

LAYING OURSELVES ON THE ALTAR TO BE BURNED BY THE LORD FOR HIS PRESENT RECOVERY

THE LORD'S DESIRE TO TURN THE AGE IN HIS RECOVERY

In these days our burden is that at least a small number of the Lord's children will realize that today is a new age in the Lord's recovery; it is not the continuation of the old age. The old age was an age of doctrinal teaching. If we study the history of Christianity, especially the history of the Lord's recovery, we will realize that in the past five hundred years many items recovered by the Lord were in the realm of doctrinal teaching. During the past five centuries a number of prevailing preachers, speakers, and teachers were raised up by the Lord. Until now Christian meetings have depended mainly on a certain preacher, speaker, or teacher. However, our realization is that from now on, the Lord intends to change the age. The new age will be the age of the Spirit instead of the age of doctrinal teaching.

If you travel to visit groups of seeking ones in many places, you will realize that the Holy Spirit will no longer put His seal on mere objective teachings and doctrines. The more people talk about objective teachings and doctrines, the more they are disappointed. If someone will turn them from doctrinal teaching to the Spirit, the seeking ones will go along. Such a turn will have the seal of the Holy Spirit. We all need to realize that from now on, the age is being changed to the age of the Spirit. We still need a certain amount of healthy teaching, but the main thing today is the Spirit.

THE LORD NEEDING THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Whenever there is a change of the age, there is always the need of a group of young people. If we read and study the Bible together with the history of Christianity, we will realize that the Lord has never used old people to turn the age. In every age, in every generation, whenever the Lord began to do something new, He always went to the young people. In order to turn the age, the Lord needs young people.

There is no doubt that in the United States the Lord is going to bring in a new age in His recovery. The Lord's recovery today is absolutely new; it is absolutely different from our old background. Today nothing old fits in the recovery. If we come to the meetings in the old way, we will sense that the old way does not fit. If you ask me, "What is the new way to come to the meetings?" I will tell you that only the Lord knows. In the United States today there are millions of Christians, but even the seeking ones do not know what the way of the Lord's recovery is. Most of the seeking ones are disappointed, dissatisfied, and even disgusted with the oldness and degradation of Christianity, yet they do not know what the way of the Lord's recovery is.

We are now in a very crucial period. We are in a crisis related to the changing of the age. The Lord is going to change the age and carry out a new recovery. We are here for the turning of the age. I have the desire to speak about this turn to the older generation, but the burden for such a turn will rest on the young people. In order to turn the age, the Lord needs a group of young people. The Lord needs to turn the age and carry out a genuine recovery in the United States so that He can do something through the United States to spread His recovery throughout the world. For this there is the need for a group of young people who can be used by the Lord to bring forth His recovery on the whole earth. This is not a small thing. I am burdened with only this thing, that is, that the Lord needs a group of young people to be absolutely in His hands for His recovery.

LAYING OURSELVES ON THE ALTAR AND BEING BURNED BY GOD TO BE MINGLED WITH HIM

By reading the Bible, we will realize that the Lord continually has a desire to come down from heaven to do something on earth. In many Christians there is the thought of going up to heaven. This is the desire of many Christians. In contrast, the desire of God is to come down to the earth. We may desire to go up to heaven, but God desires to come down to the earth. This is not the time for us to go up to heaven; rather, this is the time for God to come down to the earth. God always has the desire to come down to the earth to accomplish something for His purpose (Matt. 6:10; cf. Rev. 21:2a).

God cannot accomplish anything on the earth alone. He needs the cooperation of His people. He needs humanity to meet with divinity so that the two natures—divinity and

humanity—can be mingled together as one. We may ask, “In what place can God meet with human beings?” We may say that the meeting place of God and man is man’s spirit, and this is correct (John 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Tim. 4:22). However, we also need to see that to satisfy God’s desire to change the age, the place where God meets with man is not only man’s spirit but even more the place of sacrifice, the place of burning—the altar. The altar is the place of sacrifice, the place of burning, and the place of death. This is the place where God meets with human beings, not only to contact them but also to mingle with them. God mingles with man by the way of burning.

In the Old Testament the people of Israel offered burnt offerings and various other offerings on the altar (Lev. 1-7). The burnt offering is a type of Christ as the One who is absolutely for God’s satisfaction. In offering the burnt offering, the offerer laid his hands on the head of the offering, indicating that he identified himself with the offering and was one with the offering (1:4). Thus, in a sense, the offerer offered himself to God in his union with the burnt offering. This indicates that what we offer to God must be ourselves in Christ as our burnt offering.

After an offering was placed on the altar, fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering. This consuming fire signifies God Himself (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). We are the offerings, and God Himself is the fire. It is by “burning” us that God mingles Himself with us. If we are willing to be the offering, God will be the burning fire. When He burns us, He mingles with us. When we are consumed by God as the burning fire, we are mingled with God. The burning is the mingling.

Not Working for the Lord but Being Burned by Him

If we would be used by the Lord to turn the age, we must first be willing to lay ourselves on the altar. We must be willing to pray, “Lord, I lay myself on the altar.” We should not try to do something for the Lord. We are not qualified to do anything for the Lord. We are qualified only to be burned, to be consumed. We are good for burning, but we are not good for doing.

Some saints have asked me, “What is the best way for us to carry on the work?” The best way for us to carry on the work is to be burned. If we would be burned, that would be good enough. To be burned means to be truly one with the Lord. As I said earlier, we are the offering, and God is the fire. In order for the fire and the offering to be one, the offering must be burned by the fire. The more the offering is burned, the more the fire and the offering become one. Eventually, the offering is fully consumed by the fire. This means that the entire offering is burned away. After such a burning, all that can be seen is the glow of the fire. The glow of the fire is the glory of God (Ezek. 1:4).

We need to be burned by the Lord to such an extent that we are consumed. Then we will be one with the Lord, and upon us there will be the glow of the divine fire, that is, the glory of God. We do not need to merely learn to do things. We must be willing to be burned. To experience the burning, we do not need to pray with many words. We simply need to pray, “Lord, burn me. Burn me, Lord. I am here on the altar. Burn me. O Lord, burn me!”

God as the Holy Fire Always Being Ready to Burn Us

God as the holy fire from heaven is always ready to consume whatever we offer to Him (Lev. 6:9). He is waiting for us to offer ourselves to Him by placing ourselves on the altar. The fire is waiting for the offering, not the offering for the fire. Even in eternity past God as the holy fire was ready. It is not that we are waiting for God but that God is waiting for us.

If there is no altar, the fire cannot come down. Even if there is an altar, if there is no offering on the altar, the fire cannot come down. When there is the altar with the offering on the altar, the fire comes down. This kind of thing occurred several times in the Old Testament. After the tabernacle was built up and the priestly service established, fire came forth from before Jehovah, that is, from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar (9:24). No one prayed, asking God to send the fire. There was no need for anyone to pray, because the fire was ready. What the priests needed to do at that time was to lay the sacrifices on the altar. Once this was done, the fire came down. On another occasion, after the building of the temple was completed, King Solomon and the people of Israel offered sacrifices to God without number (2 Chron. 5:6). After Solomon

concluded his prayer to God, fire came down from heaven and devoured the burnt offering and the sacrifices (7:1a). On the first occasion fire came down related to the building of the tabernacle; on the second occasion fire came down related to the building of the temple. On both occasions the glory of God appeared (Lev. 9:23; 2 Chron. 7:1b).

Today there is the need for many offerings to be laid on the altar. If we read church history, we will see that the first time fire came down from heaven was on the day of Pentecost. The upper room in Jerusalem where the disciples were gathered was the real altar. The one-hundred-twenty laid themselves on the altar, and the fire came down upon them in the form of tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4). From Pentecost until today, throughout the history of the church there have been many instances like this. Whenever God's people on earth are willing to lay themselves on the altar, the fire of God from heaven comes down to burn them. Today I am burdened that this would happen among us.

We all need to realize that the Lord desires to change the age. There is a real need for a group of young people to fit the Lord's purpose. The Lord needs a number of young people who are willing to lay themselves on the altar to be burned by the Lord. The Lord as the holy, burning fire is waiting for some offerings to be laid on the altar. We need to put ourselves on the altar and be willing to tell the Lord, "Lord, we are willing. We are the offerings, and we lay ourselves on the altar. Now it is not You who are waiting for us, but we who are waiting for You."

By reading the Bible from this point of view, we can realize that throughout history the Lord has been desirous to gain a number of people who are willing to be swallowed up by Him. Whatever is offered to God on the altar becomes food to Him for His satisfaction (Lev. 3:11; Num. 28:2). God is hungry. He hungers for us to offer ourselves to Him. We need to cry to the Lord, telling Him that we are willing to lay ourselves on the altar as an offering to Him. Strictly speaking, we do not need to be taught; we need to be burned. The altar is not a place of teaching but a place of burning. God's intention is not merely to teach us but to burn us. Nothing can be accomplished for the Lord's purpose unless we are willing to put ourselves on the altar. The fire is waiting to come down to burn us. God as the consuming fire is always ready, but He is waiting for us to be ready by putting ourselves on the altar. We should say, "Lord, we are ready; we are on the altar for Your burning."

OFFERING OURSELVES TO THE LORD FOR HIS BURNING AND HIS BLESSING

In the Old Testament the children of Israel were commanded to offer a tithe, a tenth, of the produce of the good land to God (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22-23). Today many Christians practice tithing by offering ten percent of their income to God. However, the offering that God desires is not only money, something without life; God desires His people to offer themselves to Him (Num. 6:2; Psa. 110:3; Rom. 12:1). In addition to bringing our material offerings to the Lord, we need to bring ourselves to the Lord. We need to bring our tithes, our material offerings, to the storehouse, and we also need to bring ourselves to the storehouse. If we do this, we will prove the riches of the Lord's blessing. We will see that the Lord will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing for us until there is no room for it (Mal. 3:10). God's rich blessing will come down on us only when we bring ourselves as the "tithe" to Him. If we do this, God will open to us the windows of heaven—not just one window, but many windows—until the blessing will be so abundant that there will be no room to receive it.

We have seen that the mingling is the burning; when God burns us, He mingles Himself with us. We need to realize that the blessing also is the burning. The burning is both the mingling and the blessing. The more we are burned, the more we are blessed. The more burning we experience, the more blessing we enjoy. The way to prove the Lord and testify to people that the Lord is real is to bring ourselves to the altar. We all need to lay ourselves on the altar and prepare ourselves before the Lord for His burning. If we do this, He will mingle Himself with us by burning us. He will be the fire, and He will burn us as the offering. Then He will be one with us in this burning. This is the real mingling and the real blessing. (Message given by Brother Witness Lee in Los Angeles, California, on December 22, 1967, and taken from *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, vol. 2, "Enjoying the Riches of Christ to Become the Body as His Fullness," ch. 1, pp. 505-510.)