

## **Week Three**

# **Being Empowered in the Grace Which Is in Christ Jesus to Be Teachers, Soldiers, Contenders, Farmers, and Workmen**

Hymns: 723

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 2:1-7, 15

### **§ Day 1**

- I. Even during a period of decline, a downward trend when most of God's people are carried away, we need to be among the remnant of God's people, who receive mercy from the Lord to remain faithful to Him—1 Cor. 7:25b; 1 Kings 19:14, 18; Rom. 11:5; Ezra 9:8; Neh. 1:3; Hag. 1:14:**
  - A. Onesiphorus was an overcomer who resisted the general trend and stood against the downward current to refresh the Lord's ambassador in spirit, soul, and body, not being ashamed of the apostle's imprisonment on behalf of the Lord's commission—2 Tim. 1:16-18.
  - B. Timothy was one who was fully perfected and equipped to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church but also in confronting the worsening decline of the church; he was like-souled with the apostle Paul to genuinely care for the church with all the saints and remind them of Paul's ways which were in Christ—3:13-17; Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12.

C. Luke was the beloved physician, a faithful companion of Paul until his martyrdom—Col. 4:14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11.

D. Titus walked in the same spirit and in the same steps as Paul to care for the churches—2 Cor. 7:6-7; 12:18; Titus 1:4-5; 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:10.

E. Mark was useful to Paul for the ministry—v. 11; cf. Acts 15:37.

## § Day 2

**II. Second Timothy reveals that in these last days before the Lord's coming, we need to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus to be faithful men, those who are teachers, soldiers, contenders, farmers, and workmen who cut straight the word of the truth—2:1-7, 15; Neh. 8:10; 2 Cor. 12:9:**

A. If someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord's healthy words, he should train the faithful ones that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others so that they may be good stewards, dispensers, of the varied grace of God—2 Tim. 2:2; 1:12-14; 1 Tim. 6:20; Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10:

1. We must shepherd the saints with the teaching of God's economy—Eph. 4:11; Col. 1:27-29; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16:

a. We should shepherd people by dispensing the divine life in the humanity of Jesus to cherish them and by teaching them the divine truths in the divinity of Christ to nourish them—Eph. 5:29.

b. Shepherding the flock of God by declaring to them all the counsel of God, the economy of God, protects the church from the destroyers of God's building, mingles them with the Triune God as grace, and binds them together in His oneness—Acts 20:26-30; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 16:17; cf. Ezek. 33:1-11; 34:25; Zech. 11:7.

2. The teacher, as a good minister of Christ Jesus, is nourished with the words of the faith and exercises his spirit to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—1 Tim. 4:6-7.

### **§ Day 3**

B. Their serving the Lord as soldiers indicates that the apostle considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare—2 Tim. 2:3-4; Num. 4:23, 30, 35; 2 Tim. 4:7:

1. The Lord's ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war; to war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God's economy according to the apostles' ministry— 1 Cor. 14:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18.
2. To fight a good fight for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must clear away all earthly entanglements and lay hold on the eternal life, not trusting in our human life—2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:4.
3. We must be vigilant to fight the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by being filled with life to reign in life—Num. 6:6-7, 9; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 5:17; 8:6, 11.
4. Our will must be subdued and resurrected by Christ to be like the tower of David, the armory for spiritual warfare—S. S. 4:4; cf. 1 Chron. 11:22.

### **§ Day 4**

C. We must run the Christian race as contenders, athletes, until we finish our course, fully accomplishing our ministry in the unique ministry of God's economy so that we may receive Christ as our prize—2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 9:24-25:

1. We must subdue our body and make it a conquered captive to serve us as a

slave for fulfilling our holy purpose, not by our own effort but by the Spirit—Rom. 8:13.

2. We must look to the Lord to be graced with His grace in Christ as the Beloved (Eph. 1:6) in order to finish our course so that we can be awarded in the next age with Christ as our incorruptible crown in the following aspects (1 Cor. 9:24-27):
  - a. He will be our crown of life—Rev. 2:10; James 1:12.
  - b. He will be our crown of righteousness—2 Tim. 4:6-8.
  - c. He will be our crown of holiness—Exo. 28:36-38; 29:6; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 5:26.
  - d. He will be our crown of glory—1 Pet. 5:4.
  - e. The very attributes of God that guarded the tree of life from fallen man are now being dispensed into us as we eat Christ as the tree of life for Him to become our righteousness, holiness, and glory in order for us to display Him as the multifarious wisdom of God to the whole universe—Rev. 2:7; Gen. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:10; 3:10.

## **§ Day 5**

D. The church is God's farm, God's cultivated land, and we are God's fellow workers, working as farmers together with Him by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—2 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63:

1. The word of God, as a grain of wheat, dispenses God as life into us to nourish us; it is also fire and a hammer to purify us and breakdown our self, our natural life, our flesh, our lusts, and our concepts—Jer. 23:28-29.
2. God has sent forth His word as rain and snow to water His people in order to sanctify them, transform them, and conform them to His image that the Body

may be built up—Isa. 55:8-11; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26.

3. In our contact with the saints, we should have only one motive—to minister Christ to them that they may grow in the Lord—1 Tim. 5:1-2.

## **§ Day 6**

E. To cut straight the word of the truth as God's workmen means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry); there is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track—2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Acts 26:18; Psa. 119:130.



# WEEK 3 — DAY 1

## Morning Nourishment

2 Tim. 1:16 May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain.

1 Cor. 4:17 ...I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ...

Phil. 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you.

Onesiphorus was an overcomer who surmounted the general trend and stood against the downward current to refresh the Lord's ambassador in spirit, soul, and body, not being ashamed of the apostle's imprisonment on behalf of the Lord's commission. (2 Tim. 1:16, footnote 1)

In addition to his knowledge of the New Testament, Timothy had, from his childhood, a good foundation in the knowledge of the Old Testament. He was one who was fully perfected and equipped to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church but also in confronting the worsening decline of the church. (2 Tim. 3:15, footnote 1)

Philippians deals very much with the believers' soul. We must strive together with one soul along with the personified faith of the gospel (1:27); we must be joined in soul, thinking the one thing (2:2); and we must be like-souled, genuinely caring for the things of Christ Jesus (vv. 20-21). In the gospel work, in the fellowship among the believers, and in the pursuing of the Lord's interests, our soul is always a problem. Hence, it must be transformed, especially in its leading part, the mind (Rom. 12:2), that we may be of one soul, joined in soul, and like-souled in the Body life. (Phil. 2:20, footnote 1)

## Today's Reading

The early church recognized Luke as the author of both this Gospel and the Acts. Luke's authorship is evident from the style of composition of the two books. Luke was a Gentile (Col. 4:14; cf. Col. 4:11), probably an Asiatic Greek, and a physician (Col. 4:14). Beginning in Troas, he joined Paul in his ministry and accompanied him in his last three ministry journeys (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:15). He was a faithful companion of Paul until Paul's martyrdom (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Hence, his Gospel should represent Paul's views, as Mark's represents Peter's (see Mark 1:1, footnote 1, par. 1). (Luke 1:3, footnote 1)

Paul did not care for the circumstances or for what he thought or could see. He only cared for his spirit. His brother Titus had not come, so he did not have rest in his spirit [2 Cor. 2:13]. I like this phrase—in my spirit. We have to be brought into the realization of our spirit, and we have to learn how to do everything in our spirit. If we are going to be happy, we have to be happy in the spirit. If we are going to be sorrowful, we have to be sorrowful in the spirit. Many times we are happy merely in our emotions...We have to learn how to be happy in the spirit, how to have rest in our spirit. We need to learn to take care of the rest in our spirit and be persons living in the spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul tells us that he and the brothers with him had “the same spirit of faith.” We have to learn to exercise the spirit to such an extent. Whatever we do and whatever we say, we have to be sure that we have the same spirit, that we are in the same spirit. This is not something in the soul or in the flesh, but in the spirit. When we go to see a brother, we have to go in the spirit. When we have fellowship, we must have it in the spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 12:18 Paul said that he and Titus walked in the same spirit. This verse and the other verses we have fellowshiped show us what kind of person the apostle Paul was. He was a person fully, absolutely, and thoroughly living in the spirit. He would never be kept away from the spirit. (CWWL, 1967, vol. 2, “An Autobiography of a Person in the Spirit,” pp. 146, 148)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 4, “The Secret of God's Organic Salvation—the Spirit Himself with Our Spirit,” chs. 4, 6



# WEEK 3 — DAY 2

## Morning Nourishment

2 Tim. 2:1-2 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.

The subject of 2 Timothy is inoculation against the decline of the church... [There are] five specific titles given to the inoculator in 2:1-15...If we read these verses carefully, we will see that Paul regarded Timothy and his other co-workers as those who should be teachers, soldiers, contenders, farmers, and workmen...Based upon what he has just written to Timothy [in chapter 1], Paul now goes on to encourage him to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus [2:1]. Paul did not charge Timothy here to be empowered in knowledge or in gifts. He charged him to be empowered in grace...This grace is God's provision in life given to us that we may live out His purpose. Instead of being discouraged, Paul was empowered in grace, even though he was in prison. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., p. 21)

## Today's Reading

[Paul] realized that grace is nothing less than the processed Triune God—the Father embodied in the Son and the Son realized as the indwelling Spirit. Second Corinthians 13:14 indicates that grace is the very Triune God Himself: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Grace is not a thing; it is a unique person, the living, divine person of the Triune God processed to be the all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling Spirit. This Spirit now dwells in us as our grace.

The more we are empowered in this grace, the more able we will be to teach others...The things to which Paul refers [in 2 Timothy 2:2] are the healthy words in 1:13. The healthy words, after being committed to faithful men,

become the good deposit in them (v. 14). This word indicates that if someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord's healthy words, he should train the faithful ones, the trustworthy ones, that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others.

Paul realized that Timothy had received a good deposit, that he had been taught and nourished with the riches of grace. Therefore, he charged Timothy to commit these things to others who would be faithful and competent to carry on the same ministry. This indicates that more than one person is needed to carry on the riches of God's New Testament economy. My hope is that through all these Life-study messages thousands of saints in the Lord's recovery will receive a good deposit of the riches of grace concerning God's New Testament economy. Then those who have received these riches will be able to commit these things to others. Imagine what the situation would be if the Lord had ten thousand saints filled with His good deposit, spreading the riches of His economy throughout the earth. No doubt, this would hasten the time of His glorious appearing.

There is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, and one church. Because God is one, His way must also be one...God's way is in His recovery...Many saints can testify with a pure conscience from the depths of their being that if they do not take the way of the recovery today, they have no other way. The Lord's recovery is the way...Some who became dissenting and left discovered that they had no way to go back to the denominations. In certain cases the denominations might not even be willing to accept them. This shows that if we touch the recovery and then leave it, we commit spiritual suicide, for we turn away from God's unique way.

In 2:1 and 2 Paul was burdened to charge Timothy, one who had received such a good deposit, to pass on the riches of grace to others. Then there would be many teachers, many ministers of Christ, to spread the riches of God's New Testament economy. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., pp. 21-23)

Further Reading: Life-study of 2 Timothy, msg. 3; CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 2, "The Governing and Controlling Vision of the Bible," ch. 3

# WEEK 3 — DAY 3

## Morning Nourishment

2 Tim. 2:3-4 Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.

1 Cor. 14:8 For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

The apostle considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare, in Numbers 4:23, 30, 35 (lit.). Whenever we minister Christ to others, we find ourselves in a battle. Hence, we should not only be teachers committing the deposit to others, but we should also be soldiers fighting for God's interests.

The word for life [2 Tim. 2:4] in Greek is bios, denoting the physical life in this age. To fight a good fight (4:7) for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must clear away all earthly entanglements. The matters of our material, physical life should not entangle us as we are endeavoring to minister Christ to others...On the one hand, the priestly service is a ministry to God; on the other hand, it is a warfare against God's enemies. As the priests were bearing the Ark of the Testimony, they had to be prepared to fight against those who might attack this testimony. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., p. 23)

## Today's Reading

Concerning the matter of speaking in tongues [in 1 Corinthians 14:6-9],...the apostle Paul inserts verse 8 with the word battle in it...An army that is fighting a battle needs the morale, a fighting unity. In order to maintain this morale, even a little dissension concerning the smallest matter has to be killed. If that little dissenting talk is not killed, the morale will be annulled,...and surely the army will lose the fight, the battle...The Lord's ministry is like the sounding of

the trumpet for the army to go on to war (Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18). The Lord's ministry is a matter of a battle (2 Tim. 2:3, footnote 1).

We are doing something more serious than any battle on this earth. We are fighting against God's enemy, Satan. The church is God's army...Ephesians is a book on the Body of Christ, the church. It tells us that the Body of Christ, the church, is the fullness of the One who fills all in all (1:22-23). It also tells us that this church is the new man created in Christ on the cross (2:15-16). Furthermore, this church is the kingdom of God, the household of the very God (v. 19), and the wife of Christ, His counterpart (5:24-25). Paul eventually tells us in Ephesians that the church, the Body of Christ, with such a tremendous status, is a warrior to fight against God's enemy. Whatever Christ is and whatever Christ has done should be used and applied as aspects of the armor of God. We have to wear Christ as our breastplate (6:14) and as our shield (v. 16). We have to have our loins girded with Christ (v. 14), and we have to wear Christ as a pair of shoes for our standing to fight the battle (v. 15). The church is not a mere group of people collected together. The church is a universal and divine army fighting for God in the universe against His enemy. (CWWL, 1986, vol. 1, "Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move," pp. 130-131)

As Nazarites we must abstain from earthly pleasure, remain under the headship of the Lord, and learn to fight against death. Death is everywhere. Society is filled with the germs of death. Because these germs are even in the church life, we need to pray daily, hourly, fighting against death, the last enemy of God (1 Cor. 15:26). We should not think that the Nazarites are not for fighting. The Nazarites are numbered for the formation of God's army. They are very vigilant, full of feeling for the war against death. In every church there is the need of the sense, the consciousness, of death so that we may fight against it. (Life-study of Numbers, pp. 64-65)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1986, vol.1, "Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move," ch. 6; Life-study of Numbers, msgs. 9-10

# **WEEK 3 — DAY 4**

## **Morning Nourishment**

2 Tim. 2:5 And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.

1 Cor. 9:25-26 And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible. I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim...

In 2 Timothy 2:5 Paul likens Timothy to an athlete contending in the games...At the same time that Timothy was to be a teacher and a soldier, he was also to be an athlete. It is important for a runner in a race to run fast. That is not the time for him to exercise patience. In a foregoing message I encouraged you to wait and pray. But when it comes to running the race to win the crown, we should not wait. On the contrary, we should run to reach the goal. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., p. 24)

Christ as the Chief Shepherd is taking care of the shepherding of His churches [1 Pet. 5:4]. When He comes back, He will reward the faithful ones who cooperated with Him. (CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 5, "The Vital Groups," p. 118)

## **Today's Reading**

To gain the experience of reigning, we must first solve the problem of position. We must know and keep the position of ascension, and we must also know and keep the position of order. Knowing the position of ascension is the experience of knowing the ascension...Knowing the position of order is the experience of knowing the Body...We must know the position of ascension, which He has caused us to obtain in His salvation, and the position of order, which He has arranged for us in His Body, before we can exercise His authority and reign for God.

Second, we must have the desire to reign. This means that we must positively and actively reign for God, ruling over all things...Some brothers and sisters, however, have neither the thought nor the desire to reign. Their spirits are loose and lazy. They neither care for the difficulties arising in the church nor inquire about the problems springing up in the Lord's work. They simply allow Satan to work and destroy at will. Hence, according to their growth of life, they are able to reign, yet in reality, due to their laxity and unwillingness to reign, they still cannot obtain the experience of reigning. Therefore, if one desires to reign, his spirit must not be lax or timid but willing to exercise God's authority and positively and actively deal with all the works of the enemy. Thus, God's authority will immediately be manifested in the church, and many rebellious and unlawful matters in the church will be subdued.

In the church today we lack the kind of people who desire to reign. Therefore, many situations that should not exist often arise. For example, some of the fellowship and breaking of bread meetings are weak and confused. Some of the brothers and sisters should have prayed, but they did not; some should have spoken, but they withheld from speaking. On the contrary, many unnecessary prayers and meaningless testimonies were released. The meetings thus are disturbed, and the brothers and sisters are not edified and lose heart toward the meetings. This condition is mainly caused by those who should have reigned but did not reign. They have just behaved like bystanders, allowing others to act in the meetings in whatever manner they chose. They even regard such a way as being very spiritual, not by man's doing but by the Spirit's move. As a result, they cause the church to suffer great loss.

We often say that certain meetings are very dead and depressed...Whenever a meeting is dead and depressed, it means that Satan is reigning there as king. At that time, someone should rise up to reign for God, either by a word, a hymn, or a prayer to control the meeting, change the atmosphere, and release the life of God, thereby swallowing up Satan's death. (CWWL, 1953, vol. 3, "The Experience of Life," pp. 510-512)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1972, vol. 1, "Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs," ch. 6; CWWL, 1969, vol. 2, "The Recovery of God's House and God's City," chs. 6, 8

# WEEK 3 — DAY 5

## Morning Nourishment

2 Tim. 2:6-7 The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

1 Cor. 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.

[In 2 Timothy 2:6] Paul likens Timothy to a farmer. Just as a soldier must win the victory and an athlete must receive the crown, so a farmer must partake of the fruit, the food. This requires patience. As athletes, we should be quick, but as farmers, we need to be patient. If out of impatience a farmer would pluck up the tiny sprouts, his crop would be ruined. Likewise, if he drives his cattle too much, he may hurt them. With both crops and livestock, farmers must learn to have patience. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., p. 24)

## Today's Reading

When we go to the front to fight the battle, we have to be bold. Then we can win the war. But when we come to build, we have to be wise. We have to realize that the building which we are building is altogether a matter in life...The wise master builder and the building of God are both matters of life and in life. First, Paul's ministry was a matter of planting. Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth" (1 Cor. 3:6). This is not a matter of fighting, but a matter of the growth in life. Then Paul goes on to say that we are God's cultivated land, or God's farm (v. 9). This farm is not wild or uncultivated, but it is a farm cultivated by God to grow Christ. A farm is also a matter of life. Then Paul says that we are not only God's farm but also God's building (v. 9). This building is surely a building in life. (CWWL, 1986, vol. 1, "Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move," p. 143)

In 1 Peter 2:2 the word is referred to as milk: “As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.” The portions of the Bible that are easy for us to take in are milk. They are also called “the good word” (Heb. 6:5) and the word of grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32). When we read some parts of the Word, we feel like a child enjoying a refreshing glass of milk. Other portions of the Word, though, have more weight to them; taking them in is like eating a steak. These weightier portions are referred to in Hebrews as solid food (5:12) and as the word of righteousness (v. 13). When we can receive them, they give us the weight of maturity. These, then, are the life ways to take the word: taste it, breathe it, eat it, drink it as milk, and take it in as solid food.

Notice how the word is described in Isaiah 55:10-11: “Just as the rain comes down / And the snow from heaven, / And does not return there, / Until it waters the earth / And makes it bear and sprout forth, / That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; / So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; / It will not return to Me vainly, / But it will accomplish what I delight in, / And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it.” The word is likened to rain in summer and snow in winter, watering us to produce the seed for fruit-bearing and the bread for our satisfaction. This is a marvelous picture of our experience in taking the word.

The word of God even brings health to our body. Proverbs 4:20-22 says, “My son, be attentive to my words; / Incline your ear to my sayings. / Do not let them depart from your sight; / Keep them in the midst of your heart. / For they are life to those who find them, / And healing to all their flesh.” How can God’s word make us physically healthy? Illness is often caused by anxiety or anger. If people are made happy, their sickness often disappears. When we get into the Word, joy comes in to heal. The word kills the bothering things and brings in resurrection. Then we can eat and digest our food well, and our body becomes healthy. (CWWL, 1978, vol. 2, “Life Messages, Volume 1,” pp. 242-244)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Timothy, msg. 9; CWWL, 1963, vol. 1, “Experiencing the Mingling of God with Man for the Oneness of the Body of Christ,” ch. 5



# WEEK 3 — DAY 6

## Morning Nourishment

2 Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

Psa. 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, imparting understanding to the simple.

[In 2 Timothy 2:15] Paul indicates that the inoculator is to be a workman. As a carpenter, this workman must cut straight the word of the truth. This means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion. Just as a carpenter has the skill to cut wood in a straight way, so the Lord's workman needs the skill to cut straight the word of the truth. This is necessary because in the decline of the church so many truths are twisted and presented in a warped, biased form. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., p. 26)

## Today's Reading

“Contentions of words” (2 Tim. 2:14), “profane, vain babblings” (v. 16), the word that eats away like gangrene (v. 17), and “foolish questionings and those arising from an untrained mind” (v. 23) are often used by the devil (v. 26) in the downward current among the churches to beget contentions (v. 23), to ruin the hearers (v. 14), to promote ungodliness (v. 16), and to overthrow people's faith (v. 18). Hence, there is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track.

Among Christians today, only the superficial aspects of the truth are not twisted. Virtually all the deeper things of the truth have been distorted... Therefore, we should be not only teachers, soldiers, contenders, and farmers but also workmen, carpenters, cutting straight the word of the truth. The truth here does not merely denote biblical doctrine; it refers to the contents and the

reality of God's New Testament economy. The main elements of this truth are Christ as the mystery of God and the embodiment of God and the church as the mystery of Christ and the Body of Christ. We all need to learn to cut straight the word of the truth with respect to Christ and the church.

Certain Brethren teachers interpret Paul's word about cutting straight the word of the truth to mean dividing the Bible into various dispensations: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom. The Bible can be understood according to these dispensations. However, arranging the Word into dispensations is not what Paul means in 2:15 about cutting straight the word of the truth. As used in the three books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the word truth has a specific significance: it denotes the contents of God's New Testament economy. Not realizing this, many readers of the Bible think that in 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul is speaking of truth in a general way. But we need to understand the word truth in this verse according to its usage in the three books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is "the pillar and base of the truth." This truth is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. The church should bear, uphold, this truth, this reality. Numerous times in these three Epistles Paul speaks of the truth. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:4 he says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth." The word of the truth in 2 Timothy 2:15 refers to the healthy words of God's New Testament economy. As workmen, we should learn not merely to divide the Bible into dispensations. This is too superficial. We must learn to unfold the word of the truth concerning God's economy. If we would do this, we need to consider carefully Paul's use of the word truth in these three Epistles. If we consider these books carefully, we will see that truth here denotes the reality of the contents of the New Testament economy of God. Therefore, to cut straight the word of the truth is to unfold without bias or distortion the reality of God's economy revealed in the New Testament. (Life-study of 2 Timothy, 2nd ed., pp. 26-28)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1978, vol. 2, "Life Messages, Volume 1," ch. 10

# WEEK 3 — HYMN

## He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater

Comfort in Trials — By Grace for Suffering

723

1. He giv - eth more grace when the bur - dens grow  
great - er, He send - eth more strength when the la - bors in -  
crease, To add - ed af - flic - tion He add - eth His  
mer - cy, To mul - ti - plied tri - als, His mul - ti - plied peace.

Chords: F, B♭, C<sup>7</sup>, F, C, F, G<sup>7</sup>, C, F, B♭, F/A, F, B♭, G<sup>7</sup>, C, F/A, B♭, F/A, Gm, Gm/B♭, F/C, C<sup>7</sup>, F.

2. When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half-done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
3. His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men,  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

