

Message Four

The Proclamation of the Jubilee

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:16-19; 2 Cor. 6:2; Isa. 12:2-6

- I. The Lord Jesus as God's anointed One began His ministry by proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, the New Testament jubilee of grace—Luke 4:18-19:**
- A. The first commission of the Lord as God's anointed One and the reason that He was sent was to preach the gospel and to announce the good news of great joy to all the people—Luke 4:18-19, 43; cf. 2:10-11.
 - B. The acceptable year of the Lord is the New Testament age typified by the year of jubilee, the time when God accepts the returned captives of sin and when those who are oppressed under the bondage of sin enjoy the release of God's salvation—Lev. 25:8-17; Isa. 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2.
 - C. According to Luke 4, the Lord Jesus proclaimed the jubilee on a particular Sabbath day in Galilee, but during the centuries that have followed, the jubilee has been largely neglected; therefore we need a recovery of the New Testament jubilee in our experience and preaching—cf. Luke 24:47-49; Rom. 10:14-15.
- II. We must receive the commission to preach the gospel and blow the trumpet of God's complete salvation to the world, proclaiming: "Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation," the year of jubilee—2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 26:16-19:**
- A. The word jubilee in Leviticus 25:10 means "a time of shouting" or "a time of the trumpeting of the ram's horn," which signifies the preaching of the gospel as the proclaiming of liberty in the New Testament jubilee to all the sinners sold under sin that they may return to God and God's family, the household of God, and may rejoice with shouting in the New Testament enjoyment of God's salvation—1 Pet. 1:8; Isa. 12:2-6.
 - B. Announcing the gospel to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and sending away in release those who are oppressed are the freedoms and blessings of the jubilee—Luke 4:18-19:
 - 1. To announce the gospel to the poor is to preach the gospel to those who live in the world without God and without hope and who are thus poor in heavenly, spiritual, and divine things—12:21; Rev. 3:17; Eph. 2:12; cf. 1 Pet. 1:3.
 - 2. To proclaim release to the captives is to impart Christ as the Emancipator into those who are prisoners of war, slaves, exiles, and prisoners under Satan's bondage so they can be released and have real freedom by enjoying Christ as the liberating, life-giving Spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17-18.
 - 3. To proclaim recovery of sight to the blind is to open the eyes of those who are fallen and turn them from darkness to light so that they may see the divine things in the spiritual realm, which requires spiritual sight and divine light—Acts 26:18.
 - 4. To send away in release those who are oppressed is to bring those who are being oppressed under Satan in sickness or sin into the enjoyment of Christ as the release of God's salvation—Luke 13:11-13; John 8:34, 36.
 - C. The Lord appeared to Saul and commissioned him as a minister and witness of the full gospel composed of seven points revealed in Acts 26:18: (1) "to open their eyes;" (2) "to turn them from darkness to light;" (3) to turn them "from the authority of Satan to God;" (4) to help them "receive forgiveness of sins;" (5) to help them be "sanctified by faith in Me;" (6) that they may have an "inheritance," a common portion among the saints; and (7) be in the church life ("among those who have been sanctified")—cf. Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 3:8-11:
 - 1. Before we can preach this full gospel, we must go before the Lord and pray that our own eyes would be opened and that we would experience each of these items—cf. Mark 8:22-25; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; Rev. 3:18.
 - 2. If we experience the whole gospel, we will not merely be preachers, but we will be witnesses

telling people of what we have seen in the presence of the living Lord; our preaching must be the issue of what we have seen—cf. Acts 26:15-18; 1 John 1:3.

D. We must proclaim the jubilee by being commissioned, not by a doctrine, a theory, a religious creed, or any theology, but by a heavenly vision of the divine things concerning the dispensing of the Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people—Acts 26:19; cf. Matt. 28:19-20.

Focus: After receiving a heavenly vision of the full gospel, we must pray to personally see and experience all the blessings of the New Testament jubilee that we may become living witnesses of the Lord who proclaim Him as the jubilee.

Ministry Excerpts

THE LORD'S APPEARING MAKING SAUL A WITNESS

Acts 26 is also set against the background of the Jewish religion. In verse 17 the Lord said that He would deliver Saul from the people unto whom He would send him. The word “people” in this verse does not refer to mankind but to the Jewish people, the religious people. In the Jewish religion there was a young man named Saul who had a strong will and who was faithful to that traditional religion. He was very zealous for the religion and tradition of his forefathers. While he was on the way to damage the church, doing his best to persecute it, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and knocked him to the ground. Saul asked, “Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 26:15). The background here is not that of paganism but of the typical religion. Saul was zealous for God according to the traditional religion, but he was persecuting the church of Christ and opposing God’s economy. Although he was so zealous for God, he did not realize that he was part of the greatest deviation from the central line of God’s revelation.

After Saul had been knocked down, the Lord called him, saying, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16). Often the Lord knocks us down and then tells us to rise up. At these times the Lord may say, “Don’t lie there—rise up. If you rise up, I will make you a minister and a witness, not a religionist. I will make you a witness of what you have seen.” The Lord seemed to be telling Saul, “You have seen Me speaking to you from the heavens. Now go and witness to people of this. Witness to the priests, the elders, and the scribes. Formerly, you said that I was killed and buried, but now you must witness to the fact that I have been resurrected and am now living in the heavens.”

In verse 16 the Lord told Saul that he would be a witness both of the things which he had seen and of the things in which the Lord would appear to him. The Lord said that He would reveal other things to Saul, not in the way of teaching, but by means of His appearing. In whatever the Lord appeared to Saul, Saul was to witness of that to the people. This is not a teaching, a doctrine, or a religion; it is absolutely a revelation of Jesus. All that the apostle Paul later ministered was something in which the Lord had appeared to him. He was not taught by the Lord; rather, he had revelation that came from the Lord’s appearing. After his experience on the way to Damascus, Saul could say, “I have seen the living Jesus in the heavens. I will go tell people of what I have seen. My seeing comes from the appearing of this living Lord. He charged me to minister those things in which He has ministered to me, and He even promised to appear to me again and again. Every time He appears, I see something. Then I go out and witness to people about what I have seen.” Being a witness is not a matter of teaching and knowledge, but of appearing and vision. The things in which the Lord appears to us are the things which we must minister to others.

THE LORD'S CHARGE

In Acts 26:18 the Lord charged Saul, “To open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a portion among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Gk.). This is the work that you young people should do today. Do not preach the traditional gospel of Christianity. Rather, open the eyes of this generation that they may turn from darkness to light. The first thing we must do is to help others to see. In order to do this, we ourselves must have the vision and see the heavenly things. We must see the things concerning Christ, not by being taught, but by having Christ appear to us. After you have seen the vision, you need to contact people, telling them that Jesus has appeared to you and that you have seen Him. Do not preach the low, traditional gospel. Many who have received this poor gospel are still blind and in darkness. Do not teach people religion—open their eyes that they may turn from darkness and Satan to light and God. By turning in this way, they will be released from the evil power of darkness, which is the authority of Satan, unto God. As a result, they will receive forgiveness of sins and a portion among those who are sanctified. All the saved and forgiven ones are saints, and all the saints have a portion (Col. 1:12). According to Colossians, the portion of the saints is simply Christ Himself. Christ has been allotted to us, and we all share a portion in Him. What is our portion? It is neither the heavens nor the earth but Christ. Thus, Christ is the common portion of all the saints. Unbelievers do not have a positive portion. Their portion—the lake of fire—is negative. Our portion—Christ—will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Those who turn from Satan to God will not have a portion individually but corporately and collectively with all the saints. This means that they will have a portion among those who are members of the church life. We cannot have such a portion alone; we can only have it among the saints, among those who are sanctified by faith.

THE FULL GOSPEL

In Acts 26:18 the full gospel is presented. The complete, perfect, whole gospel is found here: to open people’s eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, be sanctified by faith, and enjoy the common portion of the saints to have the church life. In this one verse there are seven points: (1) to open people’s eyes, (2) to turn them from darkness to light, (3) to turn them from the authority of Satan to God, (4) to help them receive forgiveness of sins, (5) to help them to be sanctified by faith, (6) that they may have a common portion among the saints, and (7) be in the church life. Have you ever heard such a gospel? This is the gospel that the young people must preach to this generation. Do not preach the poor gospel about going to heaven—preach the uplifted gospel revealed in Acts 26:18.

THE NEED FOR PRAYER

It is quite easy to point out all the seven facets of the gospel found in this verse. But now you need to go to the Lord and pray, saying, “Lord, open my eyes. I don’t need knowledge, Lord. I need my eyes to be opened. Lord, turn me from anything dark. I don’t want to remain in darkness. Lord, turn me from darkness to light.” This is spiritual reality. When we are in it, people will realize it when we contact them. You also need to pray, “Lord, turn me from the authority, the dominion, of Satan to Yourself. I must be a person who is absolutely in God. God is my sphere, my realm, my kingdom. I must be in God.” If you pray like this, you will become another person. I can assure you that you will be different. If necessary, even fast and pray about these matters, saying, “Lord, I want to have my eyes opened like they have never been opened before. I don’t want to be opaque. I want to have eyes like the four living creatures in the book of Revelation.” The living creatures have eyes everywhere, without and within. We need to be like this. Then when we contact people, they will realize that we are crystal clear. We are not opaque like others are. Others may be good, ethical, religious, moral,

and even scriptural, but they are opaque. When people contact us, they must immediately sense that we are crystal clear. This is not preaching—this is witnessing. We must be this kind of person.

We also need to pray, “Lord, grant me a full and thorough forgiveness of all my sins. I want to have a clearance of sins from the top to the bottom. I would leave nothing that has not been dealt with. Lord, I also want to be fully sanctified. I don’t want to be merely a forgiven person but also a sanctified person. Then I will be able to enjoy my portion, the all-inclusive Christ.” Day by day, we enjoy Christ as our portion, not in an individualistic way, but by enjoying Him among the saints. Who and where are the saints? They are those who are sanctified in the church. The saints are the church. When we get into the church, we get among the saints. Oh, how we must pray over these seven matters! Pray desperately to the Lord, saying, “Lord, I want to experience the gospel that You revealed to Paul as mentioned in Acts 26:18. I want to experience this full, complete, perfect, and thorough gospel.” This gospel not only covers God’s kingdom but also Satan’s kingdom. It includes the rich Christ as our portion and all the saints as the corporate body, the church of Christ. How we need to experience this gospel!

If we experience the whole gospel, we shall not merely be a preacher—we shall be a witness. I can guarantee you that whenever you pray this way, the Lord Jesus will appear to you, and His appearing will give you a vision. Then you will see certain things. In all these messages we need to see a vision. I cannot give you anything. We all must touch the throne of grace. Does the Lord still need to knock you down? Are you that stubborn? There is no need to be so stubborn. Rather, we should say, “Lord, I’m here. You don’t need to knock me down. Lord, I’m here touching Your throne of grace. Open my eyes and turn me thoroughly from all darkness to light. Turn me from the dominion of Satan unto God and grant me a thorough forgiveness of all my sinfulness. O Lord, sanctify me that I may enjoy You as my portion among the saints in the local churches.” (*Young People’s Training*, pp. 3-7)