

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Spring Term of 2023**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES**

Message Fifteen

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

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:1, 9; 15:16; 16:25; Exo. 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10

- I. God's original intention according to His economy is for all His believers to be priests (Exo. 19:6; Rev. 1:6; 5:10); the Bible, which is a book on the priesthood, reveals that God created man with the view that He could have a priesthood, a priestly body, to serve Him (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; cf. Rev. 2:6; Exo. 32:1-6, 25-29):**
 - A. God created man in His image that man might bear His likeness, expressing Him.
 - B. God gave man His authority for His dominion, which indicates that man is God's representative—Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 5:17, 21; Isa. 43:7.
 - C. God created man with a spirit, and this spirit in Genesis 2:7 is called "the breath of life" (cf. Prov. 20:27); our God-created human spirit is an organ for us to contact God and receive God (John 4:24).
 - D. God put man in front of the tree of life, indicating that God desired to have a man to receive Him as the tree of life so that man might live God—Gen. 2:9; John 6:57; Rev. 2:7.
 - E. As priests, we must also be persons very close to God (Exo. 33:11, 14; 2 Cor. 2:10); we must be persons who are one with God, who know God's will, God's heart, and who receive God's oracle to speak for God; then we must be those who bring God to man to impart God into man and who bring man back to God to make man one with God (Mal. 2:7; Rev. 1:20; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Heb. 10:22; 4:16; cf. Exo. 27:20-21; 28:2).

- II. John the Baptist denied the entire Old Testament priesthood, but his work was the beginning of the priesthood in the New Testament (Mark 1:1-4); he preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins as the gospel of Jesus Christ; his ministry was "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (v. 1):**
 - A. Instead of serving with his father Zachariah in the temple, John stayed in a wild place, wore wild clothing, ate wild food, and did a wild work; where he lived, what he wore, what he ate, and how he worked ended the Old Testament priesthood; his work was the beginning of the priesthood in the New Testament—Mark 1:1-8.
 - B. The first New Testament priest of the gospel of God was John the Baptist; he did not offer bulls and goats as sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-4), but he offered sinners saved through his preaching as sacrifices, bringing them to Christ as the One stronger than he was and as the One baptizing the repentant people in the Holy Spirit for imparting life (Mark 1:4-8).
 - C. In the Old Testament, after the fall of man, all the animal sacrifices offered by man to God were types of the coming Christ, pointing to the coming Christ as our Redeemer; in the New Testament the saved sinners are spiritual sacrifices offered to God in Christ, with Christ, and one with Christ as members of Christ, the enlargement and increase of Christ—Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 - D. The Lord Jesus lived in a new dispensation, having the old dispensation terminated; the New

Testament dispensation, the dispensation of grace, that is, the dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, began from the preaching of John the Baptist—Mark 1:1-8; Matt. 11:13; Luke 16:16; Acts 10:37.

III. “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”—Rom. 1:1:

- A. The gospel of God is the good news as a testament, a will (Heb. 9:16-17; Luke 22:20; Isa. 42:6; 49:8); the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation, are the “happy telling” that comes to us from God; the gospel of God is God’s entire New Testament economy with the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (1 Tim. 1:3-4; John 1:14, 16; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Eph. 3:8).
- B. Also, 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:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. We need the fifth gospel, the book of Romans, to reveal the subjective Savior within us as the subjective gospel of Christ; 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; 16:1-27.
 - 3. 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.

IV. “That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring [energizing] priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit”—v. 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. 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 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.
- 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:
 - 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.
 - 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.

- 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.
 - c. As the believers continue to grow unto maturity, those who labor on them present them full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28.
3. 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—Rom. 15:16; 12:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Eph. 4:11-12, 16.

V. “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.
- 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. Psa. 2:11-12:
 - 1. 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.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. 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.
 - 4. 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.
- 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:
 - 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; 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—Phil. 3:4-6.
 - 2. We need the Lord’s light to shine on us so that we have no trust in our natural qualities, qualifications, ability, or intelligence; after we are enlightened in this way, we will truly serve and worship God in our spirit and by the Spirit; we will want to prostrate ourselves before the Lord, and we will see that in the eyes of God whatever is done in the fallen nature is evil and worthy of condemnation—vv. 7-8.
- D. Our work and labor for the Lord in the gospel are 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:
 - 1. 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—2 Cor. 1:8-9; Exo. 2:14-15; 3:14-15; Luke 22:32-33; 1 Pet. 5:5-6.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. 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.