*2017 Western Africa Regional Bible Conference*

*Closing Message by P. Abraham Kim*

**YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES**

Acts 1:3-14

Key verse 1:8

***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;***

***and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,***

***and to the ends of the earth.”***

Through this conference, we learned beautiful lessons about God’s grace of calling and our living hope. Before we conclude this conference, I want to think with you about the promise and commission the Lord gave to his disciples before his ascension. Acts 1:8 is Luke’s account of our Lord’s Great Commission for his church (cf. Lk 24:47-49). Let’s think about the meaning of this promise and commission.

1. **Christ is our hope of glory.***.*

Verse 3 says, “*After his suffering, he presented to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God*.” After Jesus suffered and rose from the dead, he stayed on earth 40 more days. During this period, Jesus did mainly two things for his disciples.

First, Jesus planted resurrection faith in their hearts. Jesus appeared to them and gave many convincing proofs of his resurrection. On one occasion, he received a piece of broiled fish and ate it before them (Lk 24:42-43). His resurrection is the Father’s confirmation that he was crucified on the cross to give eternal life to those who believe in him (Jn 3:14-15). The Risen Savior gives us forgiveness of sins and victory over the power of death. He assures us that we will also rise like him in a glorious resurrection body.

Second, Jesus planted a living hope of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the main theme of the Bible. The kingdom of God is restoration of God’s reign. During his earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed the coming of God’s kingdom in people’s lives through repentance and forgiveness of sins. The risen Lord is King of kings who received all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). He spoke about how the kingdom of God would spread to all peoples of all nations. He also spoke about the eternal kingdom he will establish when he comes again. He said, “*Look, I am coming soon!*” (Rev 22:7,12,20) Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Eternal life in the restored paradise where God is the light is our only living hope (Rev 22:5). Praise God who gave us a living hope of the glorious resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom of God through Christ our Savior and Lord!

1. **Our top priority is to be Jesus’ witnesses.**

The apostles asked him, *"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”*(6) The Israelites had been oppressed and impoverished under the superpowers for centuries. We can understand their yearning for a restored kingdom of Israel based on God’s promises for his chosen people. But their understanding of God’s promises was rather nationalistic and earthly. Jesus said, *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (7).* God’s promises will be fulfilled according to his time schedule. Jesus says that it is not for us to know the times or dates. Then he said, “***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and*** ***you will be my witnesses....”***Jesus promised that his disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. He then taught that their top priority is to be his witnesses. What does it mean to be his witnesses? It is to proclaim that Jesus died for our sins and rose again according to the Scriptures and that whoever repents and believes in him receives forgiveness of sins and eternal life (Lk 24:47, Jn 3:16). It is also to proclaim that Jesus is King who will come to judge all mankind and establish an eternal kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 20:12, 22:1).

Like the apostles, we want first to see our country be restored from recession and corruption. I believe that Africa in general is in birth pains. A new Africa is coming! At this time, I believe what Christians seek and pray for is the most important for their country’s future. Korea was once among the poorest countries of the world after Japanese occupation and a civil war that devastated the land. UBF was born 8 years after the bloody Korean civil war ended. God’s word of the good news gave college students a new life in Christ and a vision for the world. In spite of their country’s poor and dark situation, UBF ancestors began to pray to obey the Lord’s world mission command. Since there was no means for them to go to foreign countries, they decided to send the first overseas missionary to Korea’s biggest island, Jeju-do, in the far south. For this, many of them offered their bus money as world mission offerings and walked long distances to school. Others sold their blood to support the missionary. God blessed their faith and began to open ways for them to go out to Germany and United States as nurses, factory workers, students, businessmen, and medical doctors. Eventually 1,750 young people like our missionaries in Nigeria and Ghana dedicated their lives as Jesus’ witnesses to 95 countries. The UBF lay missionary movement awakened Korean churches and they began to send out missionaries. As Korea was sending out a large number of missionaries, God blessed Korea to grow to be one of the leading countries in economy and culture.

I believe that God will do a great work through you when you accept God’s vision and obey the Lord’s world mission command. Our countries’ situation makes us worry about many things. The Lord promised, *“Do not worry…But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Mt 6:33). This promise is true! I tell you, there has been no one who lived this promise and did not find that it is indeed true. Our Father knows what we need and he who gave his Son for us will provide all things we need one after another, Amen. We should accept the Lord’s words, ***“****It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set….* ***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses....”*** If we Christians seek and pray for his kingdom and obey the Lord’s Commission, God will bring his healing upon our lands.

1. **We can witness by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Jesus promised, ***“…you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”*** The Holy Spirit has come. In fact, he dwells in every believer. Do you believe that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? We tend to take the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for granted or to take it lightly. But today we should think about what it means that we have the Holy Spirit. The holy God has come to dwell in us! At the Last Supper, the Lord also said, *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you…On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you.”* (Jn 14:18, 20). Our loving Father and the Lord Jesus are with us through the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God has come in us and neither any powers nor anything else in all creation are able to separate us from God’s love and his reign in us!

To be Jesus’ witnesses, we should receive power from the Holy Spirit. How can we receive power, that is, be filled with the Holy Spirit? Let’s look at what the apostles did in verses 12-14; *“Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem…They all joined together constantly in prayers along with the women….”* They accepted Jesus’ promise and commission, returned to Jerusalem, and all joined together constantly in prayer (Ac 1:14). This tells us the secrets of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit.

First, accept the Lord’s commission. Unless we accept the Lord’s Commission and live as gospel witnesses and shepherds, we live for our needs and desires after the world. When our hearts are set on earthly things, we feel never happy or satisfied, for the Holy Spirit is grieving in us. All hopes of this world are not true hopes. At the end of our life on earth, how regretful we would be, if we have spent our one precious life for the false hopes. When we accept the Lord’s Commission and live as his witnesses, the Holy Spirit is very happy and fills us with love, joy, peace and courage. Many things tempt us. But let’s remember this: How great is the love and grace of God that the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us! How can’t we thank and love the Holy Spirit who bears us with such gentleness and patience, and encourages us and intercedes for us with ever unchanging hope 24/7? Wouldn’t we want to please the holy God in us and do what he wills?

Second, pray together constantly. When we walk by the Spirit out of our love and obedience to the Holy Spirit, our hearts are filled with this prayer: *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”* (Mt 6:9-10). Prayer is not only asking God. It is also confession, adoration, and intercession. Our daily confession of sins, thanksgivings and adoration enables the Holy Spirit to do his wonderful work in us and through us. God is pleased to work among people through our intercessory prayers. As we keep our love for God and prayer in our hearts and in our church community, we can live as God’s holy people and the Holy Spirit will certainly empower us to serve the world with God’s love.

God has called you to be the lights of Africa. What can free people of our countries from their slavery to sin and darkness? What can heal the wounds and sorrows of our young people? What can solve the prolonged problems of corruption and strife in our lands? Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can. There has always been a spiritual revival when Christians prayed together to obey the Lord’s Commission. The world and everything in it passes away. Only the kingdom of God and what we did for the Lord will remain forever. When we live as witnesses of the gospel, God will provide for us, make us fruitful, and heal our lands. God will repay all our sufferings for Christ with eternal glory and honor. May God raise many shepherds and missionaries among you and through your prayers to reach out to all 54 countries in Africa, and even to the ends of the earth!