

# WHAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO HIS CHURCH

## TRUST

*II Timothy 1:8-14—Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God; who has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings; to which I have been appointed a herald and apostle and teacher of the nations. For which cause also I suffer these things; but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him. Have an outline of sound words, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted.*

Let's have a word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for gathering us together unto Thy name. Wherever Thy name is, there is Thy presence. We do realize that we are standing on holy ground. We will remove our shoes and take our place as Thy slaves before Thee. We will open our hearts towards Thee, and we will say to Thee: Lord, what does Thou have to say to us? Speak, Thy servants heareth. We commit this time into Thy loving hands, trusting Thy Holy Spirit to give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that we may truly know Thee. And to know Thee and the One whom Thou hast sent is eternal life. We give Thee all the praise and glory, in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

We do want to thank the Lord for giving us this opportunity. We do realize that the end is coming. We do not know whether there will be more time, but we do thank the Lord that He knows our need. And He gathers us together in His presence to prepare us for meeting Him.

I believe we all know the theme of this conference: .“*What God Has Entrusted to the Church*. This is taken from II Timothy 1:12-14, and I was assigned to share with you dear brothers and sisters on verse 12: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to him.”

At first glance I thought this was not suitable for our theme “What God Has Entrusted to the Church,” because here Paul says, “I have entrusted the deposit to God.” But on second thought I think this is very suitable for our theme, because what can we entrust to the Lord which is not being entrusted to us first? So we have to know what God has entrusted to us first and then we will be able to entrust to Him.

The other thought I had was that this is a statement made by the apostle Paul. What has that to do with the church? Then again, on second thought I feel that this is for the church because the apostle Paul himself said, “I am the herald and apostle and teacher of the nations.” He was called to be a preacher; so he will preach to us what God has shown

him. And he was also an apostle, and as an apostle he was assigned to do a work, and that work is to build the church. Then also he is the teacher of the nations. He must teach us how to build the church and what the responsibility of the church is. So in every way we find that this is related to the church. I feel this is a very timely theme because this is a very special time as everything is changing. As the coming of the Lord is approaching, we who are still here have a very special responsibility. We are here to bear the testimony of Jesus, and we are here to bring in His kingdom. We have a very serious responsibility. We need to know very clearly what God has entrusted to us, and we need to be faithful.

When I was considering this before the Lord, I hoped that I would be able to share with you in a very simple way. When I thought of that word *entrusted*, I was thinking of this matter of trust. So what I will do, if God wills, is speak on the trust first, the second time we will share on the trustee, and third we will share together on this matter of trustworthiness.

### **THE MODERN DAY TRUST**

In our day there is something that is very common and getting increasingly popular, and that is people are making a trust. We will take all that we possess and put it into a trust because we want to be sure that everything will be taken care of. If one day we are incapacitated or we are deceased we want to know that everything will be well taken care of, so we will consult a lawyer to draw up a trust. We will put everything we possess into that trust and determine how it should be arranged and distributed. Most likely, the first trustee will be ourselves because we trust ourselves more than anybody else. But unfortunately, we know that one day we will be unable or we will not be here anymore, so we will find someone, a man of worth, whom we consider trustworthy, and we will appoint him as our trustee. When we are unable or deceased, then this man will take care of and arrange all our possessions. He will not change our thought, but he will faithfully do what we have put down in the trust. This is the way that modern man does a trust.

### **DOES GOD NEED A TRUST?**

But does God need a trust? Our God is the eternal God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will never die. He lives forever, and He is ever faithful and ever trustworthy. So far as God Himself is concerned, He has no need to make a trust. He is well able to take care of everything that He has. But strangely, we find that God seems to have the habit of making a trust. We wonder why.

As I meditated upon this matter I could not find a real reason for God to make a trust because He is well able to manage His affairs throughout eternity. And who is so worthy as He is? He is the most dependable Person to manage His own affairs. But we find in the word of God that He seems to delight in making a trust. He would like to put what He has into the hands of man. For instance, in the very beginning God created man. He created man in His own image after His likeness. But after God created man, not only did He give him responsibility in doing works but man was to guard and to till. He also gave man dominion over the fowl of the air, the cattle in the land, and the fish of the sea. In other words, He put some of what He has into the hands of man and asked him to manage it for Him. They were to rule over the earth and bring all things back to the feet of God. They were to exercise authority for God. So you find that God seems to delight in doing such things, and sometimes I wonder why. There is only one reason I can think of and

that is because God is trustworthy, because He is faithful. This is His character, and somehow He will extend that character to man because He trusts in Himself and He is perfectly trustworthy; therefore He put trust in man, hoping that man will be as trustworthy as He is.

Mark 11 tells us how our Lord Jesus cursed that fig tree, and the fig tree dried up. The disciples were amazed at that, and our Lord Jesus said, "Have faith in God." In the original it is "Have the faith of God." God is full of faith and He wants us to have faith just as He has faith. He likes to extend His own character into man, and I think probably that is the reason why God makes a trust. He even trusts man, hoping that man will be trustworthy to Him.

### **GOD'S TRUST FROM ADAM TO CHRIST**

In the beginning of human history God trusted Adam to rule over the earth and to bring all things back to God's feet. But as we read on we find that when man began to multiply, how they rebelled against God! And during that time people were worshiping idols, worshiping many gods, and they left the one true God. So God reacted. The God of glory appeared to Abraham, and because of His appearing, Abraham, by faith, believed and followed God. And out of Abraham came the nation of Israel.

In the Old Testament we find God sending Moses to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel out of bondage in order to bring them unto Himself. He led them to Mount Sinai, and there He gave them the Ten Commandments. If they kept the Ten Commandments they would be His people and He would be their God.

We know that the first four commandments of the Ten Commandments are related to God's holiness. He is the only true God and aside from Him there is no God. He is holy, altogether separated. He is all by Himself. That is what holiness really means. There should not be any image made, they should not mention His name idly, and there should be the keeping of the Sabbath, which is trusting in the work of God. God has done it all, and we just rest in Him. So the four commandments are pertaining to God's holiness; they express the holiness of God.

And the last six commandments represent God's righteousness because God is righteous. He does everything right, and He wants us to be right in all things. In other words, with the Ten Commandments God made a covenant with the children of Israel. To put it another way, when the whole world was in idol worship, God raised up the nation of Israel and committed His name to that people so that His holiness and His righteousness might be known to the world. To put it in another way, God had entrusted Himself to the nation of Israel. It was a trust, but unfortunately, the children of Israel eventually departed from God. They were found untrustworthy before God. But that did not change God. God is still faithful and trustworthy. So in the fullness of time God sent His Son into this world, born of a woman and born under Law, that He may redeem us from the curse of Law, and in that way we may receive sonship.

So when God reacts, He reacts not only in a positive way but in an increased way. When He sent His Son into the world, He entrusted Himself fully to His Son. And when His Son was on the earth, He was to declare the Father. As you see the Son you see the Father. Our Lord Jesus is faithful to the trust. Throughout His life the Father was before Him. He came to glorify the Father. He came to do the work of the Father. He came to

declare the Father. He even died for the glory of the Father. Everything was for the Father. He proved Himself trustworthy to the trust that was given to Him.

But then our Lord Jesus died and was raised from the dead. After appearing to His disciples for forty days He ascended up on high, and He was anointed as Lord and Christ. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down and united the one hundred and twenty believers into one body under one Head, and that was the beginning of the church. On that day, our Head, our Lord Jesus, committed Himself to the church. Just as God had not withheld anything but trusted all of Himself to His Son, so our Lord Jesus as the Head entrusted to the church, His body, all of Himself. It is a complete and perfect trust, and this has been entrusted to the church. So we would like to see what God has entrusted to the church.

### **THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

II Timothy 1:8 says, “Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” Here you find the testimony of the Lord. I feel this represents the trust that has been entrusted to the church. In the book of Revelation you find the phrase “the testimony of Jesus,” and it is mentioned a number of times because it is the very thing that God has entrusted to the church.

What is the testimony of Jesus? The apostle John was exiled to the isle of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. Throughout the centuries in the church we find the testimony of Jesus and people who are faithful to that testimony. I often feel that we do not really realize what God has entrusted to us. God has entrusted Christ Himself to us, and when He entrusted Christ to us, He entrusted all of Himself to us. We do not realize what a trust that is.

What is the testimony of Jesus? The whole Bible is the testimony of Jesus. You remember our Lord Jesus said Himself, “Ye search the Scriptures, for you think there is eternal life in it, but you do not come to Me to receive life” (see John 5:39). You also remember at the resurrection of our Lord Jesus how He conversed with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus and how He said that the book of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets all speak of Him. So you find that the testimony of Jesus is none other but Christ Himself.

### **JOHN’S VISION OF THE LORD JESUS**

I think the simplest way to know what is the testimony of Jesus is found in Revelation 1. Here in this first chapter is a vision of our Lord Jesus. “And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades” (vs. 17-18).

Now we know that the apostle John is the one who was nearest to our Lord Jesus. He was one of the first two who came to our Lord Jesus, and among the twelve apostles he was the last one who passed away. He was the one whom Jesus loved, and he was the one who lay upon the breast of our Lord and asked Him who would betray Him. In other words, he was the most intimate to the Lord. We may almost say there was no one who knew the Lord as much as the apostle John. And yet in this Patmos vision he saw the glory of the Lord as the High Priest of the church, and he fell down at His feet as dead. In

other words, his knowledge of the Lord Jesus while the Lord was on earth was full, but the knowledge of the Lord in heaven he was to receive.

Oftentimes we think we know the Lord Jesus. Have we not believed in Him as our Savior? Have we not believed in His cross? Have we not experienced Him as our Comforter? But our knowledge of our Lord Jesus is always limited. No matter how much you know of the Lord Jesus there is always much more to know about Him. He is the infinite One. Who is able to know God, all of God? Even in eternity we will continue in knowing Christ. In the word of God He has revealed so much to us, but what we have really understood is very limited. And it is the will of God that we should know Him and know Him and know Him. So the testimony of Jesus is an all inclusive testimony. It tells us who Jesus is and what Jesus is. And here you find a very simple statement, and it is spoken by our Lord Himself.

### *Our Lord Jesus is the First*

Who is Jesus Christ? He said, “I am the first and the last.” Our Lord Jesus is the first. In other words, He is the beginning; He is the Alpha. Everything begins with Him. Whatever does not begin with Him is not of God. He is the first. He has the first place in all things.

Do we know Him as the first? And the first in the Scripture does not mean that which is first, second, third, and so on. First in the Scripture means He is all. Do we know Him as the first? Do we let Him be the first in our life? Or do we put Him among Moses and Elijah? You remember that scene on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter blurted out and said, “It is so good to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Immediately the glory cloud of God passed over and everything disappeared, and they saw Jesus only. And the voice said, “This is My beloved Son; hear Him.”

In other words, you cannot put Christ among other people because it is the will of God that He is the first. He has the preeminence among all things and everything must begin with Him. Now this is not just a theory; this is the truth. This is something that God wants us to know, that we realize that Jesus is the first, and everything in our lives must begin with Him. He must be first in our lives. Our God is a jealous God. He will not allow us to have anything to be equal with Christ, and this matter of the first applies to many things. This is the testimony that has been entrusted to the church because in the church Christ is the beginning; everything must come from Christ. And in the church Christ is incomparable; He is our all and in all.

So you find in Ephesians 1:22-23: “God has made Him head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of him who fills all and in all.” And this is the testimony of Jesus, and this is entrusted to the church.

### *Our Lord Jesus is the Last*

Then He said, “I am the last.” In other words, He is the ending; He is the goal. Everything will be summed up in Him, and everything will give glory to Him. If our aim, our end does not end with Christ—whether our life or our service—all these are vanity of vanities because it is the will of God that all things will be ended in Christ, summed up in Christ. What a testimony that is! One day everything will speak of Christ because this is the will of God. So He said, “I am the first and the last. This is My place in the church.”

### ***Our Lord Jesus is the Living One***

Then He said, “I am the living one.” This speaks of what He is. Our Lord Jesus is the living One. He is life; He is the resurrection and the life. That is what He is. We know of what He does, but we oftentimes do not know what He is. He is life. He is not only the origin of life; He is the giver of life, and anything that is related to Him must be life. Whatever is not life is not of Him because He is the living One. Therefore He is over all things. So what we need to know about Christ is to know Him as the living One, to know His life, to allow His life to control us, to allow His life to be our life, and this is the testimony of Jesus.

### ***Our Lord Jesus Became Dead***

Then it is said, “And I became dead.” That refers to His work. He is life, but this life has gone into death in order to rob death of its power and come out in victory. We do thank the Lord that He came into this world and He died, but He came out of the tomb. He is the victorious One. We should experience Him as such.

### ***Our Lord Jesus Lives to the Ages of Ages***

“And behold I am living to the ages of ages.” In other words, life has overcome death. He is the resurrection and the life, and this is what we need to know of Him. In Philippians 3 we find that the passion of the apostle Paul was to know Him. And how can we know Him? We are to know the power of His resurrection. This is to know Him.

### ***Our Lord Jesus Has the Keys of Death and Hades***

And He said, “Behold, I am living to the ages of ages and have the keys of death and of hades.” In other words, He has overcome. The keys are in His hands. He can shut it off; He can open it. This is the testimony of Jesus. This is what has been entrusted to the church, and the church is to bear this testimony.

## **THE GLAD TIDINGS**

Then again we find in II Timothy 1:8b: “but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God.”

Here you find another term: *glad tidings*. What has been entrusted to the church? Secondly, we find that God has entrusted to the church the glad tidings. We often think that the glad tidings are how our Lord Jesus did the work of redemption, how His blood was shed for the remission of sins, how His flesh was given to us that we may receive life, and thus we are saved. This is glad tidings to us. There is nothing more glad than these tidings. We were dead in sin and transgressions and now Christ has come to save us. We are thankful for that and we feel this is our great commission, and we ought to preach this gospel to the whole world.

Brothers and sisters, this is what we consider as the glad tidings. But when you read the Scriptures, you find the glad tidings that have been entrusted to the church are much more than that. We consider the effect of the glad tidings to our lives, but the glad tidings are something much bigger.

In the book of Romans 1:1a, it says, “Paul, bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated to God’s glad tidings, (which he had before promised by his prophets in holy writings,) concerning his Son (come of David’s seed according to flesh, marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead) Jesus Christ our Lord.”

What are God’s glad tidings? “Concerning His Son...Jesus Christ our Lord.” So the glad tidings are Christ Himself. The glad tidings include much more than initial salvation. We see the effect of the glad tidings in our lives—it saves us. Therefore it is glad tidings to us. But the glad tidings itself is Christ Himself. He is much bigger than His effect upon us. So the Scripture speaks of the glad tidings as the mystery of glad tidings.

In Ephesians 6:19 the apostle Paul says, “And for me in order that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings.” The glad tidings is a mystery. The whole book of Ephesians speaks of the mystery of the glad tidings, and we know that Ephesians includes much more than initial salvation.

In Colossians 1:27b it says, “The glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.” So the glad tidings is Christ Himself. The emphasis is on the Person of Christ instead of the effects upon us. Of course, you cannot separate these two things, but the emphasis is on Christ Himself. This will deliver us from being self-centered to Christ-centered. And this is the testimony that has been entrusted to the church because the church does not preach about herself. The church will preach Christ. It is Christ that should be seen and heard; it is not the church at the forefront. So we are entrusted with the glad tidings.

We often think of Matthew 28 as the great commission, and it is to be preached to the nations that they may be saved. But the great commission says, “Go to the nations and disciple all nations.” It is not self-centered; it is Christ-centered. It is not that we got saved; it is that Christ may be exalted. We are to be His disciples. We follow Him. We are transformed and conformed to His image. This is the glad tidings, so Christ may be all and in all.

### ***THE FAITH***

Thirdly, we find that which is entrusted to the church is *the* faith. In the letter of Jude verse 3 it says, “Beloved, using all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I have been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

The word *contend earnestly* actually is “agonizing for the faith.” In Ephesians 4:5 it says, “One faith.” We who believe in the Lord Jesus should diligently keep the unity of the spirit, and in the unity of the spirit there is one faith. And the one faith here refers to the fundamental faith concerning our Lord Jesus. It refers to believing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God because this faith makes us children of God, and all who believe in Christ as the Son of God are one in the spirit.

But in verse 13 Paul says, “Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.” So here you find *the* faith; not one faith but *the* faith. One faith we already have; *the* faith we ought to arrive at.

What is *the* faith? *The* faith includes all the truth that we find in the word of God. All the words of God constitute *the* faith. We believe in all the words, the revelation of God,

and this is something we will all arrive at because today people may have different interpretations. They may interpret the Scriptures differently. They all believe in the Lord Jesus; they all believe Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and yet they have different ideas, different interpretations. But one day we will all arrive at *the* faith. We will know the word of God as the Spirit has taught, and we will arrive at the knowledge of the Son of God. And the knowledge is full knowledge, experiential knowledge. Now today you experience Christ in one way; I may experience Christ differently. But one day we will all arrive at the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God. This is the time when the church is fully grown. And this is *the* faith that has been entrusted to the church, and this is something that we have to pursue. This is something we have to fellowship with one another in order that one day we may arrive at *the* faith.

So what has God entrusted to the church? God has entrusted to the church the testimony of Jesus. God has entrusted to the church the glad tidings. God has entrusted to the church *the* faith. And this is our responsibility. So may the Lord have mercy upon us that we may know what has been entrusted to us. It is so much bigger, higher, greater than we think. And how much we need to pursue together! May the Lord help us.

Let's have a word of prayer:

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for Thy great love towards us. Thou hast loved us so much that Thou has entrusted Thyself to us in such a way that is far beyond what we can even think of. We do want to thank Thee that Thou can trust us in such a way. We do tremble before Thee lest we fail Thee. It is only by Thy grace that we may be able to be faithful. We do pray that Thou will continue to enlarge our horizon. Give us heavenly vision that we may really know Thee, that we may be faithful to Thee. And it is all by Thy mercy. We give Thee glory; in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*