

WCCC 2024

Brother Ted Peng

Desiring a better country, a heavenly one (3)

Dear brothers and sisters, after we sing this song we have to praise the Lord. It is He who brought us here. And it is He who makes us overcomers. And it is He who will bring us to the very end. This evening, I would like to share on one subject.

Yesterday we shared on the matter of living stones and the spiritual house. This is from 1 Peter 2. Peter put all these discussions together. After he wrote about living stones and the spiritual house, he immediately brought us to a praise because we have gone through the living stones and the spiritual house, and there is something within us that wants to praise the Lord.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"
1 Peter 2:9 NKJV

Let us look at Hebrews 10, 11 and 12 that the other brothers have covered in this conference.

"For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
Now the just shall live by faith;"
Hebrews 10:37-38 NKJV

Here the author of the Hebrews speaks of a condition. The situation is that the Lord is coming and He will not delay. But He has opened up a way for us to move forward. This way is "my just one will live by faith."

"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."
Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV

Lord, we come together to You this afternoon. We pray that You set our spirits free. May Your Holy Spirit fill us, that we can really get very near to You. That is our desire. So Lord, be with all of us this afternoon. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen

This theme verse in Hebrews 12:1 speaks of running the race. We may wonder where this race we are running is. And also whether we have this experience for ourselves. I don't know of our own experience - I think we all have some. When I shared the story of Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob with brothers and sisters, running the race is an immediate one. You can do it immediately, with a sense of urgency. So where are we running to?

Verse 2 says "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." So the goal we are running is set by our Lord Jesus because He is the author. He tells us where to go. He is also the finisher. He tells us how we are going to run in order to be there. He Himself is our goal and our way.

There is an urgency in the race. In the story of Abraham, which is a long story, there are many things which are urgent. The moment Abraham knows God's will, he jumps on it immediately. He was in Egypt and did something very wrong. The Lord told Pharaoh that he had to let them go, and immediately the whole family of Abraham went back.

After 30 something years, after Isaac was born and probably at that time a teenager, that day God told Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering on the mountain unto Him. It is all very hard. He might not even have understood what that meant, but he immediately brought Isaac, a 3 day journey into the mountain. He did this immediately.

Another example is Joshua. In the first chapter of the book of Joshua, when Moses died, the Lord spoke to Joshua: "You have to bring my people across the river Jordan into Canaan." Joshua went through his camp and told everyone that they would have to cross the river in 3 days.

Brothers and sisters, if it were up to us it would probably have taken 2 months. We would have to discuss among ourselves and consider many things. But for Joshua it was 3 days.

These stories tell us to act immediately when God tells us something. Especially in Hebrews 12:1, we are told to lay aside every weight. Brothers and sisters, if the Lord tells us to put down the weight, to put down the sin in our daily lives, would we take more than 3 days to follow, or would we do it immediately?

Also in Chapter 12, when it speaks of running the race, it speaks of discipline as a father disciplines his child. To receive discipline has to do with the race. If the Lord disciplines me today, will I respond to Him immediately, or would I tell Him that I am very busy with this thing or that. There are so many examples here telling us that we have to run the race. We ought to follow our Lord Jesus. When He tells us something, we ought to put everything down and follow Him.

This is something very practical about running the race. I will leave that with you.

Yesterday we spoke of the living stones and the spiritual house. Peter shares 3 things:

1. The chief cornerstone rejected by the builders.
2. This stone is the living stone, which is Christ Jesus, full of life. This stone is also rejected by man. Christ Jesus has become the reproach of Christ. On His body is the sign of the cross.
3. We are the living stones. When we come near the Living Stone, we are changed into His image. It takes a long time, but thank the Lord that in Hebrews 12, it says we must run the race.

As we know the Lord Jesus more and more, there is an urgency within us to be like our Lord, to be conformed to Him. That is our first priority, whether we are going to school, working, a housewife, or in the mall, we want to be conformed to His image. This is what Peter is telling us: that we can be living stones. Only then can we be built together into a spiritual house.

Who lives in this spiritual house? God. In spirit He lives in this spiritual house. As He looks at the wall, He sees stone after stone. He sees you and me. This is the picture Peter is giving us. This is extremely encouraging.

As we follow after the Lord, there is something very practical. In our own local assemblies, we want to be living stones, as Peter describes. Built up as a spiritual house. And we are all going to be priests. This is what 1 Peter 2:9 speaks of. This is not something new. It was first mentioned by God to Moses when they first came out of Egypt. This was God's original idea, that all of us would be priests. To be royal priests. The High Priest is our Lord Jesus, but we are royal priests. This is God's original idea. Peter speaks of this in the New Testament.

We also mentioned how the Lord speaks of these living stones. In His last days on the earth, Jesus told the disciples something important: how to be living stones in the house of God. Of course the Lord did not use those words, but that night when the Lord spoke to them, He was getting them ready for the future when He would be in heaven, but they would be God's house on earth. They would be the Lord's church on earth.

I want to show you 4 things the Lord Jesus mentioned that night:

1. Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)
2. Vine and Branches (John 15:5)
3. The Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:8, 13-14)
4. Bread and Cup (Luke 22:19-20)

These are things the disciples have never heard of before. The Lord tells them first that they ought to wash each others' feet. The Lord especially said that "I am your Master, I have washed your feet. You have to wash each others' feet". The Lord is saying that we must love one another. You don't love each other by speaking only to the brother you really like. You have to love your brothers the way the Lord loves you. This is the first thing the Lord told them. They had never heard this before.

The second thing is about the vine and the branches. They also have never heard of this before. We all know we must have the life of Jesus Christ in us. But on that day Jesus told them that He is the vine and they are the branches, and they needed to be connected to Him. That tells us more than Him being our life. Not only is the Lord our life, He is our life every day, and we cannot be separated from Him. And His life would flow into us like a river. All the life, all the juice would flow through us every day. If you leave Him you will not produce any fruit. This is another thing the Lord was telling them. This is how they ought to be if they are to be living stones in the house of God.

The third thing about the Holy Spirit. I have explained this to you the last time so I will not speak of it any more. But prior to that night, these disciples, if they were diligent to the Old Testament, they would know of the Spirit of God. But they didn't know that this Spirit of God would live in them. Now the Lord Jesus tells them that He would go to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to

live in them. To them this was something new. Maybe they did not understand what Jesus meant that day. But as time went on they began to understand.

The fourth thing is the bread and the cup. That night the Lord said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Dear brothers and sisters, as we think about this we really thank the Lord. If He had not mentioned this that night, we would not have this connection with Him. But because of this, every Sunday we can come together to be connected to Him.

"This bread is my body, broken for you. This wine is my blood, shed for you. This cup is the cup of my covenant". So the Lord opened up a way for us to come to Him, so that we can really have fellowship with Him and brothers and sisters. I thank the Lord for saying this thing about the cup of the covenant. We know that He is the covenant (Isaiah 42). He Himself is that covenant.

Brothers and sisters, I often think that I feel reluctant to come when I cannot keep the covenant. Maybe you are able to keep the covenant all the time, but I cannot. But do you know what our Lord meant? He calls us to come, because it is He who has kept the covenant. So brothers and sisters, we really thank Him. This is so precious that He wants us to come to Him. He has paid the whole price, and kept the covenant.

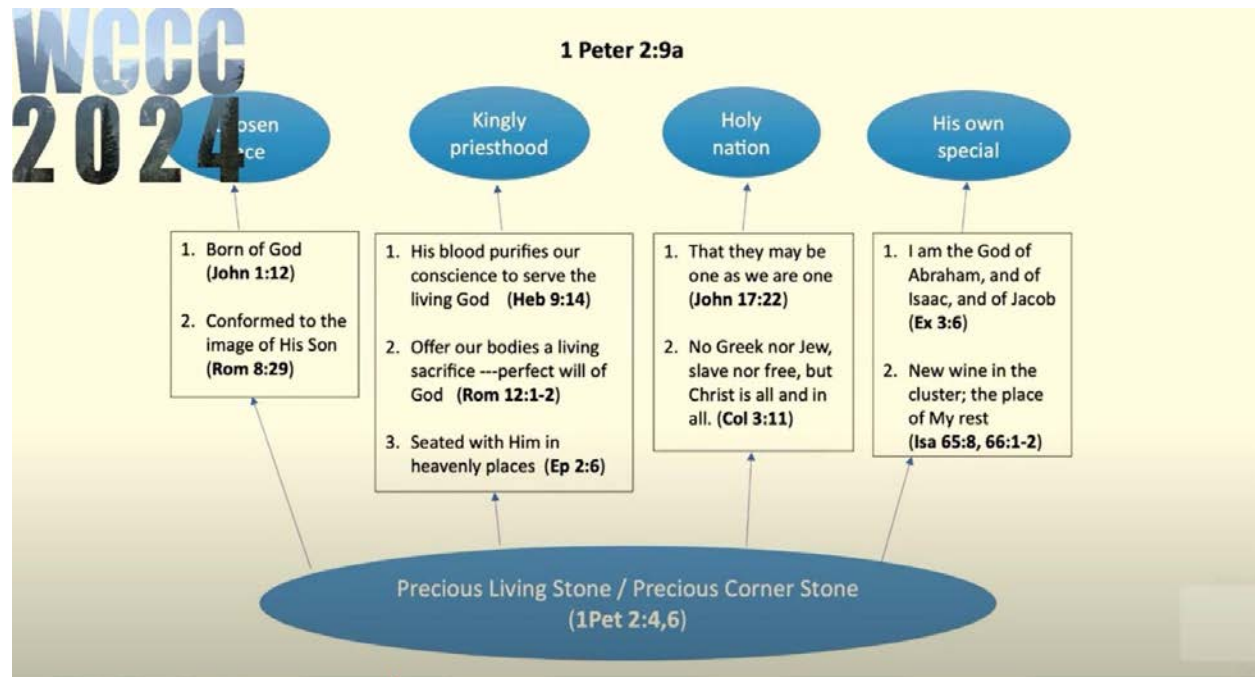
When we think about these 4 things, the Lord's burden is that He would not be with them from the next day onward. "But you are my church, and you will bring other people to be my church. How do we move forward? Remember to wash each others' feet. Remember that I am the vine and you are the branches. Remember that the Holy Spirit will dwell in you, whether you like it or not. Remember to come together to take bread and cup to remember me. Remember that I have this covenant with you. You may fail, but I have kept the covenant." Thank the Lord that this is what He tells us.

On that same day, when He prayed to His father, two things stuck in my mind. Whatever He prayed that day, all these people, His disciples, saw and heard His prayer. So what did He say to God? I would like to mention 2 things:

1. Father, what you have entrusted me to do, I have done. The disciples heard the Lord pray this in their presence. If I were one of the disciples there, I would never forget that. When the Lord was on the earth, the will of the Father was the most important thing. He had done what the Father has entrusted to Him.
2. Towards the end of the prayer, Jesus said, "the glory You have given me, I have given them. That they may be one as You and I are one." (John 17:22). This was not only to the disciples at that time. Just a few verses before, Jesus says that He is not only praying for the ones who are here, but for those who would be preached the gospel later. So this is for you and for me today. Can you believe that the glory that Jesus is willing to give us the glory God gave Him? So that we can be one as He and His Father are one. This is the quality of the oneness.

Dear brothers and sisters, I will leave this with you. Remember that the Lord Jesus has an expectation for you and me. That expectation is not any less than that glory that God has given to Jesus, and given to us. That glory is not an inactive thing. This glory is given so that we can be one. I will leave this with you. Next time when you hate your brother or sister, think of this - that the Lord has prayed for you and for me, and given His glory to us. That we may not hate our brother, but instead love our brother, wanting us to be one. This is the wonder of our Lord Jesus.

I have to move on to 1 Peter. I would like to show you a chart:



This is so that we can look at 1 Peter 2:9 in a very simple way. It is only one sentence but it contains many things.

1. After being a living stone for the spiritual house, you are now a chosen race. Some English translations say "chosen generation". That word is correct, but it is easy to be misled to think that it means a specific generation, whether Gen Z or Gen X. Peter does not mean that. He means that we are a chosen race. The emphasis is that it has a source, related to the Greek word "genus". This is the origin that we come from. Peter says that we are the chosen race.
2. Peter says secondly that we are the kingly priesthood. Each one of us is a priest. This priesthood is a group of priests. Not just one or two. They serve with the character of a king.
3. We are a holy nation. This simply means that we are a group of people, separated (holy) unto God. Peter did not say "holy nations", so we are all of us one single holy nation.
4. Peter said that we are "God's own special people". Another meaning of this translation is "my own people". In Hebrews 10, "my righteous one will live by faith". Anytime when the Lord says "my", it is more than just closeness. "You are mine" is an incredible word.

After these 4 things, because we are all of these things, we can proclaim the excellencies, or praises of Him who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. It is good to spend a few minutes on these 4 things.

Chosen Race

God created Adam according to His own image. God had great expectation and provision for Adam. God would help raise Him up to be really good, to take care of everything in the garden. But Adam failed. So essentially as Adam's descendants, we have this distance from God.

The precious Living Stone and the precious Cornerstone came. He made all the difference, bringing us back to God, to the original image and relationship. So this is a matter of origin. Adam is separated from God, outside of the garden, but now we can come back to God's original purpose and intent for people.

How did this happen? How did this precious Cornerstone bring us back to be God's people? In John 1, the Lord Jesus said,

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 1:11-13 NKJV

So Adam violated God and he could only go outside of the garden of Eden. Our Lord Jesus brought us back to God and into the original relationship. We are no longer born of the blood, the will of the flesh, or the will of man. We are born of God. Now that is only the beginning. When we go on to live, when we grow up not leaving the Lord, then one thing happens. We are conformed into the image of His Son.

So this life-relationship with God, this original relationship with God, is not staying at the baby or children level. It comes to the son level. Not only to be born of God, but also in the likeness of the image of Christ Jesus.

Isn't that wonderful, brothers and sisters? This is what the Lord Jesus did, and the foundation He laid. This is what the Living Stone did for all of us.

Now about the kingly priesthood. I went back to the Bible to see how people like us can be made into kingly priests. We are made into kingly priests by that foundation stone. Christ Jesus is the precious cornerstone. We are supposed to be living stones for the house. Now He makes every one of us priests.

I remember in Hebrews 9:14,

"how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Hebrews 9:14 NKJV

Remember the result of His shed blood. This verse says at the end, that it causes us to serve the living God. In other words, the result is that we become priests serving the living God. Brothers and sisters, the more I think about this verse the more I thank the Lord. We all remember the blood of Christ Jesus shed for our sins. Every Sunday when we come to break bread, we remember that. His blood cleanses our sins.

Now His blood has another powerful function. His precious blood, shed from the Son of God, not only cleanses our sins, it touches the deepest parts of our soul. As a result of that, we are willing to give up this dead work. This dead work is this: everyday we do many things, keeping

ourselves busy. Some may even be religious work. But is that in God's purpose? Whether it is a living work or a dead work only God knows, and you know it too.

This blood of Jesus Christ touches the depth of my soul. Now I know what is according to God, and what is not according to God. It is so precious and valuable. It is vastly beyond me. When it touched my soul, I told myself, "I want to serve God."

Dear brothers and sisters, His blood not only cleanses our sins. It moves our heart, and stirs us up. Not only are our sins washed away because of it, somehow something touches us, and we want to serve God. We want to serve the living God. Think about it. Isn't that true? Everytime after the Lord's table, we feel that we want to serve God.

Even if I have to go school or go to work, in the depths of my heart I want to serve God. He is my first priority and nothing can violate that. Thank the Lord that His precious blood makes us different people. It makes us able to serve God. It makes us willing to serve God beyond everything else.

The other thing about this priesthood, according to the Apostle Paul in Romans 12,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."
Romans 12:1 NKJV

Chapter 12 comes after many chapters. When you arrive at Romans 12, you already know the preciousness and necessity of Christ Jesus in your life. Here the Apostle Paul beseeches us and begs us to offer our bodies a living sacrifice. Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus has already offered Himself and our sins are all forgiven. But now Apostle Paul says, "I beg you to think about this: to offer your own bodies as a living sacrifice."

These animals in Old Testament times were killed and offered. But today I offer my body a living sacrifice. It is living. Yes I live. Everyday I live. But I offer myself to God. God is the most important, most valuable person to me. So thank the Lord. If we believe Romans 12, then we are ready to really serve God.

Dear brothers and sisters, don't say to yourself, "I am not worthy to serve God. I am not worthy to be a priest." God had from the very beginning, from the time of Exodus, told Moses that everybody had to serve Him. So you will be a nation of priests.

Coming here, when we know how the blood of Jesus has moved my heart to serve God, not only do I want to serve God, I want to offer my body as a living sacrifice. If you really believe and have faith in this, then you and I are really priests serving God. There may be other things that are important, but these two things are the most basic. This is the idea of God. God has told us how to be His servants and priests in His house.

The third point is about this kingly priesthood, this royal priesthood. Of course our God is the king on the throne. And our Lord Jesus is also king - King of kings and Lord of lords. And we serve God, led by our High Priest the Lord Jesus. And we also serve. So this is one point: that our Lord Jesus is on the throne. So in this sense we are royal priests.

But there is another sense in which we are royal priests. That when we serve God we are His companions. We are like kings. How can we understand this? We thank the Lord that the Apostle Paul gave us a picture. In Ephesians 2, Paul told us that we have been raised from the dead. We have been raised out from all our sins. We have been raised from the power of Satan and the world. We are raised from the power of fleshly lusts.

Where are we raised to? We are raised to the heavenly places, seated with Christ in the heavenly places. The power of the darkness, the power of the world and the power of my own flesh do not bother me anymore. They are still powerful, but I am way beyond that. I have the Lord Jesus on my side and I am seated in the heavenly places. These things cannot control me anymore. So in that sense we are kingly priests. So thank the Lord brothers and sisters.

When Peter says that we are a kingly priesthood, we are a kingly priesthood together with brothers and sisters. We have to believe that. We praise the Lord that He may have mercy to make us like that. Don't tell yourself that you are not a priest, or that you are not worthy to serve God. Every single one of us serves God. This is the expectation of Apostle Peter.

So the third thing is the holy nation. We are holy. To be holy is to be separated from the world. We are a people separated from the power of the world. That is what the word "holy" means. It means "sanctified". So we are sanctified, and we serve only one. We serve God and no one else.

I remember one verse in Philippians when the Apostle Paul told the Philippian brothers. "You are the citizens of heaven." Brothers and sisters, you better believe that. We are citizens of heaven. The stuff on earth cannot affect us. Of course we are not perfect, but the Lord is there. The Holy Spirit is there. His Word is there. And we are not going to be under the control of worldly things. We are a holy nation.

Another important thing about this holy nation is that there is only one. There are not two. My brother is much younger than I, so I feel that in church I may belong in a different class from him. He and I may not speak the same language. I may get tired easily, but he is so energetic. But brothers and sisters, there is no difference.

"where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."
Colossians 3:11 NKJV

Brothers and sisters, we may speak different languages. When I speak English, my son always corrects me. "Dad, it is a she. Don't say he." But it doesn't matter. I have seen in our fellowship that there is a family that came from China about 12 years ago. The dad and mom, and the two sons do not speak English at all. They attend Bible studies, and when the young people have their meetings and gatherings, this Chinese family attends the same meetings. They are so happy. They try to speak a little English. I saw that and I thanked God.

And then there are other times when there are a lot of brothers and sisters that speak Chinese. I also see our young people who grew up here mixing with them on Sunday. I see this brother who grew up in the United States. He doesn't speak to me because we are of different generations. But when he got together with these brothers and sisters from China, he tried to

Speak Chinese. Even though it is not very good, when I saw that, I was so thankful. The Lord is good.

One nation. One holy nation. Christ is all and in all.

The last thing is about His own special people. Brothers and sisters, you remember how the Lord introduced Himself to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." That means that "Abraham is mine. Isaac is mine. Jacob is mine." This is how dear and near the Lord feels to them. "They are my people."

When we read the Psalms and some of the books of the prophets in the Old Testament, the Lord Jehovah longs to have a really close relationship with His people. I cannot provide too many examples, so I will just give you one. In Isaiah 65 and 66, God calls a group of people "new wine in the cluster". And He also called this group of people "the place of my rest". I am going to go into that, but do you see and feel it? These people are the new wine in the cluster. "My people are my vineyard. But most of them have no interest in me. They don't care about me. But I see a cluster of good grapes. And that cluster of good grapes can be made into new wine. And this new wine in the cluster is precious to Me. And because of them I want to keep the whole vineyard."

See, this new wine is the cluster of grapes, His own special people. In the last chapter of Isaiah, God says, "Heaven and heaven above heaven is not enough for me to live. All these things I have made with my hands. What can you build for me? But I am looking for a place. A place of my rest. On these people I find - they are poor in spirit and they tremble at my word. From them I find my rest."

So dear brothers and sisters, our Lord and our God is always looking for His own people. It is not that He doesn't love others, He loves everybody. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. God loves the world, but there are people that are close to His heart. They really care about Him and God knows that. And God has a purpose. For these people God's purpose is important. God says "these are the new wine in the cluster. There are the people in whom I can find my rest."

Remember when the Lord Jesus was on earth and said, "foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest His head." Whether in the Old Testament times or the New Testament times, the Lord is looking for people who are close to His heart.

I want to share about these people. Isaiah is a thick book. In the first half of Isaiah, before chapter 40, he writes about these people whom he calls the remnant. From chapter 42 onwards he wrote "my servant shall come". That servant is the Lord Jesus. In the latter part of Isaiah he is foreseeing the future. He is saying that when my Son the servant comes there is a group of people who are with him. These are the remnant. At the end, the Lord said, "these are the good grapes in the cluster. These are the people in whom I can lay my head."

Isaiah called these people the remnant, and I would like to tell their story to you in 3 parts. The first part is before chapter 40. The second part isn't about them. It is about how God sent His Son into the world. God has given His Son, His servant something to do. The third part is very

strange. There are some things that the Son will not do all by Himself. He wants these in the remnant to do these things with Him.

The Remnant

When Isaiah wrote his book, he felt the sadness in God's heart. In the first chapter, at around the 4th verse, he wrote that "the ox knows his master, and the donkey knows the master's crib, but Israel does not know me. And my people don't care." This is the very beginning of Isaiah. At around the 9th verse of chapter 1, he wrote, "if there is no small remnant, then we would just be like Sodom or Gomorrah, and be totally destroyed."

Essentially he is saying that there is this group of people whose heart is with God. They are like the ox who knows his master. They are like this donkey who will not go anywhere else to eat except his master's house. This is the character of the remnant.

From chapter 7 to 20, God sends Isaiah to King Ahaz, to bring his son to warn him. Isaiah's son's name is Shear-jashub. The meaning of that name is "the remnant shall return". In chapter 10, it is further explained whom the remnant will return to. They shall return to Jehovah.

At that time Judah was under pressure from the north. The kings of Judah tried to compromise with them, and the Lord moved the hearts of these people, saying "My remnant shall return to the Almighty God."

The second thing about this remnant is this: when the whole nation wanted to compromise with the worldly forces, this small group of people wanted to return to the Almighty God.

The third example is in chapter 27. At that time the Assyrian army of 185,000 surrounded Jerusalem. King Hezekiah was scared. God sent Isaiah to Hezekiah to reassure him that He would take care of this army. The Assyrian army died in one night. The Lord told Isaiah to tell Hezekiah that the remnant shall take root downward and take fruit upward.

I used to be familiar with this phrase "take root downward and take fruit upward" when I was a young Christian because it was such a cool phrase. I did not know that it was a verse in Isaiah, and I did not know it referred to the remnant. Isaiah was saying that the ordinary folk in Israel and Judah are not interested in taking root downward. But there is a small group of people who are interested in taking root downward.

What does it mean to take root downward? It is to take root in God. Not only that, but allow yourself to grow and finally bring fruit.

This statement is actually pretty sad. It says that the remnant "shall again" take root downward. It means that a long time ago my people have done that. But for a long time my people have not done that. So now my remnant shall again take root downward.

Isaiah was written 750 years before Christ. About 1,000 years or 1,100 years before that was Samuel who brought the Israelites to pray. In 20 years, the country became a different place. About 300 years before Isaiah was the time of David. He inspired so many to follow Jehovah. Not only Israelites but even foreigners were inspired to come to the Lord.

But from the time of David to Isaiah was a time of desolation. Now here the Lord says, "My remnant shall again take root downward and take fruit upward."

In Isaiah 40, there is a paragraph which is very familiar to you. This remnant is talking, saying to the Lord, "Lord, why do you not know our difficulty? You don't seem to know our way." And the Lord told them "I know everything about you. I know that you are tired. I know that the going is difficult. I know it is not easy to follow me. Even the young ones will faint. But I will give you strength so that you may mount up as eagles. You shall walk and not tire, you shall run and not faint." We are familiar with this, but let us take a look at it because it is so encouraging. We are a weak people who faint easily, because following the Lord is not easy. There is the reproach of Christ. There is the reproach of the cross. There are people who despise us. It is very hard. But that part is really encouraging.

"Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
And my just claim is passed over by my God"?
Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,"
Isaiah 40:27-30 NKJV

This verse 30 is for you young people. You may have thought that you are always strong, but here it says that even the young men shall fall.

"But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint."
Isaiah 40:31 NKJV

Brothers and sisters, remember this. The Lord understands all our weakness and weariness. He knows all our failures and He still encourages us and He gives us strength that we may mount up on wings like eagles. That we may walk and run and not tire. This is not only for the young. It is even for me. Remember that we are going to run the race. The Lord says that we are going to run and not be tired.

My Servant shall come

The next part the Lord says that "My servant shall come". He will do 2 things. He will be a lamb taken to the slaughter. He will bear our weakness and iniquities, and He will bear our sins. We

are all familiar with Isaiah 53. This has nothing to do with us. There is nothing you and I can participate in. He alone will have to die as the lamb. He alone will bear our weakness and take our sin.

But there is another thing the Lord assigns Him to do. This has to do with the church in Chapter 59. God says "you are going to be the redeemer of Zion." So the first part, He is the lamb, our Savior. We have no part in that, but in the second part, He is to be the redeemer of Zion, who will make Jerusalem a special place. That Jerusalem will be an eternal excellence, and the joy from generation to generation. This redeemer will make Jerusalem special. How is He going to do that?

In Chapter 61, He says, "those who mourn for Zion, I will make them a joy. I will make them a tree of righteousness." This is not just one tree, but a bunch of trees, planted by God for His glory. Brothers and sisters what does that mean? This remnant mourns for Zion.

As His church we ought to be good, but we are not good. Why are we not good? Why does God weep when He sees us? These people who are sorrowful for Zion are the ones whom the Lord will make into trees of righteousness. They do not do this by themselves but they are planted by God. They have the life of God in them, and they will grow up for God's glory. These trees of righteousness are plural - multiple trees. This is the remnant that God wants to work together with Christ to make Zion a glorious place.

Then we come to chapter 62. Christ says, "I am going to make Jerusalem good. But I am not going to do it just by Myself. I am going to assign watchmen on the wall. They will look at me all the time. They will pray and not make God rest until He makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth."

Brothers and sisters, Christ is not doing this thing by Himself. He wants the remnant to be the watchmen on the wall. They are to pray continually not for themselves but for Jerusalem, not willing for God to rest until He makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth. This is what testimony means.

How does God make Jerusalem a praise? Do not think of Jerusalem as a city built by rocks. Spiritually, Jerusalem is you and me. We are on the wall. But sometimes you and I aren't good. We pay attention to other things. "My people don't pay attention to me." But now the Lord's watchmen are praying. God is doing something, not on the rock, but He is working on you and I. So that we may change into the image of His Son, being made into His likeness. This is what it means when the Lord makes Jerusalem a praise on the earth.

After this we come to chapter 65. The Lord says, "my vineyard is desolate, but I found a cluster of good grapes in which new wine can be made. Because of this cluster, I will not give up the whole vineyard. I am really talking about my servants. I am not talking about the grapes." So brothers and sisters, we are not inconsequential. In the eyes of the Lord, you and I are important. We ought to be His special people.

Finally in chapter 66, the last chapter of Isaiah, God sometimes needs to rest. He cannot find a place in all of heaven and earth, but here He finds a group of people who are poor in spirit. They are humble and they tremble at His Word. In them God finds His rest. This is the story of the

remnant. This is what God means when He says "my special people". May this be an encouragement to you and me. It is not abstract or theoretical. It is real people.

You may say this is an Old Testament story. But Apostle Paul in Romans 11 says, "Today, even now, there is still a remnant according to the election of grace." There is still today, in New Testament times, a remnant according to the election of grace.

The Old Testament is the time of the law, but the New Testament is the time of grace. Whether new or old, the remnant is there. Where exactly is the remnant in the New Testament? The remnant in the Old Testament is called the overcomer in the New Testament. As we sang in the song today, "A victor, a victor, because of Calvary!"

I wasn't sure about this before, but one day when brother Stephen Kaung came to LA, some of us invited them to lunch. After lunch, I said, "Brother, I am reading the remnant these days. What is the difference between the remnant and the overcome?" Brother Stephen said "oh the same, the same." Brother Stephen doesn't speak too much, but he speaks what he has already thought about.

The remnant is such an encouragement to you and to me. Finally in Revelations there is the 144,000 standing before the Lamb of God in Zion. What is their character? Wherever the Lamb goes, they will follow. And in their mouths is found no lie.

Brothers and sisters, thank the Lord that He shows us, not only in the Old Testament times but even to the times of Revelations. Don't think of the 144,000 as a limited number. 144,000 is 12,000 times 12,000. 12 is the number of completeness in the Bible. So this is the complete square. It allows all of us to be there. The important thing is whether you are willing to be God's special people. Are you willing to be like the remnant? When the whole world turns away from God, do you want to come back to the Almighty God? When God wants to build His house - Zion, Jerusalem - do you want to be part of it?

If you are willing to go with God on that purpose, you are just like that remnant. You may not even know that, or how the Lord finds you to be precious, but you are the new wine in the cluster. You are the place where God can rest His head.

Lord, when we look at ourselves, sometimes we are like Isaiah 40, where the people are weary and tired. We don't know if we are walking the right way. We don't know whether You know our tiredness. But Lord, you know. We thank you for giving us so many examples in history - in Abraham's time, Moses, Joshua and Caleb, Ruth, and Isaiah. Those are the remnant that pleases your heart. The remnant that is willing to again take root downward and take fruit upward. They are the people who care about Zion. They care about Jerusalem. And they care about your church.

So, Lord, we pray that you move our heart to be like them, so that we can also be your special people and warm your heart. That we can be a place for your rest. We praise you and worship you. In the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen