

WHAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO HIS CHURCH

TRUSTEE

II Timothy 1:8-12—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 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.

Acts 26:9-19—I indeed myself thought that I ought to do much against the name of Jesus the Nazarean. Which also I did in Jerusalem, and myself shut up in prisons many of the saints, having received the authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my vote. And often punishing them in all the synagogues, I compelled them to blaspheme. And, being exceedingly furious against them, I persecuted them even to cities out of our own land. And when, engaged in this, I was journeying to Damascus, with authority and power from the chief priests, at mid-day, on the way, I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven round about me and those who were journeying with me. And, when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against goads. And I said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise up and stand on thy feet; for, for this purpose have I appeared to thee, to appoint thee to be a servant and a witness both of what thou hast seen, and of what I shall appear to thee in, taking thee out from among the people, and the nations, to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Whereupon, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Revelation 1:12-13a—And I turned back to see the voice which spoke with me; and having turned, I saw seven golden lamps, and in the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man.

Let us have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather here before Thee we do praise and thank Thee that Thou has given us this privilege of drawing nigh to Thee. We thank Thee that the way to the holiest of all is open. We do thank Thee that we may come to Thy very presence to behold Thy beauty and to hear Thy voice. Oh, dear Lord, we need Thy word. Without Thy word we are as one dead, but Thy word will give us light and give us life. Thou will transform us

and conform us to Thy own image. And this we do desire, not for ourselves but for Thy testimony. So we just look to Thee this morning that Thou will come to each and every one of us and speak to each of us a word that we may be delivered from any darkness but be in the full light of Thy truth. Dear Lord, our deepest desire is that we may be faithful to Thy testimony. We pray that Thou will raise a people up today that will be faithful to Thyself and will be prepared and ready for Thy return to bring back the King. And we want to give Thee all the glory; we ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

Thank God for gathering us together again. What God has entrusted to His church is a very important matter. I think it is a most amazing thing that God should trust man. God is able to do everything, and He is able to do all by Himself. And whatever He has done is the perfect thing. But our God who is so perfect, so able, so trustworthy, so faithful, has within Him the desire to trust even man. It is not because He does not know what man is. He knows us so well and yet He dared to trust Himself to us. It is not because of what we are; it is because of what He is. He knows each and every one of us very well, and yet He has the faith to believe that He is able to transform us in such a way that we may be trustworthy. So it is a most amazing thing that God should trust us with Himself, and this trust is not a small thing. It is not a partial thing. When God trusts Himself to us, He trusts Himself totally to us. In other words, He gave Himself completely to us. It is such a privilege as well as a serious responsibility.

We find that the trust is the testimony of Jesus. There is nothing more important than the testimony of Jesus because it is none other than what He is and who He is. It is what He is in the sight of God the Father; it is all that the Father has entrusted to Him. And He trusted that testimony to the church that we may be His witnesses.

We also shared a little bit of what the testimony of Jesus is. He Himself said, "I am the first and the last." This is what He is. In the sight of the Father He is the first. He has the preeminence of all things. Everything must begin with Him, and only that which has begun with Him is acceptable to God. This is what He is, and this is what He expects to be to us.

Is He the first in our lives? Can we bear this witness that Jesus Christ is the first of our life? He is the one who begins our life. He is the one who begins everything in our life, and we honor Him as the first. He is incomparable. We cannot compare Him with anybody else. He occupies all and all in us.

He is the last. He is our objective; He is our end. Everything adds up to Him, everything sums up in Him, and all glory and honor go back to Him. To put it another way, He is all and in all. This is what He is.

He is the living One. He is life; He is resurrection and life. He is the everlasting life, and He ever lives to make intercession for us. He is able to save us to the uttermost. Because of us He became dead. He went to the cross and bore our sins. He shed His blood for the remission of our sins, and His body was broken. His life is given to us that we may receive light and life abundantly. But thank God, He did not stay in the tomb. On the third day He was raised from the dead. It is life out of death, and this is the life that He gave to us. He is all victorious and He holds in His hand the keys of death and Hades. And this is the testimony that He has entrusted to the church. Therefore, we find in the Scripture those who have the testimony of Jesus. In other words, they not only have the knowledge of it but they live for it.

Then we said that the trust that has been entrusted to us is the glad tidings, the gospel. The gospel is far more than we ever imagined. In the book of Hebrews it says, "So great salvation." The gospel is none other than our Lord Jesus Himself. He is the glad tidings.

We also find that the trust is *the* faith. It is not just this doctrine or that teaching. It is the whole truth because Christ Himself is the truth. So the church is entrusted with such a tremendous treasure. Our Lord Jesus dared to trust Himself to us.

Trustee

Now we would like to speak on this matter of *trustee*. What is a trustee? What is his responsibility? What kind of person does he have to be? When you make a trust, you will find a man, a woman of worth, a man that you can trust, and you appoint him or her as your trustee. And the responsibility of the trustee is such that he is familiar with the trust. He knows what is being entrusted, and he will be careful to see that everything in the trust will be faithfully carried out. He has no liberty to change the trust nor can he withhold that trust. He has to execute it according to the will of the person who made the trust. So a trustee is very important.

THE CREATION OF A NEW PEOPLE

What has God entrusted? To whom has God entrusted? We are told that God has entrusted Himself to His church. When our Lord Jesus came into this world, we often say that He came to this world to seek and to find the lost. That is very true because we are the lost and He came to find us and to save us. But we know that the purpose of His coming into this world is more than that. He came to this world not only to declare the Father, to come to show us who and what the Father is; He came into this world also to find a people to whom He can entrust Himself. When He came into this world, what did He find? It is very amazing when you read the gospels because you find that our Lord Jesus was faced with many people who were blind, who were deaf, and who were crippled, and even the dead. In other words, when He came into this world to find a people that are suitable to Him, that He can trust Himself with, what He found was just the opposite. There were the infirm and weak and sick. So when our Lord Jesus came into this world, He had to create a new people. He had to create a trustee. So He came to call people, not only to come and believe in Him, but He called people to be His disciples.

DISCIPLE

What does disciple really mean? A disciple is a person who is put under the master and learns of him. It is more than just a student. It is completely different from the student of modern times. A modern student will pay tuition when he goes to school, and he will try to absorb and learn all the learning of the professors. That is all he is. But this is so different from an apprentice. The Bible's thought of a disciple is apprenticeship. In the old days when you wanted to learn a trade, you had to find a master who was skillful in that thing. Then you will leave your own home, and you will stay with your master. You will be as one of the master's family, and if you want to learn to be a carpenter, the first year when you are with your master, he will not even teach you anything. He will ask you to help with all the affairs of the family. You have to sweep the floors, you have to serve the master, you have to help the family, help with the children, and do all the

mundane work. And sometimes you think: what is it for? I came to learn the trade. But this is very important because an apprentice is not only to learn the trade; he is to learn how to be a man. He is to learn from his master how to behave. *How to live is more important than how to work.* And gradually the master will reveal some of the skill to you. After several years when you graduate, you not only have the skill of the master, you also have the manner of the master. Sometimes the apprentice will speak like his master, and even walk like his master because he has learned his master's manner.

Brothers and sisters, when our Lord Jesus was on earth, His most important thing was to call disciples. Aside from Calvary, He was here to call for disciples. And this is why you find in the gospels that when they answered the call of the disciples, they left all and followed Him. They lived with him. They were with him day and night. They not only heard his words, they not only noticed how he worked, but they watched the way he lived. He was creating a new people, a people that are like Him to whom He can entrust Himself.

In John 2 you find our Lord was in Jerusalem, and towards the end of the chapter it says, "Many believed in Him because they had seen the signs that He did. But strangely, the Bible says, "Our Lord did not give Himself to them because He knew what was in man." These people believed in Him. Why did they believe in Him? They saw the signs that He worked. It was not that they really trusted in Him. Our Lord, who knew the very hearts of men, would not give Himself to them, and gradually He called some disciples to Himself. For three years and a half, during His public ministry, one of the things that He emphasized most was the training of His disciples.

During the period of training you find that these disciples did not understand Him. How often our Lord said one thing and they thought it was another thing. Our Lord was patient with them, even during the Last Supper when they were still arguing among themselves: "Who is the greatest?" Even when our Lord said, "I am going to die," and Peter said, "I will die with you," he did not know that he would deny the Lord three times. Do you think these people are trustworthy? But thank God, during the last discourse when our Lord Jesus was talking with His disciples at the Last Supper, you find in John 15 toward the end the Lord said, "When the Comforter, the Spirit of truth shall come, He shall bear witness of Me, and you will be My witnesses because you have been with Me all the time." So our Lord was gradually trying to commit Himself to His disciples.

When our Lord was arrested, all His disciples fled, and then Peter denied the Lord three times. Even after our Lord was resurrected, the two disciples to Emmaus were sad and talking about the death of our Lord. They did not know about His resurrection. And when the news came, the disciples were so slow in believing it. But when our Lord was risen to heaven, He gave them the commandment, "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive the power from on high; then you will be My witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth." And then there was Pentecost. The Bible tells us that when our Lord was ascended, at one time five hundred brothers and sisters saw Him, but only one hundred and twenty listened to Him, returned to Jerusalem, and in the upper room prayed with one accord for ten days. And on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to them.

PENTECOST

What is the meaning of Pentecost? How we are attracted by the sound and the sight! The sound and the sight are secondary because they vary but the real meaning of Pentecost is found in I Corinthians 12:12: "In one Spirit you are baptized into one body. A body has many members, but the body is one; so also is the Christ." So it began on the day of Pentecost with one hundred and twenty individual believers. I think you cannot find a better congregation than that congregation because the one hundred and twenty people included the apostles, Mary, and His brethren. And these one hundred and twenty were so devoted. They were able to gather together praying in one accord for ten days, and yet they were only one hundred and twenty individual Christians. They were a congregation but not a body. When they gathered together they were together. When they were not in a gathering they were each by themselves. A body is different; a body is one. There may be many members but each member cannot go its own way. No member can do its own work. They are one body, and the testimony of Jesus is entrusted to that body.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Brothers and sisters, today we are so individualistic. Everything is just "I, me and myself." This really happened when sin entered into this world and everybody is for himself. Adam is for himself. "This woman you have given me, she has done it." And the woman said, "No, it is the serpent." Everybody is for himself. Sin not only separated us from God; sin separated us from one another. We become so self-centered. But our Lord Jesus entrusted Himself not to one individual but to a body. Why is it so? It is because He is so rich, He is so abundant. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. There is no one individual who has the capacity to be filled with His fullness. He requires a body to be His fullness. So that is what Ephesians 1:22-23 says: "God has made Christ head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and in all." So it takes a body to be His fullness, and it takes a body to take up the responsibility to manage His riches.

I feel that probably we lack a real understanding of what the church is. Probably to many of us the most important thing is my salvation; what about me? I want to be a spiritual person. It is between the Lord and me. Sometimes we hear people say, "I do not care about anybody else. It is just the Lord and me." When you hear it, it sounds very, very spiritual; but it is hyper-spiritual. We need the body. The Lord needs the body. We often think of the church as something extra to us. I can very well be a good Christian without the church. On the contrary, sometimes I find the church makes me a bad Christian. It is much better if I shut myself in my room and be a perfect Christian." This is not the thought of God. I have met people who withdrew themselves from fellowship, and shut themselves in their own home. They thought this was a way to spirituality. This is not the will of God. The church is not something extra; the church is fundamental. So we need to have a clear understanding of what the church is. It is almost as important as to have the clear understanding of what the trust is. If we do not know what the trust is, then we will not be able to be the trustee, but the trustee itself is also equally important.

Do you really understand what the church is? Are you really in the fellowship of the church? Are you really a living, functioning member of the body of Christ? Where are you now?

A HOLY CALLING

Second Timothy 1:9 says, “Who has saved us and 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.”

God has saved us. Thank God He has saved us! But that is not the end. And it continues with: “And has called us.” He not only has saved us but He has called us with a holy calling, and that calling is according to His own purpose, and that purpose is purposed in Christ Jesus before the ages of time. So you see that we are not only being saved but we are called with a holy calling. And this calling is according to God’s own purpose and is purposed before the foundation of the world. So you can see how important that purpose is. Sometimes we are saved but we do not know God’s purpose; so we miss so much. What have we been saved for? For what purpose have we been saved? We are called according to God’s own purpose. God saved us in order to call us to His purpose, and that purpose has been decided before the foundation of the world. It connects you with eternity. How important is that calling! That is why when our Lord Jesus was on earth, He called for disciples.

And what is the calling? In Ephesians you find that the calling is that we are called to be one body because there is nothing more important than a body to our Lord Jesus. To be saved is important to us, but to our Lord Jesus answering the call is important. Only that will fulfill God’s purpose. According to Ephesians we are called to be the body of Christ. We already mentioned Ephesians 1:23: “The church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and in all.” The body is the body of Christ, and each one is a particular member of that body.

Then in Ephesians 4 we find we have to walk according to our calling. That is Christian life. That is to live our church life. I cannot do without my Lord; and I cannot do without you. You cannot do without the Lord, and you cannot do without me because we are one body. It is in that one body that we are able to experience the riches of the Head.

RESPONSIBILITY

But we often think of our privilege. What a privilege that we can receive all the heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus. Now this is true. If we are in the body we receive all the fullness of the Godhead. We become the fullness of Him who fills all and in all. But we not only have privilege; we also have responsibility. If we receive the privilege and do not fulfill the responsibility then we have been unfaithful to the Lord. So we need to see the body. There must be a time that the Lord opens our eyes to see that we are not just individual Christians. We are members of one body, and we are members one to another. We need such revelation.

Think of the apostle Paul. Before he knew the Lord his name was Saul. He was an extraordinary young man because most young men seek for the things of this world, but he was different. Even when he was young, he sought for spiritual things. But unfortunately he was misled. He put his whole heart into it, but he was on the wrong way. According to the tradition of the fathers he thought Jesus was an imposter. So he tried his best to destroy all who followed the Lord Jesus. He was sincere, but he was wrong. He thought he was doing God a service, but he did a great disservice to God. God knew his heart, and He would allow him to go as far as he could.

Saul was going to the city of Damascus to seize the believers, bring them to Jerusalem and condemn them. At mid-day, suddenly a light brighter than the mid-day sun shone upon him and he was smitten by that light. In that light he heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard to kick against the goads." And Saul said, "Lord, who are You? I do not know You, but one thing I realize, You are Lord. Whoever You are, You are Lord. I am no longer my master; you are the Master." In that heavenly vision he saw that Jesus is Lord. Not only Jesus is Savior; Jesus is Lord. Not only Jesus will save him but Jesus is his Master. How do we know? His next question is: "Lord, what do You want me to do? Now I am finished; You are the Lord. You have to give the word. Then I will know what to do. I have given myself completely to You to do Your will. I am now an obedient ox, and I am under Your yoke. I am to do Your work."

SEEING JESUS AS LORD

Brothers and sisters, do you ever see Jesus as Lord? Is He your Savior and that's it? He saves you and then you can do anything you want because heaven is guaranteed. If this is the case you will never see the church. You will never see the body of Christ. You will not be a functioning member of the body of Christ. God has not entrusted you with Himself. We need a vision to see Jesus as Lord. It finishes your life. It brings you to Him, putting yourself at His feet and allowing Him to direct your life and no longer living for yourself. You live for Him because this is the purpose of God. We need that. And after you have seen this, then it follows that you will see the church as the body of Christ. When Saul was on the road to Damascus, God not only showed him that Jesus is Lord, Lord of all, but God also showed him the body.

Saul was trained as a Pharisee, and he had all the logical arguments. But when Jesus said, "Why do you persecute Me?" it would be natural for him say, "Who are You? I never knew You. How can I persecute You? You are in heaven; I am on earth. How can I do it?" He could well argue in this way. That is logic, but his naked eyes were shut, and his inner eyes were opened. He did not reason. Immediately, he saw one thing: touching any believer is touching Christ because when you touch a member of the body, you touch the Head. The Head and the body are one.

THE HEAD AND THE BODY

Brothers and sisters, do you see this? Do you have a vision of the body of Christ? That is what the church is. The church is not an organization. The church is an organism. Christ is the Head; the church is the body. The Head and the body are one. They cannot be separated. All the fullness of the Head rests in the body, and all the beauty of the Head is manifested through the body. The testimony of Jesus is entrusted to His own body. That is why in the beginning of the book of Acts Luke says, "I wrote the first discourse about Christ beginning to do and to teach, and now I am writing the second discourse, the book of Acts, to show you how Christ continues to do and to teach. In the gospel of Luke Christ does and teaches in His incarnate body. In the book of Acts Christ continues to do and to teach in that mystic body. So this is why Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you, brethren, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, and this is your reasonable, spiritual, worship, and service."

Notice here that the body is in plural number because it represents each and every one of us. We all have our own body. Why does it say the body? It is because we live in this

body, and we work with this body. Actually the body represents the whole being. It is only when we present our bodies a living sacrifice that Luke follows with verses 4-5: "Do not look to yourself more than you should because you are a member of the body. The body is one but there are different bodies. And in that body you are to live and to serve." Here you find in verses 4-5 the body is singular. In other words, unless you present your bodies a living sacrifice you will not be able to see the one body of Christ because when you really consecrate yourself, then the Holy Spirit will transform your mind. He will enlighten your mind, and He makes you see the body of Christ. I feel that many today do not see the church as the body of Christ. It is not an external thing. It is not an organization. It is an inward, living reality. It is the vessel that Christ has committed Himself to. It is a tremendous thing. Many do not see this because their bodies have not been put on the altar.

Brothers and sister, especially young brothers and sisters, may I plead with you. You are not only saved, but you have been called. You are called by God's eternal purpose. You have to confess Jesus as Lord. Put what He has redeemed in you on the altar, and then He will open your eyes. And you will see the essence of the church, the body of Christ, and make you a living, functioning member to take up that trust that Christ has entrusted to the church.

THE LAMPSTAND

In Revelation 1, the apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos *for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*. On the Lord's Day, probably he was sitting on the rock facing the sea. If it was a good day, he could see the outline of Asia Minor, and there were the churches that he ministered to before he was exiled. He must have been thinking about them and praying for them. Then he saw a vision. What was the vision? He heard a voice, and when he turned to see the voice, he saw seven golden lampstands with one like the Son of Man in the midst of it. That is the Patmos vision. He saw the seven lampstands, and these seven lampstands are explained to us because they are the churches. In the sight of God the church is a golden Lampstand.

What is a Lampstand? A Lampstand is a vessel that is used not only to contain the light but to uplift the light. A Lampstand is not just a decoration. It is very practical because a Lampstand is to uplift the light that it may shine broader. There you will find the seven churches in Asia. And at the forefront is one like the Son of Man. Now of course this vision tells us of the heavenly ministry of our Lord Jesus. We think of the heavenly ministry of our Lord Jesus as our High Priest, but when we think of Him as our High Priest, we often think of it in a personal way. He ever liveth, making intercession for us. He is able to save us to the uttermost. We cannot be a Christian if we do not know Him as our High Priest, but here in Revelation you find He is the High Priest of the church. There He is ministering to His church. Christ is described in detail, in a ten-fold description, but there is no description of the Lampstand in the first chapter.

Sometimes we can go to the other extreme. We will emphasize the church even above Christ, and if you do that you lose Christ. Christ is at the foreground; the church is the background. The church is not the light. The church has no teaching, no doctrine. The teaching and the doctrine are Christ. The church does not speak of herself; it speaks of Christ. It is not the light; it is the light lifter.

Brothers and sisters, Christ is the light. He commits Himself to the Lampstand that the light may shine bright and wide. This is the trustee, and we are members of that one body. So what God has entrusted to the church is that He has entrusted Himself to Himself because the church is *the* Christ, and only *the* Christ is able to manage the affairs of Christ. May the Lord give us this vision.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we are amazed that You should trust Yourself to us the church. We do pray that Thou will open our eyes not only to see Thee as the trust but also see ourselves as the trustee. Dear Lord, we want not only the privilege; we are willing to bear the responsibility. We pray this morning that Thou will give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we may know Thee. Open our eyes that we may understand. Draw us that we may glorify Thee. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.