

THE SEVEN SPIRITS AND OUR SPIRIT

Message 4

Being Burning in Spirit to Serve the Lord and Fanning into Flame the Indwelling Gift to Preach the Gospel

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:11; 2 Tim. 1:6-7

- I. **Those who have a desire to serve God must know that God is a consuming fire that burns and energizes—Heb. 12:29; Ezek. 1:27; Dan. 7:9-10; Luke 12:49-50; 1 Thes. 5:19; Rev. 4:5:**
 - A. God is a consuming fire—Heb. 12:29; Deut. 4:24; 9:3.
 - B. The Lord Jesus came to cast fire on the earth; this fire is the impulse of the spiritual life—Luke 12:49-50.
 - C. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire, and the seven Spirits of God are the seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne—Ezek. 1:4; Acts 2:3-4; 1 Thes. 5:19; Rev. 4:5.
 - D. The divine fire, the burning Triune God, enables us to serve and even sacrifice our lives—Rom. 12:11:
 1. Our service must come out of the burning of God’s fire; this fire should be the energy, the driving force, the impulse, within us; if we have this fire, our service will be out of God, not out of ourselves—Exo. 3:2, 4, 6; Lev. 6:13; Luke 12:49.
 2. The burning of the seven Spirits as seven lamps of fire motivates us to rise up and take action for the carrying out of God’s economy—Rev. 4:5; Dan. 11:32b.
- II. **“Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord”—Rom. 12:11:**
 - A. Concerning practicing the church life, Romans 12 tells us that we need to present our bodies a living sacrifice (v. 1), be transformed by the renewing of the mind (v. 2), and be burning in spirit, serving the Lord; only if we are such persons can the church have a way to go on:
 1. The common problems in the church life lie in our presenting our bodies insufficiently, that is, not offering enough of our time; in our being lukewarm in spirit; and in our mind being strong in expressing opinions.
 2. Romans 12 shows that when our bodies are presented, our mind is renewed, and our spirit is burning the service will surely be successful; this is the secret for the church life to be strong.
 - B. If we desire to serve, not only must our body be presented and our mind be transformed by renewing, but our spirit must also be fervent and burning—v. 11; cf. Acts 18:25:
 1. Our spirit being burning refers to the exercise of the human spirit, the mingled spirit; our spirit must be burned and burning, on fire all the time—cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
 2. We may have presented our body and been renewed in our mind, but after a period of time, our spirit may become cold; although we still serve, there is no vigor within.
 3. Although the Lord is in our spirit, if we are not burning in spirit, He cannot burn; only when we are fervent and burning in spirit will the Lord burn within us.
 - C. The apostle Paul says, “Be burning in spirit”—Rom. 12:11:
 1. The word *be* here means that we need to take the initiative.
 2. Whether or not we are burning in spirit is our responsibility, not the Spirit’s responsibility—2 Tim. 1:6-7; cf. 1 Cor. 14:32; Isa. 64:7.

3. We must not be passive and slothful in exercising our spirit; if we are diligent to rise up and exercise our spirit the indwelling Spirit will follow us and manifest His unlimited riches and inexhaustible power—Rom. 8:6, 9-11.
- D. The unique requirement to be burning in spirit is to contact the Lord—cf. Eph. 5:18; 6:17-18:
1. We need to use our spirit to contact the Lord so that our spirit may be made alive; as a result, our spirit will be fervent and burning within us.
 2. We can be burning in spirit by praying in order to spend more and more time in the presence of the Lord; when we are genuinely burning in spirit, we are beside ourselves and are fools because of Christ—Matt. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:13; 1 Cor. 4:10.

III. “For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness”—2 Tim. 1:6-7:

- A. Second Timothy 1:6-7 indicates that we need to fan our spirit into flame:
1. We may say that the gift of God that we must fan into flame is a spiritual gift; but the spiritual gift is in our spirit—vv. 6-7.
 2. There is fire in our regenerated spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit; actually, we may say that our spirit is the fire; Paul reminded Timothy that there was a small fire within him, which he needed to fan into flame.
 3. The way to fan our spirit into flame is to open the three layers of our being: to open our mouth, to open our heart, and to open our spirit.
 4. To use our mouth with our heart and with our spirit to say, “O Lord Jesus,” is to open up our spirit from deep within; then the fire burns.
 5. When we are down, we should call “O Lord Jesus” again and again from deep within with the exercise of our spirit; then we will be up.
 6. Whenever there is the fanning, there is always a battle with Satan who tries to quench the fire being fanned within us; today there are many things that are like cold water, trying to quench our inner flame; when these things come, we have to fight and fan our spirit into flame; then we will be the highest persons, the super persons.
- B. We need to fan into flame the gift of God within us in order to preach the gospel—v. 6:
1. In order to do anything, we must know the secret of how to do it.
 2. We have been speaking about the God-ordained way for many years, and this speaking has been accepted, received, and honored in the Lord’s recovery; however, it is not sufficient to stir up the church to accept this way; what we need now is not more speaking, but for some to enter into the practice.
 3. Paul reminded Timothy to fan the gift of God into flame; it is not adequate merely to have a gift; we need to fan it into flame—v. 6.
 4. In every church there should be some individuals who are burning to contact people and bring them in—Acts 18:25.
 5. “I dream that the brothers and sisters would be burning to gain others. I can forget about eating and sleeping, but I cannot forget about this burden”—*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1991-1992*, vol. 3, p. 171.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE SPIRIT BEING BURNING

If we desire to serve, not only must our body be presented and our mind be transformed by renewing, but our spirit must also be fervent and burning. We may have presented our body and been renewed in our mind, but after a period of time, our spirit may become cold. Although we still serve, there is no vigor within. On the one hand, we know in our mind that we need to serve, but inwardly we are full of complaints. This kind of service may be compared to having cold water poured upon us. When we contact such persons in the service, it is like having cold water poured upon us. We can touch neither life nor the Spirit in such ones, because their spirit is not fervent or burning. Although they may be good brothers, the condition of their spirit is poor.

The proper service requires us not only to present our body and be renewed in our mind, it also requires us to be burning in spirit, because the Lord is in our spirit. Strictly speaking, although the Lord is within us, He may not be present when our body is present. Although He is the Spirit, if we are not burning in spirit, He cannot burn. Only when we are fervent and burning in spirit will the Lord burn within us. This is because He is in our spirit. When we are burning in spirit, we will present our body, and our mind will be renewed. When we are burning in spirit, we will not argue or reason in our service; rather, we will be full of thanksgiving and praise. This is to be burning in spirit. Only this can truly touch people.

A person whose spirit is on fire will not argue and reason; instead, he will be burning in spirit. We need such people in the church today. It is not necessary to minister the word from the podium in order to be burning. If we are burning in spirit when others contact us, they will be burned by our spirit and by the Christ in us even if we are simply cleaning the chairs. This kind of burning is genuine. Some brothers give “cold” messages. Those who listen to them may also become cold. However, sometimes a brother stands on the platform and does not speak clearly, yet when we hear him, we become burning in spirit. Perhaps at the beginning of his speaking, we were like a bowl of ice cubes, but after listening to him for ten minutes, the ice starts to melt, and after half an hour we become hot like boiling water. This is not a matter of arguing or reasoning. It is a matter of being set on fire in spirit. We need to be burning in spirit so that the Lord can burn within us.

Our Lord is holy fire, and we all need to be burned by Him. Romans says that our body needs to be presented, our mind needs to be transformed by being renewed, and our spirit needs to be burning. With these three conditions, we will be able to serve. I hope that the brothers and sisters will present their body, be renewed in their mind, and be fervent and burning in spirit. It is a dreadful thing to have a renewed mind without a burning spirit. If our spirit is not burning, it will become cold. Once it becomes cold, it will “freeze,” and once it freezes, it will become deadened. Therefore, our spirit must be burning. The unique requirement to be burning in spirit is to contact the Lord. To be burning in spirit is not a matter of doctrine; rather, we need to use our spirit to contact the Lord so that our spirit may be made alive. As a result, our spirit will be fervent and burning within us. (*CWWL, 1965*, vol. 4, “Experiencing the Spirit in the Epistles,” ch. 5, pp. 356-358)

TO FAN OUR SPIRIT

Second Timothy 1:6-7 indicates that we need to fan our spirit into flame. In these verses Paul says, “For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.” Some might think that these verses do not say that we should fan our spirit but that we should fan our gift. But if you get into these verses, you will see that the fanning of our gift into flame is the fanning of our spirit into flame. Paul tells us in verse 6 to “fan into flame the gift of God.” Then in verse 7 he says, “For God has not given us a spirit...” Our God-given spirit is what we must fan into flame. We have to fan our spirit.

We have to know the background of 2 Timothy to appreciate Paul's word here. Paul wrote this book during a difficult time for his spiritual son Timothy. Paul was in prison in Rome. Furthermore, all those in Asia had forsaken Paul's ministry (v. 15). The churches in Asia were the main churches raised up through Paul's ministry, but they forsook him. Timothy was there among them. If you were Timothy, how would you face the situation? People could have said to Timothy, "Why are you still following Paul? All the saints in Asia have forsaken him. Also, if God were really with him, He would rescue him from the prison in Rome." No doubt, Timothy was discouraged. Otherwise, Paul would not have said, "For which cause I remind you..." Timothy was discouraged and had to be reminded. Paul knew that Timothy was down, and he sympathized with him. He reminded Timothy that there was still a small fire within him, which he needed to fan into flame.

At times you may suffer to such an extent that you may begin to doubt God and doubt your salvation. But regardless of how much you doubt, one thing is within you that you cannot deny—your spirit. You are not like a beast. You have a spirit. This spirit is a trouble to Satan. Regardless of how much work Satan has done and is still doing, there is one thing within us that he cannot touch—our spirit. We need to fan our spirit into flame.

We may say that the gift of God that we must fan into flame is a spiritual gift. But without our spirit, how could we have the gift? The spiritual gift is in our spirit. There is fire in our regenerated spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Actually, we may say that our spirit is the fire.

A small fire that is fanned into flame can turn into a great fire. A forest fire is an example of this. The wind fans the small fire into a great fire. If something were burning within a house, and you wanted to fan that fire, you would open the window or the door. The wind would cause the fire to burn into a flame. The easiest way for you to fan your spirit is to open up your mouth.

If you want to fan your spirit into flame, you need to open up your mouth, open up your heart, and open up your spirit. You need to open these three layers of your being. You have to use your mouth to say, "O Lord Jesus." But then you have to go deeper by using your mouth with your heart to say, "O Lord Jesus." Then you need to go even deeper by using your mouth with your heart and with your spirit to say, "O Lord Jesus." This is to open up your spirit from deep within. Then the fire burns. If you are down, you should call "O Lord Jesus" again and again from deep within with the exercise of your spirit. Then you will be up.

We have to exercise such a God-given spirit. The capital for a person to run in a race is his God-created legs. Without God creating two legs for you, how could you run? You would have no capital with which to run. In like manner, if God did not give us a spirit, we would not have the capital to run the Christian race. But today we have a great account, a great deposit in the bank. We have a God-given spirit. As long as we have the God-given spirit, we have power, love, and sobermindedness with a clear sky.

Whenever there is the fanning, there is always a battle with Satan. While the fanning of a fire is going on, the fire department is fighting to quench the fire. This is an illustration of Satan trying to quench the fire being fanned within us. Today there are many things that are like cold water, trying to quench our inner flame. Sometimes a telephone call comes with bad news. Then someone comes to you with more bad news. Things will happen in our environment that can quench us. At that time we have to fight. We have to declare the facts. We have to fan our spirit into flame. Then we will be the highest persons, the super persons. (*CWWL, 1993*, vol. 2, "The Spirit with Our Spirit," ch. 8, pp. 182-185)

FANNING INTO FLAME THE GIFT OF GOD TO PRACTICE THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

In order to do anything, we must know the secret of how to do it. We have been speaking about the God-ordained way for several years. It is good that our speaking has been accepted, received,

and honored in the Lord's recovery. However, it is not sufficient to stir up the church to accept this way. History tells us that the way of stirring people does not work. The big revival in Wales in the early 1900s did not last long. When a new church begins with a few saints, it increases quickly, but when the number of saints arrives at about one hundred, there is often much preaching and speaking without much practice. What we need now is not more speaking; we need some to enter into the practice of the God-ordained way. Simply to encourage others and promote a burden is not effective. Rather, the elders and the co-workers should pay the price to practice what they are burdened for. If we mean business to preach the gospel, we must find a way to do it. There is no need to talk about theory; there has already been too much theoretical talk. Now there is the need for practice.

Paul told Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God that was in him (2 Tim. 1:6). To have a little burning is not adequate. We need to fan our gift into flame. The elders do not need to stir others up to contact people. Instead, they need to stir themselves up. There is little benefit for them to meet together every week without contacting any people. They may talk about problems for years without ever solving them. In all the churches there is much fellowship, talk, and teaching, but it is difficult to find one who practices the God-ordained way.

If someone is burdened for people, he should dream about ways to contact people in his neighborhood. There are many ways to contact people. One way is to print invitation cards to invite people to our home for afternoon tea, at which time we can have a little talk. If we do this for ten people, we may gain at least two of them. One hundred fifty years ago the Western powers subdued China, made unequal treaties with it, and pressed the government to force the Chinese people to open their cities and receive Westerners, including the missionaries. Although the people were forced to welcome the missionaries, no one would sell or rent a house to them. Therefore, the missionaries would find some place in the corner of the village to sleep at night, and in the day they would walk the streets to contact people. One missionary waited under a bridge for a certain man who sold bean cakes, and he bought as many as he could afford. After doing this several times, the two became friends. This was the way that the missionary found a contact. There are many stories like this. Through this kind of contact the way was opened for the old, conservative Chinese to receive the gospel.

Some may say that it is not easy to contact people where they are. However, there is still a way. Not everyone among the millions of people around us is a stubborn one. If we will contact people, there will be a way. One brother in Germany opened his bakery early in the morning and then left early in the afternoon. After coming home and washing, he went out to contact people for the Lord. To be sure, he did not do this in vain. Every year he gained two or three people in this way. Another brother with his wife often invited people to their home. Although the brother was not eloquent and he spoke with an accent, all those whom they invited received the help. If he could do this, we all can. The best way to gain people is to invite them to our home, perhaps for tea or for dinner. This leaves people with a deep impression that they cannot forget. This requires our time and labor. Every step of the God-ordained way requires someone to practice it. Eventually, we will gain someone, and then spontaneously we can have a small group meeting with those whom we gain.

All the elders welcome the God-ordained way, but very few practice it. The first eleven brothers in the church in Chefoo did not care for eating or sleeping. What was on our heart was to contact people day and night. That was the reason that we increased to about fifty people in only five months. In the following spring we moved to a new building, and our number increased to eighty. This demonstrates that we all need to pay the price to practice this way. Paul reminded Timothy to fan the gift of God into flame. It is not adequate merely to have a gift. We need to fan it into flame. Similarly, Paul says, "Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). Today many are busy, but they are not burning. To be busy doing something is one thing, but to be burning to do it is another. In every church there should be some individuals

who are burning to contact people and bring them in. I dream that the brothers and sisters would be burning to gain others. I can forget about eating and sleeping, but I cannot forget about this burden.

No one should say that he cannot speak well. The brother whom I mentioned could not speak well, but he helped many others. He forgot about everything else and simply invited people to his home, and no matter how many he invited, his wife cooked for them all. We need those who practice like this. We should not expect that the entire church will be revived. Instead, individual saints should rise up to practice the God-ordained way. (*CWWL, 1991-1992*, vol. 3, "Caring for the Church by Taking the God-ordained Way to Contact People," ch. 1, pp. 169-171)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985*, vol. 3, "The Proper Service to God in the Church."
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1965*, vol. 4, "Experiencing the Spirit in the Epistles," ch. 5.
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1961-1962*, vol. 3, "The Exercise of the Spirit for the Building of God," ch. 8.
4. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1993*, vol. 2, "The Spirit with Our Spirit," ch. 8.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1991-1992*, vol. 3, "Caring for the Church by Taking the God-Ordained Way to Contact People," ch. 1.