

# THE CONTINUATION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS— LIVING IN THE DIVINE HISTORY WITHIN HUMAN HISTORY

BY ED MARKS

This article may be considered a synopsis of Acts in its intrinsic significance and organic reality. Luke 24:45 says that the Lord in resurrection opened the mind of two disciples to understand the Scriptures. We need the Lord to open our mind to understand the portion of the Scriptures that we will be covering.

When we say, “the continuation of the book of Acts,” we are saying that Acts is the only book in the Bible that essentially does not have an ending; it has no conclusion because it is a record of the work of God. The work of God does not stop at Acts 28; it continues. We are in “Acts 29” because we are still in the work of God. Acts 28:31 speaks of “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.” This is the last verse in Acts, showing that the work of God continues.

In this continuation there is a living of the divine history within human history. We are in human history, but we are also in the divine history. The human history is like a shell, and the divine history is like the kernel within the shell. Praise the Lord—we are in the divine history! Before Pentecost a hundred and twenty disciples gathered together in the upper room to pray. Acts 1:14-15 says, “These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers and said (there was a group of persons gathered together, about a hundred and twenty).”

We all should aspire to be like those hundred and twenty in that upper room. They are among the faithful ones who carried out the divine history within human history. Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history as “the acting God”; they have become God in life, in nature, in expression, and in function (but not in the Godhead) for the spreading and building up of the church as the corporate manifestation of Christ (1:8, 14; 2:14; 4:10-20, 31-32; 5:20, 38-39; 13:1-4; 26:16-19; 28:31). In the *Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel* Witness Lee says, “We may even say that, as God’s representative, Samuel was the acting God. God intended to move, to act, yet He needed a representative. Samuel thus became a prophet, a priest, and a judge. He was God’s oracle and God’s administration. As such, he was the acting God on earth” (43). Samuel was God in function and in action. We need to become God in function. This is to be the acting God. We are becoming God in life, in nature, and in function but not in the Godhead—this is for the spreading and building up of the church as the corporate manifestation of Christ.

In Acts 1:8 the Lord Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Eventually, the Lord spread from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. According to

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the Greek, to be a witness means to be a martyr. We should not have a negative view of being a martyr. To be a martyr is to continually exercise to reject the self and live by another life. We need to be those who live by the divine life in our human life so that we would be witnesses, those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life. Acts 2:14 says that when Peter stood up to speak, he was standing with the eleven. We always need to realize that our functioning is a Body matter, not an individual matter. The release of the word of the ministry is a Body matter.

In 4:10-12 Peter testified concerning Christ to the Sanhedrin; he said that the One whom they crucified, Christ, God has raised from the dead and that He has become the chief cornerstone. In verse 12 Peter said, "There is salvation in no other, for neither is there another name under heaven given among men in which we must be saved." Verse 13 says, "As they beheld the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated men and laymen, they marveled and they recognized them, that they had been with Jesus." It is as if the Jewish rulers and elders looked at the disciples and said, "We are more educated than they are. They are uneducated. They are laymen." Nevertheless, they marveled and recognized that the disciples had been with Jesus. People should marvel that we have been with Jesus. Then the Sanhedrin charged Peter and John not to utter anything at all or teach based upon the name of Jesus. They gave a very good answer, saying, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you judge; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (vv. 19-20). We need to see and hear Christ in Acts; we need to actually see Him and hear Him, and we need to speak the things that we have seen and heard.

In Acts 5:20 an angel (representing God) spoke to Peter, saying, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." Concerning the phrase *this life*, Witness Lee says that it refers to "the divine life preached, ministered, and lived by Peter that overcame the Jewish leaders' persecution, threatening, and imprisonment. This word indicates that Peter's life and work made the divine life so real and present in his situation that even the angel saw it and pointed it out" (Recovery Version, v. 20, note 2). How good it would be if an angel could come to us and say, "Speak the words of this life that you are enjoying and propagating." We need to enjoy and speak to the people all the words of "this life."

#### Peter's Quoting from the Book of Joel

In Peter's first proclamation of the gospel in Acts, he quoted from the book of Joel, which reveals the intrinsic, divine history within the outward, human history (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 1:1-4; 2:28-32). Peter quoted from Joel to show that we are in the divine history within human history, that what Joel spoke of is currently taking place. In Acts 2:17-21 Peter said,

"It shall be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream things in dreams; and indeed upon My slaves, both men and women, I will pour out of My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord comes. And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

We should not "graduate" from calling on the name of the Lord. We need to daily call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved from Satan, sin, death, the self, the flesh, and division.

Joel 1:1-4 speaks of the divine history within human history:

The word of Jehovah which came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders, / And give heed, all you inhabitants of the land. / Has this ever happened in your days, / Or even in the days of your fathers? / Tell your children about it, / And let your children tell their children, / And let their children tell the next generation. / What the cutting locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; / And what the swarming locust has left, the licking locust has eaten; / And what the licking locust has left, the consuming locust has eaten.

Witness Lee says, “Four words for locust are used in [verse 4], probably referring to one kind of locust in various stages of growth” (Recovery Version, v. 4, note 1). He goes on in this note to explain that these four stages correspond to the four sections of the great human image in Daniel 2. Hence, the stages of the locust represent the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of Medo-Persia, the kingdom of Greece, and the kingdom of Rome. These kingdoms signify, in a general sense, all of human history, but within that human history there is a divine history.

In Joel 2:25 the Lord said, “I will restore to you the years / That the swarming locust has eaten, / The licking locust and the consuming locust and the cutting locust, / My great army / That I sent among you.” This verse applies to us spiritually and even to our personal history. If we have wasted time, the Lord promises that He will restore to us the years that the locust has eaten.

### The Divine History within Human History Being Christ’s “Goings Forth...from the Days of Eternity”

The divine history within human history is Christ’s “goings forth...from the days of eternity” (Micah 5:2) across the bridge of time into eternity future (Psa. 90:2) so that He might be dispensed into His chosen ones as the Desire of all the nations (Hag. 2:7) for His corporate manifestation and His full glorification. Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Lord Jesus would be born in Bethlehem: “You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, / So little to be among the thousands of Judah, / From you there will come forth to Me / He who is to be Ruler in Israel; / And His goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity.” The Lord was preparing to come out of eternity into time—with His divinity into humanity—to go across the bridge of time, of which the millennial kingdom is the last part, and into eternity future. He is carrying out the divine history within human history. His goings forth include the processes that He passed through. He went forth in His incarnation, human living, all-inclusive death, all-surpassing resurrection, and all-transcending ascension. Then He went forth by being dispensed into us. Today He is still going forth. We have been redeemed judicially, and we are being saved organically. He went forth in our spirit to regenerate our spirit, and then He goes forth from within us through the processes of sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and finally, glorification. He is going forth in us to make us exactly the same as He is in life, nature, and function but not in the Godhead. These are His goings forth from the days of eternity.

**H**aggai 2:7 says, “I will shake all the nations, and the Desire of all the nations will come; and I will fill this house with glory, says Jehovah of hosts.” When the Lord comes back, He will come back as the Desire of all the nations. Unconsciously, all the nations desire Christ. They do not realize that they desire Christ. We may enjoy the beauty in creation, but actually, the beauty in creation represents Christ. Christ is the real Desire of all the nations. Most people desire peace and a good life. Peace is Christ. A good life is a God-man life. Both peace and a good life are Christ. People also desire light, love, patience, humility, meekness, endurance, joy, and righteousness. These are some examples of what Christ is in His divine attributes mingled with His human virtues.

### Joel Speaking concerning the Spirit Poured Out on the Day of Pentecost

Joel speaks concerning the outpouring of the processed, consummated, compound Spirit,

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who was poured out on the day of Pentecost; this Spirit is the consummated Triune God and the realization of Christ for the manifestation of Christ (2:28-29; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16). Acts 2:1-2 says, "As the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place. And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting." This occurred when the one hundred and twenty were gathered together. In John 20:22 we see that the Lord breathed into the disciples the holy breath, the holy pneuma, the Holy Spirit, which was the essential Spirit for their life and living. The rushing violent wind was the economical Spirit for their ministry and work. We need both the essential and economical aspects of the Spirit. In Luke 24:49 the Lord said, "Behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high." We have the Lord as our inward power, and we can be clothed with the Lord as our outward power from on high.

Concerning the disciples' experience on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:3-4 says, "There appeared to them tongues as of fire, which were distributed; and it sat on each one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth." When the multitude of people heard the disciples speaking in their own dialect, they were amazed and said, "We hear them speaking in our tongues the magnificent works of God" (v. 11). The symbol of the economical Spirit is a tongue of fire. This means that we need to speak forth Christ in order to propagate Christ. In order to propagate Christ as the development of the kingdom of God throughout the earth, we need to speak with the divine and mystical fire of the Triune God. This fire is for burning and purging in God's economical move.

#### **The Acts of the Apostles Being a Book without an Ending Because This Book Is Still Being Continued as the Divine History within Human History**

The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is still being continued as the divine history within human history (28:31). The Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and that the Lord is also working. Acts is a record of the work of God. After Acts 28 many of God's vessels have been and still are carrying on with His work. Even in and as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests (Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36). God's work is continuing and has not stopped. His work will go on until the kingdom and even in the new heaven and new earth. God is always advancing; He never stops. If we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord.

**T**he work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ is not yet complete and needs to be continued. Such a work for Christ's increase, propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (Rom. 8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and Revelation, which follow Acts.

Since God is seeking a corporate, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and learn to live the Body life; otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal (Rom. 12:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12). God had individual vessels in church history, including Martin Luther, Count von Zinzendorf, and John Nelson Darby, but now He wants a corporate vessel. This is why we must learn to live the Body life. Revelation 1:10-12 shows that our testimony of the one Body is one city with one church and one church for one city. We can have only one expression of the Body in each city. In cities all over the world, there are local expressions of the one Body.

Even the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the whole church; they do the work, and the whole church receives the benefit (12:5-9; 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:4-5, 12, 20-21). We need to pray, "Lord, make me an overcomer. Make me a part of Your overcoming bride. I want to be one who cooperates with You to do the work of God so that all Your children can receive the benefit."

Judges 7 speaks of Gideon and Israel's fight against the Midianites. The Midianites had a vast number of soldiers, but the Lord instructed Gideon to reduce his troop size to three hundred (vv. 6-7). Those three hundred were real overcomers. They fought and were victorious on behalf of all Israel. All Israel received the benefit from those three hundred. Before the fight the Lord encouraged Gideon, saying, "Arise; go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down with Purah your young man into the camp; and you will hear what they are saying. Then afterward your hands will be strengthened so that you can go down against the camp" (vv. 9-11). Gideon went down with Purah, a young man, to the edge of the battle array that was in the camp, and they overheard one Midianite recounting his dream to another, saying, "I have just had a dream. There was this round loaf of barley bread tumbling through the camp of Midian. And it came to the tent and struck it, so that it fell and turned upside down. And the tent collapsed" (v. 13). Then his companion said, "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has delivered Midian and all the camp into his hand" (v. 14). Gideon and his attendant must have been greatly encouraged by that conversation. Eventually, what the Lord said came to pass. All this indicates that the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the whole church. The overcomers are not for themselves; they labor to bring the whole church to perfection. Even the victories of the overcomers are corporate victories (cf. Phil. 1:19).

### The Word of God Still Growing and Being Multiplied as the Continuation of Acts

The word of God is still growing and being multiplied as the continuation of Acts. There are three verses in Acts that show this. Acts 6:7 says, "The word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith"; 12:24 says, "The word of God grew and multiplied"; and 19:20 says, "The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." *Grew* in 6:7 "refers to the growth in life, indicating that the word of God is a matter of life that grows as a seed sown into man's heart" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 7, note 1); this growth is for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us (Mark 4:14). Colossians 2:19 says, "Holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God." When we hold the Head, the word of God grows in us with the growth of God. *Multiplied* in Acts 12:24 refers to the increase of Christ in numbers; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word. We do want the increase of Christ in numbers. For this we need to pray that the word of God would grow in us inwardly and that the word would be multiplied outwardly.

New disciples are "added to the Lord" so that they become the parts of Christ, the members of Christ (5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16). Acts 5:14 says, "Believers were all the more being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women." Speaking of Barnabas, Acts 11:24 says, "He was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a considerable number was added to the Lord." The expression *added to the Lord* is very unique. The way we should preach the gospel is to add people to the Lord for the Lord's increase. We need to encourage the new believers "to remain with the Lord with purpose of heart" (v. 23), that is, to be persistently faithful to the Lord, cleave to Him, and live in close fellowship with Him. We should pray, "Lord, make me a person who is persistently faithful to You. Make me a person who cleaves to You. Make me a person who lives in close fellowship with You."

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### Calling on the Name of the Lord, Suffering on Behalf of the Name of the Lord, and Speaking in the Name of the Lord, the Name of Jesus

Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by calling on the name of the Lord, suffering on behalf of the name of the Lord, and speaking in the name of the Lord, the name of Jesus. Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment concerning God's New Testament jubilee have two aspects: on God's side, He poured out His Spirit in the ascension of the resurrected Christ; on our side, we call on the name of the ascended Lord, who has accomplished all, attained unto all, and obtained all (Joel 2:28-29, 32; Acts 2:16-18, 21). I appreciate the account of Saul's conversion. Saul was on his way to Damascus when suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell on the ground and heard a voice speaking to him (Acts 9:3-4). Then he asked, "Who are You, Lord?" and the voice said, "I am Jesus" (v. 5). This means that Jesus is Lord. We call on the name of the Lord, saying, "Lord Jesus." He is the ascended Lord to us, and we are saved by calling on His name.

Our divine history in the midst of human history is a history of calling on the name of the Lord to enjoy the riches of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ as the fullness of Christ (Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 3:8, 19; 1:22-23). Romans 10:12 says that the Lord is rich to all who call upon Him. We need to believe that when we call upon Him, He is rich to us. The way to enjoy His riches is by calling upon the name of the Lord. By calling on the name of the Lord, we keep ourselves in God's golden, divine history—a history that begins with Enosh (Gen. 4:26), continues through the Old and New Testaments (Job 12:4; Gen. 12:8; 26:25; Deut. 4:7; Judg. 15:18; 1 Sam. 12:18; Psa. 116:4, 13, 17; 80:18; 88:9; 1 Kings 18:24; Isa. 12:4; Lam. 3:55, 57; Psa. 99:6; Isa. 55:6; Jonah 1:6; 2 Kings 5:11; Isa. 41:25; Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22), and concludes with the last prayer in the Bible (Rev. 22:20). We need to treasure our golden history in the Lord's move. To stay in this history, we need to keep calling on the name of the Lord. The last prayer of the Bible ends with calling on the name of the Lord. In this verse we see not only calling on the name of the Lord but also pray-reading. In this verse the Lord said, "He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly." The verse continues with John saying, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" The Lord said, "Yes, I come quickly." John responded by praying back the Lord's words to Him: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" Hence, in this short verse we see calling on the name of the Lord and pray-reading.

As we are living in the divine history, we suffer on behalf of the Lord's name within the human history; it is a real honor to be dishonored on behalf of the Name, the very name of the man-dishonored but God-honored Jesus (Acts 4:18-20, 29-31; 5:41-42; 9:13-16; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Col. 1:24-25). Acts 5:41-42 says, "They went from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ." Saul of Tarsus received a commission from the chief priests to bind all those who called on the Lord's name. When the Lord asked Ananias to speak to Saul, Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name" (9:13-14). The way in which the early believers were identified was by their calling on the name of the Lord.

In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, "I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church." We cannot participate in Christ's sufferings for redemption; only He can participate in those sufferings. However, we can participate in the sufferings of Christ for the producing and building up of the church. Paul is referring to these sufferings when he says, "I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf." This is the fellowship of



Christ's sufferings spoken of in Philippians 3:10 for the producing and building up of the church.

In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, "We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake." Whenever we are speaking, we need to have an aspiration that we would not preach ourselves so that people are impressed with us. Rather, people should be impressed with Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as their slaves for Jesus' sake. We carry out the divine history within human history by speaking "boldly in the name of Jesus"; this name is the expression of the sum total of what the Lord is in His person and work (Acts 9:27; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Thes. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5).

### **Living, Moving, and Acting as One Body—Doing Everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body**

Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by living, moving, and acting as one Body; they do everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body. We need to pray, "Lord, make me a person who does everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body." We should always have the sensation that our particular service to the Lord is a Body matter; it is a matter of doing things in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body. We need the Body. Hebrews 13:18 is Paul's simple statement: "Pray for us." We should pray for one another, shepherd one another, love one another, and be in one accord.

**A**fter the Lord Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended, He continued to live, act, walk, and work on earth in thousands of people, because He had imparted Himself into them through His death and resurrection (John 12:24). In John 12 the Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In verse 23 He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." The disciples may have thought that it was the golden time for the Lord to manifest Himself as the Ruler of Israel and that they would hold positions of honor. Peter may have even thought that he would become the leader of the disciples. However, in verse 24 the Lord said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The concept that the disciples had regarding glorification may have been that they would ascend to a place of honor, but the Lord meant that they would descend into the ground and die. We are the "much fruit" of the life-releasing death of Christ and the life-dispensing resurrection of Christ. We are the many grains of that one grain.

The four Gospels give us a picture of the Head, and Acts shows the Body; Acts is actually the acts of Christ by the Spirit in the church as His Body, His reproduction and duplication (1:14; 2:14, 42; 9:4-5; 28:13-15). In Paul's going to Rome and meeting some brothers, we can see a picture of the Body life. Acts 28:13-15 says,

From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind came on, and the second day we came to Puteoli, where, having found brothers, we were urged to remain with them seven days. And thus we came to Rome. And from there the brothers, having heard about the things concerning us, came as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

This is the beautiful Body life in Acts.

### **Rejecting Themselves and Living by Another Life—Christ as the Divine Life**

Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by rejecting themselves and living by another life—Christ as the divine life; this corporate living of Christ is the reality of the Body of Christ. This corporate living of Christ is the reproduction of the reality that is in Jesus, spoken of in Ephesians 4:20-21. The reality

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in Jesus is the actual condition of the life of Jesus recorded in the four Gospels. He wants this life to be reproduced in us and to be propagated by us.

Paul lived Christ and served God by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus in his spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit); he lived within the veil (in his spirit as the practical Holy of Holies) and outside the camp (the human organization of religion) (Acts 16:6-7; 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13). In Romans 1:9 Paul says, "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers." Then in Philippians 3:3 he says, "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." Here Paul indicates that we are the ones who really cut off the flesh. We need to make this verse our prayer; we should pray that we would serve by the Spirit of God and have no confidence in the flesh.

We also need to live within the veil, that is, within the spirit (Heb. 6:19), and we need to go outside the camp, that is, to go outside of every vestige of religion (13:13). We define religion as acting, moving, and doing things without the presence of the living Christ. Everything we do must be with the exercise of our spirit. Exercising our spirit brings us within the veil and propels us outside the camp of religion.

**I**n order to live in the divine history within human history and by the divine life in our human life, we need to be vessels open to the Lord, loving Him, receiving Him, being filled with Him, and letting Him be everything to us and do everything in us, through us, and for us (Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 9:21, 23; cf. 2 Kings 4:1-6). We need to pray, "Lord, I open my whole being to You. I do not want to hide any part of my being from You. I would like to open my whole being to You without reservation."

Paul was unique in revealing that we are vessels to contain Christ and to convey and propagate Christ to others. After Saul's conversion the Lord sent Ananias to him, saying, "Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). No doubt Ananias spoke this to Paul, because later in his ministry Paul says that we are vessels. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 he says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us." Our earthen vessel is weak and fragile, but we have a glorious treasure in our earthen vessel. In a message, under the heading "The Treasure of His Face," Witness Lee says,

Paul tells us that we are the vessels, and the Lord Jesus within us is the treasure. But the key to this verse is the verse preceding it: "To illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6). In Greek, the word for *face* is the same word used for *person* in 2 Corinthians 2:10, which means the index around the eyes. This means that if we do not have the index of Jesus' face, He can never be a treasure to us. We will never sense that we have a treasure within until we see the face of Jesus. When we are enjoying His presence, we sense that He is such a precious treasure within us. ("Indwelling Christ" 597)

To know what this treasure is in 4:7, we must refer to verse 6, which speaks of "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Verse 7 says, "We have this treasure"; hence, the face of Jesus Christ, the person of Jesus Christ, is this treasure. The treasure in our earthen vessel is not a doctrinal Christ; it is the presence of Christ, the actual person of Christ. The living Christ within our spirit is our treasure.

### **Continuing Steadfastly in Prayer and in the Ministry of the Word**

Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history by continuing steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word; this is to live in the apostolic ministry in coordination with Christ as our great High Priest in His heavenly



ministry (6:4; Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2). The Lord is very active in His heavenly ministry. What He is primarily doing is revealed in Hebrews 7:25, which says, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them." Right now Christ in the heavens is praying for us corporately and personally. In order to reflect the apostolic ministry, we need to be people of prayer.

Hebrews 8:1-2 says, "We have such a High Priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." On the one hand, He is praying for us; on the other hand, He is ministering God into us. If we would reflect Christ's heavenly ministry, we need to pray for others, enter into Christ's prayer for them, and minister God into them. This is why in Acts 6:4 the apostles said, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word." This is to reflect Christ's heavenly ministry by praying for God's people and ministering God into them.

By prayer we set our mind on the things above and become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens; we depend on prayer to do what man cannot do, to understand what man cannot understand, and to speak what man cannot speak (9:11; 13:1-4; Col. 3:1-3; 4:2; Eph. 6:18; Dan. 6:10; 9:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:6). Shortly after Saul of Tarsus met the Lord on the road to Damascus, the Lord spoke to Ananias, saying, "Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying" (Acts 9:11). Prayer should be the foremost practice in our life of propagating the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ as the development of the kingdom of God.

Colossians 4:2 says, "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." To persevere in prayer means to watch and not sleep. Just as it is possible to sleep physically, it is possible to sleep psychologically. When we sleep psychologically, our attention is absent. We may also sleep spiritually, which means that our perception is dormant. We must watch so that our perception would not be dormant and our attention would not be absent.

In Daniel 6:10 and 9:2-3 we can see that Daniel depended on prayer to understand what man could not understand and to do what man could not do. In Daniel 6 King Darius signed an edict that said that for thirty days any man who petitioned any god or man besides the king would be subject to death (v. 7). Verse 10 says, "When Daniel came to know that the writing had been signed, he went to his house (in his upper room he had windows open toward Jerusalem) and three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously."

We need the "windows" in our being open toward the New Jerusalem. Daniel realized that his prayer was the lifeline of God's economy; hence, he would not stop praying. It was Daniel's habit to kneel to pray and to give thanks before his God three times a day. The phrase *gave thanks before his God* is meaningful. Psalm 50:14 says, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, / And repay your vows to the Most High." Witness Lee, in note 1 on this verse in the Recovery Version, concerning our sacrifice of thanksgiving, says,

This psalm tells us that some of the saints of God were offering burnt offerings and other kinds of offerings (vv. 8-13), but because they were lacking in affection, they would not offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. Thus, the psalmist, speaking for God, indicated that what God wants is not the burnt offering but the thanksgiving offering. We can offer certain offerings without being touched in our hearts, but when we are thankful to God and offer to Him a prayer of thanksgiving, our hearts are deeply touched and we are filled with affection and tender feeling toward God. This is the kind of offering God desires.

When we do this, we become very intimate with the Lord. He loves to hear us say, "Thank You, Lord Jesus. Thank You, Father. Thank You for a new day to love You and

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enjoy You.” He likes us to be thankful persons. This is why we need to pray and give thanks before our God.

By the ministry of the word, we impart Christ into others as the heavenly life and power so that they may be sustained with the riches of Christ to live Christ as their heavenly life on earth (Rom. 15:16; cf. Isa. 50:4-5). Isaiah 50:4 says, “The Lord Jehovah has given me / The tongue of the instructed, / That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. / He awakens me morning by morning; / He awakens my ear / To hear as an instructed one.” The human living of Jesus needs to be duplicated in us. We need to ask the Lord to wake us up morning by morning so that we may have fellowship with Him and receive His leading.

### Psalm 68 Showing That Christ Is the Center of God’s Move on the Earth and the Reality of God’s Activities through the Church

Acts reveals a group of people who live in the divine history within human history as seen in Psalm 68, which shows that Christ is the center of God’s move on the earth and the reality of God’s activities through the church (vv. 1, 24). Acts shows the reality of God’s activities through the church, and Psalm 68 speaks of this in typology. Verse 1 says, “Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered; / And let those who hate Him flee before Him.” This verse is “a quotation of Moses’ prayer in Numbers 10:35, uttered when the Ark of the Covenant set out from Mount Sinai” (Lee, Recovery Version, note 1).

We need to enjoy the processed and consummated Triune God as the life-dispensing and outpoured Spirit day by day (Psa. 68:11-13; Acts 2:46-47; 5:42; 16:5; 20:31; 28:30-31). Psalm 68:11-12 says, “The Lord gives the command; / The women who bear the glad tidings are a great host. / The kings of the armies flee. / They flee! / And she who abides at home / Divides the spoil.” The spoil of Christ’s victory is ours for our possession, experience, and enjoyment. What is the spoil? Verse 13 says, “Though you lie among the sheepfolds, / There are dove wings covered with silver, / And its pinions, with greenish-yellow gold.” Our inheritance, enjoyment, and experience are “dove wings.” The dove signifies the Spirit, and dove wings signify the moving power of the Spirit. Today we are enjoying the moving power of the Spirit as the dove. The dove wings are covered with silver. Silver signifies the redeeming Christ. The pinions, the feathers at the edge of the bird’s wings that give it the power to soar, are covered with greenish-yellow gold. Gold signifies God the Father in His divine nature, green signifies the divine life, and yellow signifies the divine glory. Hence, greenish-yellow gold signifies God the Father in His divine nature glittering in His life and glory. Therefore, our spoil is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. We are enjoying the Triune God; He is our inheritance.

It is of great importance that we dwell in Christ as the “shore” of the evangelists for the transportation and spreading in the preaching of the gospel. On the day of Pentecost at least one hundred twenty gospel “ships,” all of whom were Galileans, set out from the shore to spread the gospel. To preach the gospel for its transportation and spreading throughout the entire earth is to live in the divine history within human history as the continuation of Acts (Psa. 68:27; Gen. 49:13; Acts 2:7; 13:31). The goal here is that the word of God may grow and be multiplied for the Father’s glory. **AFC**

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