

# THE EXPERIENCE, GROWTH, AND MINISTRY OF LIFE FOR THE BODY

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

## **Being a Qualified Servant of God by Having the Complete Experience of a Called One**

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:2-4, 6, 8, 14-15; 4:3-4, 6-7, 9, 14b-16, 24-26

- I. Moses was the first complete, qualified, and perfected servant of God in history; because he was the first fully qualified servant of God in the Bible, Moses is the standard model of God's servant, and God's calling of him is the standard for the calling of all His servants—cf. Exo. 2:11-15; Acts 7:22-30, 34-36; Heb. 11:28.**
- II. A person who is called by God must see the vision of the burning thornbush—Acts 7:22-36; Exo. 3:2:**
  - A. The thorns in Genesis 3 indicate that fallen man is under a curse; sin brought in the curse, and the curse brought in the excluding flame of fire—vv. 17-18, 24.
  - B. In Exodus 3 the cursed thorn becomes the vessel of God, and the flame of fire becomes one with the thornbush—vv. 2-4:
    1. Through redemption, the curse has been taken away, and the fire has become one with the thorn.
    2. The redeeming Christ has taken away the curse, and the Spirit as the fire has been given to us—Gal. 3:13-14; Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3-4.
  - C. This indicates that everyone who is called of God must realize that he is just a thornbush (a sinner under God's curse—Gen. 3:17-18, 24) with a fire burning within him and that this fire is the Triune God Himself in His holiness, the God of resurrection—Deut. 33:1, 16; Mark 12:26.
  - D. The record of the burning thornbush is to be a continuing memorial and testimony to God's called ones—Deut. 33:1, 16; Mark 12:26:
    1. Because of God's redemption, signified by the lamb slain and offered to God for fallen man (Gen. 4:4), the excluding flame of Genesis 3 has become the visiting and indwelling flame of Exodus 3—Gal. 3:13-14; Rom. 12:11; 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
    2. The fact that the thornbush burned without being consumed indicates that God does not want to use our natural life as fuel; He will burn only with Himself as fuel—Exo. 3:2; Rom. 12:11; 2 Tim. 1:7; Col. 1:29.
    3. Through the sign of the burning thornbush, God impressed Moses that he was a vessel, a channel, through which God was to be manifested—2 Cor. 4:7; Phil. 1:20, 25-26.
  - E. The church is a corporate thornbush burning with the God of resurrection—cf. Gen. 2:22; Eph. 2:6:
    1. God's ultimate goal is to obtain a dwelling place, to build up His habitation—John 1:14; 2:19; 1 Cor. 3:16; Rev. 21:3, 22.
    2. The church is the Triune God burning within redeemed humanity; this is the divine economy—Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3-4.

3. The children of Israel, typifying today's church, were a corporate thornbush, who were redeemed (Exo. 13:14-16), sanctified (v. 2), transformed, and built up:
4. Do not say that the church is poor, low, or dead; the more you say this, the more you put yourself under a curse, but if you praise the Lord for the church life and speak well concerning it, you will put yourself under God's blessing:
  - a. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel"—Num. 23:21.
  - b. "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your tabernacles, O Israel!"—24:5.
  - c. "Blessed is everyone who blesses you, / And cursed is everyone who curses you"—v. 9b.
5. In spite of all the division, sin, confusion, abuse of gifts, and heretical teaching in the church in Corinth, the apostle still called it the church of God, because the divine and spiritual essence that makes the assembled believers the church of God was actually there—1 Cor. 1:2.
6. Being a corporate thornbush as God's dwelling place today is a matter altogether in resurrection:
  - a. The church is "Christly," "resurrectionly," and heavenly—cf. Gen. 2:22; Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6.
  - b. Resurrection is the life pulse and lifeline of the divine economy—1 Cor. 15:12; Acts 13:33; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Pet. 1:3.
  - c. Our labor for the Lord in His resurrection life with His resurrection power will never be in vain, but will result in the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose through the preaching of Christ to sinners, the ministering of life to the saints, and the building up of the church with the experiences of the processed Triune God as gold, silver, and precious stones—1 Cor. 15:58; 3:12.

### III. A person who is called by God must have a revelation of who God is:

- A. The name of the One who called Moses is I Am—Exo. 3:14-15:
  1. The name I Am indicates that God, Christ, is the reality of every positive thing—John 8:58; 6:35; 8:12; 15:1; Col. 2:16-17.
  2. We must know that the God who calls us is and that we are not—Heb. 11:6.
- B. The One who called Moses was the God of his father—Exo. 3:6:
  1. *The God of your father* denotes history with God.
  2. In the eyes of God, the Lord who calls us is the God of our spiritual father—1 Cor. 4:15, 17; Psa. 103:7; Phil. 2:19-22.
- C. The One who called Moses was the God of resurrection—Matt. 22:29-33:
  1. We must know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the resurrecting Triune God:
    - a. The God of Abraham signifies God the Father who calls man, justifies man, and equips man to live by faith and live in fellowship with Him—Gen. 12:1; 15:6; chs. 17—18; 19:29; 21:1-13; 22:1-18.
    - b. The God of Isaac signifies God the Son who blesses man with the inheritance of all His riches, with the life of the enjoyment of His abundance, and with a life in peace—25:5; 26:3-4, 12-33.

c. The God of Jacob signifies God the Spirit who works in all things for the good of His lovers, transforms man, and makes man mature in the divine life that man may be able to bless all the people, to rule over all the earth, and to satisfy all the people with God the Son as the life supply—27:41; 28:1—35:10; chs. 37; 39—49; Rom. 8:28-29.

2. A called one of God must be in resurrection and do everything in resurrection for the building up of the church, which is altogether in resurrection—Eph. 1:19-23; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:45b, 58; cf. Num. 17:1-8.

**IV. A person who is called by God must know the purpose of God's calling—Exo. 3:8:**

A. The purpose of God's calling, negatively, is to deliver God's chosen people out of the usurpation and tyranny of Satan and the world, typified by Pharaoh and Egypt—Rom. 1:16.

B. The purpose of God's calling, positively, is to bring God's chosen people into the all-inclusive Christ realized as the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit, typified by the land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey—Col. 2:6; Gal. 3:14.

**V. A person who is called by God must know how to deal with Satan, the flesh, and the world; this is the principle of God's work—1 John 3:8; Gal. 5:17; 1 John 2:15; cf. 1 Cor. 2:11; Rom. 7:18; Gal. 6:14:**

A. Anything that we rely on apart from God is a hiding place for the serpent—Exo. 4:2-4; Luke 10:19.

B. Our flesh is a constitution of leprosy—sin, rottenness, corruption, and uncleanness—Exo. 4:6-7; Rom. 7:17-18, 24-25; Isa. 6:5.

C. The world with its supply, entertainment, and amusement is filled with the blood of death—Exo. 4:9; 1 John 5:19; Gal. 6:14.

**VI. A person who is called by God needs the experience of matching and cutting:**

A. A called one must have someone to match him in the principle of the Body for his restriction, safeguard, and protection—Exo. 4:14b-16; Luke 10:1; Deut. 32:30; Eccl. 4:9-12.

B. A called one must be willing to have the subjective experience of the circumcision of his natural life in order to become useful in the hand of the Lord for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose and to be prepared to carry out God's commission—Exo. 4:24-26.

C. May every aspect of God's calling be our experience in the Lord's recovery today.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE NEED FOR GOD'S SERVANT TO KNOW THE LAWS GOVERNING HIS WORK**

*Witness Lee:* I feel that as long as Brother Nee is here, I do not have any burden in my spirit. My spirit seems to be resting, sleeping, yet Brother Nee wants me to say something. I guess I have to say something.

We have to know that God works according to His laws. In order for us who are engaged in His service to be useful, we have to know the laws governing God's

work. If we want to become useful in His hand, we have to know the laws governing His work. I have met many brothers and sisters. I cannot say that they have not prayed. Nor can I say that they are lacking in love, godliness, or gifts. They have all these things, but very little of God's work is manifested in them. I feel that there has to be a reason for this. Eventually, I discovered that these ones do not understand the laws governing God's work.

If I want this room to be filled with sunlight, I should not only open a window that faces north, but windows that face east, south, and west as well. The more windows I open, the more light I will have. On the other hand, if I want light to come in but do not open any window, I can pray all I want for light, but I will not see any result. The same can be said with regard to God's work. We have to work according to God's laws before we can receive His blessing. If we do not work according to His laws, we can pray all we want and be as godly as we want, but nothing will happen. If we have a clear understanding of the laws governing God's work, we will become useful servants in His work. After many years of training, many brothers and sisters have become very clear concerning the laws governing the Lord's work through us. There are at least a few points we must take note of before we can serve Him properly. Of course, we need to know the laws governing His work not only individually but among the co-workers and the church as well.

Seven or eight years ago, I was meditating one day on this question. I was considering the kind of laws one should know concerning God's work. Strangely enough, during that time of meditation, I seemed to hear a voice saying, "Read Exodus 3 and 4 about Moses' calling and how God used him." Immediately I went to Exodus 3. I did not feel anything dramatic upon reading it. But after reading chapter four, I felt that every sentence burst forth with God's light. I dare not say that I received a great shining, but I dare say that I saw some great principles there.

### **THE THREE LESSONS MOSES LEARNED**

Moses can be considered the model servant of God in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we can consider Paul the model servant. Both in the Old Testament as well as in the New, Moses was considered faithful in all God's house (Num. 12:7; Heb. 3:2). In terms of spiritual principle, Moses' service as a servant of God has nothing to do with the period in which he lived; it has nothing to do with whether he was in the Old Testament or the New Testament. The principle governing his work is the principle governing the work of all God's servants. We all know the background of Moses. I do not need to repeat it here. He came from an excellent background. He was raised as the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, and he had a heart to serve the Lord. He acquired all the knowledge of Egypt in order to equip himself for the deliverance of God's people. Although God ordained that Moses would be the one to deliver His people Israel out of Egypt into the good land, his desires, knowledge, and eloquence did not qualify him for such service. God had to stir up the environment in a sovereign way to force him to escape to the wilderness in Sinai.

After Moses was driven to the wilderness, he felt that God had put him aside. During the years he spent in the wilderness, he lost faith in himself (Exo. 3:11;

cf. 2:11-13). He admitted that human life is at its end at the age of eighty (Psa. 90:10). It seemed that there was no more time or space before him and that his life would end in the wilderness. Just when he thought that his life was going to be wasted away, God came in and called him in Exodus 3 and 4. When God appeared to him in the burning bush and called him to His work, he considered himself unqualified for any work. He excused himself by saying that he was a man slow in speech. God prepared Aaron and Miriam to be his helpers. But in Exodus 4:1 Moses replied, saying, "They [the Israelites] will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." This shows that Moses was not yet motivated or convinced. Then God revealed Himself through three miracles. These miracles were the sure proofs that God had called Moses. Moses was told to do three things. In the first act, his rod was turned into a serpent. In the second act, his hand became leprous. In the third act, water was turned into blood (Exo. 4:2-9, 17). The three things—the rod, the flesh, and the water—were all useful. But they were turned into three harmful things—a serpent, leprosy, and blood.

### **The Lesson of the Rod Turning into a Serpent**

Let me first speak on the miracle of the rod turning into a serpent. To Moses, the first function of a rod was for shepherding the flock. Later, it was used for leading the Israelites on in their journey. At that time Moses was eighty years of age. The rod was his support, a necessity for his existence. Although we may not have an actual rod in our hands, we all have something upon which our livelihood depends. A merchant may have his business as a rod. A student may have his studies as a rod. A wife may have her husband as a rod. Our rod is what we depend upon. It is our very support. We have many rods. They may be our parents, education, business, or money. These can be very useful and can be of service to the Lord. But once we touch God, we will see that these rods upon which our livelihood depends must be cast to the ground.

From my own calling and from the calling of other useful servants of the Lord, I can see that in order for a man to be used by the Lord, he must first cast away the rod he holds in his hand. Once the rod is cast on the ground, the serpent hidden behind the rod is exposed. The serpent is hidden behind the rod all the time. By casting the rod on the ground, the true form of the serpent is exposed. This miracle shows us that under God's shining and the operation of His power, the rod of our support is exposed of its true serpentine nature. The serpent has been coming to us in disguise from the beginning. From the Old Testament until the time of Revelation, the serpent always disguises himself behind, below, or between certain things. His goal is to occupy and usurp the man created for God's own purpose. In Moses' eyes the rod was his support, but in God's eyes it was the embodiment of Satan. Its purpose was to occupy and usurp man.

When Moses cast the rod down and saw that it had become a serpent, he fled from it. He dared not touch it. God told him to take the serpent by the tail, and the serpent became a rod in his hand once again. Before this time, Moses had been holding that rod for many years. It was something very precious to him. But when

he cast it on the ground, he discovered that it was a serpent, something that had occupied him for many years. This experience showed him that his past support was nothing but a serpent, something that was hurting him.

Please notice that God did not tell Moses to discard the rod, but to cast it on the ground. The purpose of this casting was to reveal the true nature of the rod. Then God told Moses to take the rod, which had become the serpent, by the tail. In Nanking one responsible brother was a businessman. Later he saw the danger of going into business, and he dared not touch it again. But God does not say to discard the rod, but to take it by the tail. We must still have the rod, but we have to take it by the tail. In the past the rod was our center. Today the Lord has to be our center. In the past we struggled for our living. Today we strive for the gospel.

In the province of Shangtung, an elderly brother once said that his wife, his life-long companion, was an old serpent, and his children were little serpents. He was ensnared and could not serve the Lord or consecrate himself to the gospel freely. He became afraid of the serpents and dared not take them up by the tail. But the Lord does not tell us to discard the rod and give it up forever. It is easy to drop the rod. It is easy to migrate to northwest China for the gospel and to leave the wife, the children, and all the serpents, large and small, behind. But the Lord does not tell us to do this. Instead, He wants us to put forth our hand and take the serpent by the tail. After the true nature of the hidden serpent is exposed, we have to grab it by the tail. This is the best way to deal with the serpent. If we take a serpent by the head, it will bite us. But if we can turn it around and take it by the tail, it will lose its power and become limp. In the end it will become a channel through which we exercise our authority; it will control us no longer (Exo. 4:4, 17; Luke 10:19). If we cannot take it by the tail, we will not have any authority.

The four Gospels say that in order to follow the Lord, we have to forsake our parents, children, etc. (Matt. 19:29). In the Epistles, Paul says that we have to love our parents and honor them (Eph. 6:1-3). The forsaking in the Gospels is the casting down of the rod, while the teaching in Ephesians is the taking up of the rod by the tail. This rod becomes the rod of authority. Eventually, Moses performed all the miracles in Egypt and led the children of Israel out of Egypt with this rod.

Over two hundred brothers and sisters have handed themselves over in the church in Hong Kong. The first lesson you have to learn is to cast all that you have and all your support on the ground and then take it by the tail.

### **The Lesson of Knowing the Self**

Following this, God told Moses to put his hand into his bosom. He put it in his bosom, and when he took it out, it was leprous as snow. This is the second lesson. First, we have to cast the rod in our hand on the ground to expose the true face of the serpent and then take it by the tail. Then we have to do a second thing. It is not enough for us to follow Moses in casting down our rod. We need a second lesson, which is to follow Moses in putting our hand into our bosom. When we take out our hand, it becomes leprous. The bosom signifies what we are in our inward parts. Leprosy signifies our sin (Rom. 7:17-18). This tells us that there is no goodness

within ourselves. We have to see that we have nothing and are nothing. In the church I see many brothers and sisters who criticize, judge, and complain. I am quite angry at this. I believe these brothers and sisters do not realize that leprosy is hidden in their bosom. If we know our flesh, we will not dare criticize the brothers, even when we feel the urge to do so. We know our own leprosy. We know that people of the same kind congregate together, that we are the same as they, and that we are equally unclean within ourselves.

As long as our praise, love, and sympathy come from ourselves, they are leprous. Newton's hymn says that he hated his sin. Once a man sees himself and knows himself, he will not dare criticize others easily. He will see that he is not qualified to criticize others. The Lord forgives me for saying this: Every time I want to say something about my brothers and sisters, the Lord shows me my own leprosy, my uncleanness, and my defilement. No matter how wrong the brothers and sisters are and how hurt I have been, I dare not criticize. There is nothing within me that qualifies me for the Lord's calling. It is the grace of God that makes me what I am (1 Cor. 15:10). If I know myself this way, I will put up no resistance and will humble myself. This will remove the leprosy from among God's children. We should not be dissatisfied with anyone. We should only hate ourselves. Those who see a clear picture of themselves will realize that they are but a heap of dirt, trash, corruption, and filth. They are nothing but the embodiment of sin. Except for the mercy of God, they are not worthy to work for Him. Once we see this, we will have many confessions and prayers.

### **The Lesson of Knowing the World**

In order to know God's work, not only must we know the usurpation of Satan and the corruption of our own flesh, but we must also know the evil of the world. The third miracle that God showed Moses was this: "Take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land" (Exo. 4:9). The river refers to the Nile which irrigates the entire land of Egypt. It signifies the fallen worldly enjoyment. Egypt is a type of the world. According to the Bible, Egypt was rich with produce and enjoyed its abundance through the supply of the river Nile. The Nile was the very life and life supply of Egypt. Blood is a sign of death. On the surface the Nile brings supply and enjoyment. But in God's eyes it is death. The world may enjoy its abundance and excellence, and we may be poor, stricken, and destitute. We may see our classmates prospering. They might not have done so well in school, yet today they are enjoying everything. This makes our pain all the more acute. But once we see the water turning into blood, we will realize that man's enjoyment of everything—houses, cars, etc.—is but the drinking of blood.

Once we see that our support is a serpent, that there is nothing but uncleanness within us, and that everything is blood, we will no longer remain in delusion. The Lord said that only the water that He gives will make men thirst no more (John 4:14). A thirsty man will never be satisfied with the water of this world. Only the water that the Lord gives will quench man's thirst, and only this water will meet the needs of our work for the Lord. May we remember these three principles.

## ONE MUST HAVE REVELATION BEFORE HE CAN WORK

*Watchman Nee:* The above three basic lessons can be summarized under one basic principle—seeing. Once a man sees, he will spontaneously be separated. Without God’s revelation, we will only see the rod, we will see that our hands are clean, and we will regard the supply of Egypt as nothing but river water. But once we have God’s revelation, we will not feel the same. We will see that the rod in our hand is a serpent, that our hands are not clean, and that the world is full of death.

Exodus 4 is a chapter of contrast between God’s revelation and man’s view. Many people have asked me, “How can I have God’s revelation?” This is a matter of whether or not you have seen that the rod is a serpent, that there is leprosy in your hand, and that the water is blood. Young people have ambitious dreams. I hope that you can wake up from your beautiful dreams. God not only commanded Moses to see and perform these miracles, but to go to the Israelites and perform the same. God’s intention was for Moses to bring deliverance to the Israelites. This was an impossible task to Moses. But once he received God’s revelation, his feeling changed. Suppose there is a worm at the bottom of this cup. Being thirsty, I drink from this cup. When I get to the bottom of the cup, however, I see the worm. When I want to drink again, what will I feel when I see the cup? I am afraid I will have the “feeling” of the worm inside me. This is what revelation will do to us. Originally, I had no feeling about a certain thing. Moses did not have any feeling about his rod before the miracle. But after it was turned into a serpent, his feeling about the rod changed.

We can say the same thing about our feeling for the flesh. We have to know that sin is not only in the world but also in us. Violence is not only in the world but also in us. In the past we did not have this feeling. One day we took our hand out from our bosom, and we discovered that we were leprous. From that day onward, every time we stretched forth our hand, we would think of leprosy. Some people pretend to be humble, weak, and obedient. But their performance is artificial. If a man does not have revelation, he can be humble only when he consciously acts this way. But once he forgets to act, he is no longer humble. He has to be on guard all the time. When we speak a word of exhortation or rebuke, we have to realize that the words from “our bosom” may be leprous. Please remember that the Lord did not call us to the work based on how much we have handed ourselves over, but based on how much revelation we have received. A brother once said to me, “Even if I am weaker than I once was, I am still stronger than those two brothers.” I am afraid he has never seen his own depravity.

A servant of the Lord must also have a feeling for the water of the world. The quenching of thirst is for the purpose of satisfying our need. Perhaps some of us have been praying for years for a worldly position or blessings. I hope we will have a burning revelation from God to see that every fulfillment from the world is nothing but blood. In the eyes of those who have revelation, water is nothing but blood. It is possible to have water turned into blood even in such minute details as shopping for towels and socks. If we want to serve the Lord, we should not remain in Egypt and drink the water of the Nile. We should instead go into the wilderness to drink of the flowing water from the rock.



Here we all have to see what we did not see previously. All those who have received a revelation will say that they have witnessed something mysterious. To man, it is a rod, a hand from the bosom, or water from the Nile. But once we have God's revelation and vision, we will know the true nature of things, and we will see that they are a serpent, the flesh, and blood. We will run away from them. We will be afraid and shrink back. Only God's revelation will give us the true knowledge of the things that we put our trust in. Only God's revelation will show us that our greatest sin is the self, and only His revelation will show us the evil of this world. In the world a rod is something to rely on, the self is good, and the water is drinkable. But I would join Brother Lee to implore you to receive a clear revelation from God. You have to see the world, the self, and the true picture of everything around you. Only then will you be able to work for God, and only then will you be acceptable to Him. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 62, pp. 311-319)