

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING
(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six
**Being Laboring Priests of the Gospel of God
by Serving God in Our Spirit in the Gospel of His Son**

DT *Hymns* 499, 500

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:9; 15:16; 16:25

- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.
- Rom 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages

I. “That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit”—Rom. 15:16:

- A. Paul's being a laboring priest of the gospel of God to minister Christ to the Gentiles was a priestly service to God, and the Gentiles whom he gained through his gospel preaching were an offering presented to God—1 Pet. 2:5:

1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1. By this priestly service many Gentiles, who were unclean and defiled, were sanctified in the Holy Spirit and became such an offering, acceptable to God—Rom. 15:16; 16:4-5.

Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

Rom 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.

2. These Gentiles were set apart from things common and were saturated with God's nature and element and were thus sanctified both positionally and dispositionally; such a sanctification is in the Holy Spirit—6:19; 15:16.

Rom 6:19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification.

Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

3. Based on Christ's redemption, the Holy Spirit renews, transforms, and separates unto holiness those who have been regenerated by believing into Christ—3:24; 12:2; John 3:15.

Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.

- B. Paul is a pattern of the priesthood of the gospel; in the Epistle to the Romans, which concerns the gospel of God, he tells us how sinners can be saved and justified by believing in the Lord, how they advance in Christ by being sanctified and transformed, and how they present themselves to God as living sacrifices so that they may become members of the Body of Christ to live the church life, expressing Christ corporately and awaiting His coming—1 Thes. 2:1-12; Acts 20:17-36; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:24-26; 12:1, 4-5; 13:11.
- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
- 1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
- 1 Thes 2:4 But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.
- 1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
- 1 Thes 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
- 1 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.
- 1 Thes 2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
- 1 Thes 2:11 Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,
- 1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
- Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:21 Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus.
- Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will meet me there,
- Acts 20:23 Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
- Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
- Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face no more.
- Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
- Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
- Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.

Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.

Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.

Acts 20:34 You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me.

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.

Rom 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."

Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,

Rom 3:26 With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus.

Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 13:11 And this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to be raised from sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

C. The New Testament service ordained by God is that all believers are priests to serve God with the offerings that He desires—Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9:

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood

Rev 1:6 And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Rev 5:10 And have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.

1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1. As priests of the gospel of God, we offer saved sinners, as parts of the enlarged and corporate Christ, to God as sacrifices—Rom. 15:16.

Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

2. The offering of the believers to God is in three steps:

a. Those who preach the gospel offer the newly saved ones to God as spiritual sacrifices—v. 16; 1 Pet. 2:5.

Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- b. After the new believers grow and begin to understand what it is to be a believer in Christ, they are encouraged to offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice—Rom. 12:1.
Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.
 - c. As the believers continue to grow unto maturity, those who labor on them present them full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28.
Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
- D. In order to function as priests of the gospel, we need to see that the gospel of God includes the entire book of Romans; this Epistle shows us that when we preach the gospel, we make sinners the sons of God and members of the Body of Christ, and we help them to grow so that they can be active members in the practice of the Body life in the local churches—1:16-17; 3:24; 5:10; 8:16; 12:2, 4-5.
Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek.
Rom 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in it out of faith to faith, as it is written, "But the righteous shall have life and live by faith."
Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,
Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- E. The service of the priesthood of the gospel is the service of the church as the Body of Christ; the focus of our service is to save sinners and offer them to God, and the goal of our service is the building up of the Body of Christ—15:16; 12:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Eph. 4:11-12, 16.
Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1 Pet 2:5 You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

II. "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son"—Rom. 1:9:

- A. For all the requirements related to the believers revealed in the New Testament, especially that of announcing the gospel of God, we need to receive the divine supply of the Body through the dispensing of the processed Triune God—Eph. 3:2; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 5:17, 21; John 7:37-38; Acts 6:4; Phil. 1:5-6, 19-25.
- Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,
- Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.
- Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.
- Rom 5:21 In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- Acts 6:4 But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.
- Phil 1:5 For your fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now,
- Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun in you a good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus;
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- Phil 1:22 But if I am to live in the flesh, if this to me is fruit for my work, then I do not know what I will choose.
- Phil 1:23 But I am constrained between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for this is far better;
- Phil 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.
- Phil 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,
- B. We need to see that our service to God in the gospel is our worship to God; in the New Testament, serving God is actually the same as worshipping God—Matt. 4:9-10; S. S. 1:2; cf. Psalms 2:11-12:
- Matt 4:9 And he said to Him, All these will I give You if You will fall down and worship me.
- Matt 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, Go away, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."
- S.S. 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine.
- Psa 2:11 Serve Jehovah with fear, / And rejoice with trembling.
- Psa 2:12 Kiss the Son / Lest He be angry and you perish from the way; / For His anger may suddenly be kindled. / Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him.
1. Paul said that the believers at Thessalonica “turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God”—1 Thes. 1:9:
- 1 Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us what kind of entrance we had toward you and how you turned to God from the idols to serve a living and true God
- a. God must be living to us and in us in every aspect of our daily life; the fact that God controls, directs, corrects, and adjusts us, even in such small things as our thoughts and motives, is a proof that He is living—Phil. 1:8; 2:5, 13; 1:20.
- Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
- Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put

- to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- b. We live under the control, direction, and correction of a living God to be a pattern of the glad tidings that we spread—1 Thes. 1:5-8; 2:10; 2 Thes. 3:5.
 - 1 Thes 1:5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.
 - 1 Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,
 - 1 Thes 1:7 So that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.
 - 1 Thes 1:8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded out; not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place, your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need of saying anything.
 - 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
 - 2 Thes 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.
 - c. As believers in Christ, we must live a life in our spirit which bears the testimony that the God we worship and serve is living in the details of our life; the reason we do not do or say certain things should be that God is living in us—Rom. 8:6, 16.
 - Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 - Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
2. The Greek word for *serve* in Romans 1:9 means “serve in worship,” as used in Matthew 4:10, 2 Timothy 1:3, Philippians 3:3, and Luke 2:37; Paul considered his preaching of the gospel as a worship and service to God, not merely a work.
 - Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
 - Matt 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, Go away, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."
 - 2 Tim 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, while unceasingly I have remembrance concerning you in my petitions night and day,
 - Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,
 - Luke 2:37 And she was a widow up to the age of eighty-four, who did not depart from the temple, serving God with fastings and petitions night and day.
 3. When we come to serve God, or worship God, we need a blood-purified conscience; our defiled conscience needs to be purified so that we may serve God in a living way—Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 1 John 1:7, 9; Acts 24:16; cf. 1 Tim. 4:7.
 - Heb 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
 - Heb 10:22 Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
 - 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
 - 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - Acts 24:16 Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.
 - 1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.
 4. To serve God in the gospel is to serve Him in the all-inclusive Christ, because the gospel is simply Christ Himself—Acts 5:42; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29.

- Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.
- Rom 1:3 Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh,
- Rom 1:4 Who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord;
- Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
5. In order to preach the gospel of God's Son, we must be in our regenerated spirit (1:9); in the book of Romans Paul stressed that whatever we are (2:29; 8:5-6, 9), whatever we have (vv. 10, 16), and whatever we do toward God (1:9; 7:6; 8:4, 13; 12:11) must be in our spirit.
- Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers,
- Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.
- Rom 8:5 For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- Rom 7:6 But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
- Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.
6. Paul served God in his regenerated spirit by the indwelling Christ, the life-giving Spirit, not in his soul by the power and ability of the soul; this is the first important item in his preaching of the gospel.
7. The gospel of God, unto which Paul was separated, is the subject of the book of Romans; the book of Romans may be regarded as the fifth gospel—1:1; 2:16; 16:25:
- Rom 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- Rom 2:16 In the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my gospel through Jesus Christ.
- Rom 16:25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages
- a. The first four Gospels are concerning the incarnated Christ, Christ in the flesh, living among His disciples; the gospel in Romans is concerning the resurrected Christ as the Spirit living within His disciples—8:2, 6, 9-11, 16.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

- b. We need the fifth gospel, the book of Romans, to reveal the subjective Savior within us as the subjective gospel of Christ.
 - c. The central message of the book of Romans is that God desires to transform sinners in the flesh into sons of God in the spirit in order to constitute the Body of Christ expressed as the local churches—v. 29; 12:1-5; ch. 16.
 - Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
 - Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.
 - Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
 - Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
 - Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
 - Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
 - Rom 16 be omitted.
 - d. All of us need to function as priests of the gospel of God according to the revelation of the book of Romans; we need to learn the elements and details of the gospel, we need to experience the full content of the gospel, and we need to exercise our spirit to learn how to minister the gospel—15:16.
 - Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.
- C. “We are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh”—Phil. 3:3; cf. Rom. 2:28-29:
- Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
 - Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.
1. The flesh refers to all that we are and have in our natural being; anything natural, whether it is good or evil, is the flesh—Phil. 3:4-6.
 - Phil 3:4 Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more:
 - Phil 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;
 - Phil 3:6 As to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.
 2. As believers in Christ, we should not trust in anything that we have by our natural birth, for everything of our natural birth is part of the flesh.
 3. Even though we have been regenerated, we may continue to live in our fallen nature, boast in what we do in the flesh, and have confidence in our natural qualifications; therefore, it is important that we be deeply and personally touched by these verses in Philippians 3.
 - Phil 3 be omitted.
 4. We need the Lord’s light to shine on us concerning our nature, our deeds, and our confidence in the flesh; we need to be enlightened by the Lord to see that we still live too much by the flesh and that we boast in our deeds and qualifications.

5. We need the Lord's light to shine on us so that we have no trust in our natural qualities, qualifications, ability, or intelligence; only then shall we be able to testify that our confidence is wholly in the Lord; after we are enlightened in this way, we shall truly serve and worship God in our spirit and by the Spirit—vv. 7-8.
 Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.
 Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
6. One day, when the light shines on us concerning this, we will want to prostrate ourselves before the Lord and confess how unclean our nature is; then we will condemn everything we do by our fallen nature; we will see that in the eyes of God whatever is done in the fallen nature is evil and worthy of condemnation.
7. Formerly, we boasted in our deeds and qualifications, but the time will come when we will condemn the flesh with its qualifications; then we shall boast in Christ alone, realizing that in ourselves we have absolutely no ground for boasting.
8. Only when we have been enlightened by God shall we be able to say truly that we have no trust in our natural qualifications, ability, or intelligence; only then shall we be able to testify that our confidence is wholly in the Lord; after we are enlightened in this way, we shall truly serve and worship God in our spirit and by the Spirit.
- D. Our work and labor for the Lord in the gospel is not by our natural life and natural ability but by the Lord's resurrection life and power; resurrection is the eternal principle in our service to God—Num. 17:8; 1 Cor. 15:10, 58; 16:10:
 Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.
 1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.
 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
1. The life-giving Spirit is the reality of the Triune God, the reality of resurrection, and the reality of the Body of Christ—John 16:13-15; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Eph. 4:4.
 John 16:13 But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming.
 John 16:14 He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you.
 John 16:15 All that the Father has is Mine; for this reason I have said that He receives of Mine and will declare it to you.
 John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.
 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
 Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
2. Resurrection means that everything is of God and not of us, that God alone is able and that we are not able, and that everything is done by God and not by ourselves—Num. 17:8.
 Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.
3. All those who know resurrection have given up hope in themselves; they know that they cannot make it; everything that is of death belongs to us, and everything that is of

life belongs to the Lord—2 Cor. 1:8-9; cf. Eccl. 9:4.

2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

Eccl 9:4 For there is hope for whoever is joined to all the living—surely a living dog is better than a dead lion -

4. We must acknowledge that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing; we must come to the end of ourselves to be convinced of our utter uselessness—Exo. 2:14-15; 3:14-15; Luke 22:32-33; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.

Exo 2:14 And he said, Who appointed you a ruler and a judge over us? Are you thinking to kill me as you killed the Egyptian? And Moses became frightened and said, Surely the matter is known.

Exo 2:15 Now when Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh to dwell in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Exo 3:14 And God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM. And He said, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you

Exo 3:15 And God also said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial from generation to generation.

Luke 22:32 But I have made petition concerning you that your faith would not fail; and you, once you have turned again, establish your brothers.

Luke 22:33 And he said to Him, Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death.

1 Pet 5:5 In like manner, younger men, be subject to elders; and all of you gird yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 Pet 5:6 Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time,

5. The resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit lives in us, enabling us to do what we could never do in ourselves—1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:8-9, 12; 4:7-18.

1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.

2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

2 Cor 1:12 For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

2 Cor 4:8 We are pressed on every side but not constricted; unable to find a way out but not utterly without a way out;

2 Cor 4:9 Persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed;

2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

2 Cor 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

2 Cor 4:14 Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will make us stand before Him with you.

- 2 Cor 4:15 For all things are for your sakes that the grace which has abounded through the greater number may cause the thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.
- 2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
- 2 Cor 4:17 For our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory,
- 2 Cor 4:18 Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
6. When we do not live by our natural life but live by the divine life within us, we are in resurrection; the issue of this is the reality of the Body of Christ as the goal of the gospel of God—Phil. 3:10-11; Eph. 1:22-23.
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE UNIQUE PATTERN OF THE PRIESTS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The unique pattern of the priests of the gospel in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:16). We need to see how Paul did his work as a priest of the gospel. According to the New Testament record, he did it in three steps of offering. First, Paul saved sinners to offer them up to God as acceptable sacrifices (Rom. 15:16). Second, he brought the believers up to lead them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). Third, he warned and taught every saint in all wisdom to present each one full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28-29). He did this by laboring and struggling according to God's operation which operated in him in power. Paul's announcing of Christ in Colossians 1:28 is to tell out Christ. To present every man full-grown in Christ is to offer every man full-grown in Christ.

Saving Sinners to Offer Them to God as Acceptable Sacrifices

According to Romans 15:16, Paul offered the saved sinners to God as acceptable sacrifices. All of the unbelieving sinners are in Adam. When we preach the gospel to them and they receive the Lord, they are transferred out of Adam into Christ. When someone believes into Christ, he becomes a part of Christ. The unbelievers who are transferred into Christ are the increase of Christ. When I am preaching the gospel to offer saved persons to God, I am offering Christ—not the individual Christ but the corporate Christ. In the Old Testament, the priests offered bulls and goats as sacrifices. God was pleased with that because they were types of the coming Christ. Our work today in the New Testament age is to preach the gospel to save sinners, to make them parts of Christ. When we offer these ones to God, God considers them as parts of Christ. Thus, we are offering the increase of Christ to God. Because we are members of Christ, we can say that we are Christ. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ." When we were offered to God, we were offered to God as Christ.

The bulls and goats that the Old Testament priests offered to God were types. They were not the reality. The reality of these offerings is Christ. God was happy with the offerings in the Old Testament because they pointed to the coming Christ, but today we are priests who do not offer the types. We offer the reality, and the reality is not just the individual Christ Himself without any enlargement or increase. We are offering the increase of Christ, the parts of Christ. I am very happy because through my ministry over many years I have offered a number of thousands of people to the Lord as acceptable sacrifices. When I see the Lord, I can give Him an account that I have offered a number of thousands of parts of Himself to Him. We need to consider how many parts of Christ we have offered to the Lord.

We all have to answer this question. One day we will see the Lord, and we will have to give Him an account concerning our living and labor on this earth. How many parts of Christ we have offered to Him indicates how much we have labored.

In talking about his labor in the gospel, Paul said in Colossians 1:29, “For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.” To offer parts of Christ to God requires our labor, but not labor by our own strength or our own ability. We need to struggle according to His operation which operates in us in power. We are the New Testament priests of the gospel of God, so we have to labor on the sinners by imparting God, dispensing God, into them to bring them into Christ, making them parts of Christ which we offer to God as acceptable sacrifices. All of us as the New Testament priests are obligated to do this. One day we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and we will have to give the Lord an account.

When we talk about knocking on people’s doors for the preaching of the gospel, what we mean is to visit people. We visit people to impart Christ into them. Visiting people to impart Christ into them must be a part of our Christian daily life. In our daily life, we must impart God and dispense Christ into others to make them, the sinners, parts of Christ that we may present these parts as sacrifices offered to God for His good pleasure. This will produce the members of Christ to constitute His Body and eventually issue in this Body being expressed on earth in many localities.

Bringing the Believers Up to Lead Them to Present Themselves to God as Living Sacrifices

After the saving of sinners, Paul continued to nourish the new ones, to bring them up in the same way that we would raise up our children. When we bring up our children, we first teach them what to do, and after a period of time, we charge them to do it themselves. At the time of their salvation, Paul presented the saved sinners as sacrifices. Then Paul brought them up and led them to present themselves as living sacrifices.

When I preach the gospel to a sinner and he gets saved, he is now in Christ. I present this one to God in Christ, with Christ, and as a part of Christ, as a spiritual sacrifice. Now that he is saved, he is a babe in Christ. I should not leave him alone, but I have to feed him as a nursing mother. After revealing in Romans 1 and 2 that the believers were sinners, Paul did this feeding work in chapters three through eleven. Then in Romans 12, Paul, the feeder, begged the saints to present themselves to God as living sacrifices. Paul did not beg the saints to offer themselves to God in Romans 1. It was after his fellowship through eleven chapters that he could ask the saints in Romans 12 to offer themselves to God as living sacrifices and be His serving members. We have to offer ourselves directly to God, but we do this by being helped, by being perfected, by the preaching apostle. This is the pattern we have to follow.

When people receive the Lord as their life, they are babes. After a period of time of feeding on Christ, they grow and grow in life until, spiritually speaking, they enter into their teens. In a family, the parents cannot give the little children much responsibility, but later the parents can charge them to do things according to their stage of growth. When a child becomes thirteen years old, he comes out of elementary school and enters into junior high school. Paul’s charge in Romans 12:1 is something just out of “elementary school.” The elementary teaching is in Romans 1—11. Romans 12:1 may be considered as a charge to those who are now “thirteen years old.” After the long teaching in Romans 1—11, the children have entered into “junior high.” Paul offered them as sacrifices to God at their conversion. Now that they are in their “teens,” he begs them to present themselves to God, to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

After this offering in Romans 12, the practice of the Body life begins. After the saints’ presentation of themselves to God, they can be the active members of the Body of Christ. Thus, in the following verses of chapter twelve, we see that the ones who present themselves as living sacrifices become functioning members of the organic Body of Christ. These living members function according

to their gifts, such as prophecy or teaching (vv. 6-7).

Before Romans 12, there was no practice of the Body life. Beginning in chapter twelve the saints are beginning to be perfected to practice the Body life. After being perfected, the saints will do the same work as the gifted ones—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:11-12). Even though the saints are not these particular gifts, they will do the same work that these gifts do. This work is the work of the New Testament ministry, which is to build up the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is built directly by the perfected saints, not by the perfecting gifts. This Body is built up and expressed in many localities on this earth as the local churches.

Warning and Teaching Every Saint in All Wisdom to Present Each One Full-grown in Christ

Because the believers are still not fully matured, there is the third step of Paul's gospel work in the New Testament priesthood. This third step can be seen in Colossians 1:27-29: "To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; for which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power." What kind of Christ did Paul announce? The Christ whom he announced is not that simple. He announced the indwelling Christ as the hope of glory. Paul announced a wonderful person. Christ as the hope of glory cannot work in us fully without a worker like Paul.

The word "warning" implies that there are troubles, problems, hardships, and mistakes that we can make. Therefore, we need to be warned. Warning also implies admonishing and rebuking. Paul warned and taught every man in all wisdom. "In all wisdom" means that Paul warned and taught one person in one way and another person in another way. He warned and taught every man face to face. Paul did this so that he could present, or offer, every man full-grown in Christ. Paul did not want to miss anyone, desiring to present every man full-grown.

In Acts 20 Paul said that he taught the saints publicly and from house to house (v. 20). He also said that he admonished each one of the saints for three years night and day with tears (v. 31). Paul went to the homes of the saints to teach them and admonish them one by one. I lived in Anaheim for many years, but I went to very few homes of the saints to visit them. I feel very sorry about this. We have been off in our service due to the traditional concept. Paul said that he taught publicly and that he also taught from house to house. "From house to house" in Greek means "according to houses." Paul taught, admonished, and warned the saints face to face. By this teaching from house to house to admonish each one of the saints, Paul ministered Christ to the saints to cause them to grow in life.

In the Old Testament, a full-grown priest had to be thirty years old. A person who was twenty-five years old could only be an apprentice, a learner, in the priesthood. The Lord Jesus began His ministry when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23), the full age for God's service (Num. 4:3, 35, 39, 43, 47). We need to labor on others by warning them and teaching them in all wisdom until they are full-grown in Christ. We warn each one and teach each one in many, many ways, that is, in all wisdom. The full-grown, matured saints become the active members of the organic Body of Christ, the parts of Christ. In other words, they all become the corporate Christ. To offer the saints full-grown in Christ is to offer the corporate Christ. In such a condition, they have become parts of Christ in full, the constituents of the corporate Christ.

Because we are not full-grown in Christ, we still need to be warned and taught in all wisdom. We may say that we are parts of the corporate Christ, but are we His parts practically, in our daily life? Do you believe that the parts of the corporate Christ would participate in anything sinful or worldly? Some of us may have grown to the stage of Romans 12:1, the stage of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1, however, is not at the stage of full growth. We have to be helped by the priests who handle us to grow up into the full growth in Colossians 1:28. The apostles who handle us, who

serve us with Christ, desire to present us in Christ to God as parts of the corporate Christ.

Paul said that he labored for this by struggling. The Greek word for struggling means fighting, battling, or wrestling. It is not an easy thing to present every man full-grown in Christ. Paul did not labor according to his own ability or strength, but according to Christ's operation which operated in him in power. Christ's indwelling is so that He can operate and move in us in power. The power here is a dynamic power. Christ is working in us, but do we realize and sense that daily, day and night, Christ the living One is indwelling us and operating within us?

Some of the ones who are closest to me remind me to take care of myself in my old age. The ones close to me are concerned for me because they love me, but another One also loves me. This inner One is also operating within me all the time. Every time I go along with His operation, I am energized. The more I speak for the Lord, the stronger I am. We need to labor by struggling according to the One who operates in us, not according to our natural strength. We need to cooperate with the operation of the indwelling Christ. For the carrying out of His New Testament economy, God has done His part. He surely has consummated the works on His side to do everything for us. Now He is operating in us to make us the energizing priests. We have to take care of our part, to fulfill our duty. We may feel that we are weak, that we are nothing, and that we can do nothing, but as long as we are willing to operate, He will be our energizing power. As long as we are willing to do business, He will be our capital. The problem to Him is that we would not be willing to cooperate with Him.

The Lord told us in the New Testament that all of His chosen people, who are today's believers, are His priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). No priest can be lazy because every priest has to offer something day by day. Every priest has to be very, very diligent, even aggressive, in offering sacrifices to God. God does not want the sweet smell of the offerings on the altar to stop. He likes this sweet savor to ascend to Him all the time for His acceptance. In Romans 15:16 Paul said that he was a minister of Christ Jesus to the nations, an energizing priest of the gospel of God, to offer the nations to God. The main offering of the New Testament priests should be the saved sinners as parts of the enlarged and corporate Christ, offered to God as the New Testament sacrifices of the gospel. In the Old Testament, the main offerings were bulls and goats, which were types of Christ. Today we are offering Christ, but not the individual Christ. We are offering the corporate Christ.

This kind of offering should continue all the time. As the New Testament priests, we have to make the preaching of the gospel a part of our daily life, our daily walk. A priest's daily life and daily work is to offer sacrifices to God. In the Old Testament, the priests offered bulls and goats all day long, morning and evening. This is a type of what we should do. As the New Testament priests, we should offer sinners, regenerated, sanctified, transformed, and even conformed to the image of Christ. We should offer these persons as parts of the corporate Christ to God. We should not forget that as believers we are priests and that a priest is always offering something to God. Paul was offering the sinners he saved as sacrifices to God all the time.

We may have experienced Romans 12:1, but we have not reached the state of being full-grown in Colossians 1:28. To be presented to God full-grown in Christ is the last step to finish the sacrifice of the New Testament priesthood. This sacrifice needs three steps: salvation in Romans 15:16, growth in life in Romans 12:1, and the maturity in life in Colossians 1:28. All these steps are the work of the New Testament priesthood of the gospel. According to the divine revelation, to save sinners, to teach the Bible, to edify the saints, and to set up churches are all the work of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel of God is the New Testament ministry to carry out God's New Testament economy. We must bear this responsibility for God's good pleasure.

I have been with many of the saints for years, and I know that they love the Lord. They come to the meetings regularly, year after year. They give a lot for the Lord. In this book I have a real burden to tell all the saints that what I am teaching and preaching here is absolutely new. What most Christians practice, including us, is according to an accumulation of centuries of tradition. What we have practiced is partially according to the Bible and partially not according to the Bible. We all have been

drugged by the traditional and unscriptural way of practicing the church life and of Christian service. We need to be sober and reconsider what the Bible says. We should only take the holy Word as our base.

Our gospel preaching today must be the priesthood of the gospel in the New Testament. The gospel of God is according to the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament and includes all of God's New Testament economy. When the priests in the Old Testament offered bulls and goats, they did not realize that these sacrifices typified Christ in His incarnation, in His human living, in His all-inclusive death, in His resurrection as life, in His coming to us as the life-giving Spirit to indwell us, in His ascension, and in His descension to be one with His saved ones and to make them one Body. Although the Old Testament priests did not realize this, we should realize it because we are in this present New Testament age.

If we do not know these things, we are deficient. Because the Lord has shown me all these things, I am burdened. I do not care for any other work. I am burdened to present to all the saints these new seeings, these new visions, these new lights. The truth concerning the priests of the gospel of God is altogether new to me. I have been teaching the Bible for over sixty years, but this point cannot be found in any of my writings in the past. Thank the Lord that I have seen this matter and that I can present it to all the saints. (*The Advance of the Lord's Recovery Today*, pp. 30-38)