

## LESSON NINE

### **The Secrets of the Gospel— Being “Thick-Skinned”, Opening the Mouth, and Releasing the Spirit**

#### **I. When we preach the gospel, we must have the spirit of the gospel:**

- A. The spirit of gospel is a spirit full of burden that becomes a power within us and causes us to be so driven that we cannot help but preach the gospel; this spirit causes us to be eager to preach the gospel, to be consumed with preaching the gospel to the point that we care for nothing else and fear nothing else, and that our only care is for preaching the gospel, and our only fear is that people would perish—John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9.
- B. Everyone who loves the Lord can and should have the spirit of preaching the gospel.
- C. In order to recover the gospel, we have to recover consecration. Both things have to be absolute in us. Our foolishness lies in the misconception that we are behind the early church only in the power of the gospel; actually, our consecration comes far behind the early disciples as well.

#### **II. The secrets of preaching the gospel:**

- A. A fervent spirit: “...being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus”—Acts 18:25.
- B. A spirit of being beside oneself: “For whether we were beside ourselves, it was to God”—2 Cor. 5:13; cf. Mark 3:21.
- C. Being “thick-skinned”: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes”—Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12; Mark 8:38
- D. Speaking with a wide-open mouth: “...he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus”—Acts 9:27, 29; 4:31; 19:8; Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:14.
- E. Releasing the spirit: “And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”—1 Cor. 2:4-5; cf. Rom. 1:9; Eph. 6:12.
- F. Coming down from the throne of human dignity: “For though I am free from all, I have enslaved myself to all that I might gain the more”—1 Cor. 9:19-23.

#### **III. Not all young brothers have the gift of preaching the gospel, but we must not lack the spirit of preaching the gospel. May this fire burn in us until we can no longer control ourselves. May this fire, because it consumes us, also consume sinners until they have no ground to refuse the Lord. May the fire of the gospel be ignited in China, first burning God's children and then sinners. Sinners will be saved in great numbers. If this fire does not burn us, it will not burn those in**

**the world. The church can become the hindrance to man's salvation. O Lord, have mercy on the church! May the Lord have a way in the church so that He can gain access to the world. Fire! Fire! Let the fire of the gospel glow—first kindling us, and then setting the church ablaze —Luke 12:49**

### **Ministry Excerpts:**

The author of the book *Seen and Heard*, Mr. M'Kendrick, was a miner. He did not even attend an elementary school, but he was a totally consecrated person. Within him was the gospel fire. His heart was filled with a burning zeal for saving souls. Once, while he was on the platform, he could not utter a word. As he looked around at the unsaved people sitting before him, he began to cry, and tears rolled down his cheeks like torrents. In the end he only shouted a word or two. God's Spirit filled the entire congregation. All were convicted of their sin and waywardness. We should not be afraid of shouting. John the Baptist shouted in the Gospels. The Lord Jesus also shouted. The apostles shouted many times in Acts. Although Brother M'Kendrick did not have much education or gift, he had the gospel spirit, and countless numbers of people were saved through him. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee (Set 3), Vol. 61: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (1)*, ch. 2)

### **Consecration and Dealing**

In order to have the gospel spirit, not only must we offer up ourselves, but we need to accept the Lord's dealing. I can never forget what happened at 2:30 p.m. on February 13, 1922. Prior to that time I was seeking for the filling of the Holy Spirit. For a period of time I fasted and prayed in the park every Saturday in order that I would be equipped with the power of the gospel for preaching on Sunday morning. But the Lord was dealing with my entanglements. One day I yielded to the Lord's dealing. Brother Weigh knows that I cared very much for good clothing. I had a special fondness for silk gowns with red dots. But that day I took off my nice clothes, put on some old and simple clothes, went to the kitchen to prepare some paste, took a stack of gospel pamphlets, and pasted them on the walls of the streets. I also went around the city passing out gospel tracts. This was an unprecedented move in Foochow at that time. Because of this, many people were saved. In 1923, eleven of us young people organized ourselves into gospel teams. We put on gospel T-shirts with gospel slogans in front and behind and paraded through the city for the gospel. This became quite a sensation, and there was a revival in the city of Foochow. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee (Set 3), Vol. 61: Matured Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (2)*, ch. 37)

### **Loving Man's Soul**

If our preaching merely stirs up men's emotions or turns men to outward activities, this gospel will never be powerful. In order to preach the gospel we must have the spirit of the gospel. This is the only thing that will bring in the genuine power of the gospel. About three years ago I spoke on this subject at a university in Shanghai. I said that if a young person would open his spirit to the Lord, he would surely receive the spirit of the gospel from God. Today the church must preach the gospel. The church must love sinners' souls. This is especially true of the young students. If the Lord gives you a burden in your spirit, when you see your classmates playing in the field, you should kneel down and pray for them. If you do not preach the gospel, you will not feel happy. Individually or as the church of God, we must be filled with the spirit of the gospel. If both the individuals and the church are filled with this gospel spirit, sinners will be saved continually. (Ibid.)

### **A Spirit of Being beside Oneself**

By the Lord's mercy, I am a person who is often beside me, a person who is often "crazy." Sometimes after praying only three or five sentences, I became crazy, overflowing with joy. I felt that God's grace is so great and His mercy so abundant that I could not help being crazy. If no one is with me, it does not matter if I do such things as rolling, jumping, prostrating, and turning somersaults. But once I come into your presence, I become sober-minded. I am bound by your eyes and restricted by human regulations. It is right to take care of others' feelings, but as Christians we should daily pray and be beside ourselves before God. (*Rising Up to Preach the Gospel*, ch. 1)

### **Being "Thick-skinned"**

In order to be gospel preachers, we have to learn a few points. First, we must be "thick-skinned." If we seriously look into this, we will see that those who have been able to bear fruit for the gospel have all been thick-skinned. People who are thin-skinned cannot preach the gospel, much less be fruitful. To have the impact of the gospel, we must have a "skin that is thicker than our soles." Not only so, while preaching the gospel, we must have a face like brass. If we do not have a face like brass, we cannot preach the gospel. I was not a gospel preacher by nature, but due to the Lord's mercy, I was forced out of my old nature to become a "crazy" preacher of the gospel for the Lord. (Ibid.)

When D. L. Moody stood up for the first time to testify for the Lord, his feet trembled and his teeth chattered so much that he could hardly finish one sentence nor remember anything from his prepared sermon. As an idiot, he stood speechless in front of all. After this incident, Satan tempted him saying, "Why do you make yourself a fool? You should never do this again!" But he was not disappointed, and he continued to confess Christ before people. Eventually, he even became a world-renowned evangelist, leading over a million people to Christ and testifying that

“For the sake of Christ, I have considered myself a fool for twenty years!” (Translated from *Edifying Stories* published by TWGBR, unavailable in English)

### **Speaking with a Wide-open Mouth**

The second point we have to learn for preaching the gospel is to open our mouth widely to speak everywhere. It does not matter even if you speak wildly; as long as it is the gospel, there will still be the effect. If you intend to convince people by reasoning and therefore speak properly with eloquence and persuasion, you will tend to kill them with your speaking. In the past fifty years in China, the most effective gospel preacher was Dr. John Sung. I heard his preaching. While preaching the gospel, sometimes he jumped from the platform to the ground and then used someone as a steppingstone to jump back to the platform. His messages did not follow any logical order. Sometimes he screamed at people and scolded them, and occasionally he even made strange noises in his speaking. Nevertheless, his gospel preaching was very effective. (*Rising Up to Preach the Gospel*, ch. 1)

### **Releasing the Spirit**

The third point that we have to learn in the preaching of the gospel is the release of the spirit. To preach the gospel, you must have a spirit that is so released and strong that if you faced the devil, you would convince even him to receive the gospel. This is the spirit of the gospel.

These are the three points related to the gospel—to be thick-skinned, to have an open mouth, and to have a released spirit. You should not be bashful. Some brothers are so “unmanly” in their preaching of the gospel that they appear to be more female than the females. They are timid and apprehensive of everything. In particular, they are afraid of offending others. Their preaching of the gospel is doomed to failure. (Ibid.)

### **Coming down from the Throne of Human Dignity**

All people sit on the throne of their human dignity. Both rich and poor people have a throne because both have a sense of dignity. Married women and unmarried women have a throne because both have a sense of dignity. College professors have such a throne, but elementary school teachers also have a throne. Regardless of whether a person is a manager, doctor, nurse, college student, or just a common person, everyone has a throne of human dignity. This throne of human dignity in a believer can be a great barrier to the release of the gospel. Often a brother who is a manager is unwilling to preach the gospel to a clerk, or a sister in college is unwilling to speak about the Lord Jesus to a person who has little education. Thus, in order for the gospel to

come forth from them, they must be willing to come down from their throne. This is a matter of the spirit of the gospel; it cannot be done without the spirit of the gospel. (*Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 3, ch. 28)

## **Examples**

A man was preaching the gospel to a prisoner on death roll. He spoke with many words but just couldn't cause the prisoner to repent and believe. On his way back, he met a Christian brother who has learned many lessons before the Lord. So after conversing for a while, he besought him to go and speak to that prisoner. When that Christian arrived at the prison, he first sat down quietly beside that prisoner. Then, holding his hands, he simply and earnestly said, "God sent His only begotten Son to save great sinners like you and me. This love is too great, isn't it?" As he said this, the hardened heart of the prisoner was opened, and his tears just welled up like a spring. Later, that prisoner testified, "When the first man preached the gospel to me, he seemed to be so far away and high above me. But when this brother came, he sat down right beside me and acted as if he and I were the same. Then as he started to speak about the great redeeming love of the Son of God, I just couldn't resist anymore." Brothers and sisters, when you lead or exhort a sinner to believe into the Lord, is your attitude like that of the first man, or the second one?

In a Methodist church in Boston, U.S., there was a deacon, who was also a businessman. He had no eloquence and did not know how to preach, but he had a fervent heart and wanted to serve the Lord. He thought to himself: "Though I can't preach nor testify for the Lord, I can still do my best to bring man to Him. Therefore, he decided to prepare two more seats at his dining table, and on every Lord's Day he would invite two young people for meals. He did this continually for over thirty years and got to know many young people, many of whom also believed into the Lord because of him. When he passed away, many came to his funeral. Among them there were over a hundred and fifty young people, who came to his home for meals on Lord's days and were touched by him to believe into the Lord.

There was a poor and old lady, who, after believing into the Lord, wanted to testify for the Lord Jesus. However, she couldn't go out because her job was to wash people's clothes every day and her leg problems also made walking difficult. Therefore, she told the person who helped bringing her water, "I am so happy now because I have believed into the Lord Jesus. Can I invite you to go and listen to the gospel?" To the steamed bun seller and many others, she would also testify for the Lord with this word. After a few months, three persons went to listen to the gospel and got saved because of her.

The famous preacher Robert Chapman traveled around the world and led tens of thousands of people to the Lord. He told the story of how he received his calling: one day he was standing on top of a mountain which is by the seashore. As he looked down on the ocean, he saw a ship in the

far distance tilted and sinking with all passengers doomed to drown in the ocean. Amidst the winds and waves, he saw a man holding on to the mast of the ship with one hand and crying out for help. All of a sudden, one big wave came and swept him into the ocean, while he cried out three more times: Help! Help! Help! The winds brought his cry clearly into Chapman's ears. Standing on the mountaintop and witnessing this tragedy, he felt utterly helpless. Filled with a thousand regrets, he knelt down in prayer to God to consecrate his life: "O Lord, I would offer myself to travel to all the corners of the world to save those sinking, lost souls for You." Ever since then, every time when he preached, he could still hear the cry of the one who was swept away into the ocean. Brothers and sisters! Don't forget: thousands upon thousands of souls are sinking every day. Do not stifle the compassion in your heart. Rise up to preach the gospel! (Translated from *Edifying Stories* published by TWGBR, unavailable in English)