

WCCC 1991

Brother Kaung

Commit to Faithful Men (2)

II Timothy 2: 19 – 23.

Yet the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those that are His; and, let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and senseless questionings avoid, knowing that they beget contentions.

Maintaining the Testimony of Christ

Last night we already kind of went over the background of the Book of II Timothy. We know that when Paul wrote II Timothy, he was in a prison in Rome. He knew that he would soon be leaving this earth. So he wrote this epistle to his son in faith, Timothy. He knew the natural tendency of Timothy. He also knew what kind of time it was at that time. The burden in his heart is one thing and that is the testimony of the Lord. Paul, in his whole life, had fought for the testimony of Jesus. And at that time, it could be said that his fight would soon pass. But the testimony of the Lord has to continue on earth. And he thought of Timothy, the son in faith that he had. Timothy should rise up and carry on this entrustment. Timothy should continue to testify for the Lord. But Paul knew what kind of time the world was in at that time. Many people had withdrawn because of difficulties. The nature of Timothy was also very timid. So in such circumstances, it would be easy for Timothy to withdraw. If that was the case, the testimony of Jesus would be discontinued on earth. Paul's concern was not for his own life. In earlier times, Paul already said, I am not mindful of my life. What he was concerned with was only one thing, and it was the testimony of the Lord. He was concerned about Timothy, but we can say that what he was more concerned about was whether Timothy could continue with the testimony of the Lord. Therefore, he wrote this epistle to confirm Timothy's heart, so that he would rise up and receive the baton of this testimony. That way, the testimony of the Lord could continue on this earth.

What is the testimony of our Lord? The testimony of the Lord is to testify who He is. The testimony of the Lord is not a teaching. The testimony of the Lord is

also not a doctrine. The testimony of the Lord is not a system. The testimony of the Lord is not a form. The testimony of the Lord is to testify who He is. In the entire universe, this testimony is the greatest testimony. God also testifies to this testimony. Our Lord Himself testifies to this. Paul and many disciples also testified to this. This testimony is the Lord's heart desire. The most important thing in the heart of God is letting the entire universe know the Son of God.

Our God is a jealous God. He will not allow anything to affect or alter this testimony. We know this testimony is the focal point of conflict in the ages. The enemy of God does not want to see this testimony being established on earth because once this testimony is established, it will be the end of the enemy. Thus, those who testify for this testimony have to suffer much. The church at that time was also going through a severe trial because of this testimony. Thank and praise God that Paul, by God's grace stood firm. Although he was imprisoned in Rome, and although he knew that his time on earth would soon end, yet he was faithful to this testimony unto death. But when he looked around, he saw that all Asia Minor had deserted him. He saw that many brothers and sisters around had deserted the testimony of the Lord because of hardships and difficulties of the environment. Therefore, in his heart, he was anxious. He wanted his son who was born of the gospel to rise up and testify for the Lord. Throughout the ages, there were many conflicts on this earth because of this testimony. But we thank and praise God, because we also see that throughout the ages, God raised up certain people at the right time. These are those who are faithful to him and can maintain the testimony of the Lord on the earth. The Lord died for His testimony. And those who keep this testimony have to give up their lives also. This testimony is none other than, simply put, Jesus Christ is Lord. God has already established Him as Lord and as Christ. God has already put all things under His feet. And He is to be the Lord of all. This is the central point of the testimony.

He is the Eternal Living Lord

Our Lord Himself said, I am the alpha; I am the omega. In the purpose of God, He is the first. In the heart of God, He is also the last. All things begin with Him. All things end with Him. All things are from Him. All things go through Him. All things go back to Him. This is the eternal purpose of God. He is the living one. In other words, He is life. When we think of our Lord, we think of Him as life; that eternal, glorious, not created, incorruptible, undefiled, and undecayed life. Interestingly He said, I was once dead. This life came to this world, He entered death but He devoured death. And He came out of death and live forevermore. It proves the tremendous power of this life. In His hand, He holds the key to death and hades. In other words, His victory is perfect. And this is our Lord.

Honor Him as Lord in All Things

Dear brothers and sisters, the will of God is to have this Lord to be the Lord of each of us. And His being our Lord is absolute. There is no one on earth who can be our absolute Lord. Only our Lord is our absolute Lord. In other words, we need to give Him complete submission and obedience. This is the testimony of the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, many times we say Jesus is Lord. But is Jesus indeed our Lord? In some matters, we let Jesus be our Lord. But in most things, we still are our own lord. Maybe in some things that please us, we let Him be Lord. And for things not to our liking, we will not let Him be Lord. Oftentimes we are like Peter. We said Lord, it can never be. We claim Him to be our Lord with our mouth. But then we tell Him: 'you cannot do that'. In other words, we are still our own lord. If we are like that, then we lose the testimony of the Lord. Dear brothers and sisters, you have to see that this testimony is the greatest thing in the universe. Not only individually for us but also for the church. When the children of God gathered together, do we honor our Lord Jesus as Lord. Or do we have another Lord outside of our Lord Jesus. Is there someone there taking His place? Or we honor the opinions of men and let those take His place. 'Jesus is Lord' – is this our testimony? Today, if Jesus is indeed Lord in every one of us, and if He is indeed Lord in the church, then we can see that this testimony will bring the kingdom of our Lord onto this earth, so that all the kingdoms on earth will become the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He will be the Lord of the universe. So this testimony is very important. In the beginning this testimony is entrusted to the church. The purpose of the very existence of the church is for this testimony. But sadly, it has come to such a condition that when Paul looked around him at that time, the church seemed to have failed and had fallen off the testimony of the Lord. However, the testimony of the Lord has to continue on earth. That was why Paul was so anxious to have Timothy rise up and be strong.

The Secret to Maintaining the Testimony – Be Strong in the Grace that is in Jesus Christ

So when Paul came to the second chapter, he said: My son be strong in the grace that is in the Lord. Especially when other people are failing, it is necessary for some people to be strong and stand up for the testimony for the Lord. According to men, when people are withdrawing, it will be easy for us to follow and withdraw. We became ashamed of the testimony of the Lord and do not treat the testimony of the Lord as our glory. That is why Paul said you need to be strong. How can one be strong? Not only should one not withdraw, but rather one has to be determined to go forward. He said be strong in the grace of the Lord. If we rely on ourselves, we will easily follow and fall when we see the severe trials that the testimony of the Lord has to go through and when many

have already fallen from the testimony. How can we be strengthened? We need the grace of the Lord. Here it said, be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus. By our own strength, we will only become weak instead of strong. We will only despair and we will not look or move forward. We will only give up and we will not maintain. We will not take the testimony of the Lord as our glory but rather we will be ashamed of it. Only the grace of Christ can strengthen us.

Actively Take Hold of this Grace

This verse tells us that we need to 'be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.' This means that you yourself have to be strong in the grace in the Lord. The grace of the Lord is here, but it requires you to rise up, to receive and to depend on this grace. If you can do this then you can maintain the testimony of the Lord. Let me say this again. If we rely on ourselves, we will feel ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Only in grace will we see the testimony of our Lord as glorious. Grace abounds and is readily available. We need to actively take hold of this grace. If you actively hold on to it, then this grace is yours. Then you will be strengthened inside and you can be a faithful servant. But if you do not actively lay hold of this grace, then this grace will not help you at all even though it is there.

Boast of Your Own Weaknesses

The problem is that we are unable to see God's grace. We cannot stand if we rely on ourselves. We need to depend on His grace. Do you remember the experience of Paul? He already learned the secret. He knew God's grace. We know there was a thorn in Paul's flesh. For this thorn, he had asked God three times to remove it since this thorn had made him weak. Paul wanted to be strong. But the Lord said to Paul 'My grace suffices you, for my power is perfected in weakness' (II Corinthians 12:9). When Paul heard this, he immediately said, 'most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell upon me'. Today, do we know our weaknesses? Do we know our weaknesses in the testimony of the Lord? We know our weaknesses and we are ashamed of them. Thus it shows that we do not really know our own weaknesses. If we really know our weaknesses, we will boast of our weaknesses. Because when we know how to boast of our weaknesses, then we will know how to receive grace. Every one of us needs the grace of the Lord. We should not look at ourselves, other people or the environment. We need only to look at the Lord. When we look at our Lord, we will receive sufficient grace and we can become strong inside.

Entrusted to the Faithful Men

Therefore, Paul said to Timothy, 'and the things you have heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also'. When one becomes strong in the grace of the Lord, not only can he maintain the testimony of the Lord, but he also can entrust

to faithful men, such as those competent to instruct. We know that walking the way of the testimony cannot be done by an individual. It needs a group of faithful people to work together to carry out the testimony. You remember the story of Elijah. In his time, all Israel had forsaken God. Elijah, a prophet of God was one who stood before God. He was sent by God to challenge all Israel on Mount Carmel. He challenged them saying, 'How long do you halt between two opinions? If Jehovah be your God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him'. So they carried out a test with the result that all the people said, 'Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God'. Unfortunately, because of what Jezebel said, Elijah escaped for his own life. He said to God, I am left alone to testify for you. I am the only one who says Jehovah is God. But now they want my life'. What did God say to him? 'Yet I have left myself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal'. Dear brothers and sisters, throughout the ages, the testimony of the Lord has never been stopped. Many times, you think you are the only one left. But the Lord said, there are left seven thousand. Thus, you are not the only one there maintaining the testimony of the Lord. When you rise up, you have to entrust it to faithful men who are competent to instruct.

Timothy heard a lot of teachings from Paul. These teachings were not spoken to him in private. He received these teachings in the presence of many witnesses. Where did all these teachings from Paul come from? He told us, 'for neither did I receive them from men, neither was I taught them, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ'. In another word, Paul's teachings were not from himself. However the Lord taught him and revealed to him, that was what he entrusted to Timothy. So whatever Timothy was taught made up the testimony of the Lord. And now whatever Timothy received, he was to entrust these to faithful men.

Faithful to the Lord

Today the issue is faithfulness. Why is being faithful an issue? It is because if one is not faithful, he can easily water down the testimony of the Lord. He can easily compromise and only think of himself. What is a faithful man? And what is it that he has to be faithful to? This is very important. We are to be faithful to our Lord; not to a person outside of the Lord, not to some teachings or an organization. We have to be faithful to our Lord. Strangely enough, in our nature, we can easily become faithful to a person, to some teachings or to an organization. It seems hard for us to be faithful to our Lord. I remember when I was young, a brother told me that from his fellowship with a sister, he found that sister was more faithful to an organization than to the Lord. I am afraid that this is common among us. But we have to remember that the object of our faithfulness is the Lord. And we have to be faithful to the testimony of the Lord. If we are faithful to His testimony, then He will entrust the testimony to us. We cannot entrust the testimony of the Lord to someone who is unfaithful. If a person is not right, then the nature of the testimony will be changed. Or worse, the testimony will be lost. Thus, in this end times, what the Lord needs are

faithful men. Not men who are clever or capable, but faithful. In this end times, where are the faithful men? There are few faithful men who are faithful to the Lord, to His testimony and to the gospel that the Lord gave us. The Lord wants faithful men who are competent to teach others and who hope others will become partners in the testimony. Of course this will involve sufferings. Paul said we need to be like good soldiers of Christ.

Do Not Be Entangled with Earthly Matters

Here Paul mentioned three examples. He said, 'No one going as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of life, that he may please him who has enlisted him as a soldier'. This testimony is one kind of warfare. If we know this point, then we can prepare ourselves. Paul said we are all like soldiers in this testimony. The soldiers here were not referring to those staying behind in the camp who might have time to rest. In the original language, the soldiers here referred to those in the front line. Under that circumstance, you should not be entangled with the things in the world. If you are in the front line fighting and you are still thinking about your family, your investments and other earthly things, you will not be focusing on the fight and the one who called you will not be happy. Today we are fighting on the battlefield. Dear brothers and sisters, do you know you are in the battlefield today? You are fighting for the testimony of the Lord. When you shoulder this responsibility, how can you let the worries of this life and money entice and worry you? We should be thinking of the things of our Lord. It is true that in this world, we have a family and job. We have many things that we need to do but we should not put these things as our priority. We should not let these things entangle and worry us. We need to put our Lord as our all in all. Luke 21 said, when our Lord comes again, He is to receive His saints. But there will be some who will be entangled with the worries of this life and with money that they cannot go with the Lord. Dear brothers and sisters, are we giving our all to the Lord and to His testimony? Are we able to not let these things entangle us?

Practice Godliness

Another example that Paul gave was the principle that when we contend in the battlefield, we need to contend lawfully. Else we will not be given the crown. The background of this was the Olympics. There are different competitions in the Olympics. To get the prize, one must go through very strict training. Before the competition, one has to record everyday activities including meals. And one has to go through lots of training. And when it is time to compete, one must do so according to the rules. Only then can one receive the crown. Brothers and sisters, in the fight for the testimony, we need to practice godliness. Today, God's children are too loose. We need the discipline of the Holy Spirit. We need to have very strict discipline from God. Only then can we receive the crown.

Need to Labor Diligently

The third example Paul gave is that we have to be like a husbandman working in the field. A husbandman must labor if he is to have a plentiful harvest. He cannot fall asleep as mentioned in the Book of Proverbs 24: 30 – 31 and let the field lay waste. We need to labor diligently, just as our Lord did when He was on earth.

The Foundation of the Gospel

That was why Paul continued to say: Our Lord was the descendant of David. He resurrected just like what we preached in the gospel. Our Lord came down to this earth once as a man. For the testimony of God, He died and then He resurrected. And this is the gospel that we spread. When Paul came to this point, he summarized in verse 11: 'The word is faithful: for if we have died together with Him, we shall also live together'. And the word 'faithful' has been mentioned by Paul four times in his pastoral epistle. The first time it was mentioned was in I Timothy 1: 15. *'Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first.'* The second time is in I Timothy 4: 8 – 9 *'for bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but piety is profitable for everything, having promise of life, of the present one, and of that to come. The word is faithful and worthy of all acceptations.'* The third time is in II Timothy 2: 11 – 13 *'The word is faithful; for if we have died together with Him, we shall live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together; if we deny, He will also deny us; if we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.'* The fourth time is in Titus 3: 5 - 8 *'not on the principle of works which have been done in righteousness which we had done, but according to His own mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The word is faithful, and I desire that you insist strenuously on these things, that they who have believed God may take care to pay diligent attention to good works. These things are good and profitable to men'*. These verses tell us the promises of life and the power of life. These also tell us how to exercise holiness; how we can die with the Lord; and how we can be glorified as His heirs. These are the foundation of the gospel. It constitutes our testimony. But many people have fallen off from the testimony. And many people have said many things that are not according to the truths. Under those conditions what did Paul say? In II Timothy 2: 19 he said 'yet the sound foundation of the Lord stands.' Even though the surroundings are shaken, and God's truth is also being shaken, and heresies have corrupted the faith of many, yet the sound foundation of God stands.

Those Who Name the Name of the Lord Should Withdraw from Iniquities

The Holy Spirit continues to say *'The Lord knows those that are His; and, let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquities'*. Dear

brothers and sisters, when we read this, we think of the verse in Matthew 7: 21 – 23. These verses talked of people who said to the Lord, ‘Lord, Lord’. They also called on the name of the Lord. But our Lord said, ‘I do not know you’. In II Timothy 2: 19, it said the Lord knows those that are His. So we know here it refers to the children of God. If today you are one who is known by God, you are one who is praised by the Lord. There are some who may not be walking in the will of God even though they are called ‘Lord, Lord’. Matthew 7 tells us they said, Lord, Lord, I preach in your name. I drive away evil spirit in your name. But the Lord said, I do not know you. In another word, even though they seemed to be doing the work of the Lord, yet they did not obey the will of the Lord. So the Lord said I do not praise you. And here in II Timothy the teaching is the same. We see God’s children are all there saying, Lord, Lord. And the Lord said those who name the name of the Lord have to withdraw from iniquities. What is unrighteousness? Unrighteousness means not walking or doing things in the will of God. Do not think that as long as I do not sin, then it is alright. But unrighteousness before God is not walking or doing things in His will. Even though you have done the best, even if you have driven out the evil spirit, and preach in the name of the Lord, but if it is not in the will of God, you are still unrighteous. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord has to withdraw from unrighteousness. In another word, you need to do it in the will of God. The will of God is everything. It is not what you do, not what you preach, but whether they are done in the will of God. The will of God measures all things.

The Depravity of The Church – Like a Great House

Paul continued, ‘But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen vessels.’ From this saying, you see that the condition of the church when Paul wrote II Timothy was completely different from when he wrote I Timothy.

When Paul wrote I Timothy, it was the time when he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome. He went to visit the church and came to Ephesus. Ephesus was a place where Paul had worked before for many years. The church in Ephesus was filled with the first love in the early days. But when Paul went back to visit the church at Ephesus, we know that the condition of the church in Ephesus was already different. So Paul left Timothy there because Paul still had to visit other places. Afterwards, Paul wrote to Timothy. He told Timothy to tell others not to preach strange preaching and not to listen to fables, traditions and genealogy because these things only cause contentions. They do not build up love. What were these strange teachings? What were these fables? What were the endless genealogies? Probably at that time those are things of Judaism. And we know this group of Judaistic Jews always followed Paul. When Paul was preaching the gospel of the Lord, they followed and found opportunities to talk about endless genealogies. The Jews liked to talk about genealogy. Paul also said I am of Benjamin. But this endless genealogy brought us back to carnal

conditions. And they also liked to talk about baseless fables. And in the interpretation of the scripture by the rabbi, we do indeed see all these baseless fables. And in Judaism there are many strange teachings. And they even argued how many angels can stay on the top of the needle. You can imagine the conditions of the church at that time when you see that they were talking about all these things.

The elders of the first generation had already passed away. Because Paul in Acts 20 said, 'I will not be able to see your face again'. The second generation rose up and very possible that people fought to be elders. So Paul said, 'if you aspire to be an elder, you have to aspire to good work'. This is not to fight to be the leader but a fight to be a slave. It is to be a slave to all. If it is really this way many people will not want to be elders. The church was very weak. There were many problems in the church. But even though the situation was like this, God still considers it to be the church. So when Paul wrote the letters, he said the church is the house of the eternal God, the base and foundation of the truth. He wanted Timothy to know how to act in a church. And he wanted all the brothers and sisters in the church to know how to behave. In another word, although the church fell into that very weak condition yet God still acknowledges it was a church. And Paul still wanted to restore the condition, so that it could be indeed the true testimony of the Lord. This is I Timothy.

But when it comes to II Timothy, we see the condition is entirely different. Because at that time not only some people there were preaching strange doctrines, but the ears of men were itching. They wanted to listen to that which would satisfy their lust. What they asked they had to get. So many people stood up to talk about those things that satisfied their lusts. At this point we see the church has become a great house. Our brother this morning also mentioned how a holy city became a camp of men. How a temple of God became a trading place. We remember when our Lord was at the beginning of his work on earth, He cleaned up the temple once. He said, this is My father's temple but you have turned it into a trading place. And when the Lord came to the end of His ministry, he entered into Jerusalem the last time, and once again he cleaned the temple. He said, you have turned the temple of prayer into a thief's den. At that time, although the temple was still there, yet the reality had already gone. The glory of God was not there. The presence of God was not there. The outward activities continued with piety on the outside, but no reality of piety there. When our Lord went there, He still said, 'This is my Father's temple'. For three and a half years, our Lord still wanted to save the temple. But towards the end, He saw that it was getting worse. Not only was it a trading place but it became a thief's den. That was why when the Lord saw Jerusalem, He wept. Our Lord truly loved Jerusalem. He loved the temple. But the temple had depraved. He said, your house would become a deserted land. God had forsaken you.

There were Golden and Silver Vessels, And There were Wooden and Earthen Wares

In like manner, when it came to II Timothy, the church became abnormal. At that time, God did not call it the house of the eternal God. Instead, God said it was like a large household. Outwardly looking, it was very big. But inside it was all mixed. There were gold and silver vessels, and wooden and earthen vessels. What are gold and silver vessels? In the bible, gold represents the nature of God. Gold vessels are those formed according to the life of God and His nature. What are the silver vessels? Silver in the bible represents the redemption of Christ. Silver vessels are those entirely built according to the redemption of Christ. What are wooden and earthen vessels? In the bible wood represents the nature of man. So these vessels represented the flesh and nature of men. It is to say that wooden vessels are entirely carnal, according to man. What are the earthen vessels? The earthen vessels are of dust. These vessels are made entirely according to the world. Amazingly, the honorable and dishonorable vessels were also mentioned in Romans 9. But in Romans the honorable vessels refer to those who have been saved by grace. Those vessels by the mercy of God are destined to glory. Those dishonorable vessels refer to those who do not believe in the Lord. They would perish in the hand of God. For example, Pharaoh was a dishonorable vessel. But in II Timothy, the honorable and dishonorable vessels do not refer to those who believe and those who do not believe. In the past, it referred to the difference between believers and non-believers and the church was separated from the world. But at that time, the issue was no longer believing or not believing, or whether the church was separated from the world. The issue was in the so-called church, some were honorable vessels and some were dishonorable vessels. Here both the honorable and dishonorable vessels referred to those who believe in the Lord. But some believers, although they were saved and believed in the Lord, yet their life on this earth were totally according to their own nature. All the things that they did were according to the ways of the world. Thus they were all wooden and earthen vessels. They were the dishonorable vessels. Thank and praise God, there were still some other people, who let the life and character of the Lord in them become their character. All their works were according to the redemption of the Lord. They were the honorable vessels before God.

Separated from Dishonor, Be a Vessel to Honor

But brothers and sisters, here there is an amazing thing. All of us originally were dishonorable vessels. Just looking at ourselves, although we are saved, yet we are full of self and the world. We are full of self and flesh and we are like all the other people. We are no better than other brothers and sisters. But the Lord here shows us a way. Our Lord said, *'If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work.'* Dear brothers and sisters, what God wants are honorable vessels because these

honorable vessels are suitable for God's use and because they are those that can contain the testimony of the Lord. Christ is the Lord in their life. They are faithful to the testimony of the Lord. They are those that the Lord can use. The Lord cannot use the dishonorable vessels. They cannot be used to maintain the testimony of the Lord.

But who are the honorable vessels? Who are the dishonorable vessels? You can be an honorable vessel and you can also be a dishonorable vessel. The crucial point is here. Are you willing to purify yourself? The choice is yours. You have to rise up. You are not satisfied to be a dishonorable vessel. You do not want to be a dishonorable vessel because you love the Lord. You need to separate yourself from the dishonorable. Here the Chinese translated the word 'dishonorable' to 'dishonorable things'. But in the original language, it is just 'separate from dishonor'. What can make us become dishonorable? What is dishonorable? Wood and earthen are dishonorable. Our self is dishonorable. The way of the world is dishonorable. Our flesh is dishonorable. Brothers and sisters, are we willing to rise up and purify ourselves? Not to purify others but to purify ourselves. Our Lord said, 'you have to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me'. Before God, for the sake of the testimony of the Lord, are you willing to purify yourself? Are we willing to deny ourselves? Or we want to hold on to ourselves. You know self is the hardest to get rid of. In self, what is the most difficult to get rid of? It is our own opinion. One day when our opinion can be rid of, then our self will be rid of too. Brothers and sisters this duty is in every one of us. The grace of God is here. We need to have this heart that we want to be used by God; we want to escape the dishonorable; we do not want to live in our own self; we do not want to live in the world; we have to live in the life of our Lord; we want to dwell in the Holy Spirit; and we want to live in the redemption of our Lord. If we live with this heart, then we can maintain the testimony of the Lord.

Flee from Youthful Lusts and Pursue with Those with a Pure Heart

Paul continued, '*But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.*' We know that Timothy at that time was around thirty years old. Some said around thirty-five to thirty-seven years old. In man's eyes he was no longer a youth. He was already an adult. But in Paul's eye, he was still a youth. Paul said, flee from the youthful lusts. It is not to flee from youth. But it is to flee from youthful lusts. What are youthful lusts? Youths to a certain degree have self-pride. They usually think they are right. They like to contend and argue. They like to say I am right and you are wrong. Youths easily get excited. When they are hot, they are really hot. When they are cold, they are ice cold. Youths very easily look at other people and follow them. And they can easily stumble because of others. There are the youthful lusts. Even though age wise, we might not be young. Maybe we are fifty or sixty years old, but we still have not fled from youthful lusts. We have to flee from youthful lusts. In spiritual things, there

are some things that we need to flee from. If you do not flee from those, you will fall into the temptation. But to flee is dealing with it negatively. There is a positive way. And it is to pursue with those who called on the name of the Lord with a pure heart.

What God Wants to Restore is the Reality Inside

Dear brothers and sisters, in these times, does the Lord have words for us? Under the evil and dangerous condition of the times today, has the Lord shown us a way? We know that the testimony of the Lord has to be maintained. But how do we carry out the testimony of the Lord? In this great house, there are gold and silver vessels and wooden and earthen vessels. In such a situation, how do we maintain the testimony of the Lord? Personally, I believe the Lord here told us this is not the time to focus on the outward things. Not the time to ask whether outwardly it is correct or not. Not to ask whether man is right or wrong outwardly. Not to focus on whether this organization is correct or not. When the Lord is doing the work of recovery, He wants to recover the reality inside. When the church first started, you did not see the organization. What you see is not a name. What you see is not just eldership or deaconship. What you see is the Lord Himself. And you see the organization that came out at that time was entirely from the life inside. It was not organized from the outside to the inside. What we see today is that at the beginning it was visions and revelations, life and the Holy Spirit. But when men try to maintain those with their own doings, the result is that there is only the outward shell and the inside is empty. In the work of recovery, I believe our Lord no longer pay attention to the outward things. He wants to recover the spiritual reality inside.

Be Pure in Heart – And Look Only to the Lord

Thus the word of the Lord said, if you want to be an honorable vessel, if you want to purify yourself, you cannot do it alone by yourself. You need to look for a group of people with pure hearts. Today we see that the heart of man is not pure. The heart of man is not simple. The bible said, blessed are the pure in heart because they shall see God. Why is it that we cannot see God? It is because our heart is not pure. All we see are men and men. What we see are other people. Sometimes we see ourselves. But we cannot see God. And this is where all the problems are. If we can see God, all problems will be solved. If we can see our Lord, will we still have problems? Or that the children of God will still be divided? Can Christ be divided? It is not possible. It is all because our hearts are not pure. Dear brothers and sisters, we need to return to the presence of God. We need to have the prayer of Psalm 139: 23 – 24, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any grievous way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.' What God wants today are faithfulness and pure heart. If you say your heart is pure, why is it you cannot see God. Why is it all you see are men? If you are truly pure-hearted, all you see is our Lord. If you are like that, you can pray with those who have a

pure heart. Praying is showing that we have nothing to depend on and can only look to our Lord.

Pursue Righteousness, Faith, Love and Peace

What did Paul here say that we should pursue? Do we pursue doctrine? No, so what do we pursue? Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. These four things are our Lord's character. Our Lord is righteous. Whatever He does is righteous and is according to the will of God. Our Lord has the faith of God. He has the faithfulness of God. He has the character of God. Therefore, He can carry out the will of God. And He can get the praises from God. God is love. Our Lord is full of God's love. And in Him there is always the presence of God. And He is at peace. He has peace with God. He has peace with Himself. He has peace with men. Dear brothers and sisters, this is not doctrine. This has nothing to do with the system. It has nothing to do with the outward appearance. This is the inward character. Today what are we pursuing? Do you pursue to be like before? Do you pursue the things that have been taken down before? Today we should pursue our Lord Himself. We pursue our Lord with those who are pure hearted. This is our way going forward. Thank and praise God that He let us see His way. We have to seek those who are pure hearted. We need fellowship.

The Servants of God Should Not Contend

What are we going to do with those who are satisfied to be dishonorable vessels? If you read on, you will see that here it said, *'The servants of the Lord should not contend. But be gentle to all. Apt to teach and forbearing. In meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgement of the truth'*. Never despise our brothers and sisters. We have to come to them with gentleness. Do not argue. We have to learn patience before our Lord and to endure all misunderstanding. We use our Lord's love in us hoping to restore brothers and sisters. We hope all of us can rise up and testify for the Lord.

Let us pray.

Lord when we quiet down before You, we ask You to search our heart with Your spirit. We admit we do not know ourselves. We need to see light in Your light. Lord, we ask You to enlighten us with Your light and we have to prostrate before You. Lord, You know that we are not willing to be dishonorable vessels. Please have mercy on us. It is not only for our own future, but for Your testimony. So that we all can be strengthened by Your grace. So that we can depart from being dishonorable and be of use to You in Your hands. Together with our brothers and sisters we pursue You with pure hearts. Lord, we thank You because You are our way. You are our all in all. You are enough for us. In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.