan when He cursed him. Of course, crawl on your belly, you are cursed above all creatures. And He said to the woman, in childbearing, and He said, out of your seed, the seed of the woman will crush his head, speaking of Satan, and his heel will be bruised, speaking of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. This is the God of recovery.

Well, maybe you begin to understand that I do want us to think about this supreme encouragement of the Bible, that God never gives up. It happened again in Noah's time. The whole earth was wicked. Listen to what it says in Genesis 6:5. It says, "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of Man was great on the earth, and every imagination [every imagination – can you imagine] of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually." That is bad stuff. Did God give up? Did the God of recovery say, "That is it. Third time: angels, Adam and Eve, Noah. There is no hope. We have to look for a new choice." But He found Noah. One man, righteous. Can you imagine? One man, one family of eight put into an ark, saved from the judgment of the world. That is what happened to us. In the greatest

recovery of all, you were put into Christ Jesus, that new creation Dana was speaking about. And when you were put into that new creation, you are in the ark, you are in Christ. And you are saved from destruction forever. This is the encouragement of the Bible. God never gives up.

Think of the children of Israel. They had a good beginning, right? Oh man, Moses the deliverer, the law, all these things. And then it did not take them long to make that golden calf, right? Remember that? It did not take long. Surely you think God gave up, but He did not. He disciplined and He sent that terror through the camp to recover, eventually, those that would walk with Him, and the Levites stood up and praised the Lord. This God of recovery continued to recover. It is the end of the Old Testament. You know the stories: Ezra, Nehemiah, Habakkuk, Malachi, Zechariah, all those books on recovery. The last recovery. The loving discipline of God sent Israel into Babylonian captivity. And He did not leave them in Babylonian captivity. In His mercy He called them again through a Gentile king, “Come back to Jerusalem, build the house of God,” and thank God a remnant responded. We read about the remnant in Isaiah 11:11, that verse Dana shared with us. Praise the Lord. He never gives up. Praise the Lord that He found the remnant to respond. And that is what Isaiah 11:11 is talking about.

The God Who Never Gives Up

If He can find a remnant, He can do His recovery work. No remnant, no recovery work. Do you get that? Do you see how important these two things are linked? For God to get what He wants, He has to find a man, a woman, ones that will respond to Him. And then He can do what He always intended to do. This is a story of the Bible.

I think of that verse in II Timothy 2:13. This is a wonderful verse. I have quoted this verse so many times in sharing. “If we are unfaithful”—how many can follow me—“If we are unfaithful,” right? Did I hear that? “He abides faithful.” Oh, I think the way some melancholic Christians read it is, “When we are unfaithful, God gives up.” Thank God for the encouragement of this wonderful record we have from the beginning to the end, when He finally gets what He wants. How beautiful.

I will never forget a story I do not know about Linda's. Let me say Linda is my wife. Sometimes they think, they must think I am talking about a strange woman. I do not know. She said, “Why do not you say your wife?” So, I am not, I do not have multiple women. Linda, my wife. Okay. When we think about that, it made me lose my train of thought. But I remember a story.

Oh, it was basketball. I know. I love college basketball. I saw a brother here, right in front. He said, “North Carolina State.” I am UVA. College basketball, by the way. North Carolina State. And there was a fellow you may have remembered, Jimmy Valvano, the coach? He won a national title. He won a national title. He was riddled with cancer. Forty-seven, died early.

ESPN was just a little offshoot television sports station. And for the first time ever, they had what was called the ESPY Awards. I still remember that. I listened to the speech.

It was the most encouraging, inspiring human speech I have ever heard. Riddled with cancer, needing help to even ascend the steps to get to the lectern.

The essence of his message was, do not ever give up. And he repeated himself. He could hardly get enough volume: "Do not ever give up." And I remember thinking about that. There is only one that never gives up. It was not Jimmy V. I like old Jimmy V. But there is one that truly never will give up.

Do you think the eternal purpose of God is in jeopardy? You would think wrong. You think the end of Revelation is only a storybook that will never be fulfilled. In Revelation 20, 21, and 22, you would be wrong, because the one who wrote that story is the one who will never give up. This is the encouragement.

God's Own Possession

The Focus of God's Recovery Work

Well, let us look at the recovery work of His own possession. What do you think the focus of God's recovery work is? What do you think? Is it saving souls? Yeah, I love saving souls. I think we ought to all do the work of evangelism. Evangelism is so important. Do you focus on one thing and think it is much grander than that?

The focus of the whole recovery work, I believe, can be retraced through this one phrase we read in Exodus 19: "a people for God's own possession." It is much more than getting us saved, getting your train ticket to heaven. Some people came down on the train to Ashland. I hope you had a good ride. You had your train ticket, right? They are on your phone now. I do not know. Oh, we think just going to heaven, we are lounging, waiting to be in heaven. That is the popular view of the Christian life, but it is not God's view.

God's view is that in this short period of life for every one of us, He wanted a people for His own possession. And if you trace that verse all the way through the Old Testament and into the New Testament, you will discover that is the eternal purpose of God. Those people become a living testimony of Jesus Christ on the earth, and they express who He is. And together we have the God that possesses us and those of us that possess God. And therefore, God gets what He has eternally been after.

That is my quick explanation of the eternal purpose of God. Oh, I hope we see it.

A People for God's Own Possession in Scripture

This phrase is in both the Old Testament and New Testament, "a people for God's own possession." This is Israel in the Old Testament; they were the testimony of God in the Old Testament to all the world. In the New Testament, this is the church. They are the people of God's own possession, the eternal expression of the testimony of Jesus.

Did you know when you read the Book of Revelation, it only occurs in the Revelation? Make sure you always say that. That is a sticking point with me. Some people say Revelations, like there are many revelations there, plural. Engineers do not understand English, by the way, but they say Revelations like the many revelations. There is one

Revelation; it is God getting what He has been after forever. And not only is it one Revelation, but it is also The Revelation.

If your Bible does not say that trade it in on a new model. Because that is the biblical revelation, the word, the phrase that only occurs in the book of Revelation, the testimony of Jesus. It occurs six times in the book of the Revelation. Do you get it? Oh, I see. I would not say that.

Brothers and sisters, the testimony of Jesus is what we are to be as the people for God's own possession, expressing who He is, all that He is.

It is a marvel to me that I read Ephesians, chapter 3, verse 10, when Paul was talking about, and he did not say, "In the future in the kingdom," he said, "In order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known [not through Christ] through the assembly [church] the all-various wisdom of God." Is that not amazing? Those that possess their possession are the ultimate expression of who Christ is. This is what He is looking for, God's possession: a people for My own possession.

Sinai, the Iron Furnace, and Moses' Mark

Those verses we read in Exodus where, when they just came out, the children of Israel from Egypt, the bondage Egypt. The Bible calls the iron furnace. We have been to see the iron furnace, right? David over there. When we trounced around the desert, I thought I would die. The iron furnace. They were delivered out of the iron furnace. And how remarkable. They were immediately brought to Sinai. Three months. Three months later they came to Mount Sinai. These verses, Exodus 19:3–6 are when they first came to the mountain. And it was the first revelation that Moses had at that mountain. It was before the law. We always talk about; it was the law. It was before the law. The law starts in Exodus 20. But God wanted to show Moses one thing before they ever started. He wanted to say, Moses, do you know what I am after? Do you know what I want? Have you seen the heart of God? What I want is a people for My own possession. And together with those people, I will express all that I am. This is what that revelation at Sinai three months in was all about.

Now, of course, you know, they wandered in the wilderness and all that. But God never gives up, right? If you forget everything, I say, stories included, remember, God never gives up. Do not ever forget it. That is the most important thing. This perspective, that God wants a people of possession for His own self, is what runs throughout the Bible. It is expressed in different ways, but it is the purpose of God. And you see it repeated again and again.

A Personal Story and "Himself"

I remember. Let me tell you a short story if you believe I can tell a short story. I remember I was a young Christian, newly saved through the Jesus Movement, Charismatic Movement. And I remember in six months I was with the brothers and sisters in this room, those like you, maybe the earlier version. And I remember it was this dear older sister. She

was my spiritual mother. Many here know her. She has gone to be with the Lord, Llewellyn Miller. We always say, “the five sisters in Richmond.” The Lord used [them] greatly to start something. Let me tell you this: if it were not for those, we would not be here today. We will not be here today.

And I remember Llewellyn. Here I was, this young... My daughter, by the way, Jessica, says, “My daddy was a hippie.” That is what she said. And my long hair... Jerry exaggerates the story, down to the middle of my back. That never was true. True, Jerry, but I have a picture. I will show you if you talk to me nicely.

This dear sister looked me in the eye with wet eyes and trembling lips, and she said, “Kenny, do you understand He wants a people for Himself?” I will never forget it. “I have borne you on eagle’s wings. I have delivered you from the iron furnace. I have brought you to this place that you will be a people for Myself.” How wonderful. I remember, as dull as I was spiritually, that landed. Do you understand what I mean by saying that landed? It was engraved upon my heart. By the way, she gave me years ago this little tract by A.B. Simpson. It is a newer version. I wore the old one out: “Himself.” “Himself.” That day I discovered everything in the Bible is about Himself. That is what the recovery work is about. And I will never forget it.

She used to read me this thing. She thought I could not read. I was at, I do not know. Linda still does not think I can read, so I get it. They did not teach engineers how to read, by the way. But I will never forget she read me in that first verse in A. B. Simpson's song. It is a song. It is a poem, “HIMSELF,” in all capital letters. I will never forget that. That is written upon my heart. She would read this, and I was big-eyed. As long as she fed me, I was well, but I was big-eyed and thought, wow, this lady had seen something. It changed her forever. It changed us forever.

In that first verse it says, “once it was the blessing.” Oh, man. I was in the charismatic movement. We had blessings coming out of every orifice. “Now it is the Lord.” “Once it was the feeling. Now it is His Word.” “Once His gifts I wanted.” We used to debate among us charismatics. “Well, I want the gift of discernment.” “Well, I want the gift of prophecy.” “Well, you cannot get that. I am going to pray for that. You pray for something else.” I said, “Well, maybe helps. I will just ask to get some help.” Once I sought healing. There are brothers and sisters in this world that our whole focus in the Christian life is just to heal me. But I am not against healing. My wife is a miracle of healing, but it is not my emphasis. Once it was healing. “Now Himself alone.” I am so grateful for that sister.

Those five sisters went to a strange little conference in Wabana, Maryland. I suppose most of you have never heard of Wabana, Maryland. All because they had read a book by DeVern Fromke called *The Ultimate Intention*. And something registered that changed those ladies forever. And they— in the back of this book, Dana is talking about sovereignty. In the back of this book was a flyer, an invite to a conference in Wabana, Maryland. It was this speaker, Theodore Austin-Sparks. Who was T. A. Sparks? It was about this speaker, DeVern Fromke. Who was DeVern Fromke? It was about this speaker, Stephen Kaung. Whoever heard of Stephen Kaung? And they went for three years, '67, '68, '69. And they

were changed forever. Because of that, Stephen started coming to Richmond. Because of that, Richmond exists. Because of that, we met dear brothers and sisters from all over the country. And because of that, the family conferences started. And because of that, you sit here today in this un-air-conditioned auditorium. Do you get it? Oh, I said I would not say that. I said I would not say that.

Deuteronomy, Malachi, and the New Testament Witness

Well, this phrase, this moment, this moment at Sinai, three months out of the iron furnace, made such a deep impression, such a deep impression upon Moses. He quoted this phrase of people for God's own possession more than anybody else in the Bible. And I think, you know, Moses has the first five books of the Bible. I am still confused about how to pronounce it. I have seen Pentateuch, Pentateud. I have seen Pentateuch. I do not know about that one. It is one of these, I am sure, but it is the five books as it means in Greek. And the fifth writing, Deuteronomy, is the summary of all five. It is a summary book. And Moses, in that summary book, at the end of his life, he wrote it at 120 years old. And God buried him. You know the story. And in that summary, he had something to say for all eternity in the beginning of it in Deuteronomy 4:20. "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today."

In Deuteronomy 7:6, he says, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." In the middle of the book, in Deuteronomy 14:2, he repeats that: "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." And in Deuteronomy 26, the last time, 18, it says, let me read that. I want to read that if you do not mind. All they can do is kick me out. I am not worried. Go to Deuteronomy 26. What did I say? 18. Thank you. "And Jehovah hath accepted thee this day to be a people of possession to him, as he hath told thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments." And he went on.

Do you understand? In the book of Deuteronomy, the summary of the whole Torah, the summary of the first five books of Moses, this phrase is repeated more than anywhere in the whole Bible. If you are clumsy a little bit like me and you run into the corner of a wall, we say, "That is going to leave a mark." This left a mark on Moses at Sinai. It left an indelible mark. He knew it was God's heart. He could not escape it.

Well, you know the end of the Old Testament. This phrase occurs again. Malachi 3:16 and 17. I do not recommend any of you melancholics read Malachi. It is pretty depressing. Oh, you should read it. It is in the Bible. I am joking with you. But there is one bright spot. In chapter 3:16–17, it says, "Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, on the day [Dana was talking about the day] that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

It is not only in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we read about it in Titus 2:14. Paul, in one of his last books, wrote to Titus as he was handing over the torch of the testimony. And he said in 2:14, “Who gave Himself [speaking of the Lord] for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession.” So, this was not just for Moses and the children of Israel.

And then when you come to, I Peter 2:9, Peter was writing to those dispersed in the dispersion. If you read Peter, there is a lot in there about suffering. I have heard people complain about the air conditioning. Read I Peter before you go home, before you report another air conditioning on me, please.

It says in I Peter 2:9, “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” This is the end of the New Testament.

Let me say a few words. I always prepare people for this. The third point is the shortest point. Some of you in this air conditioning are laying out in the aisle. I got it. But the third point is always the shortest point. Hang with me.

The Privilege of God's Own Possession

The Privilege

There is a tremendous privilege wrapped up in being a people for God's own possession. I heard a news reporter the other day before I left home talking about extreme privilege with such a derogatory context. That is the spirit of this age. I do not even know what privilege is when growing up, but extreme privilege, awful thing. But do you realize we, the people of God's own possession, have the most extreme—can I borrow that without offending you?—extreme privilege that ever existed. A people for God's own possession. A people that will be made in His very image. A people that when they see Him, they shall be like Him, because they shall see Him as He is. What a day. In that day, we long for that day. Brothers and sisters, there are only two points I want to make on this last thing.

This privilege of being the people of possession. First, a chosen race. Now, I like this better in King James. I sort of go between Bibles. See, I get them all mixed up. If I quote by memory, I have half of King James and half of NASB and half of Darby. Well, that would be too many halves there. But third, I know you wonder how I ever made it as an engineer. I faked it the whole way. It says in the King James Version, you are a chosen generation. Is that not beautiful? Did you know that? But brothers and sisters, everyone in this room, everyone that has been redeemed by the precious blood, everyone that has been born of the Spirit is part of that privileged, chosen generation.

When I hear people talk about generations today, it makes my head spin. Only since my parents generations we have different generations. We have decided to divide people into seven generations. I cannot even keep them straight. I do not know where I am, and

I hardly know where you are. And you think about we have the Silent Generation. We have Baby Boomers. I am a Boomer. Do not do it to me. Do not come up and say, "Hey, Boomer." That is what they are supposed to say, like, to millennials, to people like me. I may be wrong. We have Generation X. We have the Millennials. We have Generation Y, we have Generation Z. And they affectionately call them the Zoomers. We have got Boomers and Zoomers running all over this auditorium, working up a sweat in the un-air-conditioned auditorium. There is Generation Alpha. I guess they did not know what to do. Go to the Greeks. It was good for the Lord Jesus. Alpha, let us go. And then they got Generation Beta. They have a long way to go before we run out. All by birth, all by birth dates, separated generations.

But God's heart was never to have but one generation, the chosen generation. When you were born of the Spirit of God, you were not another generation than me. Believe it or not, I know it may upset you to be in my generation, but you are in the one chosen generation. God only sees one. He chose it. They are His people for possession. It says in Psalm 24, verse six of Israel, "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah." You were part of that one generation. We do damage in the church by having Zoomers over here and Boomers over here, and any of the Silent Generation, if they have not all kicked the bucket, and Gen Z's and Gen Y's. Brothers and sisters, what do we need to be for the recovery of God to happen? We need to be the one chosen generation. I hope you understand that that is what God is after.

A People for God's Own Possession: Treasure, Jewels, and Inheritance

And then let me end with this phrase again to give you a little bit more insight. A people for God's own possession. There cannot be much more privileged than to say My own possession. Can you imagine? God says that of you and me. It seems too good to be true. But it is true. It is absolutely true. We are His own possession. There cannot be a higher privilege. Out of all the people on the face of the earth, all the people. How wonderful that is. As a matter of fact, what this means interpreted in King James Version, in that verse Exodus 19:5 we read, means a peculiar treasure. Can you imagine that God called you and me His treasure. It is almost unimaginable. My treasure. In Hebrew, it means a valued, a highly valued possession, a treasured property, a special jewel. And when you look in the King James Version in Malachi 3:17, He says, "When I make up my jewels." Is that not wonderful? What privilege, what privilege? I cannot imagine greater privilege than this. This is what it means.

There are two. There are two very short parables of the Kingdom in Matthew. In Matthew 13, they are back-to-back. This is the parable of the hid treasure. This is one verse. There is a whole of eternity loaded into this one verse, Matthew 13:44. "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hid in the field, which a man having found has hid, and for the joy of it goes and sells all whatever he has and buys that field." Do you know that is exactly what the Lord Jesus did? He sold everything. He gave up everything. He laid down everything just to buy this treasure. What a cost. What an unspeakable cost He paid to have His treasure. In this parable the field is the world, the treasure is the church, and the man is Christ, the only one who gave all. There is a famous saying, all give

some, but some give all, very often those that lay down their life in service. I would love to change that. All gave some, but one gave all. And He gave it all so that you might be His special treasure. That is what it means, a people for My own possession.

In Matthew 13:45 and 46 is the parable of the pearl. It is similar again. "Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; and having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it." That is what you mean to the Lord. Some people know the King James version talks about peculiar people. I think most of us would agree with that translation. Well, yes, I have been in church life a lot. And know they are peculiar people, really peculiar. But those peculiar people, it is archaic term. It really means a treasure, a people for God's own treasure.

Conclusion

Well, that is about all of my burden. I will mention one sentence. It means also a people for God's own possession, for God's own inheritance. Now, can you imagine a poor inheritance like that? Linda and I, we received an inheritance of a part of a pig farm in North Carolina. We were among, I think, 42; there were not enough pigs to go around. What a measly inheritance. But we are God's inheritance. I will never forget that it was one time, Jerry, it was here at this conference, Stephen Kaung was reading Ephesians 1:10, and he talks about Christ, our inheritance. Whoa. Now, that is when he is talking about the church. Now, that is an inheritance. We got Christ. And then he read Ephesians 1:18, and it says the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Oh, what a mystery. I do not know if I would ever have been anointed enough like Paul to write about the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And I will never forget Brother Kaung said, "Who do you think got the best deal?"

Oh, dear Brothers, sisters. *Open our eyes that we may see. Open our ears that we may hear. Lord, capture us to be part of those people for Your own possession. Lord, cause us, by the work of that left hand, the Holy Spirit, to ourselves possess our possession in Christ Jesus. All these things we ask in Your precious name. Amen.*

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