

THE GATES OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Message 3

Becoming Pillars at the Entrance of God's Dwelling Place

Scripture Reading: Exo. 26:31-37; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Matt. 4:18-21; Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5

- I. For the Lord to increase the numbers in the churches there is the need for some among the believers to become the pillars to provide the entrance for men as redeemed creatures to come into the Triune God—Exo. 26:31-37:**
- A. The tabernacle is a type of Christ as the incarnated and enterable Triune God; it is also a type of the corporate Christ as the Body, the church—John 1:14; 2:19-21; 1 Cor. 12:12.
 - B. Within the outer court the tabernacle was divided into two parts: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies—Exo. 27:9; 26:33; Heb. 9:1-6.
 - C. At the entrance to the tabernacle five pillars supported the screen, while at the entrance to the Holy of Holies four pillars supported the veil—Exo. 26:31-37:
 - 1. The screen signifies Christ in His perfect humanity as the One who keeps all negative persons and things outside God's dwelling place, and as the One who died for our sins under God's judgment so that we might be forgiven by God and may enter into the Holy Place of His dwelling to begin to enjoy all the riches of God in Christ—26:36-37a; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.
 - 2. The veil signifies the flesh of Christ; this veil was torn through Christ's crucifixion, signifying that the flesh of sin was crucified through Christ's death on the cross to open a new and living way for sinful man to contact God in Christ—Exo. 26:31-32a; Heb. 10:19-20, Matt. 27:51, and note 1.
 - 3. The five pillars attached to the screen signify stronger believers who are identified with the incarnated and crucified Christ; these pillars at the entrance of the tabernacle are evangelists, who declare to all that Christ died for their sins—Exo. 26:37, and note 1; Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5.
 - 4. The pillars within the tabernacle are those who experience Christ in a deeper way, who daily attach themselves to the torn veil, to the very Christ who was terminated in His flesh, and bear the testimony that they have been crucified with Christ—Exo. 26:32, and note 2; Gal. 2:20.
 - D. The two kinds of pillars provide entrances for sinners to be saved into God's dwelling place and then to be terminated so that they may come into God's Holy of Holies to enjoy God Himself in His fullness—Exo. 26:31-37; 2 Cor. 5:18-21, and note 20²; cf. Matt. 4:18-21:
 - 1. The pillars are different from the boards; the boards which form the wall of the tabernacle are good for protection and separation, but there is no way for people to enter into God's building through them—Exo. 26:15.
 - 2. We have many brothers and sisters without whom there would be no wall; without them the church would be too open and exposed to the negative things; however, if we all are boards, then there will be no entrance for people to come into God's dwelling place; the church will be closed and we will become exclusive—S.S. 8:9-10, and notes 9¹ and 10¹.
 - 3. For the sake of the entrance some of us have to be dealt with; the boards must be cut and fitted to become the pillars.
 - 4. Those who have been dealt with will be very flexible; they can be for protection and support, and they can also be the entrance for others to come into God's dwelling place.

II. In the Lord's recovery today, we need pillars attached to the screen—evangelists standing at the front of the church life and zealously preaching Christ, declaring to all that Christ died for their sins—Exo. 26:37; Matt. 4:19; Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5:

- A. The screen was attached to the pillars; this attachment indicates identification; when we have become attached to Christ and identified with Him, we become pillars.
- B. Those who are pillars attached to the screen are beside themselves for the gospel:
 - 1. We all believe that Christ died for our sins and that He also died for us; however, in our experience we may not yet be thoroughly attached to Christ in this matter.
 - 2. However, some Christians are beside themselves regarding this; day and night they desire to preach the gospel and tell others that Christ died for them; those who are so zealous to preach the gospel that they even seem to be crazy are the pillars attached to the curtain.
 - 3. D.L. Moody was such a person; after he was saved, he became this kind of pillar; he was beside himself for the gospel.
 - 4. John Sung was a person who was absolutely beside himself before God; some might consider him a mad preacher, yet he became one of the greatest evangelists in China.
 - 5. Billy Graham was an example of one who preached a genuine and living gospel, and who had a genuine burden for the gospel.
 - 6. We need to be a person with the spirit of the gospel—1 Cor. 9:16, 23:
 - a. The spirit of the gospel is in every one of us, but it can either be extinguished or set ablaze.
 - b. We need to cultivate the spirit of the gospel, and we even need to fan it into flame—cf. 2 Tim. 1:6.
 - 7. We also need to pray to kindle the fire of the gospel—Acts 4:31:
 - a. We should pray for the Lord to strengthen the spirit of the gospel within us so that the fire of the gospel would burn among us.
 - b. Furthermore, we must pray for the Lord to give us a heart of love toward men, to give us a sense of urgency towards the thousands of people who are perishing every day, and especially to give us an interest in sinners and a desire to contact them—*Hymns, #921*.
 - c. This kind of prayer fans the fire of the gospel into flame; the more we pray, the more the fire of the gospel will be burning in us.
 - d. Eventually, when we see a sinner, we will be moved to tears, and we will love the unbelievers.
 - e. If the fire of the gospel is kindled within us, we will become crazy for the gospel and go everywhere to preach the gospel; if we are the kind of people who preach the gospel everywhere, we will see the effect of the gospel; the economical Spirit, the Spirit of power, will be upon us, and we will be full of power in the gospel.
 - 8. When we work among men, we cannot preach the Lord's sacrifice without first having the proper love—Mark 10:45; 1 Thes. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:7; Luke 15:1-24:
 - a. The Lord Jesus first loved and served men, and then He gave His life for them; love comes first; the sacrifice of life comes afterwards—Mark 10:45.
 - b. We should not think that we can first preach His sacrifice and then love the listener after he has received the Lord; we must first love all men before we can lead them to the Lord.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE NEED FOR PILLARS

We have seen that there were nine pillars in the tabernacle ([Exo.] 36:36, 38). At the entrance to the tabernacle five pillars supported the screen, while at the entrance to the Holy of Holies four pillars supported the veil. In the church there are some who are the pillars. Galatians 2:9 says, "And perceiving the grace given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars..." Peter, James, and John, as the mature and stronger ones, were not merely boards but the pillars of the church. Similarly, in Revelation 3:12 the Lord promised the church in Philadelphia, "He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God."

The pillars are different from the boards. The boards which form the wall of the tabernacle are good for protection and separation, but there is no way for people to enter into God's building through them. The pillars, on the other hand, are good for both protection and separation as well as for entrance. For this reason, to be a pillar, one must be much stronger than the boards.

The boards are useful for protection, sanctification, holiness, and for separation from the world. They are strong to stand against all the negative things. Praise the Lord that we have so many brothers and sisters who exclude the negative things. Without them there would be no wall. The church would be too open and exposed to the negative things. There would be no protection and no building up of the dwelling place of God. For the building, we need brothers and sisters to be the separating boards. The separating boards are like the wall of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12), separating and protecting by life.

However, if we are all boards, then there will be no entrance for people to come into God's dwelling place. The church will be closed, and we will become exclusive. For the sake of the entrance some of us have to be dealt with. A pillar is finer and stronger than a board. The boards must be cut and fitted to become the pillars. On the one hand, to be cut and fitted is to be reduced, but on the other hand, it is to be increased in strength. Those who have been dealt with will be very flexible. They can be for protection and support, and they can also be the entrance for others to come into God's dwelling place. People will be free to go in through them.

We pray that the Lord would increase the numbers in the churches, but for this there is the need for some among the believers to become the pillars. The number of the boards was forty-eight, but the numbers of the pillars are only nine. The majority are the boards, while the minority are the pillars. We need the pillars to bring in the liberty of the Holy Spirit to provide the entrance for men as redeemed creatures to come into the Triune God.

In John 10:9 the Lord said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture." The sheep may go in and go out through Him. They have the liberty through the Lord as the entrance for coming in and going out. With the church there is the need of the separating wall, and there is the need of the entrances for people to come into the Triune God with full liberty.

The first entrance was of five pillars, signifying responsibility. The second entrance was of four pillars, pointing to man, the creature. In total there were nine pillars, which is three times three. This indicates something threefold in the Triune God. The pillars are in the Triune God to a threefold degree to take up the responsibility to form the entrances for the men as redeemed creatures to come into the Triune God. (*CWWL*, 1963, vol. 1, "Spiritual Applications of the Tabernacle," pp. 121-123)

TWO KINDS OF PILLARS

Now we come to a matter which is difficult to understand—the identification of the five pillars with the outer curtain and the four pillars with the inner veil. We have seen that both the veil and the curtain were attached to pillars. This attachment indicates identification. The

veil is identified with the pillars, and the pillars are identified with the veil. We have pointed out that the veil is Christ. However, the pillars supporting the veil cannot be Christ Himself, for they are plural in number, whereas Christ is singular. The same is true of the screen and its five pillars. Both the five pillars and the four pillars refer to believers. This means that Christ is identified with us and that we are identified with Christ. When we become attached to Christ and identified with Him, we become pillars.

We all believe that Christ died for our sins and that He also died for us. However, in our experience we may not yet be thoroughly attached to Christ in this matter. We may say, "Yes, I believe that Christ died for me. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Thank You, Lord." After declaring this, we may go about our daily affairs. But some Christians are beside themselves regarding this. Day and night they desire to preach the gospel and tell others that Christ died for them. Those who are so zealous to preach the gospel that they even seem to be crazy are the pillars attached to the curtain. D. L. Moody was such a person. After he was saved, he became this kind of pillar. He was beside himself for the gospel. D. L. Moody truly was a pillar attached to the redeeming Christ.

The pillars attached to the curtain are evangelists, bold preachers of Christ standing at the front of the church. Other pillars stand inside the church, in the inner chamber. These are those, especially the elders, who experience Christ in a deeper way. They daily attach themselves to the rent veil, the broken veil, to the very Christ who was terminated in His flesh. Because they attach themselves to such a terminated Christ, they bear the testimony that they themselves have also been terminated and that their flesh has been crucified on the cross. Therefore, they become pillars not in front of the church, but inside the church.

In the Lord's recovery today we need both kinds of pillars. We need the evangelists standing at the front of the church life zealously preaching Christ, declaring to all that Christ died for their sins. We also need the inner pillars, those who realize that Christ died not only for their sins, but also for them and with them, and who bear the testimony that they have been crucified with Christ and that their flesh has been torn, cleft, rent.

It is not easy to gain the increase in the church. But if there are some who are bold evangelists, knowing nothing except to preach Christ and His death for people's sins, I believe that a good number of sinners will be saved and brought into the church. If we are short of these evangelists, we shall not have the front pillars, and if we are short of those like Paul, Peter, and John, we shall not have the pillars within the church. We need those who are identified with the judged Christ and also those who are identified with the terminated Christ. If we have both the pillars at the front and the pillars in the inner chamber, God's dwelling place will have entrances. Then there will be a way to enter into the church life. (*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 1183-1185)

PILLARS BEARING THE TESTIMONY

We have pointed out again and again that the two curtains, the screen and the veil, were attached to pillars. This indicates that today people can have an entrance into the enjoyment of God. Yes, Christ in His all-inclusive death is the entrance. Nevertheless, the entrance requires pillars to bear the testimony of the incarnated and crucified Christ. Without these pillars there is no way for the Christ who is the entrance into the enjoyment of God to be revealed to man. This means that there would be no place where He could show Himself to others. In the four Gospels Christ was the entrance into the enjoyment of God. But on the day of Pentecost the testimony of this Christ was borne by the one hundred twenty in Jerusalem. If it were not for the believers who bore the testimony of the incarnated and crucified Christ on the day of Pentecost, how could Christ reveal Himself to the people, and where could He be revealed? Would He be revealed on a mountain, or on the throne in the heavens? It is a fact that if there were no pillars to bear Him, He could not reveal Himself. Thus, on the day of Pentecost Christ

was attached to the one hundred twenty, and they became pillars bearing the testimony of Christ. Therefore, it was possible for Christ to reveal Himself to sinners.

The three thousand who were added to the Lord on the day of Pentecost entered into the dwelling place of God, that is, into the enjoyment of God, not only through Christ Himself, but also through the one hundred twenty. These one hundred twenty had been attached to Christ, identified with Him. Thus, they and Christ were one. For this reason, the three thousand who believed on the day of Pentecost could enter into the enjoyment of God through Christ and through the one hundred twenty.

In the book of Acts we have the experience of the Holy Place and also the experience of the Holy of Holies. The so-called communal life recorded in chapters two and four is a life in the Holy Place. The first several chapters of Acts are a description of the enjoyment of Christ in the Holy Place. We know this by the fact that the flesh, the fallen nature, of certain believers still had not been dealt with. For example, Acts 6:1 says that “there was a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily dispensing.” Even though the believers had all things in common, they were still murmuring and striving. Having all things in common did not prevent quarreling and fighting. Thus, after chapter six of Acts, there is no further mention of the communal life. Because of the flesh, the communal living did not last. Furthermore, in Acts 5 we have the record of what was done by Ananias and Sapphira. We could say that they did not remain in the Holy Place, but went back to the outer court. Eventually, after a long period of time, we can find in Acts the implication that certain believers became not only the pillars at the entrance of the church life, but the pillars in the inner chamber. Through these pillars the saints who were living in the Holy Place had a way to enter into the Holy of Holies. (*Life-study of Exodus*, pp. 1190-1192)

BEING A PERSON WITH A SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL

We must consider the matter of preaching the gospel from the most basic level. A certain kind of task requires a certain kind of person. If we want to preach the gospel, we must be persons who are for the gospel. As soon as the apostle Paul was saved, he proclaimed Jesus Christ (Acts 9:20-22). This is the first thing that he did. Every serving one, including the New Testament apostles, such as Peter and John, and those throughout church history, such as Moody and Spurgeon, begins his service by preaching the gospel. Every person who is saved and loves the Lord has a spirit of the gospel, the desire to preach the gospel. In particular, those who love the Lord and consecrate themselves to the Lord have a strong desire to preach the gospel. We all must be persons who preach the gospel.

Immediately after I was saved, I felt within that I should preach the gospel. At that time no one was shepherding me. Furthermore, in Chefoo the members in the various denominations were very cold toward preaching the gospel. It seemed as if I was the only person who was zealous for the gospel. I went to the villages to preach the gospel every Lord's Day. Since there were no buses, I walked. I would walk about twenty miles in a day. By the time I returned home, I would be exhausted. Nevertheless, I did not cease preaching the gospel. There was a shortage of gospel material, so there were no gospel tracts for purchase. Hence, I began to write gospel tracts. This spirit of the gospel is in every one of us, but some of us suppress it instead of cultivating it. The spirit of the gospel is like fire that can either be extinguished or set ablaze. Hence, we need to cultivate the spirit of the gospel, and we even need to fan it into flame. The bigger the fire, the better.

PRAYING TO KINDLE THE FIRE OF THE GOSPEL

In order to preach the gospel, we first must be a person for the gospel, having the spirit of the gospel. Next, we must pray. If we lack prayer, all our labor will be in vain. Therefore, we

must pray. However, we should not pray for any specific persons; our prayer should be general. We should pray for the Lord to strengthen the spirit of the gospel within us so that the fire of the gospel would burn among us. Furthermore, we must pray for the Lord to give us a heart of love toward men, to give us a sense of urgency toward the thousands of people who are perishing every day, and especially to give us an interest in sinners and a desire to contact them. This kind of prayer fans the fire of the gospel into flame; the more we pray, the more the fire of the gospel will be burning in us. Eventually, when we see a sinner, we will be moved to tears, and we will love the unbelievers. The young saints should exercise in this way. If we feel nothing in our heart when we see people, the gospel tracts that we give them will be cold. However, if the fire of the gospel is burning within us, we will be burdened when we think of the unbelievers going to the lake of fire. Then every tract that we give out will touch people's hearts.

If the fire of the gospel is kindled within us, we will become crazy for the gospel and go everywhere to preach the gospel. The young people should be crazy for the gospel on their college campuses. Whenever they see an unbeliever, they should be enlivened, even to the point that they forget about eating and care only for the gospel. We should distribute gospel tracts and booklets every day. When I was young, there were always gospel tracts in my pocket. On my way to and from work, I would give them to the people I met. We should never be without gospel tracts, and we should give them to everyone we see. Whether we are in a store or eating in a restaurant, we should give out gospel tracts. If we are the kind of people who preach the gospel everywhere, we will see the effect of the gospel. The economical Spirit, the Spirit of power, will be upon us, and we will be full of power in the gospel.

What I have fellowshiped is the common way, the general way to preach the gospel. Every full-time serving one must have this experience. We must be on fire for the gospel, crazy for the gospel, for at least two to three years. All those who are crazy for the gospel will become thick-skinned, bold, not shy. If we have not already learned this spiritual lesson, we must make it up. All the young ones who are serving the Lord full time must be crazy for the gospel. (*CWWL*, 1985, vol. 2, "The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones," pp. 227-229)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1963, vol. 1, "Spiritual Applications of the Tabernacle," ch. 8
2. *Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 101
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1985, vol. 2, "The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones," ch. 2
4. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 52, "The Character of the Lord's Worker," ch. 2