

Message Five

Answering God's Call to Be His Dispensational Instrument, His Overcomers, to Turn the Age

Scripture Reading: Dan. 1:4-9; 2:17-19; 4:25-26, 32; 6:10-11; 9:1-4, 23; 10:11, 19; 11:32b; 12:3

I. Every time God wants to make a dispensational move, an age-turning move, He must obtain His dispensational instrument; we must be those who have dispensational value to God—Rev. 12:5-11; 1:20; Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43:

- A. We need to consider what we are doing to bring in the next age; this is a special time, so there is the need of special Christians to do a special work—16:18; Rev. 19:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; Rev. 2:4-7; Col. 1:18b; John 17:21; 1 Cor. 14:4b; Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19.
- B. The principle of the Lord's recovery is seen with Daniel ("God is my judge"), Hananiah ("Jah has graciously given," or "favored of Jah"), Mishael ("Who is what God is?"), and Azariah ("Jah has helped"); "Daniel and his companions" were absolutely one with God in their victory over Satan's devices; they were men who turned the age of the captivity of God's people to the age of their return to the land of Immanuel for the building of God's house and God's city for God's expression and authority—Dan. 2:13, 17; Isa. 8:8; cf. Rev. 17:14:
 - 1. In God's sight, an overcomer is a "man of preciousness," even "preciousness itself," a person whom God can use to turn the age—1 Pet. 2:7; Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19.
 - 2. Christ as the unique Overcomer includes all the overcomers; the unique Overcomer dwells in our spirit to make us His overcomers—John 14:30; Dan. 2:34-35; Rev. 19:7-21; 1 John 5:4, 18-19; Rev. 3:21.
- C. The Lord needs to raise up men who turn the age for the recovery of God's expression and authority; among fallen mankind God's expression is torn down and His authority is denied; Daniel and his companions truly allowed God to be expressed through them and were truly under God's authority—Gen. 1:26; Dan. 3:14-30; 4:17, 26; Rev. 22:1-2.

II. Daniel had companions with whom he was absolutely consecrated to God and separated unto God from an age that follows Satan—Dan. 1:4-8; 5:12, 22; 6:10:

- A. All those who are used by God to turn the age must be Nazarites—voluntarily consecrated ones who are sanctified absolutely and ultimately to God—Num. 6:1-8, 22-27; Psalms 110:3; Luke 9:62; Phil. 3:13-14.
- B. Although Daniel and his companions were still very young, they stood up as an anti-testimony, similar to the way that Antipas did in the church in Pergamos—Rev. 2:13.

III. Daniel joined himself to God's desire through God's Word—Dan. 9:1-4; Deut. 17:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 6:17-18; Psalms 119:11, 24:

- A. Daniel was not only a person who read God's Word regularly but also a person who was joined to God's Word:
 - 1. When Daniel read from the book of Jeremiah that God had ordained seventy years of captivity for the Israelites and that after seventy years God would turn back to bless them, he immediately fasted and prayed; as soon as he touched God's desire through the Word, he joined himself to that desire—Dan. 9:2-3.
 - 2. After Daniel read the book of Leviticus, he could no longer eat the unclean food (Dan. 1:8-21); after he read the book of Jeremiah, he could not help but fast and pray for the restoration of God's people (29:10-14).
- B. We must read God's Word in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer and touch God's desire from His Word; then we must immediately join ourselves to that desire; the Bible should affect

our living, and we should be joined to the Bible—cf. Psa. 119:11, 15-16, 133, 140; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

IV. Daniel was a man of prayer with an excellent spirit, a man living under God's rule in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens, the ruling of the heavens—Dan. 2:17-19, 28; 6:10; 9:1-4, 17; 5:12, 14; 6:3; 5:22-23; 4:25-26, 32:

- A. The center of Daniel 6 is man's prayer for the carrying out of God's economy; man's prayers are like the rails that pave the way for God's move to go on; there is no other way to bring God's economy into fullness and into fulfillment except by prayer; this is the inner secret of this chapter.
- B. The highest expression of a man who cooperates with God is in prayer; God carries out His economy on the earth through His faithful channels of prayer—Matt. 26:41; Acts 6:4; Eph. 6:17-18; Col. 4:2.
- C. Prayer is the lifeline in the Lord's recovery; the more Satan tries to frustrate our prayer, the more we should pray—Dan. 6:10, cf. vv. 4-9:
 - 1. Daniel was a person living before God; he depended on prayer to do what man could not do, and he depended on prayer to understand what man could not understand—2:17-19; 9:1-4; 10:1-3, 11-13.
 - 2. Daniel's prayer was totally for God and not for himself; through prayer he afforded God the highest cooperation—9:2b; Jer. 25:11; Dan. 9:17; 1 Kings 8:48.
 - 3. Because Daniel was a man of prayer, he was acknowledged by God, qualified to be used by God, and capable of speaking forth the mystery of God—cf. Acts 6:4.
 - 4. Daniel's prayer reached the highest peak; he asked God to do something for Himself; he prayed, "Now hear, O our God, the prayer of Your servant and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that has been desolated, for the Lord's sake"—Dan. 9:17.
 - 5. Only a person like Daniel, who prayed to God single-heartedly with an age-turning prayer, can be used by Him to turn the age.

V. Daniel was a self-sacrificing person with the spirit of martyrdom—6:10-11:

- A. Daniel's companions had a true spirit of martyrdom; they stood for the Lord as the unique God and against idol worship at the cost of their lives, being thrown at the command of Nebuchadnezzar into a blazing furnace—3:19-23.
- B. Daniel prayed at the risk of his life; the intention of the chief ministers and satraps was to destroy Daniel, but the intention of Satan, who was behind them, was to cut off the channel of prayer that God was using for the carrying out of His economy—6:4-24.
- C. Everyone whom God uses to turn the age is afraid of only one thing, that is, of offending God and losing His presence—3:17-18; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; cf. Psa. 51:11; Josh. 7:4.

VI. In order to be today's overcomers as God's dispensational instrument who turn the age, we must redeem the time; Colossians 4:5 says, "Redeeming the time," and Ephesians 5:16 says, "Redeeming the time":

- A. One could translate the word *time* in these passages as redeeming the "opportunity"; we who are learning to serve the Lord must not let the Head have a sense that we are dull to His direction and numb to His leading; we need to allow the Lord to train our spiritual sense and our spiritual sight to sense the opportunities whenever they come and make the most of them.
- B. Of the days that the Lord has ordained for us, perhaps yesterday should have been the greatest day of our life, but we may have lived yesterday in an ordinary way; this is what it means to miss the opportunity; there is never a day without God's arrangement for us.

- C. Perhaps the Lord gave us a thought that we should seek out a certain person who could potentially be very useful to the Lord (cf. Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-16), but on that day we did not go, because we were afraid the weather was too hot, and we were too lazy.
- D. One day we will face the Lord; perhaps we will regret the things in our life that now provide us with satisfaction; many times we have come short of God's will and have acted foolishly; we have not been faithful to live Christ, to grow Christ, to express Christ, and to propagate Christ in every respect for the building up of His Body—2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:21-23, 25-26, 30; Col. 1:9-10; Matt. 7:26; 25:2-3, 8.
- E. Daniel 11:32b says, "The people who know their God will show strength and take action"; this means that the people of God will open up new horizons; the more we know God's will, the more we will seize the opportunities; those who know God will never live in a habitual way day after day—cf. Deut. 4:25 and footnote.
- F. "We have seen how God has blessed Brother Witness's work. His strong point is that he does not allow any opportunity to slip by. It is hard to find him missing an opportunity. Once the opportunity arises, he takes advantage of it"—speaking from Brother Watchman Nee on July 19, 1950 (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 55, p. 199).
- G. If our service is according to God's will, one day will equal many days, but the days spent outside the will of God are not counted; outside the kingdom of God, no human beings are employed by God (Matt. 20:6-7); Nebuchadnezzar was satisfied with his own work (Dan. 4:30, 37b)—this is the principle of Babylon.
- H. However, thank the Lord for His word of comfort, the words of Joel 2:25—the years that the locust has eaten will be restored to us; if we waste our days, ten years may be equal to one day, but if we redeem the time, one day may equal ten years.
- I. Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us then to number our days / That we may gain a heart of wisdom," and 84:10 says, "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand"; the days in heaven are not counted by a cycle of twenty-four hours; God has a different way of counting days.

VII. Today the way to become vitalized is to answer the Lord's call to be an overcomer; an overcomer is a vital person, and a vital person (one who is living and active) is a praying person—119:88, 159; Dan. 11:32b:

- A. Our intention in forming the new groups is to have groups of overcomers; this is the reason that the groups are called the "vital groups"; the full-time training is also for the producing of the overcomers, those who are desperate to conquer the deadness of Sardis (Rev. 3:1), the lukewarmness of Laodicea (vv. 15-16), and the barrenness dealt with by the Lord in John 15 concerning the vine and the branches (vv. 1-8, 16).
- B. If we are going to be vitalized, we need to have close, intimate, and thorough fellowship with the Lord and with the seeking saints; we need the Lord to lead us to some companions, with whom we can labor, just as Daniel had three companions—Dan. 1:6.
- C. Within today's church life (typified by Jerusalem), we must be the Lord's overcomers (typified by Zion); this is to be in the age of the overcomers according to the Lord's calling (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 20-21; 21:7); it is one thing to be in the church life, but it is another thing to be an overcomer in the church life (14:1-5).
- D. We have to make a resolution to be the overcomers, the vitalized ones; an overcomer is one who overcomes anything that is replacing Christ or that is against Christ—Judg. 5:15-16; 1 John 2:18-20, 27.

VIII. As today's overcomers, we should be like the children of Issachar, "men who understood the times that they might know what Israel should do" (1 Chron. 12:32a); see Brother Lee's applicable experience on the next page.

On the eve of the revival in Chefoo, when the Japanese had invaded China and had made life in China, which was hard enough, to be even harder, Brother Lee wrote the following in his personal notes in Chefoo, 1942:

People on earth are suffering calamities, and the churches are in hardship; this is not the age of God's heart's desire but the age of God's procedures. God is using His procedures to fulfill His heart's desire. To turn from the age of procedures to the age of God's heart's desire, man must pray the age-turning prayer. Daniel was such a man.

The earth is suffering calamities because people on the earth do not want God and do not care for God's affairs. Therefore, if the saints are to pray to end the time of calamities, they must answer God's demands and care for God and His needs. Oh! These many calamities today should wake us up to no longer live to the earth! Oh! Today we should truly consecrate ourselves to answer God's demands on behalf of the church so that God may have a way to come in and to turn this age of procedures into the age of His heart's desire. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932–1949*, vol. 2, p. 27)