

# International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

Warsaw, Poland October 4-6, 2024

GENERAL SUBJECT:  
**LIVING IN THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

## Message Five **Living under the Sovereignty of God and according to the Mercy of God**

*RM Hymns: 25*

Scripture Reading: Rev. 4:11; Dan. 4:3, 34-35; Rom. 9:15-16, 18-23; Heb. 4:16

- Rev 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.
- Dan 4:3 How great are His signs, / And how mighty are His wonders! / His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And His dominion is from generation to generation.
- Dan 4:34 And at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation;
- Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing?
- Rom 9:15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."
- Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
- Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
- Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- Rom 9:20 But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- Rom 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

### **I. It is crucial that we see a vision of God's sovereignty—Dan. 4:3, 34-35; Rom. 9:18-23:**

- Dan 4:3 How great are His signs, / And how mighty are His wonders! / His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, / And His dominion is from generation to generation.
- Dan 4:34 And at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation;
- Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing?
- Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
- Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- Rom 9:20 But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to

- him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- Rom 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- A. Sovereignty refers to God's unlimited authority, power, and position—Rev. 4:11; 5:13:
- Rev 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.
- Rev 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever.
1. As the sovereign One, God is above everything, behind everything, and in everything—1 Kings 22:19.
 

1 Kings 22:19 And Micaiah said, Hear therefore the word of Jehovah, I saw Jehovah sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him, on His right hand and on His left.
  2. God has the full capacity to carry out what He wants according to the desire of His heart and according to His eternal economy—Dan. 4:34-35; Eph. 1:4-5, 9-11.
 

Dan 4:34 And at the end of those days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored the ever-living One; For His dominion is an eternal dominion, / And His kingdom is from generation to generation;

Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of earth are considered as nothing, / But He does according to His will in the army of heaven / And among the inhabitants of the earth; / And there is no one who can resist His hand / Or say to Him, What are You doing?

Eph 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- B. Romans 9:19-23 refers to God's sovereignty:
- Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will?
- Rom 9:20 But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
- Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- Rom 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,
- Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
1. "For who withstands His will? But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?"—vv. 19b-20:
    - a. We need to realize who we are: we are God's creatures, and He is our Creator—Isa. 42:5.
 

Isa 42:5 Thus says God Jehovah, / Who created the heavens and stretched them out, / Who spread forth the earth and what springs up from it, / Who gives breath to the people upon it / And spirit to those who walk on it:

- b. As His creatures, we should not resist His purpose or answer back to Him, the Creator—Rom. 9:20.  
 Rom 9:20 But rather, O man, who are you who answer back to God? Shall the thing molded say to him who molded it, Why did you make me thus?
2. “Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”—v. 21:
- a. God is the Potter, and we are the clay in His hand; God, the Potter, is sovereign—Jer. 18:1-6.  
 Jer 18:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying,  
 Jer 18:2 Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear My words.  
 Jer 18:3 So I went down to the potter's house, and he was there doing work at his wheel.  
 Jer 18:4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand; so he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good for the potter to make.  
 Jer 18:5 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,  
 Jer 18:6 Am I not able to do with you, O house of Israel, as this potter does? declares Jehovah. Indeed, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so you are in My hand, O house of Israel.
- b. As the Potter, our God has the absolute right over us; regarding us, He has the right to do whatever He desires—Isa. 29:16; 64:8.  
 Isa 29:16 You turn things upside down! / Shall the potter be considered to be like the clay, / That what is made should say of him who made it, He did not make me, / Or what is formed should say of him who formed it, He has no understanding?  
 Isa 64:8 But now, Jehovah, You are our Father; / We are the clay; and You, our Potter; / And all of us are the work of Your hand.
- c. If God wills, He can make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor—Rom. 9:21.  
 Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
3. Romans 9:21-23 reveals that God sovereignly created us to be His containers, according to His predestination—2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; Eph. 1:5, 11:  
 Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?  
 Rom 9:22 And what if God, wishing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,  
 Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,  
 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.  
 2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels but also wooden and earthen; and some are unto honor, and some unto dishonor.  
 2 Tim 2:21 If therefore anyone cleanses himself from these, he will be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work.  
 Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,  
 Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
- a. It is of God's sovereignty that He, the Potter, makes the riches of His glory known by creating vessels of mercy to contain Himself—Rom. 9:23.  
 Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
- b. Being vessels unto honor is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty—v. 21.  
 Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make out of the

- same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?
- c. God's sovereignty is the basis of His selection; His selection depends on His sovereignty—vv. 11, 18; 11:5, 28.
    - Rom 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
    - Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
    - Rom 11:5 In the same way then at the present time also there has come into being a remnant according to the selection of grace.
    - Rom 11:28 According to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but according to the selection they are beloved for the fathers' sake.
  - 4. "In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory"—9:23:
    - a. In His sovereignty God has the authority to make the ones He has selected and called vessels of mercy to contain Him in order that His glory might be manifested—vv. 11, 18, 23-24.
      - Rom 9:11 Though the children had not yet been born nor had done anything good or bad (that the purpose of God according to selection might remain, not of works but of Him who calls),
      - Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.
      - Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,
      - Rom 9:24 Even us, whom He has also called, not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?
    - b. According to His sovereign authority, He has prepared us unto glory— v. 23.
      - Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

## II. "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy'...So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy"—vv. 15a, 16:

- A. Mercy is the most far reaching of God's attributes, going further than His grace and love—Matt. 9:13:
  - Matt 9:13 But go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.
  - 1. According to our natural condition, we were far removed from God, totally unworthy of His grace; we were eligible only to receive His mercy—Eph. 2:4.
    - Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
  - 2. Man's disobedience affords God's mercy an opportunity, and God's mercy brings man to salvation—Rom. 11:32.
    - Rom 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.
- B. Our concept is that the one who wills will gain what he wills to obtain and that the one who runs will gain what he runs after—9:16:
  - Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.
    - 1. If this were the case, God's selection would be according to our effort and labor.
    - 2. On the contrary, God's selection is of God who shows mercy; we do not need to will or to run, for God has mercy on us.
    - 3. If we know God's mercy, we will neither trust in our effort nor be disappointed by our failures; the hope for our wretched condition is in God's mercy—Eph. 2:4.
      - Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
- C. If we would serve God in His New Testament economy, we need to know that it is wholly a

matter of God's sovereign mercy—Rom. 9:15-16; Heb. 4:16:

Rom 9:15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

1. If we know God's sovereignty, we will thank Him for His mercy, realizing that we are under His sovereign mercy—Rom. 9:15:

Rom 9:15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

- a. The expression *sovereign mercy* means that God's mercy is absolutely a matter of God's sovereignty.

- b. Being a vessel of mercy is not the result of our choice; it originates with God's sovereignty—v. 18.

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.

- c. God's mercy to us is in His sovereignty; the only thing we can say to explain God's mercy to us is that in His sovereignty, He has chosen to be merciful to us—vv. 15-16, 23.

Rom 9:15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

2. In God's sovereign mercy, our hearts are inclined toward Him; because of His mercy to us, we seek Him day by day—Jer. 29:13; Deut. 4:29; Isa. 55:6.

Jer 29:13 And you will seek Me and find Me if you search for Me with all your heart;

Deut 4:29 And from there you will seek Jehovah your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Isa 55:6 Seek Jehovah while He may be found; / Call upon Him while He is near.

3. The more we see that everything related to us is a matter of God's mercy, the more we will bear our responsibility before the Lord; however, even our willingness to bear responsibility is of God's mercy.

4. Because of God's mercy, we responded to the gospel when others did not respond, we received a word about Christ as life when others refused to receive it, and we took the way of the Lord's recovery when others drew back from taking this way.

5. Regarding His recovery, God has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

- D. Romans 9 reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy— vv. 15-16:

Rom 9 be omitted.

Rom 9:15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

1. The apostle Paul applied this principle to the Israelites, showing us that everything that happened to them was of God's mercy—vv. 16, 23.

Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Rom 9:23 In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory,

2. There must be at least one time when we see God's mercy and definitely touch His mercy—Eph. 2:4; Matt. 9:13:

Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Matt 9:13 But go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

- a. Concerning this matter, our eyes need to be opened at least once; there must be at least one time when we see that everything depends on God's mercy.
- b. Whether we see this all at once, or we realize it through a process, the minute we touch this matter, we touch not a feeling but a fact; this fact is that everything depends on God's mercy.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **THE MERCY OF GOD**

#### **Everything Depending on the Mercy of God**

When we read Romans 9, we have to pay attention both to its principle and to its application. This chapter reveals the principle that everything depends on God's mercy. The apostle applies this principle to the Israelites. He shows us that everything that happened to the Israelites was of God's mercy. Not only do we need to pay attention to the application today, but we also need to pay attention to the principle behind the application.

Romans 9:16 says that "it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Zeal and pursuit are of no use. Neither is the absence of zeal and pursuit of any use. Waiting too long, not waiting long enough, being too quick, or not being too quick—none of these is of any use. Being in one place or another, hearing much or hearing little—none of these is of any use either. Everything depends on the mercy of God. Only the Holy Spirit is able to lead men to a proper standing. There must be at least one time that a person sees God's mercy. Concerning this matter, our eyes must be opened at least once. Of course, it is good if our eyes can be opened more than once. But there must at least be one time when we see that everything depends on God's mercy. Whether we see this matter all at once or realize it through a process, the minute we touch this matter, we touch the fact—not a feeling but the fact—that everything depends on God's mercy.

God's mercy is a fact. A fact is not dependent on feeling. Take the matter of regeneration as an example. We often tell sinners that they must have a one-time definite experience of repentance and believing in the Lord. To believers, we say that they must have a one-time definite consecration of themselves to the Lord. It is the same in principle in regard to man's understanding of God's mercy. There must be at least one time when a person definitely touches God's mercy.

#### **THE NEED TO DEAL WITH THE MIND, THE EMOTION, AND THE WILL — BEING TEMPERED UNDER THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SPIRIT**

Three kinds of people need God's dealings: those who are strong in their will, those who are strong in their emotion, and those who are strong in their mind. Many people are controlled by these three conditions. These three things must experience God's breaking. God deals with man's strong points more than He deals with his weak points. Man's strong points often hinder him from spiritual progress even more than his weak points. Unless a man is dealt with in these three areas, he cannot know God's mercy.

After a man has been dealt with by God, he will be tempered in his spiritual life. In many things it is inappropriate to be either too much or too little. Some people wait too long, and others do not wait long enough. All these require tempering. Some people are not strong enough in their inner man; their outer man is too strong. This is like a man's head taking up one-fourth of his body or one-sixteenth of his body; neither is proportionate. The right proportion should be one-seventh of the body. Some people are too strong in their mind. Others are too strong in their emotion or their will. Their inner man is not strong enough. These conditions require tempering.

Once I took a leader of the China Inland Mission to hear Brother T. Austin-Sparks. After the message others usually would ask about the message that had just been given. But on my way home with this brother, I did not ask him anything. In the end he opened his mouth. He felt that Mr. Austin-



Sparks was too strong in his will. Itold him that my will was also quite strong. This leader, Mr. Baker, asked, “Then how are you able to get along with him?” Those who are outwardly strong in their will do not easily get along with others. But this brother did not realize that we are one because of our inner man, not because of our outer will. Today, in order for our inner man to match our outer man, our inner man must grow. When the inner man grows, it can control the outer man.

Some people are too strong in their mind. Their mind needs to come under the control of the inner man. I have read the New Testament a few hundred times. Although I cannot say that I have read it more times than everyone else, at least I can say that I have read it more than many people. I could find over one hundred passages that contradict each other. However, I have not done this, because my mind has been under the control of the Holy Spirit.

If we want our spiritual life to be welltempered, we need to attune our condition to a proper balance. We must neither be too much nor be too little. This can be compared to shooting on a pinball machine; there are pins to the left and to the right, and the balls must be directed at the optimum angle before they can score. There are many pitfalls in our spiritual journey; our mind, emotion, and will can all become hindrances to us. If we are too much or too little, we fall into danger.

Everything depends on God’s mercy. Before I was saved,I planned to go to America. If I had left two months earlier, I would not have met Sister Dora Yu, and I might never have been saved. Even if I had been given the chance later, I might not have believed. It was God’s mercy that I met Miss Dora Yu at that time. It was neither too early nor too late.

Only God can do things in just the right proportion. We are prone to speak either too much or not enough. No one can preach a message that will meet everyone’s need. Even the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter faced the same problem. When words come out of a person’s mouth, it is difficult for the words to come out just right. This is why it is easy for people to misunderstand.

Only God can bring man to a state of true humility. Sometimes a little cross and a little dealing make a person proud instead of humble. Only severe crosses and severe dealings will make a person humble.

Some people are too spiritual; they think that the Lord dwells only in our spirit. But Ephesians 3 says that Christ dwells in our heart through faith. He dwells not only in our spirit but also in our heart. This is something that a person can feel. John 15 says that Christ abides in the believers, but it does not say that Christ abides in our heart. Only Ephesians 3 speaks of Christ dwelling in our heart. Some people are too spiritual. They think that the heart does not mean much. However, many of the psalms speak of the heart. In order to be tempered in spiritual matters, we need to pay attention not only to the spirit but to our heart as well.

### **THE WAY OF THE CHURCH—LOOKING TO GOD’S MERCY**

The way of the church during the past two thousand years is a way of looking to the mercy of God. Only God’s mercy can temper us. I have often told the young people that they may have to wait for five years before they will realize that everything is of God’s mercy. A person has an average of one hundred forty thousand hairs. The Bible says that God has numbered every one of our hairs. He knows us more than we know ourselves. When God wants to save us, we are saved. If God did not show mercy, no one could be saved. Once D. L. Moody was preaching the gospel, and a lady was about to be saved. At that moment an umbrella fell and caused a distraction. In the end the lady was not saved. Whether or not a man can be saved is not the responsibility of the preacher. The responsibility of the preacher is simply to present the way to others. Only God’s mercy can put a person on the way. It is God’s work that puts a person on the way. It is also God Himself who takes men forward on the way. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, pp. 3-6)