

WCCC 2016

A Cloud of Witnesses Surrounding Us (2)

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Hebrews 12:1 – 2 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

At the beginning, it said since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. ‘So great a cloud of witnesses’ is what assigned to us. Yesterday at the end we were sharing about Abraham. Abraham was waiting for a city with a foundation. This city shows up in Hebrews 12:22 – 24 *‘But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel’*. When these witnesses finally came to this city, they found there are five parties. The first party is the Judge of all; the second party is Jesus the mediator; the third party are the innumerable company of angels; the fourth party are the just men made perfect, and then the fifth party is the assembly of the first born. I will like to call attention to this many first born.

That is the first thing I want to share and then I would like to share about David. How come David in particular could receive so much revelations; especially the revelation of Jesus Christ? I would just read one or two verses from Psalms 139: 23 - 24 *‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting’*. Pay attention to this man David. He did not want any shadow in between God and himself. And then we will spend a little time on Apostle Paul. I thank the Lord that many of us who are speaking this time are drawn to this brother Paul. And Brother Dana already shared that he was drawn to Paul by his desire to seek the knowledge of the excellency of Christ. Brother Godwin yesterday also shared on Philippians 3 about Paul wanted to have fellowship in the death of Christ. Today I just want to share why this brother Paul in his whole life was able to continuously receive revelations from Christ. Perhaps that can help us to seek the Lord’s revelations and also to obey and to live in it. I would like to read Acts 26 for this matter. Acts 26: 14 *‘And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in*

the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' I would like to underline this part 'to kick against the goads'. Then we come to Verses 16 and 18, *'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me'.*

Lord, we come to You this afternoon to seek Your grace. We pray that You will show us Your own face. Lord, we really need You. We know in Your heart, You have something to tell us. We pray the Holy Spirit will communicate and help us to hear so that we really can get what You are speaking to us. Thank you, Lord. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Yesterday at the end we talked about Abraham. And when we reviewed those witnesses of old, their stories really inspired us: Abel's worship, his lamb; Enoch, his walk with the Lord and Noah, his work with the Lord. And when we come to the story of Abraham, we saw how the Lord led him to walk in the heavenly way. This heavenly way he had to walk on earth. It was very difficult. For forty to sixty years he did not know exactly where the Lord was leading him. The Lord corrected him on the way. And the Lord led him to experience one thing after another. Finally, he was totally with the Lord. And the whole story was bundled up in his son, Isaac. So we thank the Lord for that. His whole family – Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob and even Joseph had their old country to go back to. But they chose not to go back. They desired a better one; a better country which is in heaven. So, what was the difference between this better country in heaven and their homeland on earth? There is only one difference and it is the Lord of glory. In heaven, there is the God of glory. The heavenly country to them was a very personal relationship. In the meantime, the bible said Abraham also waited for a city with foundation. When Abraham was waiting, he and his family were walking with the Lord – the heavenly way. And the bible said that the Lord was actually very pleased with them. He was not ashamed to be called their God. Brothers and sisters, when we want to be a witness, there is no better place in the Lord than when the Lord said I am not ashamed to be called their God. And the Lord continued to say He had prepared for them a city. So, we see Abraham was waiting for that city. He did not know what the Lord was doing. But the Lord had prepared for them a city. Brothers and sisters what is the difference between a country and a city? A country is more of a personal relationship. We can say it is a family relationship. But a city is different. A city has lots of people. Not only Abraham and his family were there. Other people came too. The bible tells us that city which Abraham was waiting for was a city with foundation. That means it will not go away but that it will last forever. But more importantly this city is built and made by God himself. What does that mean? It means that this city is representative of the character of God because He built it and He made it. And because it has the character of God, it is a matter of testimony. When people see that city, they think of the builder, they think of God. That is the

difference between a country and a city. Somehow in Abraham's heart, he was waiting for that city. And both Abraham and his family so pleased the heart of God that God actually prepared a city for them.

In chapter 12 this city was described to us in a vivid way. These witnesses were coming to this city and they entered the city and found there are five parties in there. God is there. Christ Jesus is there. Many angels are there and then there are many spirits of righteous men made perfect in there. Brothers and sisters, what does that mean? We know that many men came to this city and the righteousness was not their own. Their righteousness is the righteousness of God and by faith they had adopted that. And God was so pleased with them and God counted them as righteous. And what does this 'perfect' means? Perfect means brought to the very end. If we stop at halfway, then we are not brought to the very end. But these righteous men were brought to the very end and their spirits are in this city.

Then there is the fifth party and they are the firstborn. Who are these firstborn? I think we have to get the answer from Jacob. Remember when Jacob was at home, he actually longed for this relationship with God. He actually cheated to get the birthright of the firstborn. And also he cheated to get the blessings of the firstborn. Those were really bad things that he did. Yet he did this for a reason. He longed for a relationship with God. So, after he did all these, he got chased out of his family for twenty years. And he suffered in these twenty years. He learned many lessons. And he also became prosperous. At the end of twenty years, he ran away from his uncle. At this place called the Ford of Jabbok he sent his wife, children and properties across the river. Then an angel came to wrestle with him. That was during the night. The angel could not dominate him. When it was almost daybreak, the angel said 'I have to go'. Jacob said 'no, you have to bless me'. Now brothers and sisters, he was not asking for another wife, he was not asking for another child or cattle. He just wanted that relationship with the Lord. So the angel said 'what is your name'? 'My name is Jacob'. 'Your name will be called Israel which means prince with God. Prince with God means in the future you are going to represent me. And all my inheritance you are going to manage for me'. He could never imagine this thing would come to him. But it did; prince with God. With that, there was the responsibility of the inheritance. And that was Israel. Four hundred years later, his descendants were suffering in Egypt. When God sent Moses to lead his descendants out of Egypt, God told Moses to tell pharaoh, 'let My people go so they can serve Me. Israel is My son, Israel is My firstborn'. So, brothers and sisters, the firstborn represents the inseparable relationship with God. The firstborn cannot allow that relationship to be broken. Firstborn also represents responsibility. He does not allow himself to separate from the purpose of God. So, he has to be with the purpose of God. That's the essence of firstborn.

So, the witnesses that we read in chapter 11 were all like that. When Abel thought about his relationship with God and the relationship that his parents had lost, he wanted to regain it. He

wanted to live with the Lord. So, the spirit of the firstborn was with him. With Abraham, when the God of glory appeared to him, he wanted to have that relationship with God. So from the time he went out from his own country, he wanted to be with God and he never went back. He walked with God. Wherever God led him, he walked with Him. So, the spirit of the firstborn was with Abraham. Chapter 11 talked about Samuel, about David and the many prophets. The prophet Isaiah's heart, for example was connected with God. He saw the condition of the people of Israel, and he foresaw one day they would be taken captives. And he called his son a name, and the meaning of the name was 'a remnant will return'. Thank the Lord that this spirit that grabbed the heart of Isaiah, also grabbed the heart of the remnant in the later times in the Old Testament. They did not want anything to separate them from God. And also they did not want to see anything that damaged the purpose of God. In the New Testament time, there were those overcomers. They did not want to have anything that could separate their relationship with God. They did not want anything to damage the purpose of God. When we come to Revelation, these people are called the first fruits. Wherever the Lamb goes, they go with the Lamb. And finally, we come to the city. You see the firstborn. Brothers and sisters, today we actually have a good chance. If we are willing, if we see the examples of these wonderful witnesses of the past and if we want to walk like that and if we want to follow God in the heavenly way, and if we want to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, we will end up in the city. This is the wonderful thing the spirit is telling us in chapter 12.

Let us look at David. All these things that we see in Abel, Enoch and Noah, we can find in David. Because our time is short, I just want to share one thing about David. It is amazing that how clearly and specifically that David saw Christ. Psalms 110: 1, *'the Lord said to my Lord, "sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'*. This is the psalm of David. He saw two Lords. One is Jehovah. The other is my Lord. Who was that 'my Lord'? 2 Samuel 23: 1- 4 *'Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse: Thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, but clear shining after rain'.* Here David referred to the ruler. First part of verse 5 said, 'although my house is not so with God'. So, at the end of David's life, he said there was a ruler of righteousness although my house was not like that. That ruler of righteousness actually made the grass grows like the sun coming in the morning. So, who was this righteous ruler? Throughout these years, David was the king. But he said my house was not like this. So, this Ruler was so great. This Ruler guided David's kingship all the way. David was such a king because this Ruler was always in David's eyes and he always led David on.

And the third place we can think of is Psalm 133, *'how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity'*. If you read through Psalm 133, David saw a beautiful picture. And that beautiful picture had the oil coming from the head of Aaron to the body. It was like the Hermon coming down to Zion. What did he really see? He saw the reality of the body of Christ. That picture you cannot find on earth. But he saw that and that is the reality of the body of Christ. How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity. Does it remind you of the Book of Philippians? So, brothers and sisters, this was what David saw. How come he could see so many things? He did not see very wide things. But he saw a picture with a focus and that focus was Christ Jesus. Just like Abraham's time, that focus was that seed. And that was what Paul had in his entire ministry. That focus was Christ Jesus.

How it was that David could see these things so clearly? When David was between twenty and thirty years old, he really suffered. God gave him tremendous hard time. But thank the Lord, David stayed before the Lord. Now the Lord could strike him in different ways. He finally had a chance to kill Saul. His followers said the Lord had already anointed you to be king. You did not need to do anything, let us kill him and your problems would be over. But David said you could not touch Saul. We could not touch the anointed one from God. He used the knife to cut the edge of Saul's clothes. But immediately after David did that, his heart struck him. Not only could the Lord discipline him anytime, the Lord could also have other people to correct him. Abigail could correct him. Joab could correct him. And the prophet Nathan could correct him. All these people could correct him. David became David for a reason. Why was he able to write so many Psalms that help us so much? And how could he write so many Psalms with such immense depth and width? His son's name was Solomon. Nobody was more gifted than Solomon. But David depended on grace. He allowed all these things to come to him. And he considered everything that came to him as from the Lord. And by the grace of the Lord, he took everything. And therefore, the Lord could do things in him, freely, richly.

Then we read his Psalm 139. He said, *'search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is anything wicked way in me and lead me the way of everlasting'*. So brothers and sisters, here was a brother who did not seek gifts. He sought grace and he depended on the grace of God. And God could do anything on him and God could ask others to do anything to him. So finally, in the New Testament time, the Lord said, *'I have found my servant David, he is after my heart. And he will do my will'*. This was David's story. I think it is a great lesson for us that we should seek God and His grace instead of seeking gifts. Gifts often times are the mercy of God. It is for a purpose – His purpose. Often times it is a tool. It allows us to serve the Lord more effectively. But the basis of that and the purpose of the gift is that the life of Christ can come out. That is the purpose of our service. How can we have the life of Christ grow in us? It is by grace. So that was David's story.

All these stories were in the Old Testament. When we come to the New Testament, there were also so many precious witnesses. But there was one Apostle Paul. The bible describes him in detail. It really helps us to see the various aspects of Paul. When we read these few verses in Acts, we found there were two things. Acts 26 recorded Paul's testimony almost at the end of his life. Paul probably died at the age of 68. And the Book of Acts 26 was the last time when he was in Jerusalem. At that time, he had to be sixty or over. That was the last time he was in Jerusalem. That was the time when he was forced to give testimony before these kings and rulers and those authorities of the Jewish religion. He was telling them the most important things in his own life. And Acts 26 is a good summary of what he said. There were two parts in his story. The first part was when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus. And the light came brightly from heaven and a voice came to him and said 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard to kick against the goad'. That part talked about the past. This was what the Lord told him in the last couple of years. And the next part talked about the future. I want to send you to do something. A part talked about the past and a part talked about the future. The past was what the Lord told him 'you cannot kick against the goad'. What were the goads?

When we look at history, we see that there were three things about the goads. The first problem was the name of the Jesus of Nazareth in the last couple of years while Saul was in Jerusalem. This man came and gave the poor, the sick, and the desperate hope and brought them to God all the way from Nazareth to Jerusalem. And then he healed the sick. He made the lame walk. And he raised the dead. He brought hope to the poor. And everyone went to Him. The problem was that He did not go through Judaism. Saul did not like that. And the bible said he made up his mind to wipe out and persecute the name of Jesus. The second goad was this man Stephen. And our brother already mentioned that Stephen said things that pierced the heart of Saul. And he could not stand that. Yet he remembered every single word Stephen said. Stephen was stoned to death and Saul was happy. But the last time that Paul was in Jerusalem, he talked about the witness Stephen. He could never forget Stephen. And then the third goad was these people of the way. These were very simple people. Their heart was full of Jesus Christ. And they lived a very simple life. And whenever they went, they emanated the life of Jesus. They did not go with the Jewish religion. However, they did follow Jesus of Nazareth. Whether Jesus was on earth or whether Jesus was raised into heaven, they just followed Jesus. And Saul did not like that. He set his mind to persecute them. And on the way to Damascus, he met the Lord. And the Lord said, 'go into the city and someone will tell you what to do'. That day, that person came. Saul was blind. That person told Saul, 'the one that appeared to you on the road to Damascus, He is the righteous one. He is Jesus. Now He wants to open your eyes. He wants to fill you with the Holy Spirit'. Those were the goads.

Brothers and sisters, these three things Saul used to hate. But then towards when he was about sixty years old, he could not forget. These were the things that actually helped him so much. The Lord gave him a charge. The charge was that 'I will appoint you to be a minister and a

witness. You shall tell people what you see'. What were the things he had seen? The things he saw in the past were the goads; and the Lord who appeared to him and this Lord talked to him and told him 'I am Jesus'. This was what he had seen. Brothers and sisters, consider this. In the past he hated the goads and he hated the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But now he remembered these people he used to call goads. And now Jesus was the one whom he served. So, what he had seen now was not just by the eyes, but it was revelation. Now when he saw Stephen, the way, and Jesus of Nazareth, it was in a totally different color. In the past, they were his enemies. Now they were his inheritance. This was about the past. And then the charge also said 'I will reveal to you'. Basically, the Lord was telling him that he had to bring the revelation in the past and the revelation in the future to people. The Lord would continue to reveal to him and he had to bring those to the people too. So, what was the purpose of bringing all those revelations to people? Now he said 'so that their eyes can be opened'. What the Lord charged to Paul was just to open eyes. 'Your own eyes had to be opened first. In the future, I will continue to reveal to you and you have to keep your eyes open. And when you bring these things to people, you have to open their eyes'. So, this eye opening was Paul's charge. It was his basis and his charge.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes we go over Acts 26 very quickly. This time when I read it again, it struck me that Paul's whole ministry was to open eyes. That was his ministry. How did he execute his ministry? His own eyes had to be opened. The basis was revelation. And the purpose of this revelation was to open eyes.

Why is the eye so important to us? Our brother mentioned in the first night, when we go out to witness, can we witness anything that we cannot see? We can witness only things we have seen. And then we know this is a spiritual thing now. So, the eye seeing is not a physical thing. It is a spiritual thing. It is revelation. We can only witness to other people what God has revealed to us. Strictly speaking, we cannot say I am telling you this because the bible said so. God must have said that to us personally. We are totally convinced that this is true. The Spirit has to prove that in us. Oftentimes, we read the bible, we go to bible study and we go to conferences to listen to messages. Brothers and sisters, we cannot say the bible talks to me or certain brother talks to me. We have to ask the Lord. Finally, it has to be the Lord who talks to me. The Holy Spirit has to say that to us. That requires us to be very humble. I am thinking about this because Paul's whole life was about this revelation ministry. And then the Lord told Paul there would be things that He was going to reveal to him. That was the basis of his ministry. So, when you look at the whole ministry of Paul, he paid extreme attention to revelation. Unless the Lord spoke again, unless the Lord spoke to him, he could not take it as something he could base on. So how did he go through his life? Remember the Lord said I am going to continue to reveal to you and that was at the time he was converted. In the next thirty years, Paul wrote thirteen letters. So, the content of what the Lord revealed to him was all in those thirteen letters. Thank the Lord, he was so faithful. Thank the Lord he continued to seek that revelation, waited for that revelation and also obeyed that revelation.

Brothers and sisters, think about Enoch. For three hundred years, he walked with the Lord. At the end the Lord was so pleased with him. The Lord continued to reveal to him, day after day, month after month, year after year for three hundred years. And then he was also not passive because the bible said Enoch diligently sought the Lord because God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Here was the example of Enoch. When we come back to see Paul, he was exactly like that. All through the thirty years, he diligently sought the Lord. He never stopped. Nothing could make him stop or doubt. He sought the Lord diligently and he never stopped. Thank the Lord. I think there were other things that Paul required of himself so that he actually became a vessel of depth. I am going to put it into three different aspects. The first aspect was how Paul looked at the Lord. The second was how Paul required of himself before the Lord. And the third thing was how Paul looked at his peers – other saints, other brothers and sisters, and other apostles and other sinners before the Lord. I think when you look at all these things in the letters you can understand why he could become a vessel that could receive revelations.

The first thing is how he looked at the Lord. I think there are two aspects. The first aspect is the love of Christ; the love of Christ that constrained him. The second thing is that he was pursuing the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I will not talk about the second thing because Brother Dana already talked about it. So we will look at the first thing, the love of Christ. Brothers and sisters, there are three places very unusual that talks about the love of Christ. The first is 1 Corinthians 13. I am always amazed when it said love bears all things, love believes all things and so on. I think those are actually his experience. Man's love can only endure what is enduring. And it can only have us believe what is believable. But this Jesus of Nazareth, these people of the way, they bore this person Saul. And Saul was the persecutor of them and he was a hard-hearted Pharisee. He was dead set to persecute them. But the Lord bore him. And these people of the way bore him. They came to him and called him Brother Saul even though he was such a man. This was overwhelming. But the Lord Jesus believes that one day he was going to change. And these people of the way, who were brothers and sisters and whom he called enemies, believed that one of these days, this man Saul was going to change. So, that was his personal experience. And the love of Christ is so different from all the other love in the world. Brothers and sisters, this love is really from revelation. It takes revelation to see this kind of love. Agape is God's love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, it can come to us. This was what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13. And in Galatians 2:20 towards the very end, Paul said '*He loves me and gave Himself for me*'. I think this was why Paul can say 'no longer I but Christ. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I but Christ'. Why could he say that? It was because 'He loves me and gave Himself for me'. The love of Christ completely changed Paul. And then in 2 Corinthians 5, it says 'the love of Christ constrains us. Consider one dies for all and all died. So today we live, we do not live for ourselves again but we live for the one who has died and lived again for us'. The love of Christ constrains us and because of the love of Christ, we have a new direction in life. No longer do we live for ourselves but we live for the one who died and

risen for us. And because of the love of Christ, Paul saw this power of death and resurrection – He who has died and risen for us. That is the power that propels us the rest of our lives. So, this is what Paul saw.

So, dear brothers and sisters, why the love of Christ is so important to us and for revelation? Romans 5:5 said ‘and hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us’. The Holy Spirit has a purpose. One of His purposes is to shed the love of God in our heart. The same Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation. So, His other purpose is to give us revelation; to open the eyes in our heart. That is the other purpose of the Holy Spirit. So, when the love of Christ comes to us and we do not resist it and is opened to it, then the Holy Spirit comes in free and in large measure. And when He comes in, He will reveal Christ to us. The love of Christ is so important.

Allow me to give you a little testimony. When I was young, I went to a Christian conference. And at that time, I did love the Lord. But many parts of the bible I did not understand. The book of Hebrew was one that was very hard for me to understand. One afternoon during the conference, a sister was leading the meeting. She talked about the cross. I used to know that the Lord Jesus died for everyone in the world and He is so great. But that day the Spirit showed me that He actually died on the cross for me. And it changed me and I thank the Lord for that. A little window opened in my heart. The Spirit came through it. I remembered after that conference I regularly went to bible study. And one afternoon I got there early. I sat on the grass and I opened the bible. And I just turned to Hebrews. It was amazing. Within ten minutes I was turning page after page. Every page I turned a couple of phrases came out to me. That was the beginning of the understanding of the Book of Hebrews. So, we got to humble ourselves before the Lord. The Holy Spirit is so eager to shed abroad Christ’s love in our heart. When we let that love of Christ comes in, the Holy Spirit comes in also. And when He comes in and He finds freedom in us, He starts to open up everything.

The second thing about how Paul saw the Lord Jesus was the excellence of Christ. He pursued no end to it. I just want to mention one thing. One thing struck me in the past. Five years before Paul wrote Philippians 3, he already wrote Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians. Years ago, he also wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians. And then just about the same time he wrote Philippians, he was ready to write or wrote Ephesians and Colossians. You would ask ‘Brother Paul is there anything about Jesus that you do not know?’ Here in Philippians 3, Paul said that I may know Him. To Paul Christ is so great, so big and so immense. It is not possible to fully know Him. This was Paul’s heart. And that was why the Lord could lead him forward. I was thinking that today if we are in the bible study with Paul, and five years later, we probably are still there, moving just a little bit. Paul would be way ahead of us in knowing Christ. Brothers and sisters, may the Lord have mercy on us so that we have that real ambition and also that capacity. Christ is unlimited and it pleases God to reveal Him to us.

How did Paul require of himself before God? There were three things. First, he asked himself to be absolutely honest before God. There were four times in the bible, in four different books that he said before the Lord I do not lie. 2 Corinthians 11, he said, 'before the Lord I do not lie'. And he said similar things in Galatians, in Romans, and 1 Timothy. Sometimes to us it sounds like trivial matter. But why this thing is so important to us? I think Paul did not want to have any shadows between him and the Lord. You know brothers and sisters, when Adam and Eve sinned, and then the Lord Jehovah came to the garden and asked 'Adam where are you'? The Lord knew exactly where they were. The Lord knew exactly what happened and He knew exactly what was in Adam's heart. Why did God ask Adam that question? The Lord gave him a chance to tell the truth. He gave him a chance to be sincere before the Lord. Unfortunately, Adam gave an excuse. This woman asked me to. Brothers and sisters, that had to have saddened the heart of God. We ought to be absolutely honest before God. Sometimes I feel so comforting because whether I lied to Him or whether I am honest with Him, He knows me through and through. He wants to give us a chance to be honest with Him so we can come back to Him. So at night, before you go to sleep, just tell the Lord what happened. Let there be no shadow between the Lord and you. Is there anything you do not want to tell the Lord? If there is, then the revelations will stop because we do not give Him the freedom to tell us about Himself.

The second thing that Paul required of himself was that he was a bondservant. He said it many times. The major thing about bondservant is that the master is always right. Even if I do not understand, he is always right. I cannot consider myself, I have to consider him. In my own little experience, I found that when I read 2 Timothy, unless I read it from the point of view of a bondservant, I cannot understand it. If I ask this question of the Lord, what is in the book for me, and I want to find blessings in this book for me, then I found that I cannot understand this book. The reason is that 2 Timothy is from a bondservant to another bondservant. It is about being a bondservant. And this is the same with the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is a book written by a bondservant John to many bondservants. Now if I do not look at it from the view of a bondservant, then I do not understand. If you said, what is in this book for me, and then you will not understand. I am not really important. I am only a bondservant. Only He is important. Only His mind is important.

The other point is Paul depended not only gifts but on grace. This was the same with David. We know that the verse, 'His grace is sufficient for me. His strength is perfected in our weaknesses'. We use this verse very broadly. In University of British Columbia, you have to walk a lot. And the grace of the Lord is sufficient for us. There is nothing wrong with using this verse like this. But Paul wrote this verse in the context of revelations. Thirteen years ago, the Lord brought me to the third heaven. And then because the Lord did not want me to be proud, the Lord put a thorn in my flesh. The grace of the Lord was sufficient. And that His strength was perfected in the weakness of man. The third heaven was thirteen to fourteen years ago. But after that, the Lord continued to give me revelations. Now I had to continue to be obedient to the revelations.

His grace was sufficient and He did not want me to be proud. Whenever I was weak I was strong. I still walked with the Lord. I could still lift my eyes to heaven. I could still receive revelations. I still could not complain. So thank the Lord that was what Paul said.

Lastly how did Paul look at his peers? First thing, Paul never thought of himself apart from the body of Christ. He never thought of himself being above the body of Christ. He was always one of the body of Christ. In Philippians 3 Paul talked about seeking the Lord and right after that he said 'those who are matured and have the same mind and seeking the Lord'. He did not think he was so good that only he could seek the Lord that way. He thought all of us can seek the Lord that way. In 2 Timothy towards the end, Paul said *'I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day'*. And he did not stop there. He continued on and said *'and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing'*. In Philippians 2 he said your faith was a sacrifice to God. And I Paul would be poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice. He did not think he was so great that he was another sacrifice. He wanted to pour out himself as a drink offering on the brothers' sacrifice. So, it was one love, one mind and one sacrifice. Why is it so important to have revelations? Oneness is God's heart and purpose. The father has this thought in Psalms 133. The Son prayed in John 17 'let them be one as we are one'. And oneness is the work of the Holy Spirit. So, brothers and sisters, here is a brother whose whole heart and mind was for the oneness of the body. And God found him; someone that God can pour out his heart on oneness.

And then finally Paul in different stages of his life said three times 'I am the least'. The first time is 1 Corinthians 15, he said 'of all the apostles I am the least'. It was not diplomatic. He really meant it. He had a reason. The reason was that all these apostles saw the Lord first. And the Lord sent them first. And he was the last. So, he really meant it. Five years later, in Ephesians he said 'I am less than the least of the saints'. The reason was the mystery of God has been revealed to the apostles and the prophets. These things, he implied, were accessible to all the saints and not only to the apostles and prophets. God has made it accessible to all the saints. 'I am the least because they are all ahead of me. God gives me the grace to bring this mystery to all the nations'. So he meant it. Two years later in 1 Timothy, he said 'I am the chief of sinners. I persecuted the church in my ignorance. No matter what, I have sinned against the Lord. So I am chief sinner. Now God wants to use me as an example to show His patience and His mercy. Although I am not good, but God is a God of mercy. God is a God of patience. I am that example'. Dear brothers and sisters, his spirit was so humble. Just like his master who emptied Himself. And Paul also emptied himself. As a result, he was an empty vessel before the Lord. The Holy Spirit could fill him. The love of Christ could flow through him to others. And the revelation of God could be deposited in him. And this wonderful gospel for the poor, the desolate and the hopeless could be entrusted to him. So, dear brothers and sisters, our brother Paul was such a humble vessel and such a diligent pursuer of the Lord and such a receiver of the

love of Christ. I just thought to myself that in his heart you can find Abel's lamb. Also in his pursuit, you can see the pursuit of Enoch. And in his whole life work, you can see the work of Noah. And in the whole purpose of this man, you can see that seed of Abraham's son. Praise God. He is all knowing. He is all patience. He knows exactly what He is doing in you. Over the generation there were so many witnesses and today I believe the Lord is seeking His witness in you and me – the kind of witness that He wants.

Lord, we thank You and we really praise You. Lord, we thank You because You have an expectation in us to be Your witnesses. And we praise You because Your way is so wonderful. Lord we pray that Your grace is with all the brothers and sisters here. By ourselves we will surely come short. But Lord we depend on Your word, Your purpose and Your grace. Thank you Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.