

Lesson 3

The Purpose of Migration

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:1, 4; Rom. 12:4-5; Rev. 1:11-12

I. In Acts 8 we see the migration of the saints for the spreading of the gospel—vv. 1, 4:

- A. Acts 8:4 says, “Those therefore who were scattered went about the land bringing the good news of the word”:
 - 1. It was sovereign of God that the scattering of the believers from Jerusalem to other localities through the persecution should carry out the spreading of the gospel for the fulfillment of the Lord’s word in 1:8 (see 11:19).
 - 2. In Acts 8 we have a pattern for today’s gospel preaching through the scattered saints:
 - a. In Jerusalem, the gospel preaching was carried out mainly by the apostles; although this is a pattern, it is not the unique pattern for our gospel preaching.
 - b. Therefore, in 8:4 we have another pattern of the preaching of the gospel—the preaching of the gospel through the scattering, the migrating, of the saints.
 - c. In Acts 8 we do not have the words “migrate” or “migration”; nevertheless, migration is implied by the word “scattered”; the scattering of the saints was actually a migration.
 - d. Before the scattering of the saints in 8:4, there were many thousands of believers in Jerusalem; like most people, they probably did not desire to move; instead, they may have wanted to settle there.
 - e. Although Satan instigated the persecution against the church, the Lord is over Satan, and whatever Satan does is under the Lord’s sovereignty; therefore, the persecution in chapter eight actually worked out for the spreading of the gospel, because thousands of believers were scattered throughout the lands of Judea and Samaria.
 - f. When the saints migrate, the gospel goes out with them; the migrating saints bring the gospel wherever they go.
 - g. All the churches should follow the pattern in 8:4 concerning migration; the saints should not stay in a certain place for too long; we all should learn to migrate.
- B. In a locality there should be both outflow and inflow:
 - 1. The saints in all the churches should be encouraged to migrate.
 - 2. If the saints in a certain locality do not migrate, eventually that locality will become a “Dead Sea”; if the church in a particular locality is to avoid becoming such a Dead Sea, a “canal” must be dug to allow the “water” to flow out.
 - 3. Perhaps ten percent of the saints in a locality may migrate each year; this will allow for the necessary outflow without devastating the church; furthermore, if water is allowed to flow out, more water will flow in.
 - 4. How much water flows in depends on how much flows out; if we want the church to increase, there must be the outflow; only when there is an outflow can the church in a certain locality be preserved from becoming a Dead Sea.
 - 5. However, the migration of the saints is not a legality; the point we are making is that the churches need to follow the pattern in Acts 8:4; this means that, in principle, we should be willing to migrate.
- C. We should migrate not for the sake of our living but for the sake of the gospel; as we migrate for the gospel’s sake the Lord will meet our needs—v. 4; cf. Matt. 6:32-33.

II. The purpose of our migrations is to spread the Lord’s full recovery of the church life with all the items and all the aspects of what Christ is to His Body—Rom. 12:4-5; Rev. 1:11-12; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21a; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7, 16-17, 19:

- A. The purpose of some groups is to go to a mission field to bring the gospel to the four corners of the earth, while the purpose of others is to teach the Bible; the purpose of our migrations, however, is to spread the Lord's recovery in a full way.
- B. Up to the present time, the Lord has recovered many items; the church life is the completion of God's recovery, comprising all the previously recovered items; therefore, the church life attains to God's standard—Rev. 1:11-12:
 - 1. God's standard is that Christ must be received by us, the sinners, first as our Savior and Redeemer and then as our life, our Lord, and our all in all; then we must come together to build up the church as the Body of Christ to express Christ—Acts 5:30-32; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 3:4; 2:6, 16-17.
 - 2. The church is the Body of Christ, and this Body has many local expressions in many places; God's intention is to have a local expression of the Body of Christ in every city—Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 1:11.
- C. The purpose of migration is to represent the church life:
 - 1. The reason we practice the church life in each place is because among all the Christian groups—the denominations, the free groups, and even the free individuals—we cannot find one that is adequately qualified to represent the church life.
 - 2. When we migrate out, we are going to represent the church life:
 - a. The church life is all-inclusive; it includes all the real Christians of all kinds—Rom. 14:1-3.
 - b. When we migrate, we must receive all kinds of Christians; if we do not, we will immediately lose the church ground; we will not be a meeting representing the church life; instead, we will be sectarian—v. 1; 15:7.
 - c. When we have the migrations, wherever we go, we must take the proper ground, the proper standing; we must be able to declare to the whole universe that we are the ones who take the proper ground, representing the church life and not being sectarian; we are so open, so all-inclusive—12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4a; *Hymns*, #1107.
- D. We need to care most for the experience of Christ—Phil. 3:12-15, and note 15²; cf. 2:2; 4:2, and note 1:
 - 1. The Lord's intention from eternity past has been to build up His children in this age in all the localities where they are the local expressions of His Body.
 - 2. However, this is only our standing, our ground; this is not everything to us; the most important thing is to experience Christ in a full way—Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17; *Hymns*, #499.
 - 3. We need to experience Christ in a very subjective way, and we need to know how to take Him as our life and walk by Him, in Him, and with Him—Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:19-21a; Gal. 5:16, 25; John 15:4-5.
 - 4. A local church must be one that is absolutely full of Christ; the testimony of the local church is just Christ, not Christ in doctrine, not Christ in theology, but Christ in life, Christ in experience, and Christ in our daily walk—Rev. 1:2, 11-12; *Hymns*, #863.
 - 5. We have to experience Christ in such a full way so that we may be able to help people to know how to enjoy Christ, experience Christ, and partake of Christ in a full way throughout the day—Phil. 1:19-26, and note 25¹; 2 Cor. 1:24.
- E. May we be clear about our purpose for the migrations; if we are clear, when we go out, we will know where to go, where to stand, and what we must do; we will know how to face all the situations, and we will not be misled by anything.

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-Study of Acts*, msg. 22.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949*, vol. 2, "Speakings Given During the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry," ch. 37.
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1985*, vol. 1, "Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 4," ch. 1.
4. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1969*, vol. 3, "Migration in God's Move," chs. 3-4.