

Recovery and Our Own Possession

Scripture Reading and Exhortation

Praise the Lord that we could be together like this. Would you really want to be anywhere else? Boy, that was weak. Would you really want to be anywhere else? Nowhere but in the presence of the Lord.

I will read some verses, some we have read before, a few. For the main part of tonight's message, I will read first Isaiah 11:11a. You know this by now. This is from the New American Standard Bible. "Then it will happen." That is a fact. When you read that, "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people."

Joshua 1:11b. This was the command to the children of Israel going into the land. And he simply said to go in that one thing. They were told to go in "to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it."

Obadiah 17. Again, New American Standard Bible, but on Mount Zion we have heard a great deal about Mount Zion. Praise the Lord. How wonderful. "But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape, And it will be holy. And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions."

Now I will read to you some new verses for tonight. I Peter, Chapter Two. This is verses four through ten. We will deal quite a bit with these. "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the disobedient, the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; who stumble at the word, being disobedient to which also they have been appointed. [And here is the verse; it has been the theme verse that I have used.] But ye are a chosen race [generation], a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light; who once were not a people, but now God's people; who were not enjoying mercy, but now have found mercy."

And I will go to Philippians. This is Philippians chapter three. Very familiar verses, four through ten. Excuse me, pardon me, I got that wrong. Ten through fifteen, beginning in ten. Do you know these verses? This was Paul's cry at the end. "To know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I

may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus.”

Let me read that verse twelve once again. “Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded; and if ye are any otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you.”

Let us pray. *Lord, we are so grateful for Your words. Where would we be without Your words? Lord Your words alone are Spirit and life. How we pray tonight, by the Holy Spirit, You would breathe upon these words and send them forth for the work that You want to do among us. Without You speaking, Lord, there is no value in us being here. Lord, we do not want to hear man's words. We only want to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And so, Lord, we ask You to breathe on these words in the name, in the precious name, in the only name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

God's Cry: Recovery and Possessing

Well, everyone knows by now our theme: the cry, God's cry. It was not just the cry; it was God's Cry for This Hour—Recovery and Possessing. In the end, He is crying out to His people, and He wants His people to hear that cry. And He wants His people to respond to that cry. And when they do, He will have a people for His own possession. And when they do, we will possess that which we have been possessed for in Christ Jesus. Do you understand? The whole thing comes together, the whole thing. When we hear the cry of God for this hour, and we respond to that cry, God's recovery work is done. God's recovery work is done. And we enter into all, and we enjoy all that has been made available to us in Christ Jesus. And we delight in that vast inheritance that can never fade away. This is what the theme is about. How merciful He is.

Tonight, will be the second and last message that I have. Recovery and His Own Possession was the first one. We need to see something, brothers, and sisters. We need to see something very clearly. We need to have a new perspective where we see, first of all, the recovery work of God is centered in Him—Him getting something for Himself. If He does not, His purpose will never be fulfilled. So, I think most of us as believers—forgive me if I offend some of you—I think most of us as believers are rather self-centered. Our first thought is, “Lord, what is in it for me? What will You do for me?” Oh, dear brothers and sisters, I think the key to Him accomplishing His recovery work is to see that He wants a possession for His own. That is the first message. Tonight's message is Recovery and Our Own Possession.

You see, God never had in view that He would just possess a people for Himself. He had a view that people would possess Him. That people would realize what great work

He has done to deliver them from the house of bondage and bring them into eternal life. And they would, in fact, possess all that is made available in Christ Jesus.

So, the first part is God's part, the second part is our part. And think about it: if on our part we do not respond, will He have what He wants? I think not. God took the greatest risk. I am not sure we will ever understand why He did it. But He chose to not work without man.

Can you imagine? Think about it, brothers, and sisters. The God of glory who made everything and the God of glory who owns everything does not need us. Do you think He needs us? He chose us. You were divinely selected. You were divinely elected. You were chosen from the foundation of the world. You were not an afterthought; you were a forethought.

Somehow all the other options did not fail. And He said, "Well, I will take the nations, maybe they will work out." It was never, never His thought. His eternal thought from the beginning is that we would possess our own possession in Christ Jesus. And the glory of His purpose is that this God who made everything and owns everything is the one who brings us and includes us in this purpose.

I will never forget one time, Brother Kaung, years ago was speaking on I Corinthians 1:9. You know, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." That is one of the most powerful verses in the whole Bible. It begins with "God is faithful." What important three words! None of His purpose would be accomplished without those three words. Think about it. God is faithful, who has called you into the fellowship of His Son.

He made a statement I will never forget. It was 2007. He gave these messages in Richmond, Virginia. And he said the Godhead decided they would expand their fellowship. Can you imagine? They had the whole universe, not just our universe. They had our solar system. They had everything. And yet one day they said, "Let us include man." It is hard to take in. This has always been the purpose of God.

God's Call and Our Response

Well, tonight I want us to look at three things. Just three things. I think if we are going to enter into owning our own possession, these three things have to happen. First, recovery requires a response. That is the most important thing I could tell you. I could sit down right now. Recovery requires a response. Secondly, He needs a people who will possess their own possession, lay hold of Christ and all that has been made available, all that vast inheritance, enter into the riches of His grace. Enter in, as it says in Ephesians chapter 2, "The surpassing riches of his grace." I said faith first, but grace, you understand. I am a little tired at the end of this week. I have been running around a little bit. I think maybe you have seen that. But oh, that we would enter in and lay hold and possess. And if we do, God will have everything that He is looking for. The third thing we will look at is so essential that we have. It is a passion to possess our possession.

Recovery Requires a Response

That is what this means. Recovery requires a response. It is a vital necessity for us to understand this one thing. If we do not respond, there is no recovery. Let me put it in the dogmatic way that I thought the Holy Spirit spoke to me: no response, no recovery. Do you understand that? This is the secret of the Bible. This God is looking for a response. This sovereign God has poured out grace and mercy on us and determined to include us in His eternal plan. Unthinkable. If you told this story to somebody who had never heard this, they would say, "You are making this up." But it is altogether true. It is altogether wonderful.

May the Lord lead us into a deeper possessing of who He is, as Brother Jerry put it, "His full thought." That is what He wants to come out of this conference. Not only is God after a people for His own possession, but He is also looking for a corresponding response in a people who possess their own possession in Christ Jesus. Will He have that corresponding response? Will He have it? That is the question that is before us. He is always looking for a remnant that responds. That is such a wonderful thing, God, if just He knows. He knows us. He knows us from the beginning. He knows what we are like. And if He gets just a response from a remnant, enough, He will complete His work. It is enough.

Oh, that is the story of the return from the captivity. So small of a remnant returned out of that million or so that went into captivity—60,000, 55,000. Now, if you were managing that return as some kind of return director, you would say this is a failure. I thought He called everyone back, but, you know, with God, this was a success. I will never forget, I heard someone say one time about speaking. He said, if one hears and one responds to what he has heard or she has heard, it is enough.

God is looking for a remnant of His people. As we read in Isaiah 11:11a, "Then it will happen," just the remnant responding. "Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people." Could you imagine if God had said, "Unless I get them all, nobody gets in." How depressing the Bible would be. But thank God for His mercy that He shows to us. No response, no recovery; no response, no possession. This is essential when we talk about us possessing our own possession. Response is the vital key.

God's Call and a Personal Story

You know, brothers and sisters, God is always calling, and God is always looking for a response. That is the key to the Bible. From the beginning of the Bible to the end of the Bible, God is always calling and always looking for a response. Now, my wife is going to have to forgive me for this. Linda, close your ears. She puts a time stamp on my illustrations. She says that it expires like milk in the grocery store. You are going to drink by so and so.

I did a crazy thing in my life trying to run an engineering business. I decided I was going to go back and get my master's degree when I was 50 years old. And my partner

said, "You are absolutely crazy, so we are not going to pay you anymore." I said, "No, I just want to do it." So, I did it. And, I will be honest with you, I got a little tired of engineering courses.

So, I went to my advisor. We all have these advisors, and they tell you your plan and where you go. And I said, I would like to take this course on the history and aesthetics of jazz. He looked at me like I was a Martian. He said he knew me. Matter of fact, I did engineering on buildings there at the University of Virginia. And he knew my firm very well. He said, "Why don't you take matrix analysis?" And I said, "I do not want to take matrix analysis." And I finally convinced him. I said, "Look. Look at this curriculum. One elective allowed." And he gave in. "Can I take it?" And I left his office smiling. And I went to that class. I got more out of this one class than all of my engineering classes.

I went, and the professor, I remember, he was explaining the history of jazz uniquely. I am not trying to convince you on jazz. If you think I am, please forgive me. I do not really follow jazz that much. I just wanted to take the course, and I got an A in it. And I remember seeing that professor playing the keyboard, telling us the history of jazz. He said the whole history of jazz comes from the African experience of call and response. The whole thing. You remember from my old days growing up, watching Tarzan on TV in black and white. You remember they would play the drums in the jungle. And they would play these drums from a long distance. And then from a long way away, someone would hear these drums and begin to play the drums back. And there would be a response to the call.

I did not hear anything else that professor said. I said that is the Bible. That is an explanation of the whole Bible. God is always calling, and God is always looking for a response. You remember after man fell, I told you, God never gives up. Do you remember after Adam and Eve fell and they hid from Him in the garden? And it says in Genesis 3:9, "And Jehovah Elohim called to Man, and said to him, Where art thou?" Brothers and sisters, the God of glory is still calling to us. Where are you? Where am I? What are we doing with our lives? It is just one call that went out in creation: "Where art thou?" Why did He do it? Fellowship was broken. Sin came in. This God of recovery wanted to restore man back to that fellowship, that exclusive fellowship into which he was called. Where art thou?

God's Call in the Old and New Testaments

You remember how the Old Testament ends. Everybody knows the two verses: the one in Zechariah 1:3 and the one in Malachi 3:7. "Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts." This is the call at the end of the Old Testament. He is always calling. He is always looking for a response. If He does not get the response, His work will not be completed.

Well, I told you the other night, that other day, Malachi is such a depressing book. And the response that those Jews said to the Father was, they said, "But ye say, Wherein shall we return?" Does not that sound like Laodicea? They were rich. They thought they

were rich, in need of nothing. “Wherein shall we return? Have we drifted away? Have we gone to our own things instead of Your things?” Oh, what a sad, sad commentary. But that is the last call in the Old Testament. That is the call that is still going out to the people of God.

If you look, our brother, our brother, this morning talked about the letters to the seven churches. And it is interesting. Those seven churches, the exact same divine call, went out to each one of them: He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And because God is so gracious, He said, He that overcomes. If a few of you respond, it will be enough. You know, God did not give up. Thank God for that.

The New Testament begins with God crying again. You know the story of John the Baptist. He was the voice. How would you like to just be known as the voice? He was the voice of God crying in the wilderness about making the path straight for His own Son, the Lord Jesus. How it says in John 1:23. Again, this is from the New American Standard Bible. “He said, ‘I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.’”

Brothers and sisters, there is a call always going out. The question is, will there be a return response? This is the vital question in God's cry for this hour. Will My people respond to Me? Will My people ignore Me like they did in Malachi and say, “Wherein shall we return? What have we done?” Will we be like Laodicea, saying we are in need of nothing?

Oh, I think, brothers and sisters, if I have one word to leave with you, it is: God is looking for your response. God is looking for a corporate response so that He can have a people of His own possession. Oh, He called the children of Israel out of Egypt to be a people for God's own possession and to possess what He gave them in the promised land. This is the figure of the church in the Old Testament. This is a shadow, as it talks about in Hebrews. This is a type. Of course, when we come to the New Testament, we see the church. And what is the church defined as? It is defined as the called-out ones gathered together. That is the whole definition of the church. It is not that complicated, called-out ones gathered together.

Called According to His Purpose

Oh, I think of Romans 8:28 and 29. And you all know this, but I will read it. There are many new ones here. These are two of the most important verses in the Bible. It explains God's purpose and eternal will in two verses. It says in verse twenty-eight, “But we do know that all things work together for good.” A lot of people make this feel-good verse. I do not know if you know that. They stop right there. They say, “Oh, do not worry about it. You may have been in a car accident and your house burned down. Do not worry. All things work together for good.” That is not what he said. That is not what he was saying. “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose.”

If you leave that out, you cannot have an understanding of what that verse means. “Because whom he has foreknown”—remember, you were chosen, divinely selected before the foundation of the world in whom He has foreknown—“he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren.” Think of that, brothers, and sisters. Can there be a higher call than that? Can there be a more heavenly call than to be called, to be conformed to the image of His Son?

And so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren that are like Him? This is what God is looking to possess as His own possession. Oh, how wonderful it is. There cannot be a more heavenly call than this. The question is, have we responded to that call? Called according to purpose? Have we seen that purpose? Have we laid hold of that purpose and apprehended that purpose for our own? That is the question that is really before us tonight.

Do we hear the call of God in response? Let me tell you how you do that. It is very simple. God is only looking for a willingness. Now, Jerry, I think some of these guys, I think his brother, our brother, talked about getting bites, his material being taken away. He sort of stole my Corrie Ten Boom story. I want you to know that I am going to work on praying for forgiveness, but I am not sure about that. So, bite part of the thing. But that is okay.

A Willing Heart and God’s Work in Us

There must be a willingness to be a real response. Are we willing? Are we willing? Why is this so important to God? Why did He want a willing response? Because God does not want a coerced response. That is when you are forced. That is when you are compelled rather than constrained by the love of God. He is never looking for that. He will never force you. This is the mystery of free will. Now, I am not going to solve the argument about free will tonight. But I can. I happen to be a Calvinist. I know some of you will not believe that, but I am also an Arminian, all at the same time. God is big enough that He can predestine things before the foundation of the world. And He is big enough to give us a free will so that we can freely respond to His grace or not.

Oh, I know I am going to get in trouble from some of you devout Calvinists. Do not charge the stage all at once. Thank God for free will. What a big God. I heard you told me that story last night. It was powerful. 1912 Scottish, right? They were sitting in there talking about predestination, right? And free will, and the 9th through 12th graders, they got it. They said, our God—I do not know, if I have it right, dear brother—our God is so magnificent. Our God is so big. Our God is so enormous. He can do two things at once.

So, He is looking for a willing response. He is looking for a willing response. I will never forget all those years Lance shared at these conferences. Our dear brother Lance. We loved Lance. We are so grateful. I do not know if you—I will tell you a little backstory. I might be getting in trouble. Do it like they do soccer: add some time at the end. I kind

of like the World Cup. Give me some penalty time, whatever things are, you know. Lance would.

In '73, Brother Kaung said to us—we were having another Christian fellowship conference—and he said, “There is this brother in England. His name is Lance Lambert.” He said, “I think it is one of the clearest testimonies of Jesus”—we heard a lot about that today—“in the whole of Europe.” He said, “It is worth the risk.” Lance came, and he was with us for years. And I can remember often Lance, in that perfect British accent, would quote Psalm 110, verse 3: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”

Are we a willing people? Let me read. I will read from the Old Testament. This is—you see this a lot, and I am not going to have so much time to explain. First, I Chronicles 29, verse nine says, this is when David was talking about the offering being given for the temple, because you remember it was in David's heart to build the house of God all his life. He never did, but he never stopped preparing for it. In verse nine, it says, “And the people rejoiced because they offered willingly, for with perfect heart.” Have you got that? They offered willingly with perfect heart. So, to me, a perfect heart is a willing heart. That is the simple definition. “They offered willingly to Jehovah; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” How wonderful that is.

In Philippians 2:13, it says, “For it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to his good pleasure.” Is not that wonderful? Think about it. We are talking about God's recovery work. It is God who works in you, the willing, one version says, and the doing for His good pleasure. How marvelous. I will never forget, I was a young Christian. The Lord spoke to me about something I am not going to tell you. I was not willing. I could not do it. I did not want to do it. Those were months of agony. I went to our dear brother Kaung. I said something to him. I thought he would rebuke me, and I would have understood. I said, Brother, I am not willing to do what God is asking. I cannot do it. He said, why don't you pray this? I will never forget these words. He said, just pray, Lord, I am willing to be willing. Did you hear me? It is God that works in us, the willing and the doing for His good pleasure. And that day I went home and I prayed, Lord, I am willing to be willing. And He moved my heart. And within a few days, obedience followed. Do you understand? Oh, that we would just be willing to be willing.

“I Will Go”: Rebekah's Answer and Ours

There is one story in the Old Testament that talks about a willingness better than any, and it is the story of Isaac and Rebekah. You remember the story. You remember Abraham wanted everything for his son. Now you know that is a shadow of the Father and the Lord Jesus. I always say God is Son-centric. Everything God does is for His Son. With His Son, the Son is the center of His universe. We have told it before. We are here in the center of the universe in Ashland, Virginia. You may not know that, you may not even believe that, but that is what they have as their slogan— You go to their website. Ashland, what? 5,000 people. The center of the universe. Paris must be jealous. London must be irate. New York is downright going to come down here and burn Ashland to the ground. Sorry, Ray.

Do you understand, brothers and sisters? The center of the universe to God is His Son. Everything has to do with His Son. It is all for His Son. And Abraham told His servant in Genesis 24, "Go find a wife for my son, not of the people of the land." Now does not that sound like God's eternal purpose. God told the Holy Spirit, "Go find a wife for my Son, the Lord Jesus." That is what the whole Bible is about. I will never forget those early years, the first time Lance said it, it blew us all away. He said, "The Bible is about a wedding in the beginning with Adam and Eve, and the Bible is about a wedding in the end when the bride is made ready and Christ has His bride."

And so, Abraham said to his servant, "Go find this one." Do you remember the scene at the well? He prayed, the servant bowed before the Lord, and his fleece, he set out was, "When the women come, I will pray that this one will give me to drink and to give my camels to drink," you remember, "if it be the one." And that one came, Rebecca, this beautiful woman, she came and he asked for a drink, and she gave him to drink. And then she said, "I will give drink to your camels." God answered that prayer.

But the story really gets to the end. He was there to bring her to be the wife of Isaac. And he went to her family and talked about this being from Abraham and all these things. They said to her, they said, "Will you go with this man?" Think of the question, will you go with this man? Does not that sound like an altar call? Does not that sound like the purpose of God? Does not that sound like the eternal purpose? Will you go with this man? And do you remember, in Genesis 24, verse fifty-eight, she said just these three words. She said, "I will go." There is a willing heart, brothers, and sisters. The Lord Jesus is looking for a people for His own possession. And He is waiting to hear those exact same words; I will go with Him. That is when He will be able to complete His recovery work.

People Who Possess Their Possession

A People for His Own Possession

The second thing I want to talk about is people who possess their own possession. His recovery is not complete until we possess our own possession. As a matter of fact, when you come to, I Peter 2:4-9, we see that last occasion where that phrase occurs in the whole Bible, that God is after a people for His own possession. And we discover what that context is. It is the church. It is the church. What you see in I Peter chapter two in those verses, is the response of the church. It is not just an individual calling. Sometimes we always just talk about an individual call. An individual calling is important. But here is a corporate calling for people to rise up and be that people He is looking for. That is of tremendous importance.

If I were to borrow something, David, I am going to steal something from you, brother. This is my bite back. I will try to be gentle. He said something, I think, that was the most profound thing, one of the most profound things I have heard. He said the unit of possession is the church. Think of it. God has always been looking for a house. God has always, from the very beginning, been looking for a house. I think of the patriarchs. I

think of Abraham, and I think of Jacob. We have already talked about Isaac, right? The whole thing of the story of Isaac is to see the eternal plan, that God wants a wife for His Son. But with Abraham and Jacob, two of the most prominent patriarchs, we see something precious about the house of God. Matter of fact, when God first told Abraham to go out and go to a land—and I will read you some verses in a moment—the first revelation of God, now, God spoke to him. Remember, when he was in Mesopotamia, He spoke to him. But the first revelation of God involved the house of God.

Bethel and Ai: House of God or Heap of Stones

As a matter of fact, the first mention of the house of God in the Bible is when God took Abraham before Bethel, the house of God, and before Ai. And there are only two places. And he pitched his tent toward them and he built an altar. You know the story. This is all in Genesis. You know the story quite well. The point is, when He first revealed Himself to Abraham, the thing that He wanted to show him was the house of God, Bethel. And then aside from the house of God, there was Ai. And Ai means a heap of stone. That is what Ai is. Bethel means the house of God. Ai means a heap of stones. These are stones that are disconnected, stones that are not joined into a building. Stones that we would probably call rubble. Just loosely laying everywhere with no purpose and no idea of what they were supposed to be.

Now, I hope you know where I am going. That is true of much of the church. We have no idea. We know we have been saved. We have no idea. We are just this loose rubble that was intended to go into the house of God and never went into the house of God. But now when you go to, I Peter 2, you see living stones. As a matter of fact, I Peter 2, you see the living stone. I like that. What is it? This one version? I was thinking it was the Weymouth version that I thought was very precious. Oh, it says, “The ever-living stone.” How beautiful. Here there was a house to be built. This is what Peter shared about on this ever-living stone. That was the first one. And you, it says in verse five, as living stones are built up to be a house for the Lord. This was the revelation to Abraham. Abraham returned to that place again. He returned to that place and built an altar again.

Here is the question for us as the people of God are: Have we seen Bethel, the house of the living God? Have you seen it? This is precious to God. When you read, I Peter 2, you understand the reoccurrence of the word precious. It talks about this ever-living stone being precious to you, who believe, is the preciousness. Is the Lord Jesus precious to you? Is He precious to you?

Every one of us in this room has to answer that if there is going to be a response. But is the second part of that same revelation—the house of God and we being called to be living stones—is that precious to you? Often it is not. We hear people all the time saying, “Oh, I have tried that church life stuff you talk about. I got offended. I did not like it. I do not understand it. I am just going to be me and God.”

How many people have not really seen this vision till it takes us over? It took Abraham. It was his first, first revelation. It was the revelation he returned to. Oh, that we would see the house of God. Oh, that we would be living stones in the house of God. Oh, that we would be built together in the house of God. If you are, then God will do His recovery work. And if you do, you will possess your possession.

Jacob, Bethel, and El Bethel

Oh, we need to see that. But I think of another, I think of another patriarch. I think of Jacob. God called Himself, when Moses was there at the burning bush, you remember, he was this not-so-fearsome deliverer. By that point, God had humbled him, and God talked about sending him. And he said, "Who do I say sent me?" And He said, "Tell them the I AM sent you. I AM what I AM." But then He said, "Tell them the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me unto you." Brothers and sisters, oh, God wants us to see the beauty of His house. He wants us to see the beauty of Him, providing a bride for His Son and all that it means. The whole of the Bible is about that one item. That is the ending response He is looking for.

But with Abraham, he saw that house of God. He was never the same. He was never the same. Jacob, you remember, he had that dream of the ladder. He took that stone. The young people, by the way, and the children are sharing on Jacob. Is that not right, brother? Also 9th through 12th are it as well. And on that stone, he had a dream. Do you remember his dream? And his dream was of Bethel. He said, "This is the house of God."

Oh, this place. Let me read a few verses. This is Genesis 28. Let me, let me turn to 28:16. Genesis 28:16-17 says, "And Jacob awoke from his sleep, and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." What a revelation. Jacob was changed by this dream.

But when we read chapter 35, we see another revelation, right? We see Bethel is mentioned six times in chapter 35. These are the only times up to now the house of God has ever been mentioned in the Bible to Abraham, or who became Abraham, and to Jacob. And Jacob turned this place called Luz into El Bethel, the only time that word occurs in the whole of the Bible. Do you think that is important? That is important. El Bethel means the God of the house of God. Bethel means the house of God. There are two things you need to see, only two things for God to have what He wants: you need to see the God of the house of God. Have you seen Him? Have you seen Him? Has the Lord revealed Himself to you? And you know the God of the house of God. And then have you seen the house of God? This is what I Peter 2 is about. The God of the house of God is that elect precious stone, the stone which the builders rejected, precious indeed. But the house of God, those living stones being built up for a house for the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, these two things we need to see. The house of God is most important for the recovery work. I like what David said. I will never forget it. The unit. The unit. The house of God for possession. I remember when I was a younger, younger

believer. That was a long time ago. I remember a story by Brother Nee that was life-changing for me. Brother Nee, he went to England. Some of you know this story. George Cutting, you know, George Cutting was one of those dear brethren and he wrote a famous tract called "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment." It is the three words, right? Some of you know that it was based on a train. A train. That the Christian life is a train ride. And where are you in this Christian life? Wonderful tract. Get it and read it. Matter of fact, I learned the other day from somebody talking about training down from New York. I never knew there was such a thing as training. I thought that was like baby training or toilet training or dog training. It is a noun, training. They do not teach engineers those things.

Oh, brothers and sisters, we need to see the house of God. We need to see the God of the house of God. That is what will make a difference. And Brother Nee saw those two things, and it changed his whole ministry. George Cutting was passing away. He was in and out of consciousness. He was on his deathbed. And George Cutting would once in a while revive. And George Cutting, who loved the Lord with all of his heart, he said, "I cannot live without my Lord, and He cannot live without me." What a revelation. We often say, "I cannot live without my Lord," but is He so precious to you that you can say, "He cannot live without me"? That is the eternal purpose.

Brother Nee went back to China, and God expanded his revelation, just like Jacob. And he said, "I cannot live without my brothers and sisters, and they cannot live without me." Can you live without your brothers and sisters?

Some of us choose to live without our brothers and sisters. We think about church life. We think, "Oh, it is hard. Church life is hard." The cross will work in church life. The cross will really do its work in church life.

And I have heard people say, "I did not like that church." They are searching for a perfect church.

Jessica, my daughter, just went with her family down to Georgia and Florida, and she texted me this picture. I love this picture. I will share it with you if you want me to, but you have to ask nice. I will never forget. I could not believe it was actually on this building. This was in Pittsburgh, Georgia. I did not even know there was such a place. It is historic. I know Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but here in this historic suburb of Georgia, there was this church building. They said, "The Perfect Church." I could not believe it. If that really is the perfect church, I suggest at the end of this coming conference, we all sell our homes and move to Pittsburgh, Georgia. The perfect church. I think maybe I would offer to go down there with a little can of paint and do one of those inserted letters: "The almost perfect church."

Because Lance used to always say something, but he got it from Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He said, "If there is a perfect church, the moment you go there, the church will no longer be perfect." Brothers and sisters, how we need to see the God of the house of God. How we need to see the house of God. How we need to be built together

as living stones, shaped and fashioned so God would have His spiritual house, that we could show forth His praises. This is what I Peter 2 is about.

Peter, Paul, and the Revelation of the Church

Well, this was the revelation not only, not only of Abraham, not only was it the revelation of Jacob, but this was also the revelation of Peter. You remember Caesarea Philippi. He saw two things, right? This revelation, people. The Lord said He is setting His face like flint towards Jerusalem. And He says, who do men say that I am? And they all had these, what they thought were complimentary guesses comparing Him. Some say John the Baptist, and some say Elias, and some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The whole point, brothers and sisters, no one compares to the Lord Jesus. There is no comparison. And He looked at them in the face and He said, who do men say that I am? And God Himself gave Peter the revelation. He said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That day, Peter saw El Bethel. Do you understand? That is why he wrote I Peter 2. And then the Lord had a second part to that revelation. He said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock," meaning this revelation of the Lord Jesus, "I will build my house, and the gates," or, "I will build my church," or, "I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

He was saying, "Peter, you are a stone." The question was, is he going to be a living stone built in the house of God? That is the response. That is the thing we have to do to possess our possessions.

It was the revelation of Paul. You remember Paul on the Damascus Road, heard from the heavens, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" I can understand his confusion. He probably lay there blind on the ground, thinking, "I was not persecuting you, Lord." He called Him Lord right away: "Lord, I was not persecuting you. It was the people that follow you." But here is the eternal purpose of God: you touch the church and you touch the Lord. They are inseparable.

And then, you remember, Paul went on into Damascus, and he ran into this fellow Ananias. And there he discovered, there he discovered brethren. There he discovered a brother in the Lord. There he saw the house of God. He had seen El-Bethel, the God of the house of God. But then when he went into Damascus, he saw Bethel. And if it were no Ananias, there would be no Paul. Of course, he was Saul. Then there would be no Saul. He would still be blind.

This was the vision. This was the vision he wrote in Ephesians the same thing he saw. Do you remember Ephesians 1:9 and 10? It talks about the mystery of God to sum up all things in Christ. That is the first part. That is El Bethel. That is the God of the house of God. But then, if you look at the second part in Ephesians 3:9 and 11, you see the church. You see the church. You cannot, in God's economy, see the Lord without seeing the church and possess your possessions. You have to see both. You remember, it says,

“And now unto the principalities and powers shall be made known the all-various wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose.” Oh, we have to see this.

The Priesthood of All Believers and the Church’s Mission

These two things will make a difference. We have to not only do that, but we also have to see the priesthood. I Peter 2 talks about priesthood twice, in verse five and in verse 9. In verse 5, it talks about a holy priesthood. In verse 9, it talks about a kingly priesthood. Brothers and sisters, in the church as we see it as a whole today, people do not understand the priesthood of all believers. If God is going to do His recovery work and possess a people for His own possession, there needs to be a recovery, a real recovery of the priesthood of all believers.

Down through the church age, people believed in it, but did not practice it. Martin Luther believed in the priesthood of all believers. And I may be wrong, but I think Martin Luther thought it was a little too radical. Never practiced it, but I remember what Daniel has shared with us. I am so thankful for those little introductions, for the hymn. I remember he said how God began to recover in 1825 through this little group called the Brethren. Their main contribution to the church, I believe, was the priesthood of all believers. You are a priest; I am a priest. We need to begin to function like priests in the house of God instead of leaving all the spiritual service up to a select few. This is so vital. There will not be any recovery without it. The priesthood of all believers.

A sister in Richmond, as another of my illustrations, has been pushed to the past due line. A sister whom I baptized grew up in an orphanage, never knew her parents. Catholic orphanage, they saved her life. She is in debt. She loved those nuns that raised her and helped her. And she told me one day before she was baptized, she said, “Kenny, all I ever wanted to be was a nun.” I said, “Sister, did you know God made you a priest?” She could not believe it. We baptized her. She is full of joy, inexpressible and full of joy.

Oh, we need to be that. We need to be the holy nation. Holiness was impossible in the Old Testament. It is impossible. You could not. There could not be real holiness under the law. It says clearly in Galatians and clearly in Romans that there is no way to be perfected according to the law. But let me tell you what God did. God did an amazing thing. He put the Holy Spirit, the left hand of God Dana has been talking about, within you so that He could bring you into holiness. And when Peter wrote about it in this book, I Peter, he said, we are sanctified, which is the same word as holiness, which means, according to its Greek context, being made holy. It is the Holy Spirit that is transforming us into a holy nation. Never happened in the Old Testament, thank God. In this last recovery, the second time it will happen. If we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, it will happen.

Now, the result of all this, we read finally in this verse. Let me go to I Peter again. I think you know this verse, but I will read it. I Peter 2, verse 9. “But ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful [marvelous]

light.” Think of it. That is the one purpose of the Church: to show forth His excellencies. The testimony of Jesus, as we heard this afternoon so well, is the expression of who Christ is. And the Church's one mission is not to express herself; it is to show forth the excellencies of Him that has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have no light in ourselves. Was not our brother talking about the lampstand? You remember that the lampstand itself has no light. It literally means light-bearer. That is all the lamp does. We are the Church. We are the lampstand. But we bear the light.

And if you remember, because God's word is true, to the same purpose from the beginning to the end. When you look in chapter one of Genesis in the creation story, there are two great lights. You remember that one was the sun to rule by day, and one was the moon to rule by night. The sun is the source of all the light. The moon. I do not know if you want to ever move to the moon. I do not know if Elon Musk can talk us into all moving to the moon, but it is a pretty awful-looking sphere to me. It is pockmarked. You seem to like it. You said you will be one of Elon Musk's volunteers. This pocked surface and this dust, and there would be nothing at all of beauty of the moon, this small light, if it were not the sun radiating its own source of light onto the moon, and that light outshining as a reflection from the moon.

We are blessed. Every month we get a full moon. Now you cannot always see it. It could be a cloudy night. I love full moons. Do you ever go out in the full moon? I think Linda wonders maybe what I am doing. Sometimes I will wander outside, the full moon and the stars. And you can almost read a book by that reflected light from who Christ is, that you might show forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

A Passion for Possession

Now, the last point I want to make—it's a very short one, but it's most vital. It has to do with one of the things I want you to remember. Above all, it is a passion for possession. Let me ask you something: do you have a passion to possess your possession? Let me read you Paul's again, that short testimony of Paul in Philippians at the end of his life to the church he loved the most, which was Philippi, he shared his deepest secret. He had a special bond with Philippi. He wrote to his own beloved son in the faith, and in II Timothy he said, “All Asia has left me.” That was the end of his life. Can you imagine the heartbreak, the sorrow? But let me tell you, Philippians never left him. Philippians never changed.

And so, you share your deepest secrets with the ones you love the most. And to them he shared his deepest secret. I will just read you the one verse and we will close. But I think this is a secret. I think it is a very great secret. This is Philippians 3, verse 12: “Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it.” That was his secret. “I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus.” Brothers and sisters, this was the secret. This is what he said, I pursue this thing. I pursue. This is the prize. I am not

already perfect, but one thing I do, forgetting that which lies behind this possession I pursue. Let me end with this.

Conclusion

Is this your passion? I tell people all the time, passion solves a lot of problems. In the Christian life, we have lots of problems, right? The Christian walk is not easy. The Lord never said it would be easy. But if you have a singular passion for the Lord Jesus and His purpose, many of your problems are solved. And this was His secret at the end. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, may we have that same passion. We talked about the R words that finally boil down to recovery. These are all the P words, the prize, pursuing, perfection, all to possess because I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus.

May we respond in that way? I pray more about, "Lord, increase in me a passion for Christ and His purpose." That is a prayer I make often. If Paul said, "I am no longer perfect," I am not even going there; I would not dare think that. But I will tell you this: if this one thing is true of you, you will be one that possesses your own possession in Christ Jesus, and God will have what He wants.

Father, we take all these things and give them back to You and pray, would You, by the Holy Spirit, speak to us? Lord, only the Holy Spirit can make these things clear. But we want to be the people who respond. We want to be that people who, in the church, find our place and who function, and You are able to build Your church. And one day it will be a perfect church, the perfect church without spot, without wrinkles, or without any such thing. Oh Lord, give us, above everything else, a passion for Yourself and a passion for Your purpose. In Jesus' name.

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