

**Words of Fellowship to
the Working Saints in Northern California**

August 20, 2017

Burning in Spirit, Serving the Lord

Scripture Reading: John 4:24; 3:6; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 12:1-2, 11; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 14:32; 2 Cor. 4:13

I. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truthfulness”—John 4:24; cf. Rom. 1:9; 7:6:

- A. Everyone who seeks to serve God must serve Him in a spirit that bears the same quality as His Spirit—v. 24; Rom. 1:9; 7:6; *Hymns*, #782.
- B. John 4 tells us that God is Spirit, and John 3 says that that which is born of the Holy Spirit in a Christian is his spirit; only the spirit begotten of the Holy Spirit is qualified to serve God; only it can serve God who is Spirit—John 4:24; 3:6.
- C. If we are willing to exercise our spirit, that is, to worship and serve in spirit, we will be filled with the Spirit, and the words that we speak will be the flowing of the Spirit as rivers of living water—Rom. 1:9; John 4:24; 7:37-39; 6:63.
- D. We must exercise our spirit to pray regularly until we can pray in any place and at any time; this is the way for our spirit to be enriched and strengthened, for our service to be uplifted, and for the church to be built up—Eph. 6:18.

II. “Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord”—Rom. 12:11:

- A. A presented body, a transformed soul, and a burning spirit—all three are indispensable to a proper church life—vv. 1-2, 11:
 - 1. After we have presented our body for the church life (v. 1), it is very easy for us to fall into the opinions of our mind in our soul, which results in our being damaged in the church life.
 - 2. Therefore, our soul, and particularly the mind of our soul, needs to be transformed—v. 2.
 - 3. However, once our mind is transformed, we may easily fall into a negative and dormant state; at that time we must be burning in spirit that we may be stirred up and encouraged to go on in the church life in a positive way—v. 11.
- B. We must not be passive and slothful in exercising our spirit; we should be diligent to rise up and exercise our spirit.
- C. In order to be burning in spirit, we need to call, “O Lord!”; if we call for ten minutes, our spirit will be burning.
- D. The Lord is the real and living Spirit; as we call, He, as a consuming fire, will burn in us, causing us to be on fire.

III. “For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness”—2 Tim. 1:6-7:

- A. God surely has given us something—the eternal life and the divine Spirit, which are both God Himself—cf. John 3:15-16; Gal. 3:14; Rom. 8:16.
- B. We may say that the gift of God which we must fan into flame is a spiritual gift; but without our spirit, how could we have the gift?
- C. The spiritual gift is in our spirit; there is fire in our regenerated spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit; actually, we may say that our spirit is the fire.
- D. If you get into 2 Timothy 1:6-7, we will see that the fanning of our gift into flame is the fanning of our spirit into flame.
- E. The easiest way for us to fan our spirit is to open up our mouth:
 - 1. If we want to fan our spirit into flame, we need to open up our mouth, open up our heart, and open up our spirit; we need to open these three layers of our being.

2. We have to use our mouth to say, "O Lord Jesus"; but then we have to go deeper by using our mouth with our heart to say, "O Lord Jesus"; then we need to go even deeper by using our mouth with our heart and with our spirit to say, "O Lord Jesus."
 3. This is to open up our spirit from deep within; then the fire burns.
- F. To have a flame we need to let the draft come in through opening up to the Lord; every morning we need to bring in the draft by fanning the gift of God into flame.
 - G. All the saints in the Lord's recovery need to fan into flame the gift of God which is in them; however, in the meetings many saints seem to throw away the fan; especially in the meetings of the church, we need to fan into flame the gift which is in us.

IV. "The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets"—1 Cor. 14:32; cf. 2 Cor. 4:13:

- A. The way for Christians to meet is not to have forms, regulations, programs, and so forth, but just to exercise the spirit.
- B. The key, the secret of our meeting together, is the exercise of our regenerated human spirit.
- C. First Corinthians 14:32 is the strongest proof; verse 31 tells us that we "can all prophesy;" then verse 32 follows by telling us that prophesying is just the exercise of our spirit; it is not to wait until the Spirit pushes us, because the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.
- D. As the prophet, if we do not take the initiative, if our spirit would not move, then the Holy Spirit has no way out; we must take the initiative and exercise our spirit.
- E. If we take the initiative with our spirit to prophesy, then the Holy Spirit, who is one with our spirit, will cooperate with us; we can give our spirit the order to prophesy; our spirit is subject to us.
- F. We need to learn the secret of speaking in order to be in the spirit; Christians are a speaking people; every Christian must be one who speaks; this means that we need to speak in our daily life; day by day we need to speak—2 Cor. 4:13.
- G. This kind of speaking enlivens, this kind of speaking refreshes, this kind of speaking makes people new, this kind of speaking makes people strong and happy, and this kind of speaking imparts life to others and dispenses the Triune God into the listeners; this kind of speaking is a strong testimony of the Lord's recovery.

V. "We serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter"—Rom. 7:6b:

- A. We need to learn not only to walk, to live, in the spirit but also to serve in the spirit and to serve in the newness of the spirit—v. 6.
- B. We need to learn to choose a hymn in the spirit; we should not choose a hymn for a meeting according to our mind, but according to the inner feeling of our spirit.
- C. We need to learn to minister the Word in the spirit; we need to learn the lesson not just to speak according to our knowledge but learn to act and serve according to the inmost feeling, ministering in the spirit and according to the spirit.
- D. We need to learn to offer a prayer in the spirit; we should not pray according to knowledge or routine; when we come together to pray, we need to exercise our spirit to sense the inner anointing; we should pray according to the inmost feeling of the anointing—*Hymns*, #779.
- E. We need to learn to visit the saints in the spirit; we need to exercise our spirit, looking to the Lord; while we are listening to them, we need to fellowship with the Lord and to sense both what is in their spirit and what is the anointing in our spirit.
- F. We need to learn to preach the gospel in the spirit; we should not preach merely according to the knowledge of the gospel; rather, while we are speaking, we need to forget about our knowledge and come back to the spirit to minister in the spirit.
- G. Only by exercising our spirit can we serve God in newness of spirit, and only then can we please God.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE BELIEVERS BEING IN THE SPIRIT

The relationship between God and His people is altogether in the spirit. God is Spirit, and we have a spirit. Therefore, all our dealings with God, whether prayer, fellowship, or service, are in the spirit. This is the first thing that we need to know.

NOT BEING SLOTHFUL TO EXERCISE THE SPIRIT

We must confess that we are lazy and loose in the matter of exercising our spirit. In this matter the children of God tend to be slothful, just like some children are too lazy to use their mind to study. Most children can play all day without feeling tired. But they are unwilling to do their homework, because they are slothful in using their mind. They are accustomed to exercising their body, but they are unaccustomed to studying with their mind. This also applies to us as God's children in relation to exercising our spirit. We are willing to spend a good amount of time reading newspapers, conversing, and doing many other things, but we are not willing to pray. Prayer requires that we exercise our spirit, but our spirit is slothful, unwilling to move.

The apostle Paul says, "Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). The word slothful here is in relation to the spirit because Paul goes on to say that we need to be burning in spirit, serving the Lord. Some saints are diligent outwardly, but their spirit is slothful. They are diligent and energetic in doing things, but they are slothful and seldom moved in spirit to pray. This is the result of being slothful to exercise the spirit and being unwilling to pray more with the spirit.

NOT EXERCISING THE SPIRIT BEING AN OFFENSE TO THE LORD

Being slothful in spirit and not exercising the spirit greatly offend the Lord. In John 4:24 the Lord said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." Verse 23 says that God seeks such to worship Him. God is longing for persons who will fellowship with Him in spirit. We offend God by not exercising our spirit to worship Him or by rarely exercising our spirit.

God is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit so that we can receive and enjoy Him. God created us with a spirit and redeemed us so that the Spirit could enliven our spirit. Now the Spirit dwells in our spirit so that we may absorb and enjoy God with our spirit. However, we put Him aside, ignore Him, and turn our back to Him when we do not contact Him with our spirit. Many of us do not enjoy the Lord much, and some have never enjoyed Him. Some co-workers serve fervently in the church and visit other saints. They are fervent in many things other than exercising their spirit. They do not enjoy the Lord. As a result, the Lord is unable to reach the goal of His salvation among us.

Since we seldom exercise our spirit, we do not have a rich supply for the saints; we are not channels for them to receive the Lord. We may frequently visit the saints, but we can neither enliven their spirit nor supply them, because we do not exercise our spirit to pray with them. We are unable to render the saints real spiritual help.

Even in the meetings we do not exercise our spirit to contact one another. Most of our activities have the flavor of rituals and formalities, not the flavor of the Spirit or the moving of the Spirit. We cannot expect to worship and gain God, who is Spirit, in such meetings. How can we speak of exercising our spirit to open the spirit of the saints and bring them into the Lord? These shortages are the result of our not exercising our spirit, not praying enough, and being unwilling to open ourselves to pray with others. (*The Exercise of the Spirit and the Building of God*, Chapter 8, pp. 67-69)

THE GENUINE SUPPLY OF THE CHURCH DEPENDING ON THE SPIRIT

The sequence in the Gospel of John concerning the Spirit is excellent. Chapter 3 says that the Spirit regenerates our spirit; the Spirit begets the spirit (v. 6). Chapter 4 says that God is Spirit and that we need to worship Him in spirit (v. 24). This means the spirit worships the Spirit. Chapter 6 says, "It is the Spirit who gives life;...the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). First, the Spirit regenerates a person, and then this person needs to worship God in spirit. As a result, this one who has been regenerated by the Spirit and who worships God in spirit will be like the Lord; when he speaks, his words will be spirit and life. Because he is filled with the Spirit, what he utters will be spirit. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). John 7 goes one step further and says that when the Spirit comes forth, He becomes rivers of living water (v. 38).

If we are willing to exercise our spirit, that is, to worship and serve in spirit, we will be filled with the Spirit, and the words that we speak will be the flowing of the Spirit as rivers of living water. If we read and speak the Bible, listen to messages, and read spiritual publications without exercising our spirit, we will eventually have more knowledge but less of the Spirit. As a result, the church will receive dead letters, not the genuine spiritual supply.

We must see that the supply to the church depends on the Spirit and not merely on the ministry of the word. In His work of recovery the Lord first uses the Word, but He must ultimately match the Word with the Spirit. Otherwise, the Word will become dead letters; it will be without the Spirit, and it will not be the Spirit; and the church will become deadened. If we can match the ministry of the word with the exercise of our spirit so that we serve in spirit, then the ministry of the word will be Spirit-filled, strengthening, enlightening, uplifting, and releasing. Furthermore, those who listen to our speaking will be enlivened, and their spiritual capacity will increase. This will draw out more words from those who minister the word. In this way, the church will receive a fresh and living supply, and all the saints will be able to know Christ, experience Christ, and touch the riches of Christ in their spirit. For this reason, we must exercise our spirit to pray regularly until we can pray in any place and at any time. This is the way for our spirit to be enriched and strengthened, for our service to be uplifted, and for the church to be built up. (*The Exercise of the Spirit and the Building of God*, Chapter 11, p. 105)

All the saints in the Lord's recovery need to fan into flame the gift of God which is in them. However, in the meetings many saints seem to throw away the fan. Especially in the meetings of the church, we need to fan into flame the gift which is in us. Then the flame will grow higher and brighter, and the riches of Christ will be manifest. All the saints need to be encouraged with the fact that they have eternal life, a pure conscience, and unfeigned faith. For this cause, they should fan into flame the gift of God.

A Strong Spirit

In verse 7 Paul continues, "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of a sober mind." The spirit here denotes our human spirit, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6; Rom. 8:16). Fanning into flame the gift of God is related to our regenerated spirit.

Paul says that we have a spirit of power, of love, and of a sober mind. Power refers to our will, love to our emotion, and a sober mind to our mind. This indicates that a strong will, a loving emotion, and a sober mind have very much to do with a strong spirit for the exercise of the gift of God which is in us.

We need to believe that God has given us such a spirit, and we should praise Him for it. We should not say that we do not feel as if we have a spirit of love, power, and a sound mind. In our physical body we usually do not have any feeling with respect to our internal organs unless there is something wrong with them. Under normal circumstances, are you aware of the fact that you have a liver? I may not be conscious of my liver, but I know that I have this organ and that it is

functioning. In like manner, we may not feel as if we have the kind of spirit described in verse 7. Nevertheless, we need to believe Paul's word and exercise our spirit. (*Life-study of 2 Timothy*, msg. 1, pp. 6-7)

THE EXERCISE OF OUR SPIRIT

...Now that we have seen the importance of our spirit, we want to see the exercise of our spirit. We must build up a habit of exercising our spirit. When I rise up in the morning, the first thing I spontaneously say is "O Lord." To call on the Lord by saying, "O Lord" is a habit of exercising our spirit. To say "O Lord" as soon as you rise up in the morning makes a big difference. If you rise up in the morning without saying anything, you may pray in a routine way without really touching the Lord. This is because there is no exercise of your spirit. We have to build up a habit of saying, "O Lord." When we say, "O Lord," we touch the Lord. This is the habit of exercising our spirit.

At times we may be in a hard situation. We may be sick or we may have lost our job. At that time, we should exercise our spirit. We should force ourselves to say, "O Lord Jesus!" The word exercise implies forcing. To exercise is always a forced matter. When the Olympic athletes are exercising to practice or compete, they must have a strong will. They force themselves to exercise. If we Christians want to be strong and want to grow in the Lord, we must force ourselves to use our spirit.

Let us suppose that a problem comes into your family life. It may be a problem between you and your spouse, between you and your children, or between you and your parents. If you do not exercise your spirit at that time, your entire soul with your mind, will, and emotion will become prevailing. Then the soul will overcome and subdue you, conquering your spirit. This can even cause you to lose your temper in a bad way. Therefore, whenever you are in a hard situation, you have to force yourself to exercise your spirit. To force yourself to exercise, or to use, your spirit makes you a different person.

In 1 Timothy 4:7 Paul said, "Exercise yourself unto godliness." Then in verse 8 he spoke of bodily exercise. In these two verses Paul speaks of two kinds of exercise. The exercise besides that of the body, which is the exercise unto godliness, must be the exercise of the spirit. To exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to live Christ in our daily life.

TO FAN OUR SPIRIT

Second Timothy 1:6-7 indicates that we need to fan our spirit into flame. In these verses Paul said, "For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness." Some might think that these verses do not say that we should fan our spirit but that we should fan our gift. But if you get into these verses, you will see that the fanning of our gift into flame is the fanning of our spirit into flame. Paul tells us in verse 6 to "fan into flame the gift of God." Then in verse 7 he says, "For God has not given us a spirit...." Our God-given spirit is what we must fan into flame. We have to fan our spirit.

We have to know the background of 2 Timothy to appreciate Paul's word here. Paul wrote this book during a difficult time for his spiritual son Timothy. Paul was in prison in Rome. Furthermore, all those in Asia had forsaken Paul's ministry (v. 15). The churches in Asia were the main churches raised up through Paul's ministry, but they forsook him. Timothy was there among them. If you were Timothy, how would you face the situation? People could have said to Timothy, "Why are you still following Paul? All the saints in Asia have forsaken him. Also, if God were really with him, He would rescue him from the prison in Rome." No doubt, Timothy was discouraged. Otherwise, Paul would not have said, "For which cause I remind you..." Timothy was discouraged and had to be reminded. Paul knew Timothy was down and he sympathized with him. He reminded Timothy that there was still a small fire within him which he needed to fan into flame.

At times you may suffer to such an extent that you may begin to doubt God and doubt your salvation. But regardless of how much you doubt, one thing is within you which you cannot deny—

your spirit. You are not like a beast. You have a spirit. This spirit is a trouble to Satan. Regardless of how much work Satan has done and is still doing, there is one thing within that he cannot touch—our spirit. We need to fan our spirit into flame.

We may say that the gift of God which we must fan into flame is a spiritual gift. But without our spirit, how could we have the gift? The spiritual gift is in our spirit. There is fire in our regenerated spirit, which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Actually, we may say that our spirit is the fire.

A small fire that is fanned into flame can turn into a great fire. A forest fire is an example of this. The wind fans the small fire into a great fire. If something were burning within a house, and you wanted to fan that fire, you would open the window or the door. The wind would cause the fire to burn into a flame. The easiest way for you to fan your spirit is to open up your mouth.

If you want to fan your spirit into flame, you need to open up your mouth, open up your heart, and open up your spirit. You need to open these three layers of your being. You have to use your mouth to say, “O Lord Jesus.” But then you have to go deeper by using your mouth with your heart to say, “O Lord Jesus.” Then you need to go even deeper by using your mouth with your heart and with your spirit to say, “O Lord Jesus.” This is to open up your spirit from deep within. Then the fire burns. If you are down, you should call, “O Lord Jesus” again and again from deep within with the exercise of your spirit. Then you will be up. (*The Spirit with Our Spirit*, ch. 8, pp. 79-82)

Taking the Initiative to Prophecy

Every believer in Christ has the capacity to prophecy. We may say that we cannot, but the Lord says that we can. Although we know that the Lord is right, some of us may say that we can prophecy only when the Spirit inspires us to do so. Verse 32 continues, “The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.” This means that our spirit is subject to us, and not we to our spirit. The prophets are not under the control of their spirit, but their spirit is under their direction. This indicates that in prophesying, we should take the initiative and not wait. We need to be active, not passive. There is too much passivity in Christian meetings. Many of us are passive and are waiting for inspiration. If we ask a brother, “Why don’t you open your mouth and speak something?” he may respond by saying, “I have no inspiration, no guidance. The Lord has not led me.” This is poor. We should not be so passive. We need to be active. We have the right and the standing to be active.

When we take the initiative to prophecy, the Spirit follows us. When we open the window, the air comes in. The wind is always outside the window waiting for us to open the window. If we would open the window, the wind would come in. It is not we who are waiting for the Spirit, but the Spirit who is waiting for us. He is waiting in our spirit for us to take action. We need to say, “O Lord,” and let the air come in. (*CWWL, 1968*, vol. 2, p. 485)

We need to learn the secret of speaking in order to be in the spirit. Christians are a speaking people (2 Cor. 4:13). Every Christian must be one who speaks....Day by day we need to speak. (*CWWL, 1968*, vol. 2, pp. 487-488)

The plain words spoken by anyone by the spirit of faith and in the Holy Spirit builds the church. Therefore, we all have to practice everywhere to speak. We speak on the street; we speak in the classroom; we speak in the office; we speak at home; we speak to everybody, to all kinds of persons; and, we especially speak in the meetings, even the more in the home meetings. Learn to speak this way. This kind of speaking enlivens, this kind of speaking refreshes, this kind of speaking makes people new, this kind of speaking makes people strong and happy, and this kind of speaking imparts life to others and dispenses the Triune God into the listeners. This kind of speaking will overcome any kind of opposing environment. We must speak—speak in the Holy Spirit and speak by the spirit of faith. If everyone would become a speaker, a speaking witness, the situation would be overturned. This kind of speaking is a strong testimony of the Lord’s recovery. (*CWWL, 1985*, vol. 3, “The Divine Speaking”, ch. 3, p. 303)