

**WCCC 1991**

**Brother Kaung**

## **Commit to Faithful Men (1)**

*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 you have 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.*

In verse 8, the Chinese translation is ‘do not be ashamed of testifying for the Lord’. But the English translation is ‘do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord’ – the testimony of our Lord.

Let us pray:

Lord, we truly thank and praise You for bringing us into Your presence tonight. We thank and praise You that we can study Your word. We pray that Your Holy Spirit quickens Your word in us. You have told us that Your word is the spirit and the life. So, we look upon Your spirit and Your life to minister to us. We ask that You remove all the hindrances inside us. Please cleanse us with Your blood. We also ask You to clean us with Your cross. We put ourselves completely before You. We put ourselves before Your word. We are willing for Your word to conquer us. We wish that Your word will transform us so that You can have the glory. In the name of our Lord. Amen.

### **Timely Words in the Time of Apostasy**

This time our burden is ‘Commit to Faithful Men.’ We know today we are in an unusual time. Not only all the conditions of this world tell us that the end of all things is near, but we also see that the condition of the church is indeed like the condition of the church in Laodicea. We already know the apostasy and

heresy that the bible prophesied. Many of the things that we have not imagined can happen are already happening among the children of God. When we are in this kind of situation, there is a voice in us asking: 'Does God have a word for us in such a time?' If we do not have God's word, we are at a loss as to how to go forward. We will not be able to tell what is right and what is wrong. We are in a dilemma as to whether we should go back or go forward. We know we have to move forward. But we do not know the way before us is correct or not. We become paralyzed because we are afraid of making mistakes. At this moment, I believe there is a voice inside in the hearts of many brothers and sisters. Although oftentimes we do not know how to express this in words, yet there is a deep sighing before the Lord. Are there timely words from our Lord in such a time? If we do not have His words, we do not want to go forward.

Dear brothers and sisters, we thank and praise God. Because our Lord is an all-knowing God, He knows all the things that happen to us. Will He not give us His words? In the Gospel of John 16: 4, our Lord said, *'But I have spoken these things to you, that when their hour shall have come, you may remember them, that I have said them to you'*. Our Lord truly loves us. He knows the things that are going to happen to us. He already let us know beforehand so that we will not feel unprepared when things do happen to us.

We believe that God has already spoken to us in His words. Now we need to find out those words. We know that all of God's words are spoken to us. All of God's words are very precious. But in God's words we know there are some words that have special relation to the things happening in our time. The Book of Hebrews or II Timothy or II Peter or the Epistles of John and Revelation are examples. We know these books have an intimate relationship with us in this end time. This time we would like to focus on II Timothy. If God willing, we will look at one chapter each time we meet.

### **The Background of the Book of II Timothy**

Before we look at II Timothy, we need to know a little of the background of this book. The background will help us understand this book better. According to what we know today, Paul was released from the Roman prison around 63 A.D. He was imprisoned in Rome for about two years for the sake of the gospel. He wrote several letters when he was in prison. According to these letters, after he was released, he revisited the churches that he had worked in before. Possibly when he was passing through Crete, he left Titus there. Then he went on to Ephesus, and he left Timothy in Ephesus. And he went forward to Macedonia by himself. He thought that he could return to Ephesus very soon. But for some reason, he could not return quickly to Ephesus. So he wrote 1 Timothy. At the same time, he also wrote to Titus and told Titus to meet him at Nicopolis because he wanted to go to Spain from there. It was very possible that when he was returning from Spain, the bible tells us that he left Trophimus at Miletus because he got sick. We do not know whether he was able to go to Ephesus. We do not know whether he met with Timothy again. But at that time, the situation had

completely changed. We know that he was taken as prisoner again. But we do not know whether it was at Troas or at Corinth. And he was again taken to Rome as a prisoner.

But at that time the situation was completely different. In 64 A.D., probably in July, King Nero set fire to burn down Rome. And the people were very angry that the city of Rome was burned. History told us that when Rome was being burned, the king was there playing the harp and enjoying the sight. We do not know why he burned Rome. Some said he burned Rome so he could build a grander city. No matter what the reason was, the people got very angry. Nero saw that the situation was not good. So he needed to find a scapegoat. He blamed it on the Christians because the Christians are different from all the people in the world.

Thus, from those people's point of view, the Christians were all criminals. So the persecutions of the Christians started in different places. Paul became a target and he was captured again. This time the circumstances that sent him to Rome was completely different from the previous time. The first time when he was imprisoned in Rome, he could stay in the apartment that he himself rented. Although there was a guard who was stationed there with him, yet he did have a certain amount of freedom. He could receive guests. At the end of the Book of Acts, Paul in his own rented apartment could freely preached the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. But this time when he was imprisoned again, the situation was different. According to legend, he was sent to a sepulcher, which was like a grave. And this was a place where it was dark and wet. And many people did not really know where he was kept. Here it told us that Onesiphorus spent a considerable amount of effort before he could find Paul.

When Paul was defending himself during the inquest, no one would testify for him. The whole Asia Minor left him. Although God stood by his side and he was able to testify for God during his own defense, yet he knew that his days were limited. So before winter came, around 67 A.D., he wrote a letter to his beloved son, Timothy. He asked Timothy to hurry up and go to him before winter started, because he desired to see Timothy again. We do not know whether Timothy made it there. We just know that in early 68 A.D. Paul was martyred. This is the background of II Timothy.

### **The Basis of Serving God – Pure Conscience and Genuine Faith**

When Paul wrote this letter, he said at the beginning: *'I am thankful to God, whom I served from my forefathers with pure conscience'*. The forefathers that Paul mentioned here were probably the forefathers right before him. Although his forefathers did not know the Lord, yet they served God with pure conscience. That is to say, they served God with pure conscience, according to the light that they saw at that time. We all know that Paul's name before was Saul. He was born in Tarsus. But he went to Jerusalem when he was still young and studied under Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Working under the

darkness of the tradition of his forefathers, he thought Jesus Christ was a rebel of Judaism. So he persecuted those who believed in the way. He thought this was how he could serve God. But thank and praise God, on the way to Damascus, the Lord met him. Under the light, his eyes were opened. From that time onward, he served God with pure conscience according to the new light he saw.

Dear brothers and sisters, we need a pure conscience to serve God. This pure conscience does not only mean an irreproachable conscience, but it means single conscience in the English. Not only do we not receive condemnation in the conscience, but our conscience towards our God is single. There is no other motive in us for serving God other than just to serve Him. Paul served his God with such pure conscience. And what kind of a person was Timothy, his true son in faith? In particular Paul mentioned that in Timothy there was genuine faith. This genuine faith was first in his grandmother, Lois and then in his mother, Eunice. Some bible scholars said his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were original believers, that is the believers at the Pentecost. Many believers from all places went to Jerusalem to keep the Pentecost. And on the day of Pentecost, three thousand were saved. It is very possible that his grandmother and mother believed on that day. And they brought up Timothy from a young age with the words of God. And because of Paul's preaching of the gospel when he was in Lystra, this young man was saved. Thus in this young man there was this genuine faith. Not only his faith is pure but the faith in his heart was true.

Brothers and sisters, this is also very important. Today we need to know the object of our faith. Not only is our faith accurate but the faith in our heart has to be genuine. And this is what was inside of Timothy. So we see there are two things here. One is a pure conscience. The other is a genuine faith. Today, when we serve God, is it according to these two things? Before God we need to have a pure conscience. But some do not have a pure conscience. The bible tells us that if one neglected one's conscience, it is like a boat with holes in it. The faith can sink like the boat. So for us Christians our conscience is very important. Before we believe in the Lord, our conscience was not reliable. But after our Lord Jesus cleansed our conscience with His blood, God speaks to us through our conscience. So we have to walk before man and God with a pure conscience. Especially with regards to serving God, not only that our conscience does not blame us, but our conscience before God should be without any other opinion. Serving God in this way will be acceptable to God. Then we need to add on a genuine faith. We need to know whom we believe in. If we believe in the words of men, in the traditions, we do not know what we really believe in. That way we will not be able to serve God. If we have an accurate and absolute faith, then this is genuine faith. According to these two things we can serve God on this earth.

## **In Times of Great Persecution, We Still Need to Boldly Testify for the Lord**

But during this time, Paul's pure conscience and genuine faith were greatly tested. Why was it? Because at that time the situation had completely changed. Paul was put in prison. All Asia Minor has left him. We know that Asia Minor was the place where Paul completely put himself into. It was the place that Paul loved. But when he was imprisoned, the entire Asia Minor deserted him. We do not mean that all the Christians in Asia Minor forsook God. They just deserted Paul because Paul was too hot. They were afraid if they admitted having something to do with Paul, they would be in trouble. Even though they had not denied our Lord, yet they kept a distance from Paul. They want to preserve their own life. They loved themselves. They did not dare to testify for the truth. It seemed that they hid themselves. They did not deny the Lord, but they did not dare to openly acknowledge the Lord either. They had an attitude that they wanted to preserve themselves.

How about Timothy? We know this young man Timothy's health was weak. He was not only weak in health but he was very timid. In the past, he had hidden himself in the shadow of Paul. He was not one who would charge ahead. He followed Paul to serve God. Now Paul was captured. In such situations you can imagine how Timothy felt in his heart. According to his nature, although he would not deny God, and he would not deny Paul, yet he would hide himself. He was a timid person. He could go on just keeping the faith, but he would not dare to openly testify for the Lord. However, Timothy was the one who received the baton. Now Paul was imprisoned, the second generation had to rise up for the testimony of the Lord. If Timothy hid himself, if he also compromised, then the testimony of the Lord would be cut off. Though Paul himself was imprisoned and in distress, he did not think of himself. He thought of the testimony of our Lord. He knew his beloved Timothy. So he wrote this letter to Timothy to let him know the faith that he had before God had a source. And he had a foundation for his faith. When his faith was in the middle of this severe test, not only should he not withdraw, but he needed to be strong by the grace of the Lord. Because what God has given him is not a timid heart, but a loving, strong and firm faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, the conditions we are in today are similar in many ways to the conditions of Paul and Timothy at that time. Although we are not in such dire outward conditions, but in the atmosphere of the spiritual realm, we feel we are in the same condition. Many of God's children cannot stand the trials and have dispersed. Although they have not denied the Lord, yet they hid themselves. In such a condition, how should we be? God is seeking faithful people. God needs people who will rise up to continue to be His witnesses. So, there are the instructions in verse 8. There were missing two words in verse 8 in our Chinese translation. If you have English bible, you will see the word, 'therefore'. We know this word refers back to the previous words. Previously it said we have a pure conscience and a genuine faith. And now in times of severe

testing, we not only cannot withdraw, but we need to be strong. Thus, it said, therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Here there is one thing which is very important. And this thing is the testimony of our Lord. It is no longer a question of our individual loss or gain. This is not an issue of Paul or Timothy. This issue has to do with the testimony of the Lord. Under such circumstances, are there people who will rise up to continue with the testimony of the Lord? Are we ashamed of the testimony of the Lord? Or do we offer ourselves up for the testimony of our Lord?

### **The Testimony of Jesus Christ**

Dear brothers and sisters, what is the testimony of our Lord? If we read the Book of Revelation, we see that the testimony of Jesus Christ is a very important term. The entire Book of Revelation or we can say the entire prophesy is the testimony of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 19: 10, it said, 'the spirit of prophesy is the testimony of Jesus'. This is the translation of the original language. We know that the bible is full of prophecies. Especially in the Book of Revelation, there are many different prophecies. But here it tells what the spirit of prophesy is. The letter of prophesy is the seven bowl, seven trumpets and seven seals. These are the letters of prophesy. But what is the spirit of prophesy? The spirit of prophesy is the testimony of Jesus Christ. If we read the bible today and all we pay attention to are the words or letters, and ignore the spirit, then we will lose the real purpose of prophecy. All prophecies are for the purpose of testifying for our Lord. Why was apostle John exiled to the island of Patmos? He was exiled because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. In Revelation 5, we see a group of people under the altar who were killed. And those are people martyred for the testimony of Jesus. They were martyred for the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is a tremendous thing. The enemy is very afraid of this testimony. He has tried every way to eliminate this testimony. Thus, those who have testified for the Lord suffered a lot. Paul was also imprisoned for the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the will of God. This is what God wants to gain on earth.

So, what is the testimony of Jesus? It is to testify who Jesus is. Then who is this Jesus? If we read revelation 1: 17-18, what did Jesus Himself proclaim? What did our Lord Jesus say to John? He said '*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*'. This is when our Lord talks about Himself. He is the first and He is the last. He is the living one, then He became dead. But He was living again and lives to the ages of ages. And His hand holds the keys of hades and death. Simply put, what is the testimony of Jesus? The testimony of Jesus is that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. God has established Him to be Lord and Christ. All knees shall bow before Him and all tongues shall confess, He is Lord.

## **What Has Been Entrusted to the Church – to Testify that Jesus is Lord**

Dear brothers and sisters, today this testimony is entrusted to the church. The church has to testify for Jesus. The church does not testify for itself. The testimony of the church is that Jesus is Lord. God has entrusted this testimony to the church. We need to testify that indeed Jesus is Lord. But to do this testimony, we need to let Jesus truly be the Lord in us. He has to be the Lord in the church. And then He has to be the Lord of this world. And He will be the eternal Lord in the universe. This is our testimony. No wonder Satan is very much afraid of this testimony. If this testimony is established, he will be completely destroyed. Dear brothers and sisters, here we see that to many Christians in this world, Jesus is not the Lord. But Caesar is the Lord and besides Caesar there was no king. But Paul was there proclaiming Jesus is Lord. So, there was a great conflict. For this reason, Paul was imprisoned and then martyred. But Paul said I am not ashamed of the testimony of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, today what is our attitude towards the testimony of our Lord? Do we see that this testimony has been persecuted in many ways? It was not only that the world seems to be attacking this testimony. The enemy does a more severe work. He did not just only oppose this testimony on the outside. He also causes confusion on the inside of this testimony, to a point that we became ashamed of this testimony. We cannot discern what is the real testimony of our Lord. We thought that we are testifying for the Lord. But in reality, it is not so. So, we feel painful inside. Brothers and sisters, under this condition do we just withdraw and preserve ourselves?

Paul said: do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. This testimony is correct. This testimony will certainly continue on. Although we have to suffer a little for this testimony, yet this suffering is worthwhile. Dear brothers and sisters, Paul told us again: God saved us. He has called us with a holy calling. Not according to our works, but according to His will and grace. This grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time. God saved us. He did not just save us but He called us with a holy calling. Dear brothers and sisters, everyone who is saved is called by God. His calling is not according to our works. Not because we are good. He called us according to His will and His grace. In other words, everyone who is saved is one who has been called by God. God has called us according to His eternal purpose. And according to that purpose, He called us. And then He gave us grace so we can answer to the call. What is that purpose? To put it in a simple term, the purpose is for us to testify for our Lord. And this is the gospel.

The gospel tells us the Lord Jesus already came. He has abolished death. He has manifested His life and incorruptibility. Today in us there is an incorruptible life. Around us is death. If we know the gospel and we know our calling, although we are surrounded by death, yet we will not be devoured by death. God will make this incorruptible life in us to manifest the power of God. Brothers and sisters, what did Paul say? He said: I know whom I have believed and am

persuaded that He will keep what I have entrusted to Him until that day. This gives Paul the power inside him to maintain the testimony of the Lord.

### **Know Whom I have Believed**

First, I know whom I have believed. Dear brothers and sisters, do we know whom we have believed today? What we believe is not a doctrine. What we believe is not a system. What we believe is not any person – not Paul, not Peter and not Apollo. Man can make mistakes. System can go wrong. The teachings can be wrong. But the Lord that we believe in can never go wrong. Because man is wrong, we lose faith. Because the teaching is wrong, we will get disappointed. And because the system is wrong, we give up. God has never asked us to believe in man. There is no man who will not make mistakes. If you believe in a person, sooner or later you will fall. Even if you believe in Paul, you will fall. If you believe in teaching, the teaching can gradually turn into heresy. If you believe in a system or a method, the system might at certain time be effective. But at another time it will be ineffective. These are not what we should believe in. Brothers and sisters, do you know whom you have believed? If you know whom you have believed, you will not fall. You have fallen today because you forgot whom you have believed. Our Lord is a trustworthy Lord. He has never done us wrong. He is a faithful, reliable Lord. So Paul said: I know whom I have believed. He is the Lord of all. I believe in Him. I follow Him until the end. He also said: I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

### **Entrust to Him Who is Able to Keep Us**

Dear brothers and sisters, these words are like you have something here and you have deposited it in the bank. We who believe in the Lord, can we be faithful unto the end? Today many people ask this question. When we read the history, we see that God has raised up a work, and this work indeed is raised up by God. And a testimony arose. But history tells us in about twenty to thirty years it fell. When one rose up the other fell off. It is the same with men. We see some people who really love the Lord. And the Lord used them mightily. But after a time, they fell. And we feel in ourselves, what should we do? Can I be faithful to the end? Or will I be like them? If I will be like them, then why would I continue? Because the farther you walk, you worse you will fall. You see the work of God which after decades changed. Then you will be afraid to put yourself into the work because you are afraid after decades it will not be there anymore. There is nothing that we can be sure of. You should have heard of the perseverance of the saints. How can the saints be preserved? You have to remember that they can be preserved not because they can do it by themselves. It is the Lord of all who preserves us. If you put all your money under your bed, then one day the thief comes in and steals all of them. That is why you put your money in the bank. Then the bank will keep them for you. Today the banks also go bankrupt. But God will never go bankrupt. Let us see that all the grace that God has given us, all the revelation that He let us see and all the things He gave us are just like

a deposit. How can we be faithful until the end? We need to entrust all these to the Lord. Everything that you know, all the grace that God has given you and the path that the Lord lead you to walk in, you do not preserve all these by yourself. But you entrust all these to the Lord. You will see that the Lord will keep you until that day. That day is when you see the Lord. And this is the security of the saints. Paul not only knew whom he has believed. But he also entrusted himself and all that God has given him to the Lord. He has not kept anything in his own hands. That is why he was deeply persuaded that the Lord is able to keep them until the day he sees the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, we admit that in this time when there is a big shaking, if we just depend on ourselves, we will not be able to be faithful to the Lord until the end. But we have a secret. We can put our all into the Lord's hands. The Lord will preserve us until that day. This is my daily prayer before God. Lord, I cannot depend on myself. I have to entrust all to You. Only You can keep me. So that I can see Your face on that day. Brothers and sisters, on one hand we entrust all to the Lord. On the other hand, what the Lord has entrusted unto us we firmly keep them by the Holy Spirit. We cannot keep them. But the Holy Spirit in us is able to keep what the Lord has entrusted to us so that we will not lose the testimony of our Lord. Brothers and sisters, the testimony of the Lord will continue. The question is who is willing to be faithful to the end. In our situations today, the question is not how to reconstruct the church. The question is how to maintain the testimony of the Lord. This is the main issue. Today the Lord is looking for a group of people who will not withdraw because of the outward circumstances. But rather by the grace and power of the Lord, they will rise up and continue the testimony of the Lord. This is the hope of Paul in Timothy.

### **God Calls Faithful People**

At the end of chapter one, Paul told us that all the people in Asia Minor had deserted him. Among them were Phygellus and Hermogenes. We do not know who these two were. Maybe they were notable brothers in the church in Asia. Maybe they had worked with Paul before. At least they had influence among the brothers and sisters. And probably when danger came and when Paul was imprisoned, these two deserted Paul. Not only have they deserted Paul but they influenced all the other brothers and sisters to desert Paul. They wanted to preserve their own lives. They were ashamed of Paul. They were ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Maybe that was why Paul particularly mentioned their names. But on the other hand, Paul mentioned another person – Onesiphorus. This person was completely opposite to the two that were mentioned before. Not only did he serve the Lord and helped Paul in Ephesus, but for some other reasons when he went to Rome, he diligently sought Paul and found him. The others deserted Paul but he diligently went to find Paul. This was very dangerous. For while when he was looking for Paul, there was a chance he might be imprisoned. We remember when our Lord was captured, all the disciples

dispersed. And Peter denied the Lord three times. In such circumstances, Onesiphorus sought Paul this way showed that he stood together with Paul to testify for the Lord. So brothers and sisters, no matter in what time, whether it was in Paul's time, but even today, it is the same. There are two kinds of people within the children of God. One kind is like Phygellus and Hermogenes. They are ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. They are not willing to stand on the side of the Lord. They are not willing to suffer for the Lord. But we thank God, there are some other people, just like Onesiphorus who was faithful to the Lord. He was willing to testify for the Lord. And he was willing to suffer for the testimony of the Lord. Today God is calling for a group of faithful men. Faithful to the testimony of the Lord. Not faithful to the other things, but faithful to the testimony of the Lord. We have to keep the testimony of the Lord on earth. We have to testify that Jesus is Lord. He is the Lord of my life. He is the Lord among us. He is the Lord of this world. He is the Lord of the universe. And this is what the Lord hopes to gain in this time.

Let us pray.

Lord, we thank and praise You because You are the Lord who knows all things. We thank and praise You, because before things happen to us, You have told us beforehand. You warn us, You teach us and You encourage us. Thus, our Lord, when we read your words, we truly thank and praise You. Because You are our way, You are all in all to us. We ask You in this end times that You raise up many of your children to testify for You and to be faithful to the end. Because we know in a little while, that Who is to come will come. Lord, if we withdraw, Your heart will not be pleased. So we look up to You, and once again dedicate ourselves to You. Keep us until that day. In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.