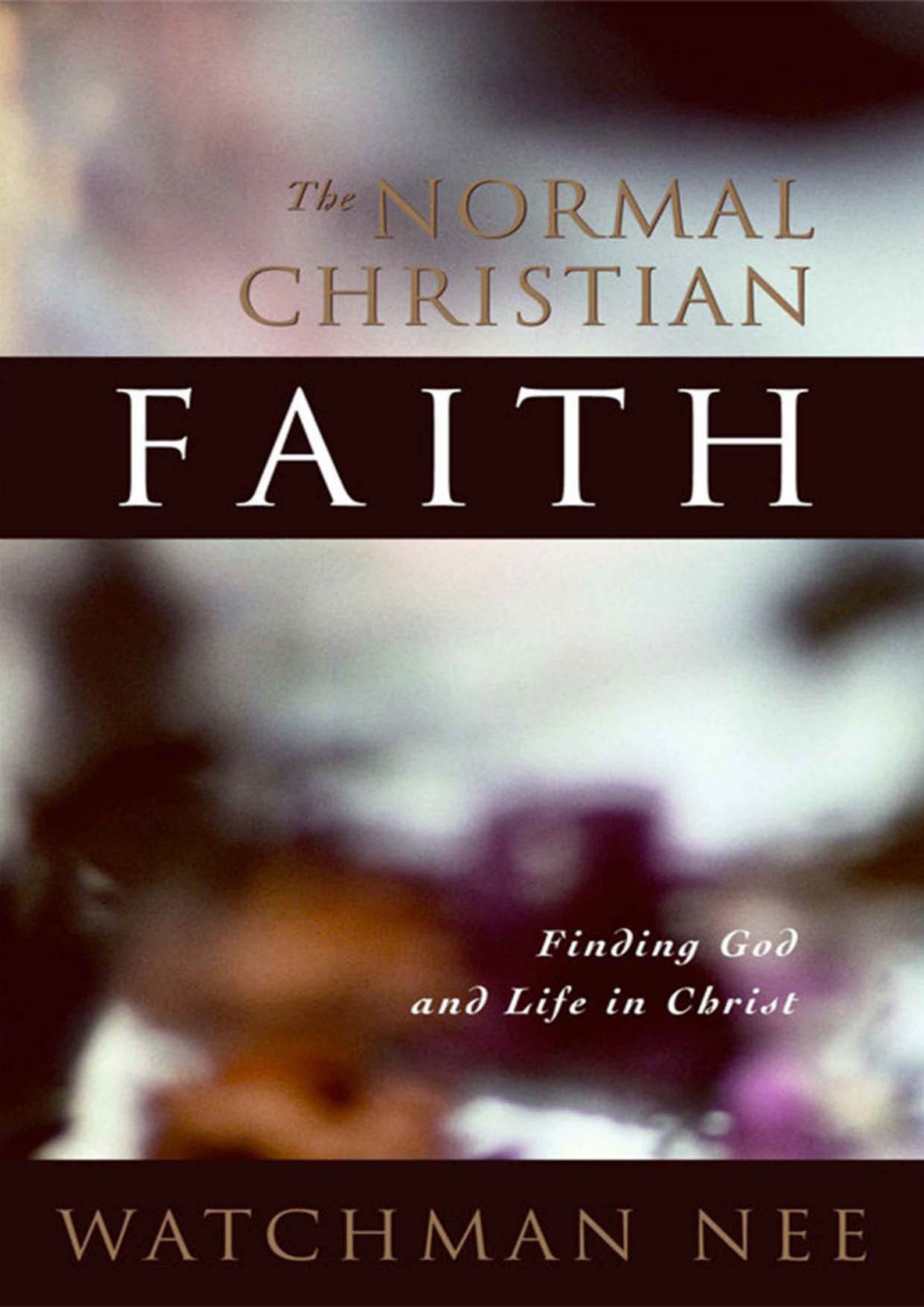

The NORMAL CHRISTIAN
FAITH
Finding God and Life in Christ
WATCHMAN NEE

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN FAITH

by Watchman Nee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of gospel messages given by Brother Watchman Nee in Tientsin in 1936. Appendix One, entitled "Towards the Church," was included in an earlier English edition of The Normal Christian Faith as Chapter Sixteen. However, it was not part of the Tientsin Conference in 1936. It has been included in this volume as an appendix, along with Appendix Two, entitled "There Is a God," which was first published in January 1936 in the magazine The Glad Tidings (published by the Shanghai Gospel Book Room). Both messages were given by Brother Nee and published by the Shanghai Gospel Book Room during this same period.

The chapters in The Normal Christian Faith were compiled from notes taken during meetings; they were not edited by the speaker. The whole series is divided into four sections, containing subjects about faith that range from the knowledge of God, Christ, and the Bible to the doctrines of redemption, life, and the Spirit.

§SECTION ONE
CHRIST AND GOD

CHAPTER ONE

THE SEARCH FOR GOD

THE FIRST QUESTION

We will look at the Christian faith from its very foundation. The first subject we are confronted with is God.

Let us read a few verses from the Bible. Psalm 14:1 of the Old Testament says, "The fool has said in his heart,/There is no God." This sentence may also be translated as "The fool does not want God in his heart." The result of saying this can be found in the second sentence of the same verse: "They are corrupt; they do abominable deeds."

Let us also take a passage from the New Testament. Hebrews 11:6 says, "For he who comes forward to God must believe that He is."

THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

Whether you claim to be a Christian, a non-believer, or a seeker after truth, we will start by examining the subject of God. In this respect the world is divided into three camps. The first is that of the atheists who do not believe in a God. The second consists of the agnostics. They have no sure knowledge about the deity. On the one hand, they dare not say there is no God, but on the other hand, they are not clear if God does exist. We belong to the third category of those who believe in God.

PROSECUTION

Is there a God? I will not try to say yes or no to this question. Rather, I will make this place a law court. I will ask you to be the judge, and I will be the prosecutor. The work of a judge is to make decisions, to approve or disapprove the truth of statements; the work of a prosecutor is to present all the evidence and arguments that he can possibly gather.

Before we proceed, we have to be clear about one fact: all prosecutors are not eyewitnesses of crimes. They are not policemen. A policeman may personally witness an event, whereas a prosecutor obtains his information only indirectly. He places all the charges, evidence, and arguments collected

before the judge. In the same way, I shall present before you everything that I can possibly find. If you ask whether I have seen God or not, I would say "no." I am reading or demonstrating what I have gathered. My job is to search for facts and to call for witnesses. You are to arrive at a conclusion yourself.

QUALIFICATIONS

Many people assert that there is no God. As a prosecutor I ask you first to check the qualification of these people. Are they qualified to make such claims? Are those who assert that there is no God moral or immoral? Do not just listen to their arguments. Even robbers and swindlers have their arguments. Of course, the arguments support them as robbers and swindlers. The subject of their arguments may be very noble; they may talk about the state of the nations and the welfare of society, but their opinions cannot be seriously considered. They are not worthy of passing such judgments. If a man is upright in his conduct and moral judgment, we can give credibility to his words, but if not, his words lose their credibility. This is especially true when it relates to the question of deity. It is interesting to note that the moral standards of men are directly related to their concept about God. Those who admit their own ignorance have a passable standard, while insistent atheists invariably have a low level of moral responsibility. I do not claim to know all atheists, but of the several thousand that I know, none of them possess a notably commendable morality. You may tell me that there was once a moral atheist, but if there was one, he is dead. Or you may tell me that there will be a moral atheist, but whoever he may be, he is not here yet. At least we can say that for now, we do not know a moral atheist.

NO ATHEIST IS MORAL

Once at a gathering at the University of Nanking, I remarked that no atheist is moral. There were many students on the campus who did not believe in God. They were greatly offended by these words. The next day, while I was speaking, they came and shuffled their feet in an attempt to distract me and the audience. The next day when they came again, they made funny gestures and faces at me and carried on continuously throughout the speaking. On the fourth day the vice-president of the university, Dr. Williams, came and said to me, "We had better change the place of meeting. These students are infuriated by your assertion on the first day that atheists are not moral. Today they are not going to use their feet and lips only; they are going to use their fists. I heard that they will be waiting at the entrance of the hallway and will jump on

you when you step in." I went along with the arrangement and conducted the meeting at another place. On the way to the meeting I walked alongside many students and listened to their conversations. Although many did not agree with me and felt uneasy about my preaching, they wanted to come back. One among them remarked, "Mr. Nee said that people who have no God have no sense of moral responsibility. This is perfectly right. How can anyone with moral decency shuffle his feet and jest while others are delivering a speech? Yesterday they caused such a disturbance in the meeting, and today they are going to come to fight. This is surely not what an honorable person would do. There is no doubt that those who do not believe in God do not have moral decency. Let us go to the meeting regardless of what they plan to do."

Once a young man told a preacher, "When I was young, I seriously believed in God. But now that I am in college. I can no longer believe in Him." The fifty-year-old preacher patted the young man's shoulder and said, "My son, you do not believe in God anymore! Let me ask you a question: Since you have been converted to be an atheist, have you advanced morally? Has atheism helped you become better? Has it made your thoughts cleaner or your heart purer? Or did it make you just the opposite?" That young man felt ashamed. He admitted that he had gone downhill morally since his denial of God. The preacher pressed on: "I am afraid that you are not really saying that you believe there is no God, you are just hoping that there is no God."

DO NOT JUDGE ACCORDING TO HOPE

Many people are not really convinced that there is no God; they merely hope so. They would rather that there were no God in the universe. For them it would be much more convenient in respect to many things.

I myself was one of those people. When I was a student I claimed that there was no God. Although I was extremely strong in my claim, something within me seemed to be protesting and saying, "There is a God." I knew deep in my heart that God exists. But my lips refused to admit this so that I could have an excuse for sinning. By declaring the nonexistence of God, going to sinful places was justifiable. If there were no God, I would become bold to sin. When you believe in God, you dare not do certain things. When you do away with God, you feel free to commit the worst sins without any fear whatsoever. If you sincerely hope to raise your moral standard by asserting the nonexistence of God, then your arguments are still plausible. However, the only reason men claim that there is no God is for an excuse for lawlessness, immorality, license,

and indecency. For this reason, their whole argument is not worthy of consideration. The question is, "Are you qualified to claim that there is no God?" If your hope is merely for an escape from justice, you have lost your ground already.

IS MAN THE GREATEST?

One day a young man came to me and said, "I do not believe in a so-called God. Man is the greatest. He is the noblest among all creatures. There is no God in this universe; man is everything." We were sitting opposite each other. After hearing what he said, I stood up, went to one side of the room, stooped down, and gazed at him intently. I said, "You are really great!" Then I walked to the other side of the room and looked at him from another angle. "That is right," I said deliberately; "You are great! In Kiangsu province there are thirty million who are like you. There are at least four hundred million of your kind in China. The world contains only two billion who are the same as you are. Do you realize that during the last few days there has been a flood in the south? The dykes along the river are in jeopardy. The whole population in Hsing Hwa with more than two hundred thousand people have been recruited and rushed to the dykes in a panic. They are carrying earth with them to reinforce the banks. The repair work is still going on.

"Suppose that the world is recruited to hollow out the sun. A hole is drilled through the surface, and everyone has to remove a load from the inside. Assuming that no one will be burned to ashes, do you think that they can do the job? Even if all the people themselves were inside, they would not fill up the sun. That is not all. If you put several hundred planets the size of Earth inside and started shaking it, you would still find that the sun would be very empty inside. How many suns are there in the universe? Do you realize that the number of solar systems is in the hundreds of millions?"

HOW VAST IS THE UNIVERSE?

I then said to the young man, "And here you are! You have not even walked through the whole earth, and yet you consider yourself greater than the whole universe. Let me ask you, do you know how vast the universe is? Take light for example. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. Try to calculate how far light travels in one minute, or one hour, or a day, or a year. There are some stars whose light takes three thousand years to reach us. Go and work out how far they are from us! And you think you are so great! I would therefore

advise all atheists and young men alike to admit the incompetency of man not only morally, but intellectually and academically as well."

CAN MAN EXTEND BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF TIME AND SPACE?

Another time when I was in Kaifeng, I met another one of those young, stout atheists. I walked up to him and patted him on the shoulder, saying, "I saw God today!" He stared at me in curiosity and demanded a further word. I replied, "You are God! If you know that there is no God, then you have to be God." He asked for an explanation. I said, "Since you are convinced that there is no God, you must have traveled over the whole earth. If God is not in Shanghai, He may still be in Nanking. You must have been to both places. That is not all. If God is not in Nanking, He may be in Tientsin. You must also have been to Tientsin. But you cannot draw this conclusion simply by being in China; God may be in another country. So you must have been to every country on this earth. If God is not in one place, He may be in another. Therefore, you must have traveled throughout the world. One never knows if God is hiding at the North Pole or the South Pole, or in the woods or wilderness somewhere. So you must have combed through all those regions as well. If God is not found on earth, He may be found on the moon. You therefore must have been to the moon. God may also be on other planets or in outer space. This means that you have traveled through space and all the other galaxies as well. If you can say that there is no God, it must mean that you have traveled throughout the whole universe. If this is the case, you must be God yourself.

"This is not all. Even though you know that God does not exist in Shanghai today, how about yesterday? Perhaps God will come tomorrow. You say that you know there is no God today, but what about last year? And how do you know that God will not come next year? You say that there is no God this year, but what about a thousand years ago? Very well, you must be an everlasting one who knows everything about the past and future. You have to be a being beyond time and space. You must be in Tientsin and in another country at the same time; you must be omnipresent from the east to the west, from the North Pole to the South Pole. Who else but you can be the very God? If you are not God, you can never be qualified to say that there is no God."

THE EVIDENCE

Some will immediately step back and say, "I have never said that I know there is no God. One can never tell whether there is a God or not." Well, if you cannot give a conclusion, I will ask witnesses whom I consider trustworthy to present arguments to you and prove the existence of God. Again let me say this, you are the judge, and I am the prosecutor. I am presenting only the evidence before you. Decide for yourself if there is a God.

THE UNIVERSE

First, look at nature, the world that is before our eyes and every phenomenon in it. We all know that scientific knowledge is the rational explanation of natural phenomena. For example, there is an observed drop in the temperature of a patient. The drop in temperature is a phenomenon, and the explanation for it is scientific knowledge. When an apple falls from the tree, it is a phenomenon. Why does an apple not fly into the air? The explanation for this phenomenon constitutes knowledge. A man with knowledge is a man who has the proper explanations.

ONLY TWO EXPLANATIONS

The universe displays countless phenomena of diverse forms, colors, shapes, and nature. We cannot fail to notice these phenomena before our eyes. The explanation for all these phenomena is known as knowledge. All thoughtful persons have only two explanations as far as the origin of the universe is concerned; there is no third explanation. You have to take one or the other of them.

What are these two explanations? The first says that the universe came into being through natural evolution and self-interaction; the second attributes its origin to a personified Being with intellect and purpose. These are the only two explanations presented by all philosophers of the world. There is not a third one.

Where did the universe come from? Did it come into existence by itself or through chance? Or was it designed by the One from whom we derive the concept of God? You have to think and then make a decision about it. Everything that is by chance has certain characteristics. I would suggest you list all of these in a detailed way, the more the better, and then compare all the phenomena of the universe with your list. Alongside of this make another list of the characteristics which, in your opinion, would be prominent if the

universe were created by an intelligent Being. Now by a simple comparison of nature with your two lists, it will be easy to draw a reasonable conclusion.

CHANCE EVENTS

What are the characteristics of things that come about by chance? First, we know that they are unorganized. At the most they can be partially integrated. They can never be totally organized. One can achieve a specified goal by chance once, but he can never achieve a specified goal by chance all the time. Anything that comes together by chance can only be integrated partially, never totally. For example, if I throw this chair to the other side of the room, by chance it may come to rest at a perfect angle. If I do the same with a second chair, it may also lie neatly beside the first one. But this will not keep on happening with the third and the fourth and so on. Chance can only provide partial organization. It does not guarantee total integration. Furthermore, all random interactions are aimless, disorganized, and purposeless. They are without order and structure; they are loose, formless, disorderly, and not directed toward any meaningful purpose. Briefly, we can say that the characteristics of chance events are disharmony, irregularity, inconsistency, purposelessness, and insignificance. We will write down these four characteristics on our list.

CONSISTENCY AND ORGANIZATION

Now let us compare the things in the universe with these characteristics. Take, for example, the human being. He is carried in his mother's womb for nine months and delivered; he grows up and eventually dies. This cycle is repeated for every single individual. Consistency can be observed. It is not a wild game of chance. Again, look at the sun above your head. It does not exist purposelessly. Rather, it has its purpose and significance. Look at the moon, the stars, and the myriads of galaxies through your telescope. Some stars have their own planets. They all follow definite tracks and patterns. They are all organized. Their manner of motion can be calculated and predicted. The calendar in your hand is derived from them. Even next year's calendar can be printed before this year is past. All these show that the universe is organized, consistent, and purposeful.

MICROORGANISMS

Let us turn to the micro-world. Take a thin slice of wood. Put it under a microscope and observe its grain and structure, all meticulously regular and

rhythmic. Even a blade of grass and the petal of a flower are finely fashioned. Nothing is unorganized or confused. Everything is disciplined and functional. All these things witness one fact to you: the universe, with its macro and micro aspects, is purposeful and meaningful. Can you say that all these came into existence by chance? Surely you cannot.

IS IT OCCUPIED?

Once I was preaching the gospel with a co-worker of mine in a village. On the way back we were extremely thirsty. There was neither a teahouse nor stream for us to get water. In fact the whole area was uninhabited. After walking for a while we came across a thatched hut. We went to the door quickly and knocked. For a long time there was no answer. We thought that no one lived there. When we opened the door and went in, we found that the floor was swept clean. In one of the rooms was a bed with nicely folded sheets. There was a teapot on the table, and the tea in it was still warm. I said, "Surely someone must be living here. All the arrangements indicate beyond doubt that this place is occupied by someone. We should not drink this tea. We must get out quickly or else people will think we are thieves." We walked out and waited for the owner to return.

By observing the arrangements of the house, we concluded that someone was living there, without having seen the occupant. In the same way, we know that God is there by the arrangement of everything in the universe, although we cannot see Him. Every single phenomenon of nature is so balanced, organized, meaningful, and functional. You may say that they come by chance, but it is impossible for me to believe that chance is its sole originator. The Bible says, "The fool has said in his heart,/There is no God." Only foolish people can say in their hearts that there is no God.

CHANCE OR DESIGN

The universe has to be created by Someone with profound wisdom, vast knowledge, and intricate design. If you cannot accept the concept of random formation of the universe, you have to admit that it was created by such a God. There cannot be a third explanation. The choice is left to you. You have to decide if the universe came by chance or whether it was created by God.

A DEMAND AND ITS OBJECT

One witness may not be enough. I will call in another. This time we will consider man's heart. Before doing so, we should also observe one fact: wherever there is a desire, there must first be an object for that desire. For example, an orphan who has never seen his father naturally has a desire for a kind of paternal love. I have asked many people who were orphans, and they all have felt this irrepressible yearning. By this we can see that every desire of the heart arises out of an object in the world.

As human beings we have a need for social belonging. We need companionship and mutuality. If you put a boy on a deserted island and he grows up alone, he still has the yearning for companions, for beings like himself, even though he has never seen a human being. This yearning or desire is the very proof that somewhere in the world there is something known as "man." At a certain age, man begins to think about posterity; he starts desiring children and grandchildren. This is not a mere fantasy. This desire stems out of the existence and possibility of offspring. Hence, where there is desire, there is an object for that desire.

THERE IS GOD IN THE HEART

Do we have any desires other than social identity and self-propagation? What other cravings do we have? Deep in everyone there is a craving for God. Whether they are highly civilized races, such as those among the Caucasians, or the ancient civilizations, such as the Chinese civilizations, or the African natives and uncultured aborigines, they all have a common craving—God. As long as they are men, they have a yearning for God, no matter what race or nationality. This is a fact. You cannot argue against it. Everyone is seeking after God. Everywhere man is craving for God. This is very clear.

By applying the principle that we just mentioned, we can see that since our heart feels the need for a God, there must necessarily be a God in the universe. Since there is a need for God in the heart, there must be the existence of God in the universe. If no God exists, we would never have such a craving in our heart. We all have an appetite for food. In the same way, we all have an appetite for God. It would be impossible to live if there was only an appetite for food but no food. Likewise, it would be impossible to live if there was a capacity for God but no God.

NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT GOD?

Once an atheist rudely rebuked me in a loud voice: "You said that a man has the psychological need for a God. But there is no such thing, and I do not believe in it." I said, "Well, do you mean to say that you never think about God? In fact, even while you were talking, you were thinking about Him. This indicates that you do have a capacity for God. There is no one who has never thought about God. He may try not to think much about Him. Since this thought is in you, there must be such an object outside of you."

THE WORDS AND THE HEART

A young man once came to me to argue about God. He was vehemently against the existence of God. He gave me one reason after another for saying that there is no God. As he was enumerating the various reasons why God should not exist, I listened to him quietly without saying a word. Then I said, "Although you insist that there is no God and support yourself with so many arguments, you have lost your case already." He said, "What do you mean?" I went on to explain: "Your mouth can say as much as you want about there not being a God, but your heart is on my side." He had to agree with me. Although one can give all sorts of reasons in the head, there is a belief in the heart that no argument can defeat. A stubborn person may give a thousand and one reasons, but you can have the boldness to tell him, "You know better in your heart that there is a God. Why bother to look for evidence outside?"

CALL ON GOD IN DANGER

Once a missionary to South America saw a man preaching before a crowd in an open space in a forest. The man forcefully and vehemently denied the existence of God. With enthusiasm he gave more than ten reasons, one after another, to prove the nonexistence of God. After he finished speaking, he asked, "Is there any one of you who would like to object? Please come up here."

For a while there was silence. The missionary decided that he should say something. He stood up and told the crowd, "Friends, I cannot give many reasons. I can only give facts and tell you a story. Yesterday I was walking along the bank of the big river which, as you all know, is very rapid and leads to a treacherous waterfall. I was at the bank and I heard a man shouting for help. He distinctly cried, ‘O God! Save me!’ I ran toward the sound and found a man in the midst of the river tumbling toward the waterfall. Without hesitation or thought of danger, I jumped into the river. The torrent was rapid,

and I fought hard to keep myself from being swept under. Fortunately, I was quite strong. With one arm around him and the other swimming through the water, I managed to drag him ashore. After I did this, I felt quite happy. Do you know who the man who was crying to God for help is? Let me introduce him to you." At these words he pointed towards the man who just made the speech. "The one who called on God yesterday," he concluded, "is the same one who denies God today. This is what you call an atheist!"

All problems come from inside. When a man is on the border of life and death, he calls on God. When danger is over, he argues and denies God. In our heart we all know that there is a God; there is no question about it. We know it because there is a capacity for God. The capacity for God proves that there is God.

IS PRAYER ANSWERED?

We should look not only at objective phenomena but also at our own subjective experience. We know that God answers prayers. Once I spoke to a person who resolutely denied the existence of God. I told him not to be too bold or presumptuous. The history of mankind is about five to six thousand years old. During this span of time, countless numbers of people both in Christianity and outside have prayed to God. Can you prove that not even one of these many prayers, throughout many years and among many people, has been answered? Are you so bold as to brush aside with one stroke the validity of all answers to prayers? These people prayed to heaven. Can you say that none of their prayers were answered? Let me testify that not only have there been one or two answers; there have been countless answers. Of course, one answer would suffice to prove the existence of God. Friends, do you think that there has never been an answer to prayer? Would you say that all answers to prayer are false? I personally have had at least two to three thousand answers to prayers. Is it conceivable to regard them all as mere coincidences? Many other people had their prayers answered. Are all those also coincidences?

Once a preacher was traveling across the Atlantic when a thick fog suddenly surrounded the ship. The vessel could not proceed and had to be anchored in the middle of the sea. The man went to the captain and said, "You have to hoist the sail again; I am scheduled to preach in Quebec on Tuesday." The captain replied, "Do you see the thick fog? It is impossible for the ship to proceed. If you can pray to dispel the fog, I will surely pull up my anchor." The preacher answered, "Go right ahead. I am going to pray right here while

you pull up the anchor. There is no time to lose." He began to pray. The captain began to work on the anchor as the preacher prayed. When the anchor was up, the fog was gone. The ship arrived on time. Was this a coincidence?

THE TRUE GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

Once I went with a few brothers to a village to preach. Many people there said, "Our god is most powerful; he is called Dah-wang (i.e., the Great King). Once a year we hold a procession for him, and for years good weather always prevails that day. We have never had bad weather on that day." Prompted by God, one of us said, "Tomorrow when the procession goes on, it will certainly rain." The next day, the parade was scheduled for ten o'clock. But from nine o'clock in the morning, it rained heavily; the Great King was not able to come out, and the scheduled parade was called off. After much debate it was announced that as a result of careful calculation the day had been erroneously chosen; it should have been the fourteenth instead of the eleventh. We boldly declared that it would surely rain again on the fourteenth. The day came, and it did rain again. With no other choice, the people carried the statue of Dah-wang out for the procession. The bearers slipped on the way more than once, and Dah-wang fell and was broken to pieces. Was this a coincidence? There are innumerable incidents of this same nature. They are only a very small part of the Christian experience. If all the answers to prayers were enumerated, no one knows how big a volume it would take. These answers to prayers are a strong proof of the existence of God.

PARCEL FROM THE UNITED STATES

When I was young I had a wild and stubborn mentality. Not only did I refuse to believe in a God, but I refused to even believe in a United States of America. After seeing its map I still did not believe that there was such a place. One day when my father was going to order some items from there, I casually put in an order for a pair of shoes and a toy boat. Later when he brought back a parcel from the post office and gave me the shoes and the toy boat, I began to believe in the reality of the United States because I saw with my own eyes the parcel from America. Years afterward when I was in Chicago, I purposely visited the department store from which I obtained my toy. Pointing to the building with my finger, I told myself that this was what made me believe in America.

I cannot give you a direct proof or a direct answer to the question of the existence of God. But I am presenting all these testimonies of answers to prayers. You should not be so bold to make a sweeping denial of God and a categorical rejection of the credibility of prayers.

CONTACTING GOD THROUGH PRAYER

Once I met a student at Yenching University. He confessed to me, "When I was in high school, both the chaplain and the teachers taught me that there is a God, and I believed in Him. Later I went to college, and everybody said that there is no God. The world, they said, came into existence by natural evolution, and the universe was formed by chance. After so many people said the same thing, I became confused. For many months this problem troubled me. I had to choose one of the two possibilities. Is there a God, or is there not a God? At first I pondered the theory of chance. Is it conceivable that several things which are lumped together, shaken, and mixed with each other can result in a living human being? Is it conceivable that the whole world and even the whole universe were constituted in this fashion? I could not arrive at a conclusion with this kind of conjecture. Finally, I could not help but bow down on my knees and say, 'O God, I do not know if You really exist. The more I think about it, the more I am confused. Please show me Yourself.' Two weeks after this prayer, I rejected the theory of chance and believed that there is a Creator. I cannot tell you why I made this decision. But I believe that God answered my prayer and led me to believe in Him." This is another case of prayer being answered. I know God too well. I have had dealings with Him numerous times, and too many transactions have been settled between Him and me. I know what I am saying. If you have ever touched God, you will know what I am saying also.

CAREFUL JUDGMENT

Now what would you say? After looking at nature and the universe, after checking with your inner feeling, and after listening to the testimonies of so many witnesses, it is up to you to decide whether or not there is a God. But you should not be irresponsible; your attitude must be sober because everyone has to meet God soon. One day you will all stand before Him. Everything concerning yourself will be laid bare. On that day you will know God. But now is the time for you to be prepared. We should all be prepared to meet our God.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WORD OF GOD

I shall begin by assuming that the issue of God's existence is settled. We all believe that there is a God. As those who desire to know the truth, we must go one step further to find out what kind of God He is. God is the greatest Unknown. We must spend some time to find out about this unknown One. The next step now is to know what kind of a God He is.

THE BIRTH OF RELIGION

In the past few thousand years man has been inquiring about the nature of God. Is He kind or is He righteous? Is He indifferent towards us, or is He extremely interested in human affairs? These types of questions are the direct cause of all human religions. What is religion? Religion is man's inquiry about God and his explanation of Him. Through these explanations, different men have arrived at different concepts about God. What kind of God is He? This is a big question. It is also a very serious question. We have all given our thought to this subject at one time or another. The question might even have occurred to our little mind when we were five years old. All men, educated or ignorant, have been intrigued by this question. It comes naturally after some contemplation and observation.

MAN'S CONJECTURE OF GOD

But a person trying to speculate about God is like an ant attempting to understand a human being. It is extremely difficult for the little creature to try to realize our life, nature, and mind. In the same way it is impossible for us to try to comprehend God. For this reason, in the past few thousand years, all kinds of people, theologians and philosophers alike, have done much thinking about Him. What has God been doing all this time? Has He been indifferent to us or has He tried to reveal Himself to us? What is God's attitude? Do you think He would say, "I am God and have nothing to do with human beings. I do not care what you think about Me. I shall stay in heaven as God. Let the mortals be ignorant!" Or do you think He has a desire to reveal Himself to man and visit him?

When I was in India, I saw some people lying naked on beds studded with nails. Some walked with bare feet on burning coals. These people devoted a great deal of energy to seeking after God. What has God done to them? Did He hide Himself and take no notice of them at all? Has He not kept Himself as a perpetual mystery? This is a great question. We have to consider it scientifically and objectively in order to find out what God is like.

GOD IS LIFE

A few years ago I spoke on a similar subject to some medical students in an auditorium in Cheloo University. I said that man is an organism with a life. God also is a life. Man's life is higher than that of the lower animals, and God's life is even higher than that of man. I asked the students, "Since we realize that all living organisms have some common laws and express some common traits, can you name them?" Different ones then started to bring up different points. At the end we summed up the discussion in this way: all living organisms contain two common characteristics. You can call these characteristics their common expressions or their common laws. First, every life wants to preserve itself. It tends to reproduce itself. There is the ability to produce posterity, to continue its own life. Second, every life wants to have fellowship with other lives. It cannot stand being by itself. When a man cannot find fellowship with another human being, he goes to dogs, cats, fish, or birds and makes friends with animals. All living creatures desire fellowship.

Based on these two characteristics of life, namely, the preservation of itself and fellowship with others, laws of human government are instituted. For example, the death penalty reflects a convict's desire to preserve his own life; punishment comes in the form of taking away and terminating such a life. This is the way to inflict suffering on a life. Imprisonment, as a less serious punishment, cuts him off from having fellowship with others. This reversal of the life principle becomes then a suffering for him. From this we see that punishment is applied according to the principles of life.

With these two chief characteristics in mind, let us turn to the life of God. God is an organism of a higher order than human beings. He is naturally governed by this law of life. We can know God by the characteristics and distinctive features of His life. From this we can deduce whether or not God wants to have fellowship with man.

NATURAL RELIGION VERSUS REVELATIONAL RELIGION

There are two kinds of religion: religion based on natural concepts and religion based on revelation. Natural religion starts with man as the center. He is the one that is seeking after God and studying about Him. What then is revelational religion? Revelational religion comes directly from God. He is the One who comes to reveal things to us. Man's thoughts are often useless fancies. God's revelation alone is trustworthy. Christianity is different from all other natural religions in that it is a religion that comes from revelation. Christianity begins from God. It is God who comes to seek out man, rather than man who seeks after God.

I will not try to persuade you to believe in Christianity or to read the Bible. I will only make a few suppositions. We will treat the subject in the same way as if we were solving a problem in geometry. We will start from the suppositions and then deduce our arguments step by step. We will examine our reasonings to see if they are sound and if our conclusions are logical. As in mathematics, with some problems we work forwards, while with others we work backwards. At any rate, in the end we should be able to tell whether or not a supposition is justified.

A FEW SUPPOSITIONS

We have to make a few suppositions. The first one is that God exists. This in fact has been covered by us already. We have agreed that there is a God. He is a Being who has a purpose.

Second, we assume that God has a desire to reveal Himself to man. If God wants to reveal Himself to man and if He wants us to know Him, how does He do it? In what manner can He be made known to us? If He speaks to us through thunder or writes to us through lightning, we will not be able to comprehend His message. How then does God make Himself known to us?

THE WAY GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

If He is to reveal Himself and if He wants us to know Him, He necessarily must do it through human means. What then are the common ways that men communicate with one another? First, they do it through speaking and second through writing. All means of communication, whether telegraph, telephone, sign, or symbols, are all included in these two categories. If God is to manifest Himself, these are the only two means for Him to do so. For the present we

set aside the aspect of speaking; we will see how God communicates with us through writing.

If God reveals Himself through writing, of all the volumes written by different people throughout the centuries, there must be one book which is divinely inspired. This is a very crucial test. If such a book exists, it proves not only the existence of God, but it contains His written revelation to us as well. Is there then such a divinely written book?

In the search for such a book, let us first mention a few basic principles. Suppose I want to order a book from a publisher. If I can tell him the name and author of the book, there will be no trouble getting it. If, however, I forget the name and author of the book, I can describe the characteristics of it to the publisher, such as the contents, size, color, binding, etc. The publisher will then search through all his books and locate the volume I want. God has one book in this universe. How do we find it? We have to know its characteristics first. If there is any book that has been written by God, it must meet certain conditions or have certain qualifications before one can say that it is from God.

FOUR QUALIFICATIONS

Let me put forth a few propositions. If there is a book written by God, it must first of all mention God. It must tell you that it is from God and that its author is God. This is the first qualification. Second, it must carry a moral tone that is higher than what we commonly know. If it is a fabrication, it can at the most be on the same level as man. Third, if there is such a divine book, it must tell us about the past and the future of this world. Only God knows clearly what occurred in the past and what will happen in the future. Only by telling us these matters will we know Him as God. Fourth, this book must be simple and available so that all may be able to secure and understand it. If there were only one such book in the world, then only a very few people would be able to see it. It would not pass the test unless it is a book accessible to everyone. In the United States there is a group of people who claim to have a book from God. It is engraved in gold and contains only twelve pages. Such a book then would not be accessible to the Chinese. God would never write to us a book at which we could not look.

Now the matter is simplified. Let us repeat these four conditions once more. (1) If such a book exists, it must tell us explicitly that its author is God. (2) It

must carry a high tone of morality. (3) It must give a detailed description of the past and the future of the universe. (4) It must be available. Let us pick out some of the more important writings throughout human civilization and check them against these qualifications to see if any meets our requirements.

GOOD BOOKS

We will start from books that are generally considered to be good. Let us take the Chinese classics of Confucius. They are immediately disqualified under the first requirement, for none of them claims to be written by God. They do have a high tone of morality, but they fail to give the origin and destiny of the world, the universe, and man. This does not mean that they are worthless books; it means that they do not contain the qualifications we want. They are not what we are looking for.

Let us go to the classics of other cultures. There are numerous volumes of famous writings, but none of them passes the first test. They are all clearly written by man. They may be masterpieces in philosophy or morality, but they are not written by God, nor are they divinely inspired. We have to set them aside.

There is a book in India called the Rig-Veda. It once dominated Hinduism. However, it does not claim to be written by God.

Another book called the Avesta, written by a Persian named Zoroaster, is also extremely influential in the Middle East. It does not claim to be from God either. Moreover, its moral tone is not especially commendable.

Let us come to the Koran of Mohammedanism. This is the closest one we can find. It tells us that it comes from God; it meets the first requirement. However, it does not fulfill the second requirement, for its moral tone is too low. The heaven it describes is full of lusts and flesh. God could never write a book with such licentiousness and immorality. Hence, this book does not pass the test of morality.

THE ONLY BOOK THAT MEETS ALL FOUR CONDITIONS

After searching through all the books, you have to come finally to the Bible. If God desires to communicate with man, and if He does so through writing, then this is the only book that can pass the four tests. Hence, this must be the book God has for man.

What does this book say? In the books of the law in the Old Testament, it says, "Thus saith the Lord," at least five hundred times. Other books in the Old Testament repeat the phrase about seven hundred times. In addition to the references in the New Testament to the speakings of God, the Bible has more than two thousand claims of divine origin. If God has no intention of communicating with man, we can forget about this book. But if He does communicate with man through writing, then this book has to be of immense value. Can you find another book where God is claimed as its author that many times?

We have to see if the Bible meets the second qualification. Let us take a look at its moral tone. Everyone who has studied this book confesses that it carries the highest moral standard. Even the sins of the most noble persons are recorded and condemned without mercy. Once a strong opposer of the Bible was asked by his son, "Why are you so strong against the Bible?" He answered, "If I do not condemn it, it will condemn me." This book does not let us get by easily. The human concept is that all sexual acts outside marriage are considered as fornication. The Bible, however, says that even an evil thought is fornication. Human morality condemns an act of killing as murder, but the Bible condemns a slight hatred in the heart as murder.

We consider a man who lets his enemy get by without paying vengeance as forgiving. But the Bible charges man to love his enemy. How high is its moral tone, and how low we are before its standards! You cannot help but admit that it presents the best ethical code for humanity.

PAST AND FUTURE

Furthermore, this book describes in detail the past and future of the universe. Once a friend told me that he could believe in everything the Bible says except the parts in Genesis and Revelation where it talks about the origin and destiny of the heavens and earth. I told him that if this is indeed a book from God, it must, of necessity, contain these matters. If the Bible did not contain Genesis and Revelation, it would be the same as any other book, and we would have to look for another book; it would not be the one we want. But the past condition of the world and its future destiny are recorded here. Hence, the third qualification is also met.

OVER TWO HUNDRED MILLION COPIES SOLD

What is the circulation of such a book? Last year (1935), more than two hundred million copies were sold. Can you name another book that has such a high circulation rate? This statistic, moreover, is not limited to just last year; every year the number has remained approximately the same. In one sense this book is very popular. In another sense it is like a thorn in your hand; it pierces you. This book gives you a headache. It creates an unspeakable uneasiness within man. It even causes man to oppose it. In spite of this, its annual sales are still over two hundred million.

Furthermore, this book is translated into more than seven hundred twenty languages. In every country and among every race, there is a translation of this unique book. It is extremely easy for anyone to obtain a Bible anywhere in the world. If the Rig-Veda were God's book, then more than half of the world would perish due to a failure in obtaining it. Even if you put the Rig-Veda in my hand, I would still be unable to understand it. If only the educated ones can contact God, then I am destined to go to hell. If only the Indians have the opportunity, we Chinese, as well as other races, are out of hope. If God speaks through the Rig-Veda, then where can we find that book? Maybe we can only find the original copy in the London Museum. And even that may not contain the original meaning of God's revelation to man.

A COMPLETE BOOK

This is not all. The Bible contains sixty-six books and it is divided into the Old and New Testaments. It was written by no less than forty people. The span from the time the first book was written to the time when the last book was finished is more than sixteen hundred years. The places where they were written are also different. Some were written in Babylon, some in Italy, some at one end of Asia Minor, others at the other end of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the writers themselves differed in their backgrounds. Some were lawyers; some were fishermen. There were princes, and there were shepherds. All these writings by men of different backgrounds, languages, environments, and periods are put together. The amazing thing is that it is still a complete book.

All those who have had some experience of editing know that in order to put together a few articles written by different authors, it is necessary for the authors to be of comparable level of academic achievements and viewpoints. Even when the academic standard and viewpoints are similar, there will still be conflicts and contradictions when you put five or six articles together. But

the Bible, though complex in contents, contains history, poetry, laws, prophecies, biographies, and doctrines and was written by so many different ones at different times and under different circumstances, yet when you put them together, they surprisingly run as one continuous volume. There is no conflict or contradiction. They are written in one breath.

GOD'S HAND

If you read this book carefully, you have to admit that God's hand is behind all the writings. More than forty people of varied backgrounds and ideas in different times and places wrote these sixty-six books. When you group them up, they link together as if they were written by one individual. Genesis was written about fifteen hundred years before Christ, and Revelation was written ninety-five years after Christ. There is a time span of sixteen hundred years. One talks about the beginning while the other projects the end of the world. Yet whatever begins in Genesis is concluded in Revelation. This amazing feature cannot be explained in human terms. Every word of it has to be written by God through man. God is the motivating One behind the whole composition.

DIE FOR THE BIBLE

There is another remarkable thing about this book. In itself it is a book that gives life. Yet countless numbers of people have lost their lives for its sake. There was a time when anyone who held this book in his hand would immediately be put to death. The most powerful empire in history was the Roman Empire. There was a time when this empire summoned all its forces to destroy this book. Everyone who possessed it would be inhumanly persecuted and later killed or burned. They wiped out thousands of people and burned countless copies of the Bible. They even set up a monument at a place where they killed Christians. On it was the inscription: "Christianity is buried here." They thought that when they had burned all the Bibles and removed all the Christians, they would see Christianity lying there beneath their feet. But it was not long after that when the Bible came back again. Even in a country like England, which has already accepted Christianity as its state religion, you can still find tombs of martyrs for Christ if you visit different places there. Here and there you can find places where the Bible was once burned. Or you may come across a tombstone that tells you that such and such a person tried so hard and wrote so many books in his life to oppose the Bible. One place may tell you that the Bible was once burned there, and

another place may tell you that Christians were once killed there. One signpost may point you to a statue of martyrdom, and another may point to a site of Bible burning.

Why is it that so many people have tried so hard to oppose this book? Why is it that men would pass by other books, but would either oppose this book with every fibre of their being or would put their whole life to the stake for it? There must be something extraordinary here. Even if you do not believe that this is God's word, you have to admit that there is something unusual about this book.

IT WILL NOT LET YOU GO

This book seems to be very simple and easy. If you consider it from the historical point of view, it tells the origin of the universe, the earth, the plants, human beings, how they established their kingdoms, and how they will eventually end. This is all. There is nothing special about it. Yet it has been handed from generation to generation for centuries. Today it is still with us. Moreover, if you do not confess that it is truth, you have to conclude that it is false. You can disregard many books, but you cannot ignore this book. Nor will it ignore you. It will not let you go. It demands a verdict from you. It will not pass you by.

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

Another remarkable thing about this book is that almost half of it is prophecy. Among the prophecies, almost half of them are fulfilled. The other half are for the future and await fulfillment. For example, it predicted the fate of the nations of Moab and Ammon and of the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Today when people talk about big cities, they mention London and Shanghai. Then it was Tyre and Sidon. They were two chief cities of the ancient world. The prophecies concerning these two cities were all fulfilled. Once I was in the Middle East. For some reason I did not visit those two places. However, I bought two pictures of those cities. It amazed me when I looked at those pictures. I could not help but believe in the Bible. It was prophesied that if these two metropolitan cities did not repent, they would be destroyed and devastated. Their land would become hills of rocks and pebbles where fishermen would come to dry their nets. In the pictures that I bought, there was nothing but fishing boats and open nets on the shore. This is only one small fact that proves the reliability of biblical prophecy.

If you compare past events with the prophecies in the Bible, you will find that they all correspond one with another. For another example, take the birth of Christ. Isaiah prophesied concerning a virgin with child a few hundred years before Christ actually came. Later, He was born indeed of the virgin Mary. The prophecy was accurately fulfilled. As the prophecies concerning the past have been fulfilled, so the prophecies concerning the future must also be fulfilled.

THE BOOK FOUND

If God desires to communicate with man, He must do so through common human channels of communication. He must use the human language or human writings. In other words, there must be a book in the world that is a direct revelation from God. If such a book does exist, it must contain the four criteria we mentioned. Now we can say that such a book is found. This book tells us that God desires to have fellowship with us. He speaks to us through this book. Through it God is no longer an unknown Being. We can now know Him. This book is the Bible. I hope all of you will read it.

CHAPTER THREE

GOD BECOMING MAN

(1)

SPOKEN LANGUAGE BEING A BETTER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

God desires to reveal Himself to us. He does so through means that are comprehensible to man. These are namely written and spoken language. We have seen how God reveals Himself through writing. Now we want to take a look at His revelation through speaking.

Suppose that you have had correspondence with a person for many years; however, you have never seen him. Naturally, you would want to know him more by having some direct acquaintance with him. Full understanding of someone cannot be achieved merely through writing. Direct contact gives a better chance. It seems as if communication through speech is of a more intimate and thorough nature than writing. When spoken language is added to written language, communication becomes enhanced. If you take away either of the two, you have a gap. Of course, if you take away both, communication is completely voided. Effective communication is always carried out by these two means.

If God's intention is to reveal Himself to us, He must of necessity do so through speaking. But how does God speak? Does He trumpet from the heavens? If so, we would all be frightened to death. We would all run away. No one would dare to listen. There is a chasm between Him and us. He, being so high and great, would drive us away from His holiness. How then does He speak?

THE WINTER ON THE MOUNTAIN

Let me relate to you a story. One winter I was staying on the mountain Lu-shan, recovering from an illness. It was immediately after the war, and there was practically no one living on the mountain. In the vicinity of my dwelling, one could hardly see anyone all day long. I am a quiet person by nature. This kind of environment was very appealing to me. Not only was it quiet there, but the weather was cold as well. From morning till dusk, all I saw

was a boy who came three times to deliver my meals. At the beginning I was quite at ease. But after a while, even a person like me began to feel lonely.

One day after lunch I went to take a nap. There was a balcony outside my bedroom window. When I woke up I saw some little creatures gathering around the balcony. Bits of my meal had been dropped there, and the birds were busily chirping around them. As they hopped around, they chirped and made many cheerful noises. I said to myself, "All right. Since I cannot find any human beings, I will try to make friends with these little birds."

I rose up and went out to greet them. But in an instant they all flew away. An idea came to me. I took some of the leftover rice and began to arrange it in rows, with only a few grains in the first row and gradually increased them towards the entrance of the doorway. I hid behind the door and watched them coming. Soon they gathered around again. I said to myself, "This is my chance." I walked out and began to make friends with them. But the minute they saw me, they all scattered. Some perched on the branches of the tree across the balcony and stared at me, as if trying to determine what my intention was. Every time I approached them, they flew away, and every time I walked away, they came back. This went on a number of times.

REFUSING TO COME

I wanted to preach to the birds. I wanted to tell them, "Little birds, I have no special intention in doing this. This is winter on the mountain, and food is scarce. I have enough food with me, and I just want to share it with you. Please be at peace and come down. I only ask that as you eat, I can sit among you. I want to listen to your songs and watch you playing. Come. Let us be friends..." But the birds would not come. They did not understand me. I had to give up.

Later I had a certain realization within. I began to preach to myself. I said, "This body of mine is too big. If I could shrink from five feet eleven inches to the size of a bird, and even change myself into a bird, they would not be alarmed by my presence. I could then tell them my heart's intention, and we could spend the winter on the mountain Lu-shan together."

GOD MUST BECOME THE SAME AS WE ARE

We have a similar problem today. If God remained God, we could never understand Him. If He talked to us in His language, we would be altogether

lost. If God wants to reveal Himself through speaking and have fellowship with man, He must shrink Himself to such a degree that He and we are the same. Only then would He be able to speak to us and tell us of Himself and of the mysteries of the universe. Only then would we be able to understand Him.

Has God become a man to reveal Himself through His speaking? Let us again use the method of supposition. What if God revealed Himself through the human language? What if He became a man and fellowshipped with man? The implication is tremendous here! It would mean that in this world, among all the human beings throughout history, one person was not merely a man, but God as well! If it is granted that God became a man, there must be a mortal who was also divine. We need to find out about this One.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A MAN TO BE GOD

This is a thorny task. But we will employ the effective method we have adopted—namely, setting down a few principles. Then we will search according to these qualifications and directions. We want to base our evaluation on what manner of life a person should possess and what qualifications he must have if he is God.

The first condition that this person must fulfill is that he must claim to be God while he is on earth. He cannot be apologetic about it. He must declare boldly that he is God. Only then can we know who he is. Without this declaration, we have no way to guess his identity. Hence, a declaration is our first qualification.

Second, the way this person came into the world must be different from ours. If I said that I am God and yet was born in the same manner as every other mortal, my words would carry no force. If on the other hand, I dropped down from heaven, my assertion would be taken seriously. The way this person comes into being must be extraordinary. He must come in an absolutely different fashion; otherwise, his words will not carry the necessary weight.

Third, this man must bear a moral standard that is far above that of all other human beings. He must have God's holiness, and his life must bear the mark of God's righteousness. For example, if I became a bird and lived in exactly the same way as other birds, without showing them anything extraordinary, I could not convince them that I was actually a man. If God is

to become a man, His moral behavior must be of the highest quality. This is the only way that we could identify Him as God.

Furthermore, if a person is God, he must necessarily be able to perform things which no mortal can do. If he can achieve what we cannot achieve and know what we do not know, we can say that he is truly God.

Lastly, this person must be able to tell us the divine purpose concerning man. What was God's purpose in creating the universe and man? How does He take care of human pains and sorrows? What is the origin and ultimate solution of everything in the universe? What should our attitude towards God be? All these he must reveal to us. Unless this one shows us what we do not see, we cannot say that he has shown us any revelation.

A MAN WHO MEETS ALL FIVE CONDITIONS

We will set down these five conditions and put the whole of humanity to the test. Let us find out if someone meets the five requirements. Such a person would surely be qualified to be God.

The first person to put to the test should be yourself. Of course, you are not God, because you have never claimed to be God. Nor have I ever claimed to be. So that rules out you and me. Very well, now we will introduce Confucius. If you read his books, you will find that he did conduct a very moral and proper life. But he never claimed to be God either. Hence, he fails in the first step.

What about Sakya Muni, the founder of Buddhism? Not only was there an absence of the claim of divinity, but his philosophy itself is void of deity. He did not believe in the existence of God. Since he had no God, he cannot be God either.

Next, go to Mohammed. He believed in God. But he never claimed to be God. He called God Allah and himself the prophet of Allah. If you go through every person in history, you will discover that no one ever claimed to be God except One. That One was Jesus of Nazareth. He claimed to be the living God. No other person put forward such a claim.

THE CLAIM TO BE GOD—A SERIOUS MATTER

How can Jesus of Nazareth claim to be God? Before going on, we have to pause for a moment to seriously consider the matter. It is not a light thing to

claim to be God. A person who makes such a claim falls into one of three categories. He must belong to one of these three categories; he cannot belong to all three. First, if he claims to be God and yet in fact is not, he has to be a madman or a lunatic. Second, if he is neither God nor a lunatic, he has to be a liar, deceiving others by his lie. Third, if he is neither of these, he must be God. You can only choose one of the three possibilities. If you do not believe that he is God, you have to consider him a madman. If you cannot take him for either of the two, you have to take him for a liar. There is no need for us to prove if Jesus of Nazareth is God or not. All we have to do is find out if He is a lunatic or a liar. If He is neither, He must be the Son of God. These are our three choices. There is no fourth.

THE SON AND THE FATHER ARE ONE

What did Jesus of Nazareth say about Himself? In John 10:30 He said, "I and the Father are one." We need some explanation here. In the Bible the invisible God is called the Father. The Son manifests and expresses the Father. What is hidden is the Father, and what is expressed is the Son. The Son is the One who can be seen and touched. Behind, you have the Father. In front, you have the Son. The two are actually one. They are the two sides of the same reality. When we talk about two, we refer to the fact that one is hidden while the other is revealed. When we talk about one, we say that the revealed One is just the hidden One in manifestation. This is the biblical interpretation of the Father and the Son.

Therefore, when Jesus of Nazareth one day said, "I and the Father are one," it was a statement that no one else could make. This man was saying in reality that He and the invisible God are one entity. He is God and God is He. God is the invisible Father, and He is the manifested Son. The Father and the Son are one! Who can this One be that made such a claim? Is He a madman? Is He out to deceive us?

After Jesus spoke such a word, what reaction do we see? "The Jews again took up stones that they might stone Him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these works are you stoning Me? The Jews answered Him, We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, are making Yourself God" (vv. 31-33). The Jews understood very well that Jesus' words meant that He claimed to be God. After hearing these words they wanted to stone Him to death. A claim was made by Jesus, and an accusation was charged by the Jews,

both of which concerned His divinity. Was Jesus insane? Did He speak pure nonsense just to cause people to kill Him? Or was He a swindler setting up some kind of a scheme? If so, what was He trying to gain? Was He trying to gain death?

THE SON EXPRESSES THE FATHER

Perhaps we will go back a little bit to the earlier parts in the Gospel of John and see what it says there. John 1:18 says, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Why has no one seen God? It is because God is invisible. Jesus said that He was the only Begotten of the Father; He expressed the invisible Father. When you see the only Begotten, you see the Father.

Again He spoke concerning Himself, "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven" (3:13). Have you ever heard anyone say such words? I cannot say, "No one has been to Shanghai, but he who comes from Shanghai to Tientsin, even I, Watchman Nee, who is in Shanghai." If I say so, I would be gibbering nonsense. But Jesus was speaking a heavenly language. He said that He came out of heaven and is still in heaven. What can a person be if he can be in two places simultaneously? Either he is God or he is a lunatic or he is a liar. If you have not yet believed in Christ, please give a verdict to this issue. Who is this man?

SPEAKING THINGS OUT OF HEAVEN

Let us read John 3:31-32: "He who comes from above is above all; he who is from the earth is of the earth and speaks out of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies, and no one receives His testimony." He said that He came out of heaven and was above all. After a while He said the same thing again. Let us see what is the purpose behind these words. He came to preach the things of heaven, but no one received His words. He mentioned words like "heaven," "above all," "out of heaven," etc. What kind of man was He? Confucius never said this. Neither did Sakya Muni or Mohammed. Was Jesus of Nazareth a madman, a liar, or the Son of God?

John 5:17 says, "But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working." He always put Himself in the same place as the

Father. Verse 18 says, "Because of this therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." When we read His words now, we may consider them to be ordinary remarks. But the Jews knew what He was saying. They knew that He was making Himself equal with God. The words in fact meant that God is His Father and He came to express God. The invisible One is God, and the visible One is He. Therefore, the Jews sought to kill Him. What should we do about such an unusual person?

KNOWING THE SON IS KNOWING THE FATHER

John 6:46 says, "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except Him who is from God, He has seen the Father." Here the word is clearer. He said that no one other than Himself has ever seen God. Only He knew what the Father is like. I can only say with soberness and reverence that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Read John 8:18. What did He say? "I am One who testifies concerning Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies concerning Me." The question in verse 19 is most interesting: "They said then to Him, Where is Your Father? Jesus answered, You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." Have you seen what He was saying? They had seen Him, yet did not know Him. Of course they would not know the Father either, whom they had not seen. If men knew Him, they knew God. Who is He then? If knowing Him equals knowing God, is that not the same as saying that He is God and God is He?

Read John 8:23: "And He said to them, You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." The preposition "from" in this verse is *ek* in Greek. It means "out of." That is how it should be translated. He said, "You are out of this world, but I am not out of this world." This man claimed to be from above; He did not come out of this world. Who can He be?

GREATER THAN ABRAHAM

The Jews were confused. They were totally bewildered. Who was this man? The ancestor of the Jews is Abraham. They boasted of being the descendants of Abraham in the same way the Chinese boast of being the offspring of Hwang-ti. The name Abraham was highly venerated among the Jews. Now they brought out Abraham. Please read John 8:53: "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too. Who are You making

Yourself?" How did Jesus answer them? Was He greater or smaller than Abraham? In verse 56 Jesus said, "Your father Abraham exulted that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced." What is this? Even Abraham had to look forward to Jesus! Hence, verse 57: "The Jews then said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Now please pay your attention to Jesus' answer in verse 58: "Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am." Tell me who this man is. If I told you that before Hwang-ti was, I, Watchman Nee am there, you would immediately write me off as a lunatic. Some of you would say that I am a liar. The words Jesus spoke made Him either a madman, a liar, or God. There can be no fourth alternative.

HE IS IN GOD

We have to read on. In John 10:37-38 Jesus said, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, even if you do not believe Me, believe the works so that you may come to know and continue to know..." Know what? The clause following is very crucial. It is a big statement: "...that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father." Who then is this man? He said that He was in God and God was in Him.

Passages like the above are numerous in the Bible. I shall mention one more. Read carefully John 14:6-7: "Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." It says clearly that if you know Jesus of Nazareth, you have known the invisible God. Why is this so? It is because He is God.

NO NEED TO ASK TO SEE THE FATHER

One of the disciples was confused. John 14:8 says, "Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." Philip was asking to be shown the Father who had been mentioned again and again by Jesus. Verse 9 says, "Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?" Here Jesus made it very plain that to see Him is to see God. He made no apology about it. He is God. There is no need to see the Father anymore. If you see Him, you see God!

A JUDGMENT

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? What would you say? Is He merely the founder of the Christian religion? Is He merely an example of self-sacrifice and humanitarianism? Is He a social reformer? Is He an advocate for universal love, peace, and freedom? Listen to what He said about Himself. He said that He is God. What is your conclusion? Is He a lunatic or a liar? Is He a hoax, or is He God? This is a vital question.

Can He be a madman? If you read His biographies in the Gospels and observe His life and manner, you will realize that not only was He sane and sound, He was very sober and firm. If there is a perfectly sound person in this world, He has to be the One. His mind was clear, and His mentality was alert. If you study His deeds and words carefully, you have to confess that His thoughts are very logical and consistent, and His manners are most comely and appropriate. To opposing ones He only needed to reply a few sentences, and their arguments against Him were defeated. He did not have a trace of madness in Him. A madman could never have done what He did.

Then is He a liar? A liar always lies for a profit. If there is no profit to be gained, what is the purpose of lying? Why was Jesus crucified? For no other reason than that He claimed to be God. At the last judgment, the hour when His release or crucifixion was to be deliberated, He was examined as to who He was. What was His answer? He said that the Son of Man would be seen sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, descending on the clouds in glory (Matt. 26:64). Even then He claimed to be God. As a result, He was crucified on the cross. Is there a liar who would sacrifice his life for his lie?

HIS WORD BEING TRUE

Once I met a person who wanted to talk with me about our faith. He read some books about Jesus and admitted that Jesus had a high standard of morality. He could consider Jesus as a perfect man, a model for humanity. But he could not believe that Jesus is God. I said, "If you admit that He has a high standard of morality, then He at least is not a liar. If you agree that He is not a liar, then you have to accept His claim of divinity as truth. He repeatedly asserted that He is God. If you admire His morality, you have to recognize His divinity as well. Jesus of Nazareth is God!"

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Please read John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 says, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality." What is the "Word" mentioned in verses 1 and 14? Verse 1 speaks of the relationship the Word has with God. In reference to when, the Word was there from the beginning. In reference to where, the Word was with God. In reference to what, the Word was God. Today the Word has become flesh; He has taken on a human body and dwelt among men. As to how He dwells, it says that He is "full of grace and reality," and "we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father." Who is this One? He is Jesus of Nazareth.

Here we have only seen one of the five qualifications mentioned earlier. Only Jesus of Nazareth meets this first condition. This proves that He is God. We shall go on to see the four other conditions or qualifications. Jesus of Nazareth must meet all the other four qualifications before we can conclude that He is God.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD BECOMING MAN

(2)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

If God is to be a man, He must come into the world in a way that is very different from all other mortals. We come into the world through our parents and are conceived by our mothers. To ascertain whether Jesus of Nazareth is an ordinary person or the incarnated God, we need to examine His birth. If His birth was no different from ours, we have to conclude that He is nothing but a man. Not only does He have to pass the first qualification, but He needs to pass the second one. Do not hastily believe in a person simply because he claims to be God; we have to test him by our second criterion. If he is indeed God, he must be born in an extraordinary manner.

If we study the birth of Jesus, we will find that it was very different from ours. He was born of a virgin. Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament tell us this fact. Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary.

BORN OF A VIRGIN

Before we go on, we have to realize that there are two ways to know God: by natural speculation or by revelation. According to natural speculation, one meditates and conjectures about God. In revelation, God speaks to man. We want to look at the revelation of God. We want to know what God says.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke show us that Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary. This important fact enables us to conclude that He is no ordinary person, and it justifies our being a Christian.

The natural mentality cannot readily accept this fact. Some years ago, a big debate was conducted in England. On one side were prominent leaders of modernistic schools of theology. On the other side was a famous Presbyterian pastor-theologian. Four major topics were raised. Twice a day, for four consecutive days, each side took turns delivering a long speech for a total of eight messages. One of the topics was related to our subject—the virgin birth. The modernistic theologians asserted that one reason alone was enough to

disprove the virgin birth—the event was biologically impossible. According to the law of biology, it is impossible to have the virgin birth.

DID IT HAPPEN OR NOT?

On the same day, their opponent gave the rebuttal. Let me briefly mention a few of his arguments. He said, "Our friends have denied the possibility of such an event on the ground of biological law. I am here to ask whether such an event happened. They asked, 'Can this happen?' They referred you to academic principles. I am asking, 'Has this happened?' I point to a historical occurrence. It is one thing to be academically justified. It is another thing to be historically recorded."

As he was speaking, he drew out a newspaper from his pocket. In the paper was an article about an accident that had happened a few days earlier. A man was driving on a winding mountain road. Due to carelessness, the car slid and tumbled down a deep gorge. The car was totally wrecked. Not even a square foot of the vehicle was left untouched. It was thoroughly damaged. But the man on the ground was absolutely unhurt. Later, he rose up and walked away. The theologian read the passage aloud and said, "This car tumbled down a thousand feet into ruin. You cannot even find a square foot of whole metal, and yet the man was unharmed. My friends would ask, 'Could this man live?' But my question is, 'Is this man alive?' He is alive! If you consider the possibility, there is none. But if you consider the fact, there it is!"

What we have is a historical fact. If we try to study the virgin birth from a scientific point of view, we may conclude that this is an impossible event. But my question is whether or not such an event occurred. The Gospel of Matthew says that Jesus was born of a virgin. So does the Gospel of Luke. At least you have to say that these records have said such a thing and that such an event was recorded in history. At least you have to believe that there is a historical event.

WRITTEN AFTER CAREFULLY INVESTIGATING

I am not asserting that Matthew and Luke were inspired by the Holy Spirit when they wrote their books. Whether these books were divinely inspired or not, we will set aside for a moment. We are saying that there were a few people who followed Jesus. They wrote His biography. Both Matthew and Luke were contemporaries of Jesus. Matthew followed Him for more than

three years. Luke was not as close, but he "carefully investigated all things" (Luke 1:3). I believe that when he wrote his gospel, the mother of Jesus was still alive. What did they say about the birth of Jesus? They all testified that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. His birth was absolutely different from ours. Today, after almost two thousand years, some who never saw Jesus, never talked to Mary His mother, and never met Joseph His father, conclude that He was not born of a virgin. How can you say that He was not born in this manner? Are you ruling out the possibility of such an event and concluding that it did not happen because of some arguments you proposed in your study room or some theories you fashioned in the laboratory?

BORN OF MARY

Perhaps we should read the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. There are forty-two generations in the genealogy. Beginning from the first generation, it repeatedly says, "So-and-so begot So-and-so." This phrase is used through verse 15, which says, "And Eliud begot Eleazar, and Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob." Verse 16 continues, "And Jacob begot Joseph." The surprising thing is that the next part of the sentence does not continue with "Joseph begot Jesus." Rather, it says, "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." When the line reaches Joseph, the pattern is dropped. This is because Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary. His way of birth was very different from ours.

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS DEATH

We have seen that His method of coming into the world was an unusual one. Now we want to look at His way of departing from the world. As we shall see, this was also contrary to our ordinary deaths. No one can ever predict the place, time, and manner he or she is going to die. A hundred years from now, all of us here will be dead. But no one knows how we are going to die. Jesus of Nazareth, however, foresaw His own death. He knew exactly when, where, and how it was to happen.

DIED ON THE CROSS

Once when someone told Him that He was going to be killed, He answered that it was not acceptable for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). He knew that He was going to die in Jerusalem. One day, He told His disciples that the hour had come. Not only did He sense the imminence of His death; He told others that His death hour had come. He knew also how He

would die. A number of times He mentioned that He would be crucified. This was recorded at least three times in Matthew. Not only was this man different in His way of entering into the world, but His manner of departure was no less extraordinary. Both His birth and His death were very unusual. Is this the Son of God?

WITHOUT SIN

Let us consider the third qualification. What kind of morality did Jesus of Nazareth have? Was He the same as we are? Did He ever sin?

I like the sentence Jesus spoke in John 8. Many were opposing Him at that time. They surrounded and cross-examined Him. In return He asked, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (v. 46). This was a tremendous challenge! Which one of us would dare to stand before everyone and challenge to be convicted of sin? Whoever dared do such a thing would be put to shame the minute his wife stood up to testify against him. Perhaps, in less than five minutes, seven or eight people would immediately rise up to expose his lies and unfaithfulness. But when Jesus made such a statement, no one was able to convict Him of sin. There has been a countless number of saints and sages throughout the ages, but none was bold enough to claim to be perfect and sinless. Why is it that Jesus alone dared to make such a claim?

All I can say is that this man is either arrogant to the extreme or holy to the uttermost. A proud person may talk in an outlandish manner because he does not know himself; he has no realization of what kind of person he is. But when Jesus challenged, "Which of you convicts Me," there was no way He could be humble or polite about it. He is without sin, and He is holy to the uttermost.

Jesus of Nazareth is not like Confucius, who said that given some more time, he would be rid of big, moral flaws. Jesus is sinless. When He made such a statement, He made it before His enemies. If there had been a slight misconduct on His part, the Jews would have caught it right away. The Jews are not prolific writers; they have not produced many books other than the Holy Scripture. But after Jesus, many books were written by the Jews to contradict Him. All these books deny His divinity, but none touch His morality. Of all the opposing writings, none can prove that Jesus ever sinned.

NO NEED TO REPENT

Every philosopher or founder of religion, at one time or another, has said, "I repent," or "I regret such and such a matter. I will do better from now on." But Jesus of Nazareth never repented. A sinner must of necessity repent. But what does a sinless man have to repent of? Jesus never apologized to anyone; He never did anyone any wrong.

When I was in England, some British friends asked for my opinion concerning their people. I said, "Among you, once ever so often, I hear, 'Excuse me' and 'I beg your pardon.'" To the English, anyone who does not know how to make these two remarks has to be an extremely base person, for he knows not his own mistakes. Anyone can make a mistake, but when one refuses to admit his mistakes, he makes himself vulgar. For this reason we have to say, "Excuse me" and "I beg your pardon" all the time.

The amazing thing is that Jesus of Nazareth never said "sorry" to anyone. He never apologized. Could He be so evil as to ignore His conscience completely? Was He oblivious to His own errors? Or is He really sinless? If so, He cannot say, "sorry." It is not a matter of humility or politeness to Him, but a matter of maintaining His standing.

TOUCHING AND NOT PRESSING

I love the story about Jesus once walking down a road. Many people were gathered around Him, hoping to see the resurrection of a dead person. It was so crowded that the people pressed upon each other. One woman, who suffered from an issue of blood for years, thought that Jesus would surely be able to heal her since He had performed all kinds of miracles. She did not come to the Lord directly. All that she did was touch the fringe of His garment, and the sickness was immediately healed (Mark 5:25-29).

Jesus felt something, turned around, and asked, "Who touched Me?" How did the disciples respond? They said, "You see the crowd pressing upon You and You say, Who touched Me?" (v. 31). He should have asked, "Who pressed Me?" instead of "Who touched Me?" If I were Jesus, I would have said in a gentlemanly fashion, "Excuse me." But Jesus did not need to say that. When He said that it was a touch, He meant that it was a touch and not a pressing against. The disciples only knew that many thronged around Him. But He knew that someone "touched" Him. He knew what He was doing. There was no need for apology. He knows no sin because He is without sin.

PASSED THROUGH THEIR MIDST

Let me mention another story about Jesus. One day He came to the synagogue in His hometown. Someone handed Him the Scripture, and He started to read from a passage about Himself. The people there, however, despised Him. He remarked that a prophet is always despised in His own place. For this reason, God would not choose them but would rather go to someone else. After they heard this, they were very indignant. They carried Him outside and tried to throw Him down a cliff. I like very much what Jesus did then. He passed through their midst (Luke 4:16-30). If someone tried to push us over a cliff, we would struggle to escape. But He was no ordinary person. He simply passed through the persecutors' midst. They could do nothing except let Him pass by! He is without sin.

Again, you see the same Jesus preaching to a ruler at midnight in a house (John 3:2), while choosing to converse with a woman beside a well at midday (4:5-7). Everything He did was very proper. No one can say anything against Him. You cannot find fault in Him.

NEVER DOING A WRONG THING

Another time some opposers came to tempt Him. They asked whether or not it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar. The Jewish nation, as you know, no longer existed then, and Caesar of Rome was their king. If Jesus said "no" to the question, He would have been involved in a political issue, and the opposers would have had an excuse to condemn Him. If He said "yes," all the Jews would have counted Him as siding with the Romans and hated Him. The result, of course, would have favored the opposers. This was a question that could not be answered "yes" or "no."

How did Jesus reply? He said, "Show Me the coin for the tribute" (Matt. 22:19). He was wise. He even had the opposing ones draw out the money from their own pockets. Then He asked, "Whose is this image and inscription?" (v. 20). They had to admit that it was Caesar's. Jesus gave an excellent reply: "Render then the things that are Caesar's to Caesar and the things that are God's to God" (v. 21). With that He dismissed the whole case. This is where His majesty lies. He never made a mistake. You cannot get a case out of Him.

CALMNESS AND MAJESTY

I cannot enumerate all His deeds. Everything He did bears such a mark of nobility that there is absolutely no flaw in His behavior. I will briefly mention His betrayal as a final example. It was very late in the night, and men armed with torches, spears, and swords came to arrest this empty-handed Jesus. He asked them, "Whom do you seek?" They said, "Jesus the Nazarene" (John 18:7). He replied, "I told you that I am" (v. 8). At that very word, the band of rogues whose minds were set on capturing Him fell back to the ground. If Jesus had not voluntarily given Himself over to them, they would never have been able to seize Him. Such calmness and majesty can only be seen in Him!

As to the traitor, Jesus knew from the first day of his intention. Yet He allowed the same to follow Him and even let him be the keeper of the money. All the time Jesus knew that money was being stolen by him. Who can demonstrate such forbearance and uprightness? Here is a man who is absolutely different from all others. In every respect, He has been proven to be the Son of God.

PERFORMED IMPOSSIBLE ACTS

The fourth qualification we mentioned is that one who claims to be God incarnated must be able to perform what an ordinary person cannot. Has Jesus of Nazareth performed any supernatural acts? We are not His contemporaries; it was almost two thousand years ago that He walked on earth. Naturally, we cannot be His witnesses. But one thing is sure: the apostles who followed Jesus recorded, preached, and testified the things concerning Him. The four Gospels were all completed within thirty years after His departure. Most of the Jews who were then alive had seen Jesus. If the apostles' records were false, they would have been repudiated long ago. However, the Jews only argued that Jesus is not the Son of God. They never denied His deeds, for the deeds were all facts.

Today, when we read the four Gospels, we have no apprehension about their authenticity. If there had been a slight error when they were written, there would have been grave problems because many of the contemporaries had actually seen and heard Jesus. There was no chance for any fabrication. Hence, these books cannot be a hoax. If the Jews could not attack these books, there is even less of a basis for an attack today.

PROVED BY MIRACLES

Let us examine some of the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. Matthew 11:2 and 3 say, "Now when John heard in the prison of the works of the Christ, he sent word through his disciples and said to Him, Are You the Coming One, or should we expect another?" John wanted to make sure that Jesus was the Christ sent from God. If He was not, John would wait for another.

Verses 4 and 5 say, "And Jesus answered and said to them, Go, report to John the things that you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; and the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel announced to them." Jesus answered neither "yes" nor "no." He only asked the messenger to tell John of the things heard and seen. He wanted John to think about them and decide for himself if Jesus was the Christ. Jesus proved His divinity by the miracles He performed. Here is a man who accomplished things that are impossible for human beings. You cannot help but confess that He is God.

John 7:31 says, "But many out of the crowd believed into Him and said, Will the Christ, when He comes, do more signs than this man has done?" Many people testified that He performed all kinds of miracles which no man could do.

CLAIM TO DIVINITY

John 10:24 says, "The Jews therefore surrounded Him and said to Him, How long will you hold our soul in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." On the one hand, the Jews hardened their hearts and refused to acknowledge His divinity, and on the other hand, they were puzzled by the many supernatural miracles that He performed. They gathered around Him and pressed for an answer. There is one thing in which Jesus never gave in: His claim to divinity. He performed what mortals could not. These acts testify to His divinity. He told the people clearly, "The works which I do in My Father's name, these testify concerning Me" (v. 25). On the one hand, He made His claim, and on the other hand, He performed miracles to justify His claim.

BELIEVE HIM FOR HIS WORKS' SAKE

In John 14:11 He said to His disciples, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me." This is the same as saying that He is the invisible Father. "But if not, believe because of the works themselves." If He had not

done anything impossible, this word would have had no value at all. If He had not performed any extraordinary acts, they would have asked back, "What works have You done? We do not know what You are talking about." But the disciples knew of the acts He did. All these acts prove that He is the Son of God.

HE SHOWED WHAT GOD IS

We have to check Jesus of Nazareth against a fifth qualification. If He is God, He has to show us what He is. Is He kind, or is He severe? Is He gentle, or is He fierce? What kind of a God do we have? As a matter of fact, Jesus did show us what God is.

This is a most wonderful thing. The eternal, invisible God is now seen by us. There is no need to conjure up an untouchable and far transcendent God or imagine what He is like; He has revealed Himself to us. He has dwelt in our midst and walked among us. Jesus of Nazareth is the very God dwelling among and with man. He has manifested God's nature and attributes to us. There is no need to search for God anymore because He has revealed Himself. Our mentality is too limited. Our hands are too short, and our viewpoint too narrow. If we were left to ourselves to study and search for God, we could only conclude that He is the unknown One. Now we know that God desires to reveal Himself. In fact, He has revealed Himself to us already.

GOD HAVING SPOKEN IN HIS SON

We have said that the two means whereby God communicates with us are the written and spoken language. For this reason, the Bible and Jesus of Nazareth are the two indispensable factors in our faith. When you take away either one, God becomes the gravest problem in the world. Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets." These speakings constitute the Bible. "Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son" (v. 2). This is Jesus of Nazareth. Whoever is in Christ now may know Him. To have heard the words of Jesus of Nazareth is to have heard the words of God.

Dear reader, what is your attitude towards Jesus of Nazareth? Thomas confessed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Peter proclaimed, "You are...the Son of the living God!" (Matt. 16:16). Martha said, "I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God" (John 11:27). Even a Roman

centurion exclaimed at the sight of Jesus hanging on the cross, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54b). I hope you will make the same confession.

§SECTION TWO
CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRIST VERSUS DOCTRINES

Our Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God. It is different from all other religions which are attained through meditation, conjecture, and searching. We believe that the Bible is God's revelation to us. In other words, it is His spoken word to us. We also believe that God has become a man, who is the very Jesus of Nazareth. God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ constitute the basis of our faith.

THE POSITION OF CHRIST

Let us begin by looking at the position that Christ occupies in our faith, or we may say, in Christianity. However, Christianity has been altered and is not what it ought to be. At the present we will not mention what Christianity ought to be. Rather, we will only draw a comparison between Christianity and other religions in order to see the distinctiveness of our faith. We will not try purposely to exalt Christianity and debase other religions. We will only draw an objective comparison between them.

First, let us consider Confucianism. Actually, followers of Confucius never formally assert that theirs is a religion. Confucianism merely exercises great influence on Chinese culture, education, ethics, and philosophy. One thing, however, is certain: the teachings and doctrines of Confucius are of foremost importance, while the person Confucius is not as crucial. I do not mean that Confucianism has no concern for Confucius. The man indeed was an extraordinary person. However, in order to be a part of Confucianism, one only needs to understand the doctrines of Confucius, abide by his teachings, and be thoroughly acquainted with his books. It does not matter whether one understands the man Confucius or not. The principles, doctrines, and teachings of Confucius are the essence of the religion.

THE DOCTRINES OF BUDDHISM

Next let us consider Buddhism. The founder of Buddhism was Sakya Muni. Once he preached to his disciples about evil persons being reincarnated through the Wheel of Rebirth after death. This is something that attracts man's attention. But in all of Buddhism, the point of emphasis is doctrines

and theories. Concerning the man Sakya Muni, although he has a history and biography, they are something parenthetical. They do not form the crux of Buddhism. The center of the religion is not the man Sakya Muni. Whether there was such a person is unimportant to today's Buddhism. All that is needed are the doctrines and teachings.

FOUNDERS ONLY LEFT THEIR DOCTRINES

Other religions such as Taoism and Mohammedanism are all of the same principle. After each founder set up a religion and left his teachings, doctrines, and regulations as the content of his religion, the founder himself was disassociated from the religion and had little to do with it.

CHRISTIANITY BUILT ON CHRIST

But our faith is entirely different. From its outset, Christianity is built on the man Christ. It is not built on the doctrines and teachings of Christ. It is amazing that when you open the Bible, you will not find too many chapters of doctrines. Passages where pure doctrinal issues are expounded are rare and of less concern to people. What concerns one the most is the man Himself and what kind of person He is. All who have read the Bible know that the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are not outstandingly voluminous. His person draws our attention. He alone is the foundation of our faith.

The word Christ came from Greek, meaning the Anointed One. According to the Chinese, when a man takes up a task, he is given a letter of employment. The Jewish equivalent of this is anointing. When God summons a person for a work, He pours oil on the person as a seal of commission. Christ is the very God who was set apart to come to earth to be a man for the manifestation of God, in order that man may know God. Christ is the Anointed One. He is commissioned to such a task.

CHRIST DEMANDS OTHERS TO BELIEVE IN HIM

Due to this basic distinction, Christ is different from the founders of other religions. Once He asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Over and over again He demanded that His disciples believe in Him. He said that he who believes in the Son has eternal life. Again He said, "He who loves father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). Unless a man loves in this way,

he is not worthy to be His disciple. Words such as these have been uttered only by Him. No other religious leader ever said anything like that. Confucius never said to Yen-weh or Tze-lu, "Believe in me," nor did he ever say, "Love me." Neither did any of the other leaders, such as Sakya Muni or Mohammed, demand of their disciples faith in them. All it takes to be their disciples is to believe in their doctrines.

THE ISSUE BEING WHO JESUS IS

Hence, the true Christian faith is based on a person. It is built on Christ and not on some doctrines. The crux of the true Christian faith is a question of who Jesus is! Is He merely a Jew? Is He only a prophet? Or is Jesus the Son of the living God? The whole matter hinges upon who Jesus of Nazareth is. The difference between a genuine Christian and a false one lies not in the knowledge of the doctrines of Christ. Rather, it lies in the knowledge of who Jesus is!

THE ANSWER IS IN THE BIBLE

Who is this man from Nazareth? Since this is a crucial question related to our basic faith, we have to find the answer in the Bible. We will pay more attention to the Gospel of John and discover that only Christ Himself is the center of the Bible and the focus of the whole of Christianity.

Before taking up the Gospel of John, we have to take a look at the background of the book. Prior to the coming of Christ, a forerunner was sent by God to prepare a way for Christ that men might be ready to acknowledge Christ. The forerunner was John the Baptist. Because of his powerful preaching, many people were convicted. As a result, many thought that he was the Christ who was supposed to come.

But John 1:8 says, "He was not the light, but came that he might testify concerning the light." The light means Christ. He is called the light because light reveals and manifests. John was not the Christ. He was only bearing witness to Christ.

Concerning this light, verse 9 says, "This was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." In this dark world, if a person has Christ, he will know all about God. When this light shines forth, man will say, "Here is God." They will recognize the light as God.

Up to verse 9, we still do not know who this light is. Read on from verse 10 to verse 15: "He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, yet those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality. John testified concerning Him and cried out, saying, This was He of whom I said, He who is coming after me has become ahead of me, because He was before me." Have you realized, after reading the above verses, that all that is recorded here are actual facts, rather than many doctrines?

JESUS IS

What did John the Baptist say about Christ? He said, "He...is...after me." And yet He who was after John would be before him. This is because Christ was before him in the first place. This is the beginning of the testimony of John the Baptist.

John 1:27: "He who is coming after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." The preaching of John is the beginning of our faith. He came just to tell others who Jesus of Nazareth is. Not only was Christ before John, He was so much greater than John that he was not worthy to untie the thong of His sandal and be His slave.

John 1:29: "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Verse 30: "This is He of whom I said, A man is coming after me who has become ahead of me, because He was before me." When John introduced Jesus, he said, "This is He"! (v. 30). The Gospel begins by showing us who Jesus is!

THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION

This is the word of the forerunner. But what about Christ? What did He say? We admit that in the Bible there are a few basic doctrines. For example, regeneration is one of the basic truths. Buddhism and Mohammedanism also talk about regeneration. In their teachings they teach that whatever is past is considered as dead yesterday, and whatever is hereafter is considered as born

today. But what did Jesus say about regeneration? Let us look at the record of John 3.

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This one came to Him by night" (vv. 1-2a).

Nicodemus was a ruler. He was also a learned and aged person. He came to Jesus to discuss some problems with Him, and Jesus brought up the matter of regeneration.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3).

Jesus showed Nicodemus the matter of regeneration, telling him that he needed to be born again. After Nicodemus heard this, he was confounded. He wondered how an old man could be born again. Did that mean that he had to go into his mother's womb and come out again? Jesus told him that this is not a birth of the flesh, but a birth of the spirit. If a man is not born of the Spirit, even if he could go into his mother's womb again, the flesh would still beget flesh. Only the Spirit begets spirit. Here you can see that even in such a basic and fundamental matter, Jesus did not expound much doctrine. He only mentioned a very simple fact—the need to be born again.

REGENERATION IS SIMPLY BELIEVING

No wonder Nicodemus asked, "How can these things be?" Jesus told him that this is not an earthly matter. It is something heavenly. That is why he could not believe. How can a man be born again? "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended out of heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that every one who believes into Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes into Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God" (vv. 13-18). Have you seen this? This is regeneration!

Jesus was saying that regeneration is not a doctrine. It is believing into Him. To be born again is to believe into Him. If a man does not believe into Him, he cannot be regenerated. After saying so much, it all comes back to "Him."

What is our concept of regeneration? We think that if one was a thief yesterday and returns his booty to the owner today, that this is regeneration. Or, if one thought of having a mistress yesterday, but gives up that idea today, that this is regeneration. We think that as long as we quit doing whatever was bad in the past, considering it as dead, and strive to do well hereafter, we are born again. But this is man's concept. This is not the regeneration that Christ gives.

The way of Jesus depends on whether you believe into Him or not. He who believes into Him has eternal life! God gave His only begotten Son that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life. He who believes is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned. This is not a doctrine. It is a matter of the person. It is a relationship between Him and man.

SATISFACTION VERSUS CONTENTMENT

Besides regeneration, there is another crucial matter, which we call Christian satisfaction. A genuine Christian feels that his hopes are fulfilled, his aspirations attained; he has no want; he is absolutely satisfied. But this satisfaction is very different from the contentment that people commonly talk about. Contentment is to see things in an optimistic way, to let things come and go by as they are without insisting on anything. There may not be much wealth or position. There may not be much honor or renown. But as long as one can live in peace and be left unbothered, that is good enough! This is contentment. But this is not satisfaction. When a person is satisfied, he feels that he has what he wants and that he has no more desires.

HE WHO DRINKS OF THIS WATER SHALL THIRST AGAIN

There is an excellent record in John 4. What did Jesus say to a Samaritan woman there? "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again" (v. 13). If you desire worldly glory, renown, wealth, position, etc., you will never be satisfied. When you have ten thousand dollars, you will want a hundred thousand, and when you have acquired a hundred thousand, you will start

dreaming about a million. There will never be satisfaction. He who drinks of this water will thirst again.

How do you quench this thirst? The Lord Jesus said, "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever" (v. 14). An amazing fact is that neither Confucius nor any other religious leader ever said such a thing. The teachings of Confucius and Mencius only tell you to be content and to abide in your poverty. The person Confucius or Mencius has nothing to do with your contentment. However, the person Jesus has a great deal to do with your thirst-quenching.

Naturally the woman desired to drink of this thirst-quenching water. When she asked Jesus for this living water, "Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (v. 10).

Was Jesus preaching a doctrine? No. There was no doctrine. The only thing He did was point to Himself, as if to say, "Well, if you know who He is, you will ask of Him at once, and He will give you living water, that you may never thirst again." Have you seen this? The whole question is who Jesus of Nazareth is.

The Samaritan woman was not a decent woman. The fact that she had had six husbands showed what kind of woman she was. She must have been dissatisfied with this one and that one. One husband could not make her happy; another could not make her satisfied. As a result, she changed from one husband to another, and then to a third and a fourth, until she came to the sixth. One day she came out to draw water, a symbol of her being one who drinks and is still thirsty. The remarkable thing is that on that day, her life was changed. She became satisfied! What did she do? She did not do anything! On that day she realized who Jesus of Nazareth is and she was saved. Let us look again at the process through which she came to know Jesus and believe in Him.

KNOWING WHO HE IS

"The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (v. 19). Because Christ told her everything that she ever did, she perceived that this was no ordinary man. He must be a prophet. Jesus said something more to show her that He was not merely a prophet: "Believe Me" (v. 21). The woman

said, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when He comes, He will declare all things to us" (v. 25). What did Jesus answer her? He said, "I, who speak to you, am He" (v. 26). The first thing that a sinner needs to do is not to repent and change his behavior, but to realize who Jesus is. All will be well if he realizes who Jesus is.

Later the woman returned to the city and told the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I have done. Is this not the Christ?" (v. 29). I do not like the words, "Is this not." Since she knew that this man was the Christ, why did she say, "Is this not"? At any rate, she believed and went to tell others that Christ had come. You can see clearly that the whole issue is not about doctrine but about a person! Our basic concern is not doctrines. Rather, it is seeing who Jesus is! Once we have the Lord Jesus, we will have real satisfaction; we will be filled with the sense of having acquired everything.

We will see a little more from John 5. It seems that in chapter five the Lord Jesus spoke some doctrines. But actually not much was expounded. It was once again an invitation to receive the knowledge of who Jesus of Nazareth is. He spoke some words, but they were to lead us to believe into Him. The Lord Jesus said that the Jews searched the Scriptures. But the Scriptures, the Lord pointed out, are a witness to Him. What is written there concerns Him. It is important to know the Scriptures. But more important than that is the knowledge of who Jesus of Nazareth is. The question is not what kind of teaching He teaches, but what kind of a person He is.

I AM

When we come to John 6, the matter is brought out in an even clearer way. "Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst" (v. 35). He did not preach any doctrine. He just said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger." Have you seen the implication here? If I say that I am your bread of life and that he who eats me shall never hunger, you will surely say that Mr. Nee is a madman from Shanghai. Religious leaders can only give doctrines to others. They cannot give themselves to others. But Jesus is different. He is the bread of life. He is also the thirst-quenching water. The problem is in the people's unbelief in Him. When anyone believes in Him, everything will be all right.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die" (vv. 48-50). These are words that no other can speak. Only Jesus can say this. He is neither a madman nor a liar. And whatever He says always points back to Himself. This man is the bread of life. He who eats of Him shall not die!

Hence, our Christian faith is based on the issue of who Jesus of Nazareth is. We are not spending time merely to study His teachings. We are only asked to answer one question: who is He? What Christ proclaimed persistently on the earth was not His doctrines but Himself. The focus is not on the doctrines but on the person. As far as doctrines go, the books of Confucius and Mencius are filled with philosophies, ethics, and morality; they far exceed those in the Bible. But there is only one issue: who is Jesus of Nazareth? Do you know? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?

HE IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Let us read on. John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh, given for the life of the world."

Here His words become more and more peculiar. It is strange enough to say that He is the bread of life which came down out of heaven. Now He says that he who eats Him, not only will not die, but will live forever. This is extraordinary. Even more intriguing are the words that say that the bread He gives is His very flesh. No wonder the Jews at that time said that it was a hard saying. Who can take this? It is right! We never heard such words before. We never heard them from Confucius, from Mencius, from Lao-tze, from Chuan-tze, or from any other sages. We never heard them in China or in any other country. No man has ever spoken such words.

After Christ spoke such words, verse 52 says, "The Jews then contended with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" What doctrine did Jesus preach? None. All that He said was to eat His flesh. Verses 55 and 56 say, "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him." You can see that He is only emphasizing Himself. This is not a set of doctrines. Rather, it is the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood. Those who eat and drink will live forever.

HE IS THE WATER OF LIFE

When we come to John 7, we see the last day of a great feast. Jesus spoke some words in front of those who were attending the feast. "On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (vv. 37-38). Just imagine: on one of our busy festive holidays, I, Watchman Nee, stand up in the midst of a crowd and shout, "If you are thirsty, come to me and drink. He who believes in me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." What would you say? You would surely say that I am a senseless fool from Shanghai who is talking nonsense. But that was exactly what Jesus did and said. There was really no doctrine; there was just the person Christ.

On that day when Jesus spoke those words, a dispute arose among the Jews. Some said that this truly had to be the Christ. Others reasoned how Christ could come out of Galilee. In trying to answer who this man was, an argument arose among the Jews. The argument centered around one thing: who was this Jesus of Nazareth? A genuine Christian is one who believes that Jesus is the Christ.

HE IS THE LIGHT OF LIFE

Further on in John 8:12, Jesus told the crowd, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." You can see that again His words are not doctrinal. The emphasis here is the "light" and the "I." It is not the practice of His teachings that makes a Christian. Rather, it is a relationship with Christ that qualifies us as one. Only by believing into Him will we receive the light of life. Only by receiving Him will we not walk in darkness.

HE IS FROM ABOVE

John 8:21-22 says, "He said therefore again to them, I am going away, and you will seek Me and will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. The Jews then said, He is not going to kill Himself, is He, for He says, Where I am going, you cannot come?" The Jews were confused again. Where is the place He is going that we cannot go? They thought that perhaps He was going to commit suicide. Actually if that place could be reached by committing suicide, the Jews could still get to it by killing themselves. How could the Lord go to a place to which they could not go? Verse 23 says, "And He said to them,

You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." It is because of this that where the Lord was going they could not go.

BELIEVING OR NOT BELIEVING THAT HE IS

Furthermore, they did not die in their sins because they were murderers and adulterers. Verse 24 is crucial, especially the latter half: "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." The King James Version added the word "he" after "I am." Let us quote the words of the original text. The Lord said, "You will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." The question is whether or not you believe that He is. What does this mean? It means that of the millions of people in humanity, you can pick out one and say, "This is He! This is God!" We want to examine Jesus of Nazareth to see if He indeed is! If we believe that He is, we will not die in our sins. Many are believing in a distorted Christianity, but we want to believe according to what Christianity really is. The first question we must ask is whether or not Jesus of Nazareth is.

Once again the Jews retorted by asking, "Who are You?" (v. 25). Jesus' answer seemed to say, "This is not the first time that I tell you who I am. Concerning this matter I have never given in. I told you that I am; I am the One." Time after time He proved to others that He is; He is the Son of God.

THE ESSENCE OF OUR FAITH

What is the purpose of Christ's works? It is to bring man to believe that He is the Son of God. In John 9 Christ gave sight to one who was born blind. The Pharisees started another argument about this. They summoned the one who was healed and asked him all kinds of questions. After getting nothing out of his answers, they drove him out. Later the Lord met him. He asked the healed person only one question: "Do you believe into the Son of God?" (v. 35). He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe into Him?" (v. 36). "Jesus said to him, You have both seen Him, and He is the One speaking with you. And he said, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him" (vv. 37-38). Nothing is clearer than this. This is the work of the Lord Jesus. His work is just to bring men to realize who He is. He never let go of the fact that He is the Son of God. This is the essence of our faith. It declares that Jesus is the Son of God.

ONLY THIS ONE POINT

If we read the Gospel of John through, we will find that every passage concerns this one point: Jesus is the Christ. In John 10 the Jews surrounded Him and said, "How long will you hold our soul in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (v. 24). The question still hung on this one point.

How did Jesus answer? He said, "I told you, and you do not believe...You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep" (vv. 25-26). All who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God incarnated as a man, are not Christians. Those who do not recognize Him as the Son of God do not have the life of Christ in them; they are not His sheep. Upon this issue stands the whole basis of the Christian faith.

In John 11 Jesus said again, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live" (v. 25). Can a common mortal utter such words?

GOD HINGES ON HIM

In John 12 Jesus cried out aloud, "He who believes into Me does not believe into Me, but into Him who sent Me; and he who beholds Me beholds Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that every one who believes into Me would not remain in darkness" (vv. 44-46). You can see that the One who sent Him hinges on Him. To believe into Him is to believe into the One who sent Him. To see Him is to see the One who sent Him. The light also hinges on Him. To be in the light is to believe into Him. Everything hinges on Him.

Then in John 14 the Lord said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe into God, believe also into Me" (v. 1). He wants us to believe into Him in the same way that we believe into God. The one thing He always insists upon is the demand to believe in Him.

John 15 speaks of some who hate the Lord. He said, "He who hates Me hates My Father also" (v. 23). Once again He reveals that He and the Father are one.

NOT BELIEVING IN HIM IS A SERIOUS SIN

In John 16, the Lord said that one day the Holy Spirit would come and convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Why concerning sin? The explanation is in verse 9: "Concerning sin, because they

do not believe into Me," because they do not believe that He is the Son of God. This is a sin, a very serious sin. When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict men, and they will realize how serious a sin it is not to believe in Jesus being the Son of God.

One further passage in the Gospel of John will suffice. 17:3: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ." Here we are shown what eternal life is. The Lord's definition of eternal life is to know God. Believing in the eternal God and believing in His sent One—Jesus Christ—is eternal life. Eternal life hinges upon this person.

I hope that we would all realize who Jesus of Nazareth is. Our faith does not have any empty doctrines. It is based on the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. To receive Jesus Christ is to receive God.

CHAPTER SIX

CHRIST—
THE BASIS OF OUR DOCTRINE

We have said that Christianity does not emphasize doctrines. Rather, it emphasizes the person Christ. Even when some doctrines are mentioned, they are few in number, and when you go about expounding them, they always point back to a person. If you turn to the four Gospels you will be amazed to find that everything recorded is just a description of Jesus of Nazareth. There must first be the knowledge of who He is; doctrines come afterwards. We have ascertained the person of Jesus Christ. Now we want to take a look at the doctrines of our faith.

COMPARISONS IN DOCTRINES

You cannot find many doctrines in the four Gospels. Neither are there many doctrines in the Acts of the Apostles. One finds doctrines only after coming to Romans. This is exactly what we have said before, that you have to know who Jesus Christ is before you can understand what His doctrines are all about.

Concerning doctrines, there is also a vast difference between those in Christianity and those in other religions. I would like to mention again that the fact that I am a Christian does not mean that you have to feel and see things as I do. I will not take such a presumptuous attitude. I will only present the facts again, showing the difference between Christianity and other religions. I will not decide what is good or bad. You are asked only to examine the facts. If you think that this is right, then believe in it. Otherwise, take your choice. Emotional words are unnecessary here. I will, therefore, make no plea or invitation.

Observing all the religions that are before us, you will see that all of them emphasize doctrines, not a person. Whether Confucius or Lao-tze, who they are and what they teach are two different things. They are two separate entities. Their doctrines do not have much to do with their person. You can take the person away from the religion, and it will not make much difference.

The person only preached the doctrines, but he became disassociated from that which he preached.

This is not the case with our faith. When did Christian doctrines come into existence? It was after the death, resurrection, and departure from the world of the person Christ that the doctrines began. All doctrines came later. Moreover, all these doctrines are centered upon Christ. The doctrines and Christ are inseparable. First you have Him, then you have His doctrines.

THE UNION OF GOD AND MAN

For example, there is a doctrine in Christianity that speaks of the union of God and man. It is a very important doctrine. If you open the Bible to see how this can be, you will see that the source of such a doctrine is the fact that God became a man—Jesus. He is God mingled with man.

The Bible does not present a doctrine of God becoming one with man. Rather, it shows Jesus of Nazareth, who is a sample of God being one with man. Originally, God and man were separate; there was a wide gulf between them. There was no possibility of union. But the Nazarene came. He was God coming to be a man. He was the bridge between man and God, joining the two into one. This is not a doctrine that teaches people to be one with God. Here is the fact: henceforth, when a man is in Christ, he can be one with God.

THE DOCTRINE OF DEATH

Another very important doctrine in the Bible concerns death. The Bible depicts man as being totally corrupted, without any possibility of being reformed. The only solution is death. A man is like a piece of worm-infested wood with no chance of being carved or shaped. The only destiny for him is the fire. Death is the solution. Only dead people will not be proud if you praise them a thousand times. Only dead people will not be angry if you rebuke them repeatedly. Only dead people will not be tempted by sin and will not sin. Death solves all problems concerning sin.

But how can we die? How can such a death occur? A religion will exhort you to die. Be dead! If you are dead, sin will no longer have an object to work on! But how can one die? By committing suicide? By throwing oneself into the sea? Or as the old Chinese scholars have said, by considering everything that is past as dead yesterday? No! All these are methods of common religions. They are not the Christian teaching.

WE CAN DIE BECAUSE OF CHRIST

The doctrine of death is absolutely related to Christ. His person determines His doctrines. Jesus died. What does the Bible say about this? It says that the world died with Him (2 Cor. 5:14). His death was to sin; hence, the whole world is dead to sin. Originally, the whole world was in sin, being dead in it. Only Jesus was not affected by death. He did not die of sin; He died to sin (Rom. 6:10). If we are one with Him, we are also dead to sin by His death (v. 11). Sin will not have an object to work on. All the problems of sin in us will be solved.

This is the doctrine of Christianity. It is a fact that is absolutely tied to the person Christ. It is not an exhortation for people to conduct a moral life and repent from their wrongs. These are not Christian doctrines at all. Since Christ has died, whoever is in Him is also dead, thoroughly dead, to sin. Sin has no more grip on us. If Christ had not died, there would not have been any doctrine. All experiences and doctrines are based upon this person Jesus Christ.

THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION

Another fact we have is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He died and was resurrected. Hence, on our side, we are not only dead to sin, disassociated from it; we are regenerated and a new creation in the resurrection of Christ. All these are bound to the person Jesus Christ. No accomplishment is by us. Everything depends on Him.

TEACHINGS ARE BOUND TO CHRIST

The Bible is not completely void of teachings. However, all the teachings rest on the person Christ Jesus. Only when He has a certain experience can there be a certain doctrine or teaching. Every single doctrine or teaching is bound to His personal experience. His incarnation is the basis of the union of God with man. His death is the basis of our dying to sin and self and the foundation of a life of holiness. His resurrection is the basis for receiving our new life. Everything we have obtained is based on what He has attained. The doctrines are absolutely based upon the person and bound to the person. This is genuine Christianity. This makes our faith different from all other religions.

HE IS THE WAY, THE REALITY, AND THE LIFE

Once when Christ Jesus was about to leave the world, He spoke of a very amazing doctrine. Of course, this doctrine is again closely related to Him. He said, "I am the way and the reality and the life" (John 14:6). Perhaps you have heard others quote this passage. He said that He is the way. He is the way to overcome sin. He is the way to overcome the temptations of the world. He is His own teaching! All the ways to victory are Him.

He also said that He is the reality. We have often heard people say that there is reality in So-and-so's words. Sometimes when someone puts forth a theory, we call it reality. In geometry, when we have proved that this equals that, we say that we found a truth. But the reality that Christ Jesus speaks of is Himself. He is the reality.

Moreover, He is the life. He does not merely preach a doctrine and ask you to work it out yourself; He is the very life-power to perform what He preaches. Religion tells you to be honest and not to lie. Maybe someone has come and told you, "Exercise yourself not to lie. Every time you lie just bite your tongue once." I think that if we were able to recognize every lie we told, our tongue would be in two pieces before the day was over! Since our life is a human life, there is no possibility for us to not lie or sin. The life of man is absolutely impotent in this respect. Merely to give you some nice, lofty doctrines, while leaving it up to you to work them out, is not the way of Christ.

The Bible says that He makes you able. That ability is of Christ. As long as you are in Him, He is your life. He can make you not lie, no matter what kind of a person you are!

WHAT FOUNDERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS CANNOT DO

No other founder of a religion is great enough to uphold these three items: the way, the reality, and the life. All of man's experiences are included in these three things. Whenever you do something, you always have to decide whether or not it is worth doing. This consideration is a weighing of the reality. After the decision is made, you have to find a way. And after the way, you must have the power. Whenever you set out to accomplish something, you always have to pass through these three steps: the way, the reality, and the life.

All three are inseparable. You are not given reality first, then the way, and then left to yourself to find the life. Every one of these three items is found in

one person. When you have Him, every problem will be solved. This is Jesus. This is our faith. As long as there is a way to Him, everything will follow.

JUST BE IN CHRIST

When we look at a few passages in the Bible, we easily discover that when the Bible mentions a doctrine, it always says that it is "in Christ." The words "in Christ" are constantly mentioned. Some passages say, "by Christ." But "by Christ" is not the best translation. It is better in those instances to translate them as "through Christ." God does not give things to us directly; they have to go "through Christ." In addition, there are phrases like "with Christ" and "together with Christ." They show the position Christ occupies in the Bible. Everything has to be through Him. Receiving Him is receiving His doctrines. Without Him it is useless to have any of His doctrines.

NO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FOUNDERS AND THEIR CREEDS

The above cannot apply to all other religions. You can be a devotee of other religions, abiding by their every creed, without having anything to do with the founders themselves.

In arithmetic, there is a table called the multiplication table. You can find the product of any two numbers from one to nine from the table. Everything is arranged neatly. Do you know who formulated this table? I am afraid that millions who use this table never know who made it. But you can use this table without knowing the person who made it. All common religions are like this: you need not have anything to do with their founders, but you can apply their doctrines. The doctrines and those who preached them have no relationship with each other.

In Kaifeng I met a foreign missionary. He had heard my preaching. I discovered that he was related to the doctrines of Christ but not to Christ Himself. He told one of my former classmates, who is also now my co-worker, how to practice the teachings of Christ and expound the theologies in the Bible. My co-worker asked him, "Can you touch people by these? Has anybody repented, forsaken his sins, and had his life changed by your preaching? Do you have such power?" He was dumbfounded by my co-worker's words.

THE GEM OF THE DOCTRINES IS CHRIST

The source of our faith is Christ. If we have no relationship with Christ, we have no power. The doctrines of Christ are absolutely joined to Christ. The gem of the doctrines lies in Christ. It is useless to merely infer and discuss in an outward way.

Let us now look at the book of Romans in the New Testament. I will not give many explanations. Rather, I will merely present the facts to you. We want to see what the Bible says.

Romans 3:22, 24: "Even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction;...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." These verses say that a man receives forgiveness of sins and justification before God by the redemption of Christ Jesus. They are based on a relationship with Christ. Without redemption, the sins of man cannot be forgiven.

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Romans 5:1: "Therefore having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Verse 2: "Through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and boast because of the hope of the glory of God."

Verse 10: "For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled."

Verse 11: "And not only so, but also boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Everything that we have received, such as justification, reconciliation, standing in grace, salvation, joy in God, etc., is received through Jesus Christ. Simply by going through Him, we inherit all these.

RECEIVING GRACE BY HIM

Romans 5:15: "But it is not that as the offense was, so also the gracious gift is; for if by the offense of the one the many died, much more the grace of God and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ have abounded to the many."

Verse 17: "For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

Because of Jesus Christ, the grace and gift of God can be bestowed upon all men. We can also reign in life due to Him. Verse 21 says, "In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The receiving of eternal life is through Him. It does not depend on the good behavior of man.

CRUCIFIED WITH HIM

Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves."

Verse 17: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which you were delivered."

This is a vital doctrine in our belief: that by faith, we are crucified with Christ, and the old man is annulled. I do not crucify myself. When Christ was crucified, I was crucified with Him. By this I am set free from sin, being no longer a slave to it. In this way I can reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. This is a big doctrine that hinges on the person Christ.

LIBERATED IN HIM

Romans 7:24-25: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin."

Here is a man who was constantly defeated by his own fleshly lusts. When he was at the end of his hopes, crying for deliverance, he saw the way of salvation: liberation by the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of liberation is also in the Lord.

NO LONGER IMPOTENT IN HIM

Romans 8:1: "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. "Condemnation" does not refer to any ordinary kind of condemnation.

According to some recently discovered old manuscripts of the Bible found in Egypt, this word has two meanings. The first is a legal term; the second is a common daily expression. In the legal context it means condemnation as a verdict. But in its ordinary usage it means impotent, powerless, bound, etc. For this reason I will translate this portion as, "There is now then no impotence..." There is no more weakness and inability.

Verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Here are two laws. Originally, we were all bound by the law of sin and of death. Now the law of the Spirit of life has freed us; we are no longer under the control of the law of sin and of death. The law of the Spirit of life is in Christ Jesus. Have you seen this? Once again, our relationship with Him sets us free.

Verse 10: "But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." Since Christ is in me, I can live.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS IN HIM

Romans 8:35, 37: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?...But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us." Although there is so much trouble outwardly, we are still more than conquerors. Strength is obtained by going through Him. Not that we are able in ourselves. It is all by Him and through Him.

In the same manner, verses 38 and 39 say, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Why can nothing separate us from His love? It is not because of our virtues, but because this love is "in Christ Jesus our Lord"! Love is tied to the person Christ. When we are in Christ, we are in this inseparable love.

CHRIST BECOMING OUR WISDOM

Let us look at 1 Corinthians.

First Corinthians 1:30: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

I myself received much help from this verse. Of God are we in Christ Jesus. Not only so, God has made Christ our wisdom,...etc. We think that though we are not too brilliant, if we study more books, read more of the Bible, and listen to more sermons, we will be more intelligent. But this is not what God says. God has made Christ our wisdom. Wisdom is tied to Christ again. He becomes man's wisdom.

We say that we are unrighteous and that we cannot see God. But what does this verse say? God has made Christ our righteousness. Now we can face God as if we were sinless.

We think that we are too corrupted; our thoughts are unclean; we are proud and always lie. We have no holiness. Yet God has made Christ our holiness. He can be transmitted into us through Christ to be our holiness. Many have experienced that had it not been for Christ, there would absolutely have been no holiness.

Concerning salvation, a part of it touches the future. We will not mention it now. At any rate we can see that Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and salvation from beginning to end.

BEGOTTEN AND GROWING IN HIM

First Corinthians 3:1: "And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ." According to the Scripture, it doesn't matter what your physical age is. What matters is your stature in Christ. This measure is again one that is in Christ.

First Corinthians 4:15: "For though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Only in Christ can someone be regenerated and begotten by the gospel.

WALK IN HIM

First Corinthians 4:17: "Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church."

Here is a man who walks in Christ. You will discover that not only here, but in numerous passages, it is mentioned that the Christian walk should be one that is in Christ.

HIS DOCTRINES ARE WHAT HE IS

Let us look at something very important concerning our faith:

First Corinthians 15:12-14: "But if Christ is proclaimed that He has been raised from the dead, how is it that some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is vain; your faith is vain also."

Verses 16-17: "For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

It does not say what we will get for good or bad behavior. Everything in our faith is based upon the person Christ. If He had died without being resurrected, His doctrines would be lifeless, and everything would be over. Our faith would be of no effect. We can see here that His doctrines are what He is. But praise the Lord, He was resurrected. Hence, our preaching is not in vain. All is reality. Everything of our faith is tied to the resurrected Lord.

DOCTRINES CAME OUT OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

We will skip over 2 Corinthians because it is not a book that deals with doctrines. Books that deal with doctrines are Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. However, we can only briefly mention them. We will show that all doctrines come out of the person of Christ.

Galatians 2:4: "And this, because of the false brothers, brought in secretly, who stole in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into slavery." Our freedom is in Christ.

Verses 16-17: "And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law, because out of the works of law no flesh will be justified. But if, while seeking

to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also have been found sinners, is then Christ a minister of sin? Absolutely not!"

Justification is due to our being in Him. It is not a result of our behavior. Once we are joined to Christ, we are justified.

I IN HIM

Galatians 2:20 is another precious verse: "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

I did not kill myself; I was crucified with Him. When He died on the cross, I died also, because I am in Him.

ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS GIVEN IN HIM

Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." All spiritual blessings are given to us in Christ. For this reason everything that follows is received in Him.

Verses 4-7: "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace."

Again read Colossians 1:14: "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Redemption and forgiveness of sins are in the Beloved.

Colossians 3:1-3: "If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Again, only by Christ can we receive a resurrected life. The relationship God has with us is based upon the relationship He has with Christ.

ALL TEACHINGS AND DOCTRINES ARE TIED TO CHRIST

From the book of Romans on, we have discovered a fact: not one doctrine and teaching concerning our faith is related to our work. Rather, every one of them is tied to the person Christ. Whether it is forgiveness of sins, regeneration, holiness, or freedom, etc., there is no doctrine that is disassociated from Christ. Without Christ we have no faith. Without Christ we have nothing to preach. This is the difference between our faith and all the other religions. Without passing through Christ, we can do nothing. Without being related to Him, we cannot have any doctrine. Everything depends on Him.

Some may ask: are not there some exhortations in the Bible? Is Christianity not concerned with right and wrong? Yes, the Bible does have exhortations; it also tells people how to behave and walk. For example, the book of Romans contains some words of exhortation and teaching. But they appear after chapter twelve. Before chapter twelve, however, are all the doctrines that are related to Christ and how we can be joined to Him. Only afterwards are there exhortations for our conduct.

THE EMPHASIS IS ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

Ephesians settles the relationship between us, God, and Christ in chapters one through three. Then chapters four through six deal with some teachings on behavior. Even when speaking of our walk, the basis is our relationship with Christ. The same principle can be found in all other books.

Hence, genuine Christianity does not first exhort us to do something. Rather, it tells us to establish a relationship with Christ. After a relationship is established, then the practice comes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TWO CORPORATE MEN

We have seen that one cannot separate Christ from truth or from the doctrines. Nor can He be isolated from the Christian faith. What then is the relationship Christ has with us human beings?

THREE
IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

Before we come to look at the relationship Christ has with man, we have to investigate the law of heredity a little. A life which bears a particular trait or feature in its nature may transmit that same feature to the next generation. Looking at it another way, we can find the temperament and idiosyncrasies of the father in a child. But whatever is acquired by learning is not hereditary. For example, a blacksmith may acquire strong and husky arms through his training, but his children's arms may remain small and thin. Whatever is acquired after birth cannot be transmitted to the next generation. This is a fact and phenomenon recognized by biological science.

There is a very important concept in the Bible known as the unity of men. According to the Bible, apart from our individual existence, the whole world, regardless of how many millions of people there are, can be considered as being composed of two men. These two men are corporate, embracing millions of people. The whole of humanity is included in these two men. They are two juristic persons. Due to this reckoning in the Bible, the man Jesus could die for all of us and bear all of our sins. Now all of us can receive life through Him.

A student in biology can tell us that there is an amazing concept in biology which is quite contrary to ours: a son's life is considered to be older than that of the father, and a grandson's life is much older than that of his grandfather. This is perfectly true. The son inherits the father's life and continues it. Hence, the son's life is older than that of his father. Your life and mine are naturally older than that of Adam, for his ended at the age of a little over nine hundred years. But you and I are still living and will go on living.

These are three important concepts we have to consider when we look at the relationship between Christ and man: the heredity of human life, the unity of men, and the continuation of human life.

A HUGE CORPORATE MAN

Man is not only an individual, existing by himself, responsible only for his own conduct and behavior. He also belongs to a corporate man. Every person is a part of a huge life. He is a continuation, and he is continuing this huge life. The first man in this corporate man had a life that embraced all other human life; his conduct became that of everyone that follows, and his traits are transmitted to all successive generations; they all bear the same features as he did.

This is a vast subject to be covered. But we have to understand these concepts before we can see the salvation of God and the relationship of Christ with man.

MELCHISEDEC AND ABRAHAM

Now we can turn to chapter seven of the book of Hebrews. Let us first read verses 1 through 10: "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all; first being interpreted king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace; being without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but likened to the Son of God, abides a priest perpetually. And consider how great this one was, to whom the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the choice spoils. And they of the sons of Levi, who received the priestly service, have a commandment to take tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, though they have come forth from the loins of Abraham. But he whose genealogy is not counted from them has taken tithes from Abraham and has blessed him who has the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. And here men, who die, receive tithes; but there, one of whom it is testified that he lives. And, so to speak, through Abraham, Levi also, he who receives tithes, has been made to pay tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him."

In this passage, the writer of the book told the Hebrews that the priesthood that they depended on came from the lineage of Levi. The Christ that we believe in, however, did not come from the Levites. Rather, He is of the lineage of Melchisedec (who also was a priest).

MELCHISEDEC GREATER THAN LEVI

Which one is greater, Levi or Melchisedec? The answer is, of course, Melchisedec. But why? Here the writer brought in Abraham. Abraham offered up one tenth of what he acquired to Melchisedec as a gift. Not only did Melchisedec accept it, but he blessed Abraham as well. Therefore, beyond dispute, Melchisedec is greater than Abraham.

But what does that have to do with Levi? The link is in the fact that Levi "was still in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him." Although Levi was born after another hundred or so years, according to the principle of unity, Levi offered up one tenth to Melchisedec when he was inside Abraham. On that same day, he was blessed by Melchisedec within Abraham. For this reason Melchisedec is greater than Levi.

Our faith has a central concept: whatever a man does or however he acts affects his future generations. If our ancestors have done such and such, so have we. It does not matter whether or not we were born yet, because we did the same while we were in them.

THE BEGINNING OF THE FALL AND THE SALVATION OF MAN

This is where the fall of man began. It is also where man's salvation commences. Christ recognizes the nature of unity of the human life. When the first man sinned, all who came after him sinned as well. Therefore, if another man can be established as a source of life and as the head of a new race, whoever succeeds him will be able to share all he is and all he has done in him.

HAVING SINNED IN ADAM

How does the Bible view the fall of mankind? It shows us that due to the unity of men, when the first man Adam sinned, all sinned in him, although none were yet born.

The way we look at it is whether or not we as individuals have sinned. This is not God's way. Even if I had never sinned from the day I was born, God would ask from whom I came. If I came from Adam, then I was there and took part when Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, even if I have not sinned from the day I was born. According to biological law, my life is communicated from Adam. The latest life is the same as the first life. According to God, everyone from Adam on is a sinner. Adam sinned; so every single person became a sinner in Adam.

Suppose a man has never sinned (of course, no such person ever existed). God would still reckon him a sinner because his life is a life that sins; he is the offspring of a sinful life. Even though we do not feel that we have the same experience as Adam, the fact is that his life is in man. Up till today we bear this life with us.

ANOTHER MAN

The Bible also shows us another man, Christ. God considers Christ the same way He considers Adam. God counts Adam and everyone from him as one man. In the same way, God considers Christ as the Head and includes everyone who comes out of Him as one man. The life we received from Adam is a life of sin. If we can come out of Christ and receive His life, we can be free from sin in the same manner Jesus was.

For the present, we will not consider how to receive this life that comes out from Him. We will explain this later. We want to see how the life that comes out of Christ is the very life of Jesus Himself. It is a life without sin, a life that is pleasing to God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and absolutely holy and righteous. When we receive such a life, we will be the same as Christ, having the same experiences He had.

NO THIRD MAN

Hence, there are only two men in the whole of humanity. Either you have your being in Adam or in Christ. If you are not associated with Adam, you have to be associated with Christ. You cannot find a third man. Once someone asked me, "How many people are there in hell?" I told him that there was only one, and that there was also only one in heaven. The man in Christ is in one place, and the man in Adam is in another. This is extremely simple.

TWO ADAMS, TWO MEN

Because the Bible regards the whole of humanity as two men, we will not be surprised if we read 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47: "So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul'; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit....The first man is out of the earth, earthy; the second man is out of heaven."

The Bible identifies the first man as Adam. It also identifies Christ as another Adam, the last Adam. This means that there will not be a third Adam. There are only two Adams. How does the Bible count? It counts Adam as the first man and Christ as the second. From Adam to Christ millions of men were born. But the Bible does not count them as individuals. Adam was first. Christ is second.

Hence, everyone that came out of Adam is included in him. They are all associated with sin; they are all sinful, and they are all earthy. In the same way, those who receive life from the last Adam are included in Christ, having all of Jesus' experiences. Sin has no power over them. They are of heaven.

AGAIN RELATED TO CHRIST

Once again we see that every doctrine we have is related to Christ. Every experience that a Christian will encounter is bound up with Christ. All that the Bible asks of us is to believe in Him, listen to Him, obey Him, and follow Him. The solution to all problems hinges on Him and is found in Him. All we need to do is have Christ Jesus as our life. His experiences will become our experiences. He is the center of our faith. As long as we are attached to Him, everything will be set right.

Adam is a corporate man, including you and me and everyone inside him. His experiences in the garden of Eden have become ours. His end has become our fate. In the same manner Christ is a corporate man. Everyone in Christ has the same relationship with Him as they formerly had with Adam. Every experience of Christ becomes the experience of those in Him. The whole of humanity is bound up within these two men and intimately related to them.

THE RELATIONSHIP THE TWO MEN HAVE WITH HUMANITY

Now we want to examine the crucial relationship the two men have with the whole of humanity. Romans 5:12: "Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned." Verse 14: "But death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of Him who was to come."

From Adam to Moses, there were approximately two thousand five hundred years. Countless numbers of persons were born, and innumerable kinds of sins were committed during this period. Yet, according to God's reckoning, sin entered the whole human race through one man, Adam, who was the prefigure of Him who was to come. He was a miniature of the coming Christ. If you see Adam, you will know how Christ is.

BY ONE MAN

Romans 5:15 follows, by saying, "But it is not that as the offense was, so also the gracious gift is; for if by the offense of the one the many died, much more the grace of God and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ have abounded to the many." If, through the sin of Adam, all became dead, then when Jesus Christ was made righteousness, grace abounded much more to everyone! Death is by one man. So is grace.

Romans 5:16 through 18 repeatedly says by one such and such, and by another such and such. Verse 19: "For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be constituted righteous."

CONSTITUTED SINNERS OR RIGHTEOUS

The Bible constantly shows us that sin is not committed by us alone. Rather, we are sinners in Adam. In the same way righteousness is not worked up by us. Rather, we are righteous in Christ. Due to the disobedience of one man, Adam, sin entered into him, and the whole humanity was constituted sinners. In the same way, by the righteous act of one man, Jesus Christ, who was not only sinless but was so obedient that He died on the cross, all those in Him receive life and are constituted righteous.

THE TWO MAIN SOURCES OF HUMANITY

These are the two main sources, the two headsprings, and the two flows of humanity. Everyone comes from one of these two sources. If you are not in the flow of the one life, you are in the flow of the other life. There is no middle course.

Those who believe in Christ are in Him. Paul said that he was in Christ. He addressed other Christians the same way. Moreover, those who are in Christ are not individuals; they have Christ as their life, and they form the Body of Christ with all who have the same life. Christ is the Head. In Him everyone is related together. No one is isolated.

THE CHURCH, NOT CHRISTIANITY

Now we have to mention the word church. The Bible never uses the term Christianity. We are sometimes forced to use it for the sake of easy understanding. But it has long been misunderstood and has lost its original meaning.

The Bible calls the big corporate man that is in Christ the church. The word church in the original language means a group of people called by God out of Adam into Christ. This group of people was once in Adam. They answered the call of God and came out of Adam. Now they are no longer in the sphere of Adam. They have received life in Christ and are joined with Christ to become the church.

THE BRANCHES AND THE TREE

When Christ was about to depart from the world, He spoke of His relationship with His disciples. He said, "I am the vine; you are the branches" (John 15:5). "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4). He told them that the branches that abide in Him would bear much fruit. Christians are not individuals. They are part of one tree, Christ. The branches and the tree are joined as one. The tree supplies the sap to the branches, and the branches draw life from the tree.

Since we Christians are so utterly identified with Christ, the obedience of Christ becomes our obedience, the death of Christ becomes our death, the living of Christ becomes our living, and the glory of Christ becomes our glory. Everything of Christ is ours. This is the intimacy of the relationship between Christ and us Christians.

A Christian is one who has received life from Christ and who is in Christ. If we want to find a Christian outside of Christ, such a one does not exist. Paul said that he was a person in Christ. He did not say that he was in Christ as a person. When we are in Christ, we are no longer individual persons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRIST AS OUR LIFE

Every religion makes some contribution to the well-being of society. Every one of them has a point in common: giving man something or bringing man towards some goal. Although the methods they employ may be different and what they offer may vary, all of them have something to offer. Believing in Christ naturally involves receiving something from Him. Now we want to see what Christ offers to man.

THAT MAN MAY RECEIVE REGENERATION

What we are about to see are not the contributions made by Christianity to nations, governments, the world, and society at large. We want to study a more basic, crucial, and practical matter. What Christ gives to man is regeneration. When we believe into Him we receive regeneration. We have to admit that regeneration is a big subject in the Bible. We can only take a general glance at its meaning.

If you read through the Bible carefully, you will discover that it emphasizes life. In numerous passages it alludes to life. On this earth there are many kinds of life with many different expressions. Every life has its own unique expression. You can identify a life by its distinctive expression.

THE EXPRESSIONS OF DIFFERENT LIVES

Take for example a bird. You know that it has life because it is living. You can also identify the distinctive expression of this bird. What is this expression? Even a child knows that a bird can fly. The flying of a bird is the distinctive expression of its life. There is such a uniqueness with the bird's life. When this unique trait is manifested, it expresses itself in flying.

Again look at a fish. Not only does the fish have life, but it expresses the characteristics of its life by swimming in the water.

If we compare the fish with the bird, we can see that though both have life, the expressions of their individual lives are different. A bird can only fly; it cannot swim. A fish, on the other hand, can only do the opposite. It is

impossible for a bird to swim, even if you try your best to teach it. In the same manner, there is no way that you can teach a fish to fly in the air. Different lives have different expressions. The characteristics each displays allow us to identify them as different lives.

Since the mode of living is determined by the life it possesses, the question of life has nothing to do with learning and imitation. If the lives are different, there is no way to change one into another by a learning process. The only possibility is to have a change of life. If the life is changed, the expression of it will also change. If the life remains the same, it is impossible to alter the expression.

A CHANGE OF BEHAVIOR FOLLOWS A CHANGE OF LIFE

Suppose that a person is very interested in the research of small animals. He wants very much to see a bird swim. To him nothing would be more thrilling than to be able to train a little bird to swim. So he starts teaching a little bird to dive under water, breathe in the water, flap its wings, and exercise its claws in the proper manner. Do you think that he will succeed?

Suppose he continues his experiment by changing the diet of the bird or by altering its posture in sleep, etc., in order to adapt it to a life in water. Will he succeed? No! His doctrines may work. But the life of the bird is different. This life can fly comfortably in the air, but it cannot be made to swim in the water.

The kind of life determines the kind of expression. This is a law. You cannot change it. If you try to change the expression without changing the life, you will totally fail. Based on the principle of this law, we have a most vital and basic doctrine in our faith—regeneration.

REGENERATION IS AN EXCHANGE OF LIFE

Every expression of our living as a human being is based upon the kind of life we possess. A corrupted living is caused by a corrupted life. To change the mode of living, we have to first change the life. If the life is changed, the expression of it will also change. There will be no problem with the latter when the former is taken care of. Otherwise, any endeavor will be as futile as training a bird to swim or coaching a fish to fly. Regeneration is an exchange of life. What Christ offers us is not merely a change of behavior but regeneration based upon a change of life.

One thing we unanimously admit: the human life we possess is corrupt and evil. On the one hand, we blame the wickedness in the world and the demoralizing circumstances around us, but on the other hand, we have to admit that we are basically evil and filthy within ourselves. We realize that everywhere in the world there is a base scramble for power and position, but we also realize that we are fully filled with jealousy and pride. We admit that the heart of man is stubborn and rash. There is not a gentle or loving man. We are not only sinful, but exceedingly wicked. We know that sin is abhorrent, giving no peace to our conscience. We also wish or try to deal with sin and rid ourselves of it. The basic phenomenon of our life is a total involvement with sin.

THE EXPRESSION OF LIVING IS SIN

I have been preaching for more than ten years. I have met many people. But I have not yet known of anyone who claimed to be sinless. In all the places I have traveled through, I have yet to encounter a single individual who can boast of his perfection. Everyone admits to a greater or lesser extent that there are dark spots and flaws in his living. We all have to confess that our way of living is not proper.

NOT REFORMATION BUT REGENERATION

Based on this realization, man begins to think of ways to change his mode of living. This is the purpose of so many religions.

But can this be changed? It is true that man should be clean, courteous, and law-abiding and should be taught and cultivated in these virtues. But what is the purpose of this education and cultivation? He may improve a little outwardly, but can he be changed inwardly? We know perfectly well that the inward parts are impossible to be changed. We are not setting up a debate with other religions; we are presenting only this characteristic! A very crucial point in our faith is the matter of regeneration, not the matter of reformation.

A CORRUPT LIFE WILL NOT EXHIBIT CLEAN LIVING

Our emphasis rests on this fact: not only is the expression of human living corrupt and sinful, but the life itself is corruption and man himself is sin.

People do not like to hear these kinds of words. But we can only speak the truth. Man is basically wrong in his life. He is corrupt in nature, and he sins as

a result of this corruption. Many people admit their bad behavior but will not admit their corrupt self. Some admit the latter but do not realize that it is corrupt to the core. Man, being so corrupt, cannot naturally exhibit any clean living.

One time when I was in Kaifeng, I talked to a person who admitted that he was wrong in one thing. After a while he confessed that he was wrong in another. I told him frankly that the problem was not whether he did one thing rightly or wrongly; the person was the problem. When the person is wrong, surely the things he does will be wrong. If you are a fish, surely you cannot fly. I cannot blame you for being unable to fly, because you are but a fish. When the man is not proper, the expression of living will not be proper either. This is entirely a matter of life. It is not merely a matter of an outward mode of behavior. The human corruption is within him.

USELESS TO HAVE OUTWARD CORRECTIONS

Since man is corrupt within, there is no use in correcting him outwardly. I have a friend who came home from Nanking. When the train passed through Wushih, he bought a few dolls for his little daughter. All of the dolls were made of clay. They were painted and cutely decorated with bright colors. His daughter was about seven years old. When she got the toys she was overwhelmed with joy. Immediately she assumed the role of a mother, cuddling the dolls and putting them to sleep. When it was time to eat, she fed them with food. With her hands she shoveled the rice into the dolls' mouths, saying, "How come you don't eat?" Alas, the faces of the dolls were smeared with grease and rice! The little girl, acting like her mother, began to wipe the faces with water and towels. Unfortunately, a black spot appeared when one part was wiped. The more she wiped, the bigger the black spot became. After a while, the nose, eyes, and ears were all gone. She began to cry. There was nothing that could be done! Her father said to her, "Throw them away. I will buy you new ones. Clay dolls cannot be washed."

THE ONLY WAY—AN EXCHANGE OF LIFE

I was there when that story happened. I believe that trying to improve our human behavior is just like cleaning the faces of those dolls. We think that if we rid ourselves of our proud attitude and all our lies and behave in a more refined way, we will be a better person. This is our human concept. God says that the outward corruption of man is caused by an inward corruption. The

only solution is a basic change of life. The recognition of the hopelessness and wickedness of man and the realization of the need for an exchange are the basic foundation in our Christian faith.

MAN'S HEART IS FILLED WITH EVIL

One day I was walking down a street in Shanghai with a friend of mine who has a very active mentality. He said to me, "It is a pity that we cannot see through another's heart. Would not it be interesting if I could tell at a glance what this person or that person was thinking? What a pity that we cannot see through the heart."

I said, "This is far from being a pity. I am relieved at not being able to see through another's heart. Do not try to guess what others think, because all of man's thoughts are evil. There is nothing other than stealing, deceiving, and treachery in our minds. There is no good thought. All the thoughts have to be kept secret. It is fortunate that the heart is concealed from our sight by a few bones and some skin. If we could see it clearly, we would loathe it immediately."

THE NEED OF REGENERATION

Therefore, the salvation of man cannot start from the outside. It has to start from the inside. For this reason there is the need of regeneration. Regeneration simply means to cast off the dirty, corrupted life that we have and exchange it for a new life. This is analogous to changing a fish's life for a bird's life. There will be no need to teach the fish to fly anymore; it will fly naturally. At the present we will not mention the way to regeneration. We just want to know what regeneration is. Giving up a life of sin and replacing it by a holy life is our salvation.

CORRUPTED FROM WITHIN

A few years ago I was in Amoy. One day I was preaching in the villages with another co-worker by the name of Wang. By the time we completed our visits, it was close to midnight. We were both very thirsty. All the shops along the way were closed, and there was nowhere that we could find water. Approaching the end of a little town, we saw a small grocery store with its door still open. With much joy we bought two big pears. The ones we picked were the biggest and cleanest. There was no hole or any bad spot outside. We took them with us and ate them on our way. After a while we tasted

something strange. As we examined the pears under a lamp, we found that they were bad inside. The only thing we could do was pick out the worms and eat the rest.

I told Brother Wang, "The skin of these pears looked so shiny; there was no hole anywhere. Do you know how those worms got inside the pears? Let me tell you. When the pear tree was still blossoming, the worms had already laid eggs in the pear flowers. When the flowers wilted and the pears were formed, the eggs hatched and grew inside them. Outwardly, these pears looked nice, but inside they were filled with worms." This is just what we have been talking about. The evil of man is not merely in his conduct. The basic problem is that he is corrupted in his life. The salvation of Christianity is not a change of our outward behavior, but an exchange of our inward life.

BURNING INSIDE

I know a lady who is very good-tempered. She never gets angry. There is always a smile on her face. One day while her niece was visiting in her house, an extremely unreasonable person rebuked her for a length of time. Many unbearable words were hurled at her, but she did not answer a word; there was still a smile on her face. After the person was gone, the niece admiringly said, "Auntie, that was quite a demonstration of patience to be able to hold your temper. If I were you I would have lost my temper. At least I would have said something back to him." The aunt said, "No. Do not think that I was not angry. I was burning inside! But I have cultivated forbearance and suppressed my feeling."

Our problem is not whether trouble does or does not explode out from us. Rather, it is whether there is trouble inside or not. Alas! It is all too true that we have all kinds of problems inside! The Bible shows us that we are naturally sinful. There is nothing strange about a man going after sin. His inward and outward parts feel compatible with each other when he sins. This is a most natural consequence to him. Our human life is bound to be manipulated by the flesh, the world, and sin.

THE SEED OF SIN WITHIN MAN

Some people look nice outwardly. They have a high sense of morality, and a decent standard of behavior. It seems as if they possess a better life. But the outward niceties are merely works of repression. They are like a horse held

tightly by its reins. Given a chance, it will plunge into trouble. Let me say an honest word: every man can become a bandit, and every gentleman can become a dishonorable criminal. Just let the hands go, and every vileness can break forth. There is the seed of sin within man. It is not a strange thing for man to sin.

No one needs to make up his mind to lose his temper. He only has to make up his mind not to do so. Never has a person written in his diary, "From this day on, I am determined to lose my temper once a day. If I neglect to do so, I will punish myself!" Only patience requires deliberation. Committing evil is very natural. There is no conscious effort required. A deliberate work is needed only in doing good.

SIN IS AN INHERENT NATURE

I sleep in that little room right outside the door. If there is a bright light in this hall, I will not be able to sleep there. If I want to sleep, all I need to do is close the door, and the light will be shut out from me. Darkness is the inherent feature of that room; light is the foreign element. All I can do is drive away the foreign element. I cannot drive away the inherent darkness. You can close your door to sinless aspirations. But you can never close your door to sinful temptations. Because the life we have is corrupted, the expression of it in our living is likewise evil.

The salvation of God is to regenerate us so that we will have an exchange of life. The new life is the life of God Himself. Regeneration is receiving God's life. It means that henceforth our whole being is taken away, and God is living in us. We do not live our own life anymore. God becomes our living. I never exhort people to do good. It will not work even if I exhort day and night. It is impossible for man to live God's life. Only the coming in of God's life can result in God-like living. To receive God's life is regeneration, and only regeneration will result in a change of outward behavior.

A REGENERATED MAN

We still need to look at the Scripture to understand the matter of regeneration. First Corinthians 2:14: "But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually." An unregenerated person is a fleshly person. Not only is he unable to understand the things of God, but

he regards them as foolishness. He cannot comprehend even if he wants to, for he lacks that faculty of comprehension. Without regeneration he does not have that other life, and as a result he does not have that power of understanding.

Read Romans 8:5-8 again: "For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be. And those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

These verses show us clearly that there are some people who mind the flesh and live according to the flesh. They are under the control of the flesh and are against God. Therefore, they can never submit to the laws of God. They cannot even if they wanted to. Much less can they please God. A regenerated person, however, follows the Holy Spirit and enjoys life and peace. The difference between the two kinds of persons lies in whether or not the life has been exchanged.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If a man only possesses his natural life, that is, the life that he originally owns as a man, he cannot see the kingdom of God! What is the kingdom of God? Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The kingdom of God is about these spiritual things: righteousness, peace, and joy. And all these are in the Holy Spirit. Without regeneration, these things are incomprehensible and impossible to see. If a man wants to see these things, he has to be regenerated.

THE SEPARATING LINE—LIFE

John 3:6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Christ Jesus gave us a clear separating line. What is born of the Spirit is absolutely different from what is born of the flesh. He would never come to improve the flesh of man. That which is born of the flesh is still flesh. No matter how much you reform, it is still flesh. There is no other way but to be born of the Spirit. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Regeneration is not a reckoning of "everything in the past as dead yesterday and of everything in the future as born today." There is no such thing! Without an exchange of life, even if you are born over and over again, you are still the flesh. There is still no regeneration. There is a wide chasm between the two lives which cannot be crossed over. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

I only wish to ask you a few questions. Are you reforming your life, or have you received God's life? Are you in the process of improving yourself, or are you ready to accept the life of God? The true faith of Jesus Christ gives the life of God to man. This is the life that Christ offers to man. If you receive it, you are a regenerated person, and you will be able to live the life of God on earth.

Blessed are those who have lost hope in their own life. A divine life has been prepared. If you are satisfied with your own life, Christ can do nothing. He never helps you improve your own life. God wants you to be born again and to exchange your life. This is the salvation of Christ.

§SECTION THREE
CHRIST AND THE NEW LIFE

CHAPTER NINE

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

In accomplishing His work in man, God does not deal with individuals. He includes the whole of humanity in Christ. Whatever He executes in Christ is carried out in us. The doctrine of salvation is found in Christ. God also gives man a new life in Him.

God has no desire to change our outward behavior; He only wants to change our life. His one intention is to replace our old life with a new one. He can only accomplish this in Christ Jesus. When we are in Christ, this work of replacement is automatically applied to us.

A FEW PREREQUISITES

However, before God can dispense a new life to us, some matters need to be taken care of. If these things are not settled, God can never give life to us, and we will never have the right to receive anything from Him. We know that the most crucial matter in the Christian faith is the possession of a new life from God. But there are a few prerequisites, without which it is impossible to partake of this life. Therefore, these items occupy an important position and rightly demand our attention.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The first item is the forgiveness of sins. This provides God with a proper standing to dispense life to us.

We all know that the manifested behavior of our natural life is extremely evil. It is hopeless beyond measure. Our corrupt behavior is made known by the sins we commit. Some commit rash and ugly sins, while others indulge in more refined and subtle ones. In either case, all these sins have to be forgiven. They have to be forgiven justly and properly before we can receive the life of God.

THE SOLUTION TO THE OLD LIFE

Second, the very life which activates sins must be dealt with thoroughly. Unless this life is removed from its root, the possibility of sin remains; it will

continue to bear corrupt fruit. Sin will still be manifested in our thoughts and actions. God must give a final solution to our old life. It must be terminated once and for all.

After these two things are taken care of, God can freely dispense a new life to us in Christ. Then we can walk according to it day by day. We will also be able to live a God-like life on earth and fulfill His purpose.

TO REPENT IS NOT ENOUGH

How does God forgive our sins? Many people have an erroneous concept concerning this matter. They think that although they have committed many sins, the sins can all be pardoned if they repent of their evil conduct.

But repentance can never remit a sin that you have committed. No matter how much you repent, your sins are still there. You may regret your sins as much as you want, but they will not be removed simply by your repentance.

When I was preaching in Kaifeng, some government officials were present. I told them, suppose a bandit committed many crimes and murdered many, but was not caught for a long time. Then one day he appeared before you, saying, "I repent of all my past misconduct. From now on I am going to reform. I have determined to be a law-abiding citizen and a good man." Please tell me, would his repentance annul his former crimes, the cases brought up against him by his victims, and the prosecutions conducted against him by the law? Would they be nullified? Would the law let him go?

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD MUST BE MAINTAINED

The Bible shows us that all sins incur certain kinds of judgment. Nothing we do is lightly passed over. The outward manifestation of our life is sinful. Not only do we sin against ourselves, but we sin against others and, above all, against God. God is righteous. He cannot evasively bypass our sins. His righteousness does not permit Him to do so.

I remember a true story. Once a man murdered someone and stole a sum of money. He then took refuge in another town. There he married and had some children. The people in that place knew nothing of his past.

One day, three detectives came to look for him. They found the man and were about to take him away. The man turned to his wife and asked, "For all these years that I have been with you, have I not been a good husband?" The wife agreed. Then he turned to his children, saying, "Am I not a good father to you?" The children also nodded. Finally he turned to his neighbors: "In all these years, have I ever intruded upon your property or done any wrong to you? Would you not consider me a good neighbor?" They all consented unanimously that he was a fine person.

He then turned around to the three detectives and defended himself, saying, "See, I have been a good man all these years. Here are all these witnesses testifying to my goodness. You should let me go!" The three replied, "You may be justified before everybody, but you are not justified before the law. Your repentance may guarantee your future innocence, but it can never remove your past guilt, nor can it deliver you from the judgment of the law." In the end, he had to face his trial in court.

THE CONSCIENCE WILL NOT LET GO

When we sin, our conscience also does not let us go. Sometimes when the conscience is hushed, we do not sense too much guilt. But though the conscience may sleep, it never dies! The minute the conscience awakes, it convicts us of our sins and makes us feel very uneasy. Perhaps it is silent today, but it will not shut up forever. It will never let go of what we have done in the past.

FORGIVENESS BASED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS

Furthermore, God cannot forgive our sins lightly. If we sin carelessly and God forgives our sins irresponsibly, then God Himself falls into sin in His forgiveness. This does not mean that God does not have the power to forgive sins, but it means that God can only grant forgiveness when it comes up to His dignity. He cannot degrade Himself to a state of unrighteousness in the process of forgiving our sins. God is forever the righteous God.

In Kaifeng, I met a Christian by the name of Wen. He was the chief officer of a certain department in the government. One day he invited me to dinner and mentioned a difficult situation that confronted him. Within his department a few persons were known to have engaged in a fraud that involved more than ten thousand dollars. The act was brought into the light,

and the guilty persons were arrested. The law of the department said that anyone involved in a fraud that exceeded five thousand dollars was to be executed. According to the law, such men had to die.

Wen said to me, "As a Christian, I am very reluctant to put people to death. If I forgive them, I myself become guilty of breaking the law. However, I cannot bear the thought of executing men. This is my dilemma. What would you say?" I could not think of any way to save them either. The law is absolute! There is no way around it. As Christians we cannot violate the law and fall into unrighteousness. Yet, if we uphold our righteousness, we sacrifice others' lives.

GOD HAS JUDGED CHRIST

How then did God forgive our sins? The Bible shows us that we not only received forgiveness in our salvation, but we obtained justification as well. Many times the Bible puts forgiveness and justification together. These constitute the two initial steps towards the receiving of a new life.

Let us take a closer look at the matter of forgiveness and justification. We have to come back to Christ because He is the key to all these matters. God regards Christ as the Head of a new race. He is the second man. He is also the last Adam. The first Adam was a huge man incorporating the whole of humanity. When he sinned, the whole human race was corrupted. God executed His judgment on one person, Christ, because Christ also is a huge corporate man. Those who are included in Him bear all the judgment of God in Him.

For this reason, the Bible says that when Christ died, He died for us. We do not die as individuals; we die in Christ. His death included all of us. With this death our sins can be forgiven. Hence, God's forgiveness is based upon His judgment in Christ. This is not irresponsible forgiveness. Rather, this is very just.

THE PROCEDURE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Once a man argued with me concerning this point. He said, "Mr. Nee, if God wants to forgive our sins, why can He not just say so? Why did He have to send His Son to be crucified on the cross? This is too cumbersome!" He thought that God is a nice fellow who writes off our sins unscrupulously

without any concern for the law! He did not realize that God had to go through many steps before He could issue forgiveness.

A few years ago, I was preaching on this matter in a girls' school in Nanking. However, the students could not quite grasp the idea. There was a little table before me with a beautiful vase on top. I asked the principal of the school, "Suppose someone broke this vase. According to the rule of the school, what would you do?" The principal replied that reparation would have to be made. I asked, "What would happen if one of your favorite students had done it?" She answered that the same rule would apply. I pursued on and asked, "What if she could not afford to pay?" The principal repeated that the rule would still hold.

The next day, during the meeting, the vase was gone. It was broken by one of the principal's favorite students who also happened to be very poor. I took the opportunity to preach once more the doctrine of salvation by the death of Jesus. The principal could not release the student from her responsibility on the basis of love. Yet the student had no way to make reparation. In this dilemma there was only one way to take: the principal had to use her own money to repay for the student. On one hand, this fulfilled the law of the school; on the other hand, it showed the love of the principal for her students.

Christ came to earth to bear the judgment of our sins and suffer their consequences in order that we may be forgiven. The coming of Christ was the very coming of God Himself. He came to repay for us. By doing so, He did not degrade Himself in unrighteousness; rather, He proved Himself to be just and righteous.

FORGIVENESS IS TO SUFFER LOSS

I believe we have to see one more aspect of the meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness implies bearing the transgressor's loss by the transgressed. For example, if someone has stolen my pencil and I have forgiven him, it means that I have suffered the loss of a pencil. What then is unforgiveness? It simply means to take back the pencil from the thief in order that I may not suffer a loss. Hence, to forgive is to suffer a loss.

When the student broke the vase, she should have been the one to make reparation. Unforgiveness means that she would have to suffer a loss by payment. Forgiveness, on the other hand, means that the transgressed, who

was the principal, had to take up the loss by paying for it herself. Therefore, when God forgives our sins, it means that He takes up the loss incurred by our sins. No third party can forgive our sins. Only the transgressed can suffer the loss of the transgressor. Christ is God, the One against whom we sinned. His forgiveness is the suffering of the loss of our sins.

CHRIST AS A MAN

This is not all. We have to realize that Christ is a man. He bore our sins as a man. God looked at Christ as a man and included all of us in Him. When God judged Christ, He judged us also. Hence, God has judged us in Christ and also forgiven us in Christ. This forgiveness is perfectly just.

Second Corinthians 5:14 says, "Because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died." The "One" here refers to Christ, and the "all" refers to us. When Christ died, we all died with Him because we were all included in Him. It is said that all Chinese came from the one man Hwang-ti. If in the very beginning, somebody had killed Hwang-ti, he would have killed the whole Chinese race. In the same way, we are in Christ. When Christ passed through the judgment, we passed through the same. His death became our termination.

Verse 21: "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The One "who did not know sin" is again Christ. He was made to be sin for us. What does it mean to be "made sin"? It means that when Christ was hung on the cross, God regarded Him as the sin of you and me. He looked at Christ as sin representing the whole human race. When Christ died, sin was all-inclusively terminated and removed. Now all of us who are in Him have our sins terminated; we become the righteousness of God in Christ.

IT IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD TO FORGIVE US

Why does it say "become the righteousness of God," rather than "become righteous"? What is the difference between the two? To become righteous implies that we have done a good work, whereas to be made the righteousness of God declares that God Himself is righteous. There is a big difference between the two. God did not forgive our sins in an unrighteous way; He forgave in a very righteous way. He has punished Christ. As a result of this

punishment, He can forgive us in Christ. God has not glossed over us. God is not an evasive God. When He grants forgiveness, He does so in a just manner.

Once I was going to Chiu-kang on a boat with a friend. A Moslem was reading on the deck of the same boat. After beginning a conversation with him, I told him that I would like to know if his scripture mentioned any way of salvation. He said, "All that one needs to do is repent of one's past evil deeds. The sin will then be forgiven. Why is there the need for salvation?" I replied that if God forgives in this way, He Himself sins in His forgiveness.

He was very surprised at what I said. It seemed that he had never heard such a thing before. I asked, "Do you think that it is righteous for a man to be forgiven of his sins once he repents of them? For example, when a criminal is brought before a judge, is it right for the judge to release him merely on the basis of his repentance?" After thinking for a while, he admitted that this was not just. Unfortunately, I had no time to explain to him the death of Christ. The salvation of God is based on the judgment of His Son. We receive our forgiveness in the Son.

SETTING JESUS AS THE PROPITIATION COVER

Romans 3:25-26: "Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred, with a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus." This portion of the Scripture is not easily understood. However, there are two points which we need to notice.

God set forth Christ as a propitiation place. In the original language the words "propitiation place" mean propitiation cover. In the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant was covered by a golden lid called the propitiation cover (translated by the King James Version as "mercy seat"). Man's prayer passed through this cover to reach God, and God's answer went through the same to meet man. That was a meeting place between God and man. Now Jesus has become this propitiation cover. He is the focal point of God and man. Both can now meet in Him on the basis of His blood. Jesus has died for us. He has shed His blood and forgiven our sins. Now He has become our propitiation cover.

Before Jesus died, "God passed over the sins that had previously occurred, with a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time." From Adam to Jesus, for more than four thousand years, countless sins were committed by man. Although God passed over them, He did not let them go by. This shows His righteousness in former times. In the present time, He has sent His Son. We are now justified in Him. In itself this very justification is a just act. This passage tells us the different ways that God handled these two things. First, He passed over the sins committed formerly, reckoning that Jesus would come; in this He proved Himself righteous. Second, He forgives all the sins committed now, basing this upon the judgment of Christ; in this He also declares Himself righteous. By the death of Jesus, God has both declared us sinless as well as Himself righteous.

HOW CAN GOD BE UNRIGHTEOUS?

Once I met a sister in the Lord. She said that she was an evil person and had committed many sins. She had indulged in all a woman could ever commit. Because of this, she thought that she could never be forgiven. I checked to see whether she believed that Jesus shed His blood for the sins of man, that is, for man's redemption. She said that she knew all these doctrines, but having been a Christian for so many years, and committing the multitude of sins as she did, it was impossible to be forgiven anymore.

I was sitting in front of her. At that point I stood up and solemnly looked into her eyes, saying emphatically, "I do not care whether your sins are forgiven or not! But the way you talk implies that God has sinned. This I do care! On the one hand, you believe that you are in Christ. Yet, on the other hand, you do not believe that your sins can be forgiven. If God does not forgive you, does that mean that God is unrighteous? If He is unrighteous, then He sins. How can God ever sin? I do not care if you are condemned and are going to perish. But God loved you and sent His Son to pay all the debts of your sins. His Son's death is now your death. All your sins are on His shoulder. If what you say is true, then God has indeed taken back His words. He is coming again to collect the debts of your sins! You are saying that God cannot forgive your sins and that He has become an unrighteous God! What kind of talk is this? For this I have to stand up! My God can never be unrighteous!"

On that day, tears streamed from her eyes. She exclaimed, "I am sinful, but God is righteous! He has to forgive me in Christ. Although my sins are

numerous, thank Him; He is bound to forgive me! He would be unrighteous if He did not do so."

SAVED ACCORDING TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

It is true that God is full of grace, but you do not have to be saved by His grace. You can be saved by His righteousness. The grace of God is based upon His love towards us. It makes Him willing to save us. But His righteousness is based upon His Son's death for us. It makes Him unable not to save us. Before Jesus died, God was free either to save or not save us. But once Jesus died, God was bound! He is absolutely obligated to save whoever comes to God by the blood of Jesus! Have we read this? It is impossible for Him not to forgive us!

This is salvation according to His righteousness. Before the death of Christ, if He had forgiven any of our sins or had acquitted us from the punishment for sin, He would have made Himself a sinner. Now He has caused His Son to be crucified on the cross. The judgment of sins has been accomplished. The problem of sin is solved. God can no longer reject anyone who comes to Him by the blood of Jesus. Now He will make Himself a sinner and an unrighteous one if He does not forgive.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD NOT TO SAVE US

Some may think, "Is it that easy to be saved? I am afraid that I need to pray more. I have to pray to an extent that God softens His heart and has favor upon me. Only then will I be saved!" There is no such thing. Today, even if God would not soften His heart, He still has to forgive your sins! Even if God is absolutely disgusted with you, He still has to grant you this forgiveness. It does not matter whether you pray for a long time or not. Rather, it depends on the fact that redemption has been accomplished. Even if God does not want to save you, it is too late for Him to change His mind. It would be all right if it were two thousand years ago. However, God has accepted the sacrifice of Christ; now it is impossible for Him not to save you. A sinner can suffer judgment only once! He cannot be judged twice.

In order to forgive our sins, God has taken all the trouble to accomplish the salvation in Christ. Now He has commissioned us to go to the whole world to show others that God has accomplished this work of salvation. He can now forgive sins without placing Himself in an improper standing.

GOD FORGIVES UPRIGHTLY

Others may say, "Why don't I feel saved? Why is it that after I believed, nothing special seemed to happen? I don't feel the peace inside." Please remember that it is not a matter of whether you have the peace or not. Whether or not you have the peace is immaterial. The important thing is for God to have the peace. He has to grant a forgiveness that is just and honest. When God forgives you in Christ, He does so righteously, uprightly, and openly. All you need to do is receive it.

A passage that is quite familiar to many people is Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." Unfortunately, many only read up to this part. They cut off the remaining half. The word "and" following this phrase should be translated as "even to the extent that." To what extent did the Lord Jesus come to serve? He came to serve to the extent that He gave His life as a ransom for many.

In Matthew 26:28 the Lord Jesus said, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Hence, the shedding of His blood is for the forgiveness of our sins and for our redemption. We can only obtain forgiveness in Christ. Outside of Him, whatever kind of forgiveness you have is not just.

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

We will select a few more passages to see how Christ accomplished redemption for us.

Romans 5:6-8: "For while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will anyone die, though perhaps for the good man someone would even dare to die. But God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:9-10: "Much more then, having now been justified in His blood, we will be saved through Him from the wrath. For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." This shows us clearly that the death of Christ was not the death of a martyr. He did not die for a belief or a cause. He died for sin, in order for a way to be opened for sinners to be declared guiltless! Hence, 1 Corinthians 15:3 says that Christ "died for our sins."

Hebrews 9:22b: "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Sin can only be forgiven after judgment.

First Peter 2:24: "Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose bruise you were healed." Then 3:18: "For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God, on the one hand being put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the spirit."

First John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin."

ALL THE SINS ARE UPON JESUS

Isaiah 53:6: "We all like sheep have gone astray; / Each of us has turned to his own way, / And Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all / To fall on Him." The words "fall on" here can also be translated as "placed upon." All of our sins have been placed upon Jesus. A brother who is an accountant said once that this is like transferring an account. Originally, sin was in your account. Now it has been transferred to the account of Jesus Christ.

One time a person asked a Christian about the way of forgiveness. The Christian showed him this passage in Isaiah and told him that if he would get in through the first "all" and come out through the second "all," he would be saved. We all are like sheep gone astray. Yes, I am included. I am a sinner that has gone astray. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to be placed upon Him. Yes, all my iniquities are upon Him.

There is a hymn which well describes the joy of this salvation:

Why should I worry, doubt and fear?
Has God not caused His Son to bear
My sins upon the tree?
The debt that Christ for me has paid,
Would God another mind have made
To claim again from me?

Redemption full the Lord has made,
And all my debts has fully paid,

From law to set me free.
I fear not for the wrath of God,
For I've been sprinkled with His blood,
It wholly covers me.

For me forgiveness He has gained,
And full acquittal was obtained,
All debts of sin are paid;
God would not have His claim on two,
First on His Son, my Surety true,
And then upon me laid.

So now I have full peace and rest,
My Savior Christ hath done the best
And set me wholly free;
By His all-efficacious blood
I ne'er could be condemned by God,
For He has died for me!

Hymns, #1003

CHAPTER TEN

THE CRUCIFIXION OF SINNERS WITH CHRIST

The highest goal in the salvation of God is the dispensing of His life into man. This is God's ultimate desire. Only by partaking of the divine life can we have a divine living. It is impossible to have a God-like living with our human life. The manifestation of our life is nothing but sin. In this respect God dealt with our sins and iniquities in a way that would maintain His righteousness. We have seen that the Son of God was judged for this purpose. Those who are in Him have been forgiven of their sins.

THE SOURCE OF SIN

But the salvation of God did not stop with the forgiveness of sins; it went deeper to deal with the source of sin. We have said that man's sins are not caused by his environment. Rather, they originate from the person. The mode of living is merely a natural consequence of the kind of life that is possessed. Since man's life is corrupted, his outward behavior cannot help but be evil.

For example, when I knock on the stand before me with my fingers, a certain sound is produced. You can tell at once that this is a sound produced by wood. If I knock on a piece of metal, it will give a different kind of sound, and you can readily tell the difference between the two. The contrast in sound is caused by the difference in constitution. No matter how I change my manner of knocking, I cannot make a piece of wood sound metallic. Nor can it be done vice versa.

The same is true of the behavior of man. Our environment cannot precipitate something that does not exist within us. A slow person is slow under any kind of circumstance. But a quick disposition is readily detected under the slightest stress in the environment. All outward conduct is a direct result of our inward life. Hence, temptations in the environment are merely catalysts to hasten the exposure of our inner substance. They can never bring forth anything that has not hitherto existed in man.

OUR ENVIRONMENT EXPOSES OUR LIFE

A friend told me once that the human life is programmed by its environment. A good environment will produce fine personalities, and an unhealthy environment is the cause of all vices. All that one needs to do is control the environment, and proper personalities will automatically follow.

I said, "According to what you have proposed, it would mean that salt-water fish have become what they are because of living in the sea, and fresh-water fish are the direct product of the river water. This is surely not true. The environment can never govern what is not in us. The environment only exposes what lies dormant within us!"

Of what does the human life consist? It consists of all kinds of evil and corruption. Give it a gentle knock, and everything will fall out into the open. Many moralists say that all we need to do is suppress ourselves. Many have tried it. They held themselves tightly by the reins, fearing that their evil nature would break loose once they let go even a little. This kind of person is most miserable. Daily they repress their desires. But we know that they can never succeed for long.

GOD NEVER CHANGES OUR LIVES

Can we change the human life? Never! Not only are we unable to change it; even God cannot change it. The life of man is like a sin factory that daily manufactures hundreds of products. Therefore, in addition to the work of forgiveness, God had to deal with the source of sin. Since He is not going to change our life, what basic solution did He provide to save us? We have to look at the second aspect of His salvation.

Romans 6:7: "For he who has died is justified from sin." If a man wants to be delivered from sin, the only way is for him to die. He who has died is freed from sin; it is no longer possible for him to sin.

I know a friend who had an insatiable appetite for card games. Day and night he was obsessed by them. When he could not find partners for a game, he felt tormented beyond measure. Even when he did not have cards in his hands, he would feel better just looking at them. His whole life was governed by cards. However, he is dead now. After he died, he no longer loved cards. Even if you stuffed cards into his hands, he would not take them anymore. Death has delivered him from his cards.

Consider another example of a very arrogant person. He boasts of everything about himself. There is no way to remove or suppress his pride. One day he dies. If the whole world gathered around him to eulogize and extol his glorious deeds, what would he do? Would he still be proud of himself?

DEATH DELIVERS US FROM SIN

God's salvation for man is death! He who is dead is freed from sin. We have to see the verse that precedes the one we just read.

Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." We have to take a closer look at this passage. The Greek word "annulled" has two meanings: one is unemployed; the other is paralyzed or crippled. The idea of unemployment is stronger in this passage. Hence, we can translate this as "that the body of sin might be unemployed."

SIN, THE OLD MAN, AND THE BODY

There are three important agents in this passage. The first is sin, the second is the old man, and the third is the body. Sin is personified; it is a master. This sin does not refer to individual sins. Rather, it is a powerful lord that binds, entangles, and compels man to commit all of the particular sins. Man becomes the slave to sin, being subject to such a tyrant and carrying out all its dictates.

Under ordinary circumstances, man does not feel too much pressure from this master. But the minute he makes up his mind to overcome it, he will find that no matter how much energy he summons, he can never succeed in overturning its power. The more he tries to control his temper, the more he will lose it. Sin is the master. It forces man to submit.

The old man mentioned in the Bible is our own person. Deep in man there is a love for sin. When temptation comes, man rejoices to hear its call and gladly succumbs to its sway. It is true that sin is a powerful agent, but when it is met by the old man, the result is an instant collaboration.

In such a setting, the two go about searching for an instrument and discover the body. The body is thus employed. They will either tell the eyes to look, the ears to listen, or the hands to move. In this way the body executes the order dictated by sin and seconded by the old man. Sin is the director, the

old man submits to its orders, and the body carries them out practically in the form of transgressions. These three are one. They agree with one another. The product of this collaboration is the multitude of sins that we commit.

ERADICATION OF SINS

God's salvation is different from our human concepts. His way is deliverance from sin. We think that everything would be all right if sins were uprooted from our being. But God's salvation is not the eradication of sins. He does not pull out our sins like uprooted trees.

The eastern mind always thinks that perfection is attained as soon as one has all sins repressed. But our person is one that loves to sin. It does not even want to suppress sin. Even when it tries grudgingly, there is no lasting result. The way of God is not a subjugation of sin, nor is it a mortification of the body. It is an exchange of person. The old man that was attached to sin is removed, and a new life that abhors sin is put in its place. When temptation comes, this new life naturally shuns it. In this way, the body loses its function in regard to performing sins.

GOD ONLY DEALS WITH THE OLD MAN

Hence, God's salvation is entirely different from the concepts of other religions. God does not deal with sin, nor does He touch the body. All He takes care of is the old man within. This old man is just our life. When the old man is put to death, it means that the old life is terminated, and a new life is put in its place. The two ends, sin and the body, are left untouched, but the middle agent is taken away. Sin can now no longer communicate with the body.

The man that is constituted with this new life is called the new man in the Bible. When temptation comes again, the new man reacts very differently from the old one. He no longer hearkens to those lures. He never seconds the motion of sin, and he never actuates the body to commit evil. The new man is diametrically opposed to sin. He is deaf to the suggestion of sin.

UNEMPLOYED IN REGARD TO SIN

What about the body? At this point, although the body is still willing to be a slave to sin, the power of the latter is blocked by the new man from being transmitted to the body. This new man no longer obeys sin or agrees with its

proposals. Under these circumstances, the body has nothing more to do; it becomes unemployed. Formerly, my mouth constantly cursed. Now it does not function that way anymore; it has lost its job. My hands that used to fight with others have been discouraged by the new man. Now they no longer fight; they are likewise unemployed. My eyes, my ears, and even my whole body have become unemployed in regard to sin.

This is what the Bible means when it says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him." It clearly tells us that God deals with the old man. The result is that the body of sin is unemployed, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves. That means we will no longer come under the sway of sin. We have nothing more to do with it.

We can see that the basic strategy in God's salvation is the removal of our life. Our life is just the old man. In God's eyes this has to die. If it does not die, it will produce millions of sinful offspring. It will give birth to jealousy, pride, murder, adultery, and so forth. It has an inherent and insatiable love for sin, and no matter how much you suppress it, it will still run after sin. It takes no effort for it to perform evil, but it is impossible for it to be patient, loving, and holy. There is no other way for God to take but to pronounce death for this life. Its last breath has to be taken from it. It must be utterly terminated. When this happens sin will lose its partner forever.

KILL IT

One time I was at the home of one of my friends. He had a maid who gave him much trouble. Not only was she lazy, but she had the habit of stealing. She possessed every vice that a maid could have. My friend asked for my advice. His intention was for me to preach to her some in the hope that she might change. I told him an extremely simple answer: Give her up and hire another! This is the same way that God deals with us. The human life can never be improved through preaching. God says, "I do not need you anymore." With that He simply kills it. This is God's salvation.

This is the difference between God's provision and our concept. We hope to suppress sin in order to tame the wild desires of it. But what result have we obtained? Many unbelievers have changed their conduct at different times. They were sinful and repulsive; now they are mild and gentle. But this is not the salvation of God. The salvation of God does not depend on how many sins you have committed in the past or how much you have improved. It is not a

matter of changing from violence to gentleness. God sees sin as something related to our life. He deals with the problem at its root by removing the life. As long as this life continues, sin remains. But the day that this life is put to death, sin ceases.

NOT A MENTAL RECKONING

This death, furthermore, is not the death that some people talk about, where one merely considers everything in the past to be gone for good. The amazing thing is that you can consider as much as you want that your temper is gone and dead, but in actuality it always comes back. You can only have a psychological reckoning. In reality it is still very alive. It follows you everywhere you go. Whenever you turn around it is there. You can never rid yourself of your temper, no matter how hard you try.

DIE IN CHRIST

How can we die? The answer again goes back to this one fact: God has put us into Christ. God has caused Christ to die, and when we are in Him we died also. We have said that the forgiveness of sin is because we are in Christ. God has put us into Christ. God has caused Christ to die, and since we are in Him, we died also. When God judged Christ, He judged us also. By this judgment our sins are forgiven. We cannot put ourselves to death. The death of Christ, in which God has included us, makes us dead with Him.

Let us read again Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." There is no alternative for our old man but to die. There is no choice left for him to take. However, it is not a simple matter to die. God had to include us in Christ and then crucify Him on the cross. When Christ died on the cross, we were all included. From that moment on, we were no longer ourselves; we no longer existed. We never can or will crucify ourselves. It is our co-crucifixion with Him that took care of the old man. This is the basic solution to the problem of sin.

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

Not only in Romans, but other places in the Bible say that we are crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." It is no longer I who live, because the "I" has been crucified with Christ on the cross.

Read Galatians 5:24 again. "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." We do not do the crucifying; we are crucified already with Christ.

We have seen that Christ bore our sins on the cross. Now we see that He also bore our very person on the cross. He has become a substitute for our sins as well as our person. On that day on the cross, there were not only our sins, but also our person. God has included both our sins and our person in Christ. When Christ was crucified, so were we. If we see this one point, the rest will be clear.

A hymn describes well this fact:

I am crucified with Christ,
And the cross hath set me free;
I have ris'n again with Christ,
And He lives and reigns in me.
Oh! it is so sweet to die with Christ,
To the world, and self, and sin;
Oh! it is so sweet to live with Christ,
As He lives and reigns within.

Hymns, #482, verse 1

CHRIST IS A CORPORATE MAN

We can see from the Bible that Christ is not an individual person. He is a corporate man. This is like a legal term, a "juristic person." Everyone is incorporated into such a corporate person. Whatever the juristic person does signifies the act of everyone else. Using our previous analogy, it is the same as saying that if Hwang-ti had died, all of his descendants would have died; the whole Chinese race would have been terminated there. We are included in Christ. When Christ died on the cross, we who are in Him died on it as well. By the judgment of Christ we are forgiven; by His death we are set free from ourselves. On the negative side, we receive the forgiveness of sins outwardly and the termination of the old life inwardly. On the positive side, we start afresh in Christ with the new life obtained from God.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHRIST AS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

We have seen that by including us in Christ, God accomplished redemption. This identification with Christ is purely the work of God. The present question is: How can Christ be worked into us? In other words, how can He be related to us personally and subjectively?

Having Christ worked into us and having a vital life relationship between Him and us is the essence of the Christian life. In the Gospel of John, Christ repeated over and over again the phrase, "You in Me, and I in you." Being mutually within one another is the reality and essence of union. Only in this union can God accomplish what He has purposed for us.

THE FULLER UNION

God has already included us in Christ. Now we have to see how Christ can be wrought into us. Only when Christ is in us can our union be real and complete, and only then will everything He has be worked into us. This relationship with Christ is union in its ultimate and fullest sense.

One day I was watching a blacksmith at work. As he threw a big piece of iron into the fire, he kindled the flame and began to hammer on the red hot metal. An apprentice standing next to him was trying to get some fire. He rolled up a piece of paper, and instead of thrusting it into the fire, he touched the red hot iron with the end of the paper. In an instant, it caught on fire. I was exceedingly surprised at seeing the fire coming out from the iron. This piece of iron was now different from all other iron. You could say that it was iron, yet you could also consider it as a ball of fire. The fire was within the iron and the iron within the fire. It had the nature of iron and the appearance of fire. When you put a piece of paper on it, the paper burned up. God intends that our union with Christ be as intimate as that of the iron and fire. God has forgiven our sins and terminated our old man in Christ. But He did not stop there. He wants us to be completely one with Christ in the way that the iron was one with the fire. Every molecule of iron was mingled with the fire, and every trait of the fire was manifested in the iron. This is the degree that God wants to work Christ into us.

We still have to look at God's side of the work. For the moment, we will not say what we have to do on our part. We want to see how God has wrought us and Christ into one piece. What we saw hitherto was God's work of putting us in Christ and His work of redemption. In order for Christ to be wrought into us in a union that resembles that between the iron and fire, God had to take one very important step in Christ. This step is what we are about to explain in this chapter.

THE LIMITED JESUS

We all know that Jesus of Nazareth is God incarnated. In other words He is God clothed with humanity. If God had not clothed Himself with flesh, He could never have accomplished redemption. This is the reason He was incarnated. But the minute He put on the flesh, He was limited in two ways. He was limited in time and space. If He remained merely God, He would not be within the bounds of time and space. But the minute He put on humanity, He was trapped by these two factors. He became the same as we are.

How is the flesh bound by time and space? If you are in Tientsin, you cannot be in Peking at the same time. If you appear in China, you cannot appear simultaneously in England. As long as you have a body, you are confined by distance. You can only be in one place at one time. Human beings are bound by the body.

Moreover, you are also limited by time. You cannot exist at two different times simultaneously. I can only know you as you are. I cannot see what you will become tomorrow or next year. Often I would be talking to someone one minute. The next instant he was no longer available to me. That person to whom I talked was limited; he could only appear to me at one time but not at another. This is the bondage that time puts on our flesh. We can be together, but not forever. Time puts an ultimate end to all human relationships.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ who clothed Himself with human flesh, was also confined by the two conditions of time and space. All that God could do then was to reckon us as attached to Christ and accomplish redemption this way. There was as yet no way for us to be actually in Him, because we could not get into another body of flesh. In order for us to be in Christ or Christ in us, there was the need for Him to be something other than merely in the flesh. He had to come in another form before He could be one with us. Fire can become one with iron because it is something that has "proceeded forth." It is

impossible to blend a piece of wood into iron. He had to appear in another fashion before He could come into us.

NO LONGER ACCORDING TO THE FLESH

Second Corinthians 5:16 says, "So then we, from now on, know no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him so no longer." Here the apostle revealed one of the most elementary doctrines in Christianity. The Christ that we preach is no longer the Christ in the flesh. He is very different from the One whom the twelve disciples knew in Galilee. Then Christ walked with them, ate with them, lived with them, and traveled together with them. They saw His face and touched His hands; they heard His voice and watched His miracles. Everything they knew about Him was after the flesh. But this amazing passage tells us that we know Him no longer after the flesh. The fleshly relationship is no longer valid.

Why is there the need for such a verse? There is a very strong reason for it. If Christ were still in His flesh, He would still be encumbered by time and space. We could only contact Him some of the time. He would be available at one place only. Everyone who was not at the same place and the same time as He could not touch Him.

Please give your full attention to this peak of our faith. If the Christ that we preach today were still in the flesh, imagine what would happen! If at this moment He was in Jerusalem, He would not be available here in Tientsin. If He came to Tientsin, the ones in Jerusalem would miss Him. Then He would become a prisoner of space like us.

What if He wanted to stay permanently in Jerusalem? How could we see Him? Perhaps once in a while we would have to pay the expense to travel to Jerusalem to visit Him. At least we would have to make this pilgrimage once a year to behold the incarnated God. In Jerusalem we might be able to stay very close to Him. But the minute we left Jerusalem, we would be separated again from Him. Hence, if Christ were still in the flesh, our faith would be a materialistic religion. Christianity would have a universal center on earth from which it would control and direct all the Christians.

When the twelve disciples were with Christ, He still had His flesh with Him. When He talked to three disciples, the other nine missed it. When He walked

with eleven, one was left out. Even when they all dined together, some were closer to Him than others. Not everyone could recline on His bosom as John did. He was limited by time and space.

CHRIST MUST PUT OFF HIS FLESH

If you asked me whether I would like to see Christ walking today in the flesh in the manner that the twelve disciples knew, I would tell you a strong no. This would be absolutely useless to me! If Jesus of Nazareth were here today, He would be isolated. He could not come into me. Neither could I get into Him. He would still be with His flesh. His flesh could not be part of mine, nor my flesh part of His. Hence, there was a crucial need! Christ had to put off His flesh.

BY DEATH

Christ put off His flesh by death! Please remember that the death of Christ was not merely for our sins and old man. It was also a putting off of His own flesh. Henceforth, He is no longer in the flesh. By death He has put off His flesh and is now in the Spirit. I am not saying that the resurrected Christ does not have a body. I am saying that Christ has become the Spirit in resurrection. He still possesses a spirit, soul, and body, but everything is spiritual.

IN THE SPIRIT

What is the difference between being in the flesh and being in the spirit? To be in the flesh is like putting on a garment. When Christ was on earth, He had the garment of flesh on Him. At His death He put off this garment, and in resurrection He took on a new body with a different garment—the Spirit. The present Christ has been clothed with the Spirit in exactly the same sense as when He was clothed with the human flesh.

Hence, we can know Christ in one of two ways. We can know Christ in the flesh, or we can know Him in the Spirit. Some treasure the Christ in the flesh. But more precious than that is the Christ in the Spirit. Christ in the Spirit can now come into us and allow us to be in Him. Now He and we can have an insoluble union.

IN US

The Bible shows us time and again that God is triune. At one time God put on the flesh to become Christ. Now He has put on the Spirit. God, Christ, and

the Holy Spirit are all one entity. The Christ who was clothed with the flesh was limited in many respects. The Christ who is clothed with the Spirit is omnipresent. He can reside even in you. Everyone who desires Him may obtain Him, and everyone who believes in Him may receive Him. He is no longer confined by time and space. We can be one with Him wherever we are and whenever we will.

If Christ is not living in the Holy Spirit, our faith is dead and Christianity is a dead religion. If Christ is not in the Spirit, our beliefs are mere teachings and theories, and we possess nothing in reality because nothing can come into us from the Christ in the flesh.

THE WRITING HAND

I write a great deal, yet my handwriting is not very good. The reason is probably due to my failure in early years to learn the art properly. When I was young, my father hired an old tutor to teach me to write. During the time that he was with me, I always went against him; I never sat down properly to learn. As a result he was quite upset with me. One time he said, "Look at your brothers and sisters. They are all writing beautifully. You are the only one who does not write well. Here, let me hold your hand and write with you." His broad hand grabbed hold of mine and started to move across the pages. I was trying to be stubborn and uncooperative. When he stopped I purposely tried to slide a bit further, and when he tried to write a straight line, my hand twisted around left and right. He never managed to get good handwriting out of me.

One day he made a poignant statement which I will never forget. He said, "I wish I could crawl into you to write for you. I do not see how else you can write well."

God's way of salvation is to get into us. This is the effective and ultimate solution. It is not an outward teaching. It is not His holding of our hands to move them back and forth. It is not a set of do's and don'ts. When He put off His flesh, He entered into the Spirit and can now get inside of us to be our life and live out of us. What that old tutor could never do is now being realized by God in Spirit.

THE COMFORTER

How is Christ in the Holy Spirit? We have to look into a passage in the Gospel of John in detail. John 14:16 says, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever."

The Comforter here is understood to be the Holy Spirit. The original word is parakletos. It is formed by two roots. The first part *para* means beside. The second part *kletos* carries the idea of help and succoring. Hence, this word means helping you at your side. Comforter gives the sense of one being near to you, helping you, watching over you, and sustaining you. Here the Lord is praying the Father to send a Comforter to help and sustain you.

THE SPIRIT OF REALITY

Verse 17 says, "Even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you." This Comforter is the Spirit of reality. All spiritual realities are in the Holy Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit, we have reality. Hence, the Comforter is also the Spirit of reality.

The Spirit of reality is only related to the believers. It has nothing to do with the world. Why does the world not receive Him? First, it is because they do not see Him. When people in the world do not see something, they naturally will not receive it. Second, they do not know Him. Something unknown is usually hard to be accepted also. The Lord, however, says, "But you know Him." Christians know the Holy Spirit because "He abides with you."

Even today, the Holy Spirit is constantly with the believers. This is a fact. But notice the phrase after this: "And shall be in you." "Shall be" points to a future time. The Lord was saying, "This Holy Spirit is presently with you. But a day will come when He will get inside of you." Let us read on to see more concerning this point.

Verse 18 says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you." What is an orphan? It is a child left without the care of a father. A son has all of his living, food, books, etc., provided for by the father. The father prepares everything and does everything for him. A fatherless child, on the other hand, must prepare everything by himself. The Lord is saying that He will not leave us as orphans to manage all of our spiritual affairs alone. Instead, He will come to be our Father, to care for and look after us.

TWO PRONOUNS

Please note the pronouns in verses 17 and 18. Verse 17 says that "He" shall be in you, while verse 18 says that "I" am coming to you. What is the relationship between the He in verse 17 and the I in verse 18? Do they qualify as two persons or one? It is best for us to read the two verses again to find out who the "He" and the "I" are in verses 17 and 18.

If I were to tell you something like this, "A man just stopped a taxi by the city hall. He paid five dollars and had the driver bring him here. When I arrived, I ran in and saw all of you sitting here, and I began to preach." Please tell me what would be the relationship between that man and me? Of course, that man is I and I am that man. It is just a different way of mentioning the same person. Likewise the "I" in verse 18 is the same one as the "He" in verse 17. The meaning of this passage is clear; the Lord will ask the Father, and the Father will send a Comforter to your midst. This Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, is just the Christ that will dwell inside of you. In this way the disciples will no longer remain orphans.

I IN HIM

This is a most precious portion of the Bible. When Christ was on the earth, the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, lived inside of Him. After His death, resurrection, and ascension, He lives inside the Spirit. When Christ was with the disciples on earth, the Holy Spirit was with the disciples already, for the Spirit was inside Christ. But what happened after those days? By His death and resurrection, Christ is now in the Spirit. Hence, He is coming to His disciples by the Spirit, through the Spirit, and in the Spirit. You may say that the Holy Spirit is now in the disciples. But actually it is Christ in the disciples. This is why in the first part of this portion it says, "He...shall be in you," but then the latter part changes to "I am coming to you." The "I" is in the "He."

THE HAND IN THE GLOVE

One time I was talking to a friend of mine in Kaifeng concerning Christ's being in the Holy Spirit. A foreign lady happened to come by. She greeted me and was about to take off her gloves to shake my hand. I rushed up to her and said, "There is no need to take off your gloves." I held up the hand with the glove and turned to my friend, asking, "Am I holding the glove or the hand? You may say that I am holding her glove, but I am actually holding her hand. The relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit is exactly the same. When

you outwardly take hold of the Spirit, you are actually possessing Christ inwardly. Receiving the Holy Spirit is the same as receiving Christ." My friend nodded his head and said, "Now I see!"

This is similar to what we said earlier about the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. You may say that He is God and also say that He is a man. When you touch His divinity, you cannot avoid touching His humanity also. When His humanity is manifested, His divinity simultaneously comes forth. In the same way, Christ and the Spirit are one inseparable entity. You may interchange the two terms as synonyms. The Spirit is in Him, and He is in the Spirit.

IN THAT DAY

Let us read verses 19 and 20: "Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

Here the Lord tells us about the purpose behind His putting off the flesh and coming as the Spirit. The goal of this is that the believers may know that "I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you," that a full and perfect union may be realized. This fact would come about only "in that day," the day that Christ in the Spirit came into us. Only in that day would we know the oneness of having Christ in the Father, us in Christ, and Christ in us.

This union moreover transmits to us everything that God did in Christ and everything that God is through Christ. All of His becomes all of ours. God and man, man and God, become fully mingled into one.

ONE SPIRIT WITH CHRIST

Christ died and rose for us. But if He had not come to us in the Holy Spirit, salvation could not be accomplished. Christ could not be joined to us. He would be like the old tutor of mine, only wishing that somehow He could get inside of me.

But now Christ has taken on a spiritual form. He can come freely into us. We have the possibility of receiving Him because He is now in the Spirit. The Bible also says that "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). Christ is in the Spirit. All of us also have a spirit. When our spirit receives this Christ who is in the Spirit into us, the two become one spirit. This is the gem

of our faith. Without this, our belief is a common religion with no relevance to our life. Without this, there cannot be an inward salvation.

A CLOSER CHRIST

Read again John 16:7: "But I tell you the truth, It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Here the Lord is telling us the truth of His death. As long as He was in His flesh, the Comforter could not come. When there was the Christ in the flesh, there could never be the Christ in the Spirit. This is why His death was expedient for us.

When I was in Shanghai, a friend said, "It is too bad that Christ ascended up to the heavens. If He were still on earth today, I would definitely go and seek after Him no matter how far He was from me. How I wish I could be like the disciples of His day, who had the privilege of walking, living, and eating together with the Master." As I was listening, I looked intently into his eyes and said, "I would never wish to be like Peter and John and those others!" He asked, "What do you mean?" "Do you know," I said, "that the Christ whom I know is far closer to me than the One that Peter knew on earth? Everyone who has received Christ should be able to say that our Christ is not merely the Christ in the flesh whom Peter touched; our Christ is the Christ in the Spirit. Their Christ was One who could be separated from them. He could be with them one day and be gone the next. Our Christ, however, abides with us forever. Wherever we are, there He is also. I am not afraid even of going to hell, for if I go, God in me will go with me."

THE CHRIST IN THE SPIRIT

When did Peter begin to know Christ in such a clear way? Not during the three years that he followed the Lord back and forth. The One he knew then was only the Jesus of Nazareth. Only after resurrection and in the Spirit did he begin to know Christ in the way that we know Him. Unless Christ is in the Holy Spirit and unless He comes into us, we can never know Him in a real way.

A few years ago I passed through the country of Egypt. There were a number of missionaries in our group who tried to persuade me to take a tour to Palestine and stay there for two months. They said, "Go and visit Jerusalem,

Bethlehem, and the Mount of Golgotha. See all the places where Jesus trod His feet. It will strengthen your faith."

At that time I had both the time and the money to travel. But I told them, "I have no desire to go there. It will not strengthen my faith, nor will it help me to know Christ more. The Christ in whom I believe will never be affected by Jerusalem. Even if Jerusalem, Galilee, and Nazareth all vanish away, my knowledge of Him will still remain. I am one with Him, and my experience of Him can never be affected by any outward factors. I have absolutely no interest in the so-called manger, wood and nails of the cross, and other relics. These things can at most help me to know the Christ in the flesh. What I treasure more is the Christ in the Spirit. He is more real and my knowledge of Him is more solid than the physical presence of you and me."

THE CHRIST WHO IS LIVING IN US

A passage we read earlier says that we no longer know Christ according to the flesh. If what we believe in is merely an outward religion, then we will need a holy land, a mecca, or a Rome to be a center for us to go for worship and service. But what we believe in is a Christ inside of us. We know that He is both the God in heaven as well as the Lord in us.

Not only is He the very Creator, but He was also the Christ that put on the flesh. And now He is in us as the Holy Spirit. The Christ in the flesh is over! The Christ in the Spirit lives forever in us.

IN THE FLESH OR IN THE SPIRIT

Dear friends, let me ask you a question. The Christ that you know, is He in the flesh or is He in the Spirit? Putting it another way, is your Christ the One in the Gospels or the One in the Epistles? I am not saying that you should not believe in the Christ of the four Gospels. It is right to believe in Him. However, that is only the first half. The second half is to know and experience the Christ in the Spirit.

We have seen three aspects of what God is. First, He is the God in the heavens; second, He is the God who came to earth to become a man; and third, He is the God in the Holy Spirit. These three aspects constitute the three steps of our experience of God.

CHAPTER TWELVE

LIFE THROUGH FAITH

Now we come to the critical point of the Christian faith; it is the peak of the salvation of God. We want to see how Christ can be our life in a subjective way.

In order that we may know and contact Him, God was incarnated to become a man. Through this man we come to realize what God is like. This man was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. He was God clothed with humanity.

Physically speaking, the body of Jesus was no different from ours. But the life within Him was absolutely of another category. His life was purely the life of God. It had the characteristics of God. God bestows to those who are in Christ the very same life that was embodied in Jesus of Nazareth.

DEATH RELEASED LIFE

However, when Jesus was walking on the earth, the life that He possessed could not be imparted into us. His life was bound by time and space. It was confined to Himself. It could not enter into the believers to be their new source of existence. Therefore, Christ had to die in the flesh. When He died, the bondage of the flesh was shattered and His life was released.

In John 12:24 the Lord said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The Lord compared Himself to a grain of wheat. There is life embodied in the seed. When the grain falls into the ground and dies, the life within is released, and much fruit is brought forth.

Hence, God did not stop at incarnation. He went through death in order that His life would be freed from the flesh and released into the Holy Spirit. He is no longer limited by time and space. His life can now be dispensed unreservedly to all who believe. The death of Christ on the cross was not merely for redemption of sin but also for the release of divine life. The latter is the primary goal, while the former is only a remedial necessity.

DEATH ALSO SOLVES THE PROBLEM OF SIN

However, before we could receive this life, God also had to solve our problem of sin. Hence, the death of Christ had the aspect of redemption with it. Now God has a just ground upon which He can dispense life to us, and we also have a proper standing to receive boldly this new life from God.

There is a passage in the Bible with which we are quite familiar. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." I wish to point out two things in this verse.

First, it does not say that God loves sinners; it says that God loves the world. The world denotes humanity in general and has a higher sense than sinners. I do not mean to say that God does not love sinners. But the purpose of God in this verse—the bestowing of eternal life—is not granted to sinners. Sinners are at a lower level than God's basic requirement for humanity. There is a basic standard upon which God can freely dispense life. But a sinner is below that standard. Hence, before anything could be realized, God had to forgive and deal with our sins. The death of Christ paid the ransom for sin. Now we need no longer be sinners.

SUMMIT OF SALVATION

But receiving the forgiveness of sins merely recovers us back to the state before Adam's fall. He was just a man, and his life was merely a human life at the proper level. But God intends to give His only begotten Son to us so that we may receive eternal life. This is the summit of God's salvation. God is not only recovering what we lost in Adam; He is bestowing what Adam never received. Adam did not eat of the tree of life. Had he not sinned at all, he would still be merely human. He had no relationship with the life of God. But we have inherited something far more excellent in Christ. In addition to a human life, we have a new life, a life from God, which is the very Son of God Himself. This is eternal life.

ETERNAL LIFE

What is the meaning of eternal life? It simply means a life of eternity. Man's life is transient; it will not survive in eternity. Only the life of the Son of God can exist there. If I put my own life in eternity, it would shrivel up immediately. It would not last! It would perish as a fish in air or a bird in

water. Man's life can only carry him through a temporary existence on this earth. It will not make it through eternity. Only an eternal life can survive in eternity.

First John 5:11-12 says, "And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Here we are told that this life of eternity is in the Son. It is found in no other place. Whoever does not have this life in the Son is merely a human; he can only exist on earth, but not survive in eternity. He does not have that life which qualifies him for eternity.

After the Son of God passed through death and resurrection and became the Holy Spirit, He is no longer limited by time and space. We can now receive Him anytime and anywhere. Hitherto, whoever received the Son of God received God. In the same way, whoever receives the Holy Spirit receives the Son. First Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." This enables all those who have received Christ to obtain a new life. Not only are their sins forgiven, but they inherit an eternal life from God as well.

REGENERATION

John 3:7 says, "You must be born anew." This new life is a basic necessity. It is the essence of our Christian faith. This is the difference between a false Christian and a genuine one. First John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Verse 13 continues, "I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God." This is not a matter of doctrines, works, or moral behavior; rather, it is a matter of having or not having the Son of God.

God's solution to the human life is not correction, but crucifixion. God has nailed our old man with Christ onto the cross; he is terminated. Now we are alive together with Christ; Christ has become our new life. We are a new man; we have a new beginning, and we can conduct a new way of living. All these are accomplished works of God in Christ.

Man can do nothing here. All he can do is believe and accept. Only common religion asks man to improve, work, and mortify himself. But Christ is here to be our life.

The first time I preached in the southern part of Fukien province, I held meetings with approximately fifteen hundred people. After three meetings the pastors of the whole city became worried. They invited me to them and said, "Mr. Nee, when we asked you to come to preach, we expected you to exhort our congregation to be zealous, to work hard, and to serve the Lord more earnestly. But you are saying that we do not need to do anything; all we need is to receive Christ. They are already lazy. After your preaching they will probably be even more reluctant to work! You are here only for a visit; after this you are free to go. But we are here permanently! What are we going to do after you have left?"

I said, "This is only the second day of the conference. There are sixteen more days. Would you all be a little more patient and wait to see what will come out at the end? The inward work of Christ can far exceed man's own outward labor! I believe that if a man takes the gospel that I preach, there will be a definite change in him."

They did not quite believe my words then. But since they had invited me, they could not stop me. Although I said that I took full responsibility for the outcome, they still shook their heads, saying, "This is too dangerous!" But after about a week, many pastors came and apologized to me, saying, "To accept the inward work of the Son of God is indeed much better than our own efforts."

JUST RECEIVE

John 3:16 should be read with 1:12 of the same book. John 3:16 tells us that God gave His only begotten Son to man, and 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name." How do we obtain this life? It is very simple. God gave and we receive; that is all. Just receive and accept without doubt or fear what God has given. The simpler we are, the better.

Mr. C.H. Spurgeon was a famous British evangelist. Once he was talking to some of his students about prayer. One of them asked how he could know if

prayers are answered. He pulled out a gold watch from his pocket and put it on the table. Then he told the students that whoever wanted it might take it.

All the students began to be very excited. Some could not quite believe that such a nice watch would be given away freely. Others thought, "If I stretch out my hands to take it and he decides to pull it back, wouldn't it be embarrassing?" Another said, "What if he suddenly changes his mind?" After a while a little girl stepped up to Mr. Spurgeon and said, "I want it." Immediately he put the watch into her little hands and instructed her to take good care of it. When all the other students began to regret their hesitation, Mr. Spurgeon said, "When I said that I was going to give this away, I meant it. Why didn't you believe? What God has given us is something far more precious than the watch; He has given us His Son to be our life. When God is so willing to give, why are we yet hesitant to receive?" Simply believe and receive, and you will obtain the eternal life.

AS BREATHING

Another person greatly used by the Lord was Mr. F.B. Meyer. At one time he did not realize how Christ can be life to us in the Holy Spirit, nor did he see how to receive this life. One day he was praying on a mountain, hoping that he could obtain the Son of God as life. All of a sudden it occurred to him that all he needed to do was simply believe. He took a deep breath and prayed, "Lord, in the same way that I am breathing in this air, I am exercising my faith to take You in." After he came down from the mountain, he testified to others, saying, "Since that day when I breathed in the Son of God, my life has been totally changed." To receive the Son of God as life is a very simple matter. It is as simple as breathing the air into you.

BY FAITH

A friend of mine told me once, "Mr. Nee, I really want to receive the Son of God into my life. I have prayed to God and told Him that I desire to have Christ in me. I was told that when Christ comes into me, I will have a burning sensation within. But when I knelt down, my heart was cold as a rock. And after I prayed, nothing seemed to have changed. How do I know if I really have received the Son of God into me as life?"

I said, "The Bible does not say that a man will feel burning or will remain cold when he receives the Son of God. All that it says is to believe. It is by faith,

not by feeling. If you depend on your feeling, you are not believing God's words; you are making God a liar! When God said He has given, then it is given. It has nothing to do with your feeling."

FEELING FOLLOWS FAITH

One year I was in Chefoo. A brother told me, "I have believed in the Son of God to be my life. But I do not have a glorious sensation about it. Have I really received Him?" I told him a parable: "Three men are walking on a narrow wall. The one walking at the front represents the fact of Christ's being our life. The one in between signifies our faith. It always follows God's accomplished facts. The last person represents our feeling of glory. This feeling comes after a man has believed. It is the last of the three items.

When the three walk on the wall, the person in between can only look forward. Our faith comes into being when we look steadfastly at God's accomplished work. God has already given us His Son to be our life. When we see this fact, we have faith. The second always follows the first.

After faith comes the sense of glory. All that the third man can see is the second one; whereas if the second tries to turn around to look at the third, he will immediately fall from the wall. A faith that is not fixed on facts is a shaking faith. The minute the second man falls, the third has but to follow. All feelings of glory will then be lost. Therefore, do not look back to search for the glorious sensation. Simply follow the facts.

God has accomplished everything in Christ. He died and was resurrected, and He has been transformed into the Holy Spirit. He is now ready to come into you. All you need to do is believe. If God has not done all these works, then even if you feel radiant and glowing, it means nothing at all.

After Christ comes into us to be our life, there will be a marked change in every way. This change can never be actuated by the restriction of law, the education of morality, or the imposition of improvements and discipline. I can immediately call to mind thirty or forty extremely evil sinners who have drastically changed since they accepted Christ as life. But there are hundreds and thousands of other Christians who, since their acceptance of Christ, can testify to this marvelous change, which is initiated not by discipline and mortification, but by this wonderful, powerful life of Christ that is working in us.

§SECTION FOUR
CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE MEANING OF FAITH

A Christian is a person who has received Christ and His great salvation. How does one receive Him and His accomplished work? This question may appear difficult, yet the answer is very simple. There is only one way to receive Christ, and that is by faith. In fact, to receive is just to believe.

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY TIMES

Someone counted the word "faith" in the New Testament. It appears one hundred fifty times. Thirty-five of these times, the word is used as a noun; the rest as a verb. When used as a verb, it is translated "believe." The reason this word is mentioned and emphasized repeatedly is because faith is the unique and crucial way of receiving Christ.

The place that faith occupies in the Christian belief is paramount. No other religion emphasizes faith in the way Christianity does. Sakya Muni never said, "Believe in me." Nor have you heard this from Confucius. Neither can you find anything of this nature from the writings of Lao-tze, Chuan-tze, or any other sages. But among the Christians, faith is constantly reiterated. The Bible repeats itself one hundred fifty times that we have to believe in Christ. There is no other way but by believing. The New Testament does mention other things such as repentance, baptism, the kingdom of the heavens, behavior, etc. However, they appear much less frequently than faith. The Bible has to repeat and stress this point because it involves our receiving of Christ and His salvation. When one believes, he receives. Otherwise, he is empty.

THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

Let us first examine the meaning of faith. We will try to find a definition for this word.

It is remarkable that although the word "faith" has been used one hundred fifty times in the New Testament and more in the Old Testament, its definition is given only once. Only in one verse is the word explained. We have to look carefully into this one place. Let us turn to Hebrews 11:1. Here it

gives us a unique explanation of faith. "Faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (ASV, 1901).

WHAT IS ASSURANCE

If we read through this verse casually, we may think that we understand the definition of faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. But when we think about this definition carefully, we will find that it does not lead us much of anywhere. I have to confess that I have personally spent a number of years on this word "assurance." I pondered over it again and again. I could not arrive at any intelligent interpretation.

I have spent much time to compare different English translations of this verse. After examining at least a dozen different versions, I concluded that the word is best translated as substance. The verse would then read, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." However, this rendering does not carry the full force of the word.

SUBSTANTIATING

I then spent quite some time studying the Greek language. Finally, I was able to grasp the full impact of the word. Yet I could not find a suitable translation for it. To me the implication was clear. But I could not think of a proper word to express it.

Finally, I found the right word from J.N. Darby's translation. Mr. Darby was a renowned British authority in Bible exposition. He translated the word as "substantiating." The word substance is easily understood. We all know that the substance of this table is wood, and the substance of this metal is iron. But what is substantiating? We have to spend some time to explain this word.

I believe that substantiating is the ability which enables us to realize a substance. For example, when we see a table, we have the realization that its substance is wood. Or consider the covering of the table. After looking at it, we are able to tell that the substance of this cover is metal. This very ability is the substantiating power.

THE FUNCTION OF THE FIVE SENSES

The world around us is composed of myriads of objects of various colors and shapes. There is also a host of images and objects inside of us. They form a world all their own. Between this inside world and the outside world, there

is a constant communication back and forth. The impulses of the outside world are transmitted to the inside world, and the inside world reacts and projects to the outside world. The intermediate organs that relate to the two worlds are known primarily as the five senses. Through these five senses, the impulses of the outside world are transmitted into us to produce certain perceptions, and through the same five faculties, we communicate whatever is inside of us to the outside world.

If a man were deprived of his five senses, it would be extremely difficult for anything of the outside world to come into him. There is a whole spectrum of colors in the world around us. But if a man is blind, he cannot receive these colors into him. He cannot appreciate the beauty in them, for he lacks the ability to substantiate the colors. If you tell him that snow is beautiful, he will ask you, "Why is it so beautiful?" If you answer that the whiteness is what makes it attractive, he will say, "What is white anyway?" And if you say that white is the opposite of black, he will answer, "I do not know what black is like." There are all kinds of colors in the world. But they can only come into us through the substantiating ability of the eyes. Those without sight do not have such an ability. The world inside them is void of any color.

There are some things which require our hearing ability. We receive those things through our hearing organ. If we are deaf, sound has no effect on us. There are some things which call for our tasting or smelling faculties. The function of our five senses is to transfer all the objective items into us to become our subjective experience. If we do not have these five senses, all of the outside objects will remain outside of us; they will never be able to come into us. There will forever be a barrier between the two sides. The work that the five senses does is a work of substantiating.

TRANSFER IN

Let me explain this a little further. I shall again use the example of color. Blue is a substance. It is there all the time. But when you take a look at it, your eyes begin to transfer the blue into you. This is what is meant by substantiation. Now you can say that you have substantiated the blue into you. You know now that there is such a color called blue.

In fact, every one of us is daily substantiating. Now I can see Mr. Chang sitting here and Mr. Lee there. There is a lamp above me and a road in front of me. All these are substantiated by my eyes. Daily I am substantiating

millions of objects into me through my substantiating organs. In this way, we are brought into contact with the outside world. In the same sense, we say that faith is the substantiating of things hoped for. I cannot find a better translation than this word.

FAITH IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

God uses the word "substantiating" to show us what faith means. The Bible tells us of many things, some of which we have mentioned previously. These things were hitherto unrelated to us; they existed independently outside of us. We call these spiritual matters. How can these spiritual matters be substantiated into us? Here faith comes into action.

Let me say a little more about the function of the five senses, after which we will come to the function of faith. This afternoon a few of us went for a sightseeing tour in Pali-tai. It was indeed a scenic place, and we absorbed the scenery. Mr. Jan told us that when the plum tree blossoms in a few days, the view will be even more spectacular. Another commented that the snow that was present a few days ago also made quite an impressive sight. All these lovely scenes can only be transmitted into us through our seeing ability. To a blind man, all these beauties are nonexistent.

Here is a most fragrant flower. When you put your nose close to it, you can detect its aroma, but if you were without a nose or had a cold, you would not have the smelling ability. You would not know how fragrant the flower is. Fragrance as a substance would be nonexistent to you. Here is a piano. It produces beautiful music. The player is skillful and expressive. But none of these melodious tunes come to a deaf person. To him, music is nonexistent because he lacks the hearing ability.

THE SUBSTANTIATING FAITH

The reason I have taken all the trouble to explain these things to you is so that you would understand what the Bible means by faith. It is a very important matter. As the eye is to seeing, the ear to hearing, and the nose to smelling, so faith is the organ whereby we substantiate everything spiritual into us. Without faith, every spiritual matter is a nonentity to us. This is why the Bible calls faith the substantiation of things hoped for.

BEYOND THE FIVE SENSES

Are spiritual matters real or not? You cannot ascertain them by your five senses. God has put us into Christ; we are crucified with Him. All our sins were borne by Him. Today Christ is resurrected and is in the Holy Spirit. But can we substantiate any of these with our five senses? They are useless in this respect. When it comes to these matters, the eyes are blind, the ears deaf, the nose numb, the tongue flat, and all the senses dull. If we merely exercise our five senses, we have to conclude that God does not exist, that there is no Christ, and that neither forgiveness of sins nor redemption of sinners is substantial, that there is no such thing as a new life, and that all spiritual matters are mere fantasies. The fact is that the substance is there, but the substantiating ability is absent.

Suppose a blind man stands up and proclaims, "There is no such thing as color. All the beautiful sights and scenes that people talk about are illusionary. All these descriptions of pictures as lively and vivid are merely abstract nonentities." You will not be surprised at hearing such words. You realize that he lacks the ability of seeing. To him all those things are genuinely nonexistent. His theory is the theory of the blind. Only the blind approve it and justify it.

THE LACK OF A SUBSTANTIATING SENSE

You may think that this is a joke. But there are those who would criticize others, saying, "Listen to all this talk about spiritual matters, about forgiveness of sins by Christ, resurrection, and the receiving of a new life. They are just a collection of empty words." The fact is that spiritual matters do exist, but these people lack something. They are blind in regard to spiritual matters. What they lack is what they should have but do not have; it is that sense which substantiates all spiritual matters. Without that sense, everything spiritual is darkness to them. This sense is faith. Faith makes everything real and clear spiritually.

The material universe is real. So is the spiritual world. However, you need a special faculty to see and hear the spiritual world. This faculty or sense is the faith that we mentioned. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. Though they are unseen, they are manifested to us in a tangible way. How can a seemingly abstract spiritual item be substantiated in us? It is by no other way than faith. Do we have this faith? If we do, all these will become real to us.

UNDENIABLE AND CERTAIN

The five senses substantiate everything in the physical world to us. Faith is the faculty which substantiates everything in the spiritual world to us. It is a sense in addition to our other five senses. The question is whether or not we are exercising it. Mr. Chang is sitting in front of me. He becomes real to me through my eyes. However, I can testify to you that the Christ within me is more real than Mr. Chang. Not only is His indwelling a reality; His redemption, His crucifixion of my old man, and my resurrection with Him are also real. I am more sure of them than of Mr. Chang. Within me there is an organ which enables me to perceive all of these. They are undeniable and certain. Not only I, but countless other Christians also have seen them. They are being made real through the unique organ of faith.

FAITH IS RECEIVING

God has prepared and accomplished everything in Christ. He has also put Christ into the Holy Spirit so that everyone can henceforth enjoy Him anywhere and anytime. All that it takes is for man to receive Him. But how does one go about receiving Him? It is by faith. Faith is the receiving. When man believes, he receives everything of Christ into him.

Actually, the five senses also receive. The ears receive sound through hearing, and the eyes receive color through seeing. By constant contact with the outside world, the five senses receive everything into the inside world.

Faith then is an act of receiving. Christ has shed His blood to take away our sins. When we believe in this, we receive the same into us. God has put us into the death of Christ. By faith this solution of the old man is received into us. Other facts such as His resurrection and the initiation of a new life are all received by faith. I do not know how these items get into us. But I do know that when we believe in God's word and works, they come into us. This is the function of faith.

FAITH IS NOT AGREEMENT

I have to mention an important point: faith and agreement are two different matters. Faith is living, while agreement is an exercise of the mind. Only faith will inherit all the things in the spiritual world. Mental consent has no part in it. To perceive spiritual things through mental consent is like using

the eyes to see sound or using the tongue to taste color. You will never receive anything that way.

For example, everyone agrees that Hwang Mountain is a very scenic place. It says so in books, and we see it in pictures. We give our consent and agree that it is very scenic. But Hwang Mountain has never been received into us. None of the beauties there are real to us. The receiving of spiritual matters is not a matter of consent but of faith. We need faith in the words of God. We have to mix His words with our faith. Do not doubt or argue against the words of God. Rather, we should identify ourselves with them and be saved.

If you have this living faith, you can be saved whether you are at home or in the church, in the wilderness or anywhere. Today Christ is in the Holy Spirit. He is omnipresent. Wherever you may be, you can be saved simply by touching Him by faith. Just as the electricity in this room is fully installed and will light up at your touch of the switch, so salvation will be immediately realized when you exercise your faith to receive Him.

CONFESS

Perhaps you have heard about the doctrines of Christ for more than ten years. But all the time you have simply stored them up in your mind. This is merely a mental consent. Up till today, you are still a fallen man. Your consent has done you no good. You must confess that you believe. You must proclaim, "I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. I believe that He is now in the Holy Spirit. I also believe that on the cross He has taken away my sins and that He has crucified my old man and given me a new life." With this faith, you will be brought face to face with God. You will touch Him, and salvation will be accomplished in you. It is a matter of faith and not of agreement.

OLD SEVENTY

A few years ago, an Italian warship was anchored off Gibraltar. In the evening all the sailors went on shore to gamble, drink, and cause trouble. Among them was one called Old Seventy. He was always the head of the band.

That night while he was roaming around the pier, he saw a house, inside which were a few ladies playing the piano, singing hymns, and preaching. He had never been to a place like this. Out of curiosity, he went in. A woman preacher came up and began to preach to him. She did not care whether he was drunk or not, but started to tell him about Christ's death for sinners, His

forgiveness of sins, and His bestowing of a new life. At the end she told him that all he needed to do to be saved was believe. Old Seventy was very touched. He prayed to the Lord Jesus, believed in Him, and accepted Him as his Savior.

Afterwards, he went back to the ship. He was about to go to bed but felt that he should pray again, so he knelt down before his bunk. There were more than twenty other sailors in the room. When they saw what he did, they started to shout, "Hurrah, something new! Old Seventy has a new trick! My! He really acts like he's praying. That's great. You can sit up now." But Old Seventy was still praying.

The crowd began to throw boots at him. But he paid no attention to the boots. After his prayer, he stood up and solemnly declared to everyone that he had believed in Christ. At that word everyone roared and applauded for his excellent show.

NOT THE SAME

The next morning, while he was scrubbing the deck, an older sailor came to him and told him that he also was a Christian. He asked Old Seventy whether he felt a distinctive joy and peace within him or not. If there was not, he was afraid that it was not genuine. Old Seventy replied, "The Americans only told me that when I believe in Christ, my sins will be forgiven. They did not tell me anything about peace and joy. I have to find this out from them." He took leave and went on shore to ask the ladies why it was that he did not have peace and joy after conversion, and whether his faith was a hoax.

An elderly lady sat him down and said, "Don't worry about how you feel. Let me just ask you one question. Are you different from how you were before?" Old Seventy replied, "I am altogether not the same as before." After a pause, he repeated loudly, "No, I am not the same. I was the most rowdy and mischievous among my company. When it came to wickedness, I was always the first. After last night, I cannot utter filthy words anymore. When I heard the others using foul language, not only was I unable to join them, I was even ashamed of them. Last night they threw boots at me. Formerly, I would have risen up and given each one of them a good beating. But I felt as if nothing had happened. I didn't even want to beat them. I am definitely not the same as before! No, I can't be!" At this word, he turned around and ran back to the ship.

THE EFFECT OF CHRIST

If a man has not believed in Christ, nothing will happen to him. But once he believes, everything in Christ will come into him. Even if he does not feel different, in reality he is not the same. Some say that this is the effect of emotion. This is not the effect of emotion. It is the effect of Christ!

When I was in Kaifeng, I met the chief of a department in the government. Formerly, he was a mere consenter of Christianity. This time, he believed in Christ. He told me, "I used to think that there was not much difference between believing and agreeing. But a recent incident showed me that I am not the same person I used to be. I have been given charge of a clubhouse with a tennis court to which high government officials regularly attend. It is not infrequent for these people to leave sums of money in the club for the furnishing of tennis equipment. Recently, due to an order from the government, many officers were transferred. They left quite a bit of money and belongings in the club.

"Since they have left and no one knows where they are, the money and belongings naturally would become my possession. They will never come back for them, and no one will ever quibble about them. But somehow I felt that I could not claim those items. I had to take the trouble of looking up each one of their addresses and sending the items back to them. This kind of thing would never have happened to me before. I am definitely changed."

POWER IN FAITH

A man who has met Christ in faith is different. Only those who have touched Christ have His power manifested through them. All the filthy and binding sins are shaken off from us when we touch Christ. The minute we believe in Him, His resurrection life comes into us. By faith all these become real in us.

Not only are our lives changed by faith, but there is a very great power within this faith which motivates thousands to become missionaries and martyrs. This great power within is irrepressible and unlimited. It makes man willing to suffer for the Lord, ride through danger, and eventually be martyred. All these abilities come from faith. When we touch Christ, everything of Him will be transmitted into us.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A LIFE OF FAITH

We have mentioned the resurrection of Christ and shown how we can receive a new life in this resurrection. But there is another crucial matter which has decisive bearing upon our Christian life. We have to devote our present chapter to the study of this matter. If we miss this, we will miss a vital aspect of our belief. In addition, we want to supplement our previous messages with a number of points concerning faith. We will combine them all in this same chapter.

THE PURPOSE OF A NEW LIFE

First, we want to ask why God gives us a new life. We have to look at this matter from the beginning. I shall consider you all as Christians and shall therefore approach the whole problem from the biblical point of view. In the Old Testament there are the laws with all the ordinances. The laws do not consist merely of the Ten Commandments; they comprise hundreds of ordinances and regulations. There are laws to govern your way of dressing. There are laws telling men when to plant and sow. There are laws governing the use of oxen or mules. Weaving and cooking have their arrangements. Everything is so strictly regulated. The totality of all these codes of behavior is the law. We want to know why there is the need for all these laws. Why did God set up all these ordinances in the Old Testament?

IS THE LAW FOR KEEPING?

If you check with every nation in the world as to why they instituted their various laws, each would surely answer that the laws are for their citizens to keep. Is this also the reason for God's institution of His laws? Did God set down the law of forbidding idol worship because He wants us to not worship idols? Did He give us laws because He wants us to honor our parents or not covet, kill, or steal? If we ask anyone this question, the answer would surely be yes. They would say that God gave us the laws, commandments, and ordinances so that we would keep them and abide by them, in the same way that every nation demands its citizens to be subject to its laws.

But Christians should never answer this question in this way. You have to give me permission to say an honest word. If you think that God introduced these laws for you to keep, you know nothing about the Christian faith. You are still an outsider.

Naturally, you may ask, "If God's purpose for giving us the laws was not for us to keep them, then what was the use of giving them to us?" My answer is so that we would break them! All the ordinances written in the laws are for us to break! This is the truth according to the Bible. The books of Romans and Galatians expressly tell us this.

THE LAW IS FOR EXPOSING MAN

We need a word of explanation here. Why did God give us the law? The Spirit of God gave the answer through the words of Paul: "The law entered in alongside that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20). Because of the presence of sin, the law was added. Paul also told us that the law exposes man's sins (Rom. 3:20). In other words, the purpose of the law is not to remove our sins, but rather to reveal them. If the law is for the removal of sins, then we have to keep it. But the law is not intended for that. It is there to expose us. "The law entered in alongside" for the purpose of showing us our sins.

God knows very clearly what kind of people we are. He knows all too well our weaknesses and corruption. He realizes that our conduct and behavior are such that even if we wanted to do good, we could not. Inwardly, we are corrupted; outwardly, we are degraded. The root problem is that we do not merely have an evil behavior but an evil life.

Here is the problem: God knows our wickedness, but we are ignorant of it. He realizes our utter depravity, but we have not given up hope in ourselves. We think that if we could be a little stronger or have a little more will power, we could obey God's words. Or we may think that what we lack is more effort, higher doctrines, or some other kind of help from God. We think that we can do something, but God knows that we can do nothing! For this reason God gave man a long list of laws, not for man to keep, but rather to break. In this way man will be exposed by his evil and realize that salvation can never come by the law.

God knows us all too well. But we do not know ourselves. God knows that we are only little children, and running the way we do, we will fall. Yet we do not realize it. Eventually, we fall, and then we believe that we are fallible. We do not know ourselves.

For this reason, the Bible says that the law has shut us all up under sin (Gal. 3:22). Throughout the centuries, God has been teaching us one lesson, that we would know the impossibility of keeping the law. We can never make it. None of the commandments are there for us to keep. They are all there for us to break. The result is that we would come to know ourselves. When we know ourselves, we will say, "O God, I quit! Now I know what You want to do with me!"

WHAT TO DO?

When Christ was on the earth, a young Israelite came to Him. This man was a very noble and refined person. He asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). On that day, the Lord did not tell him what we are used to hearing, that if he believed in Him he would have eternal life. Rather, He said, "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother'" (v. 20).

After the young man heard this, he said confidently, "All these things I have kept from my youth" (v. 21). The Lord knew that he did not know himself. He said, "Still you lack one thing." It seems as if He was saying, "So you think you are perfect. Let's see if this is the case or not." He continued, "All that you have, sell and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me" (v. 22). How did the young man react to these words? He began to realize that what God requires he could never fulfill. This additional item was something he could not do. So he left sorrowfully. He needed to know himself; he needed to realize that he was unable.

WITH MAN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE

What did Christ say? He said, "How difficult it is for those who have riches to go into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (vv. 24-25). Here is the purpose behind Christ's confounding of the young man. He wants us to realize that with men these things are impossible. I am not saying that the Lord demands everyone to sell all his possessions before he

can be saved. He was making all those who thought that they were able realize their real situation. God only wants to show man that he is unable. Man's life is an impotent one. There is no possibility for him to become able.

If man would confess his inability and give up before God, everything would be all right. O young man! O young ruler! Why do you have to depart sorrowfully? It is right to recognize your inability. But it is wrong to leave sorrowfully. What you could have said was, "Lord, I cannot do this. I have no way. Save me." If you had said this, everything would be different. The Lord's purpose is not for you to turn away, but to make you see that you are not able.

When a man says, "I am able," God becomes unable in him. But whenever man becomes unable, God will become able. When we have exhausted our strength, God will manifest His power and glory.

THE HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES

Let us look a little more into the history of the Israelites. After God gave the law, the children of Israel seemingly responded in a good way. They said that all the Lord commanded them, they would do (Exo. 19:8). The first commandment that God gave was that there should be no other God besides Him (20:3). Moses received this commandment on the mountain. But even before he came down, the children of Israel had already built themselves a golden calf, saying, "This is our God." They promised easily that they would obey God's commandments. But God showed them that they were unable to do so. This happened to the children of Israel. It happened to the young ruler. It is also happening to us. Over and over again, God is showing us that we are unable.

WHO CAN KEEP GOD'S LAWS?

Well, then, who can keep God's laws? This is the second crucial question we have to ask. Please remember that every commandment in the Bible is unreasonably demanding. Every rich man has to sell all his possessions, give to the poor, and then follow Jesus of Nazareth. What is this? Is this not unreasonable? The demands of Christ are so severe; they take your life! He says that whoever loves his father, mother, or children more than Him is not worthy to be His disciple. Neither is any worthy of Him who will not take up his cross to follow Him (Matt. 10:37-38). Is this not asking for your life? The clause concerning the bearing of the cross is especially so. The modern

equivalent of the cross is to take a criminal to the execution ground with his hands and feet bound and then have him dragged through the streets for public ridicule. If you cannot be like that criminal, you are not worthy to be His disciple! Is not He demanding our life?

Again, He says, "Love your enemies" (5:44). Mere forgiveness is close to impossible for us. Yet He talks about loving. Hence, we have to see that all of God's commandments are impossible to keep.

ONLY GOD HIMSELF

God Himself is the only able One. The commandments of Christ can only be fulfilled by Christ Himself. Neither you nor I can do anything. Hence, the answer to our second question is that only the Son of God can fulfill the requirements of God. All of us are unable. God alone is able.

Therefore, whenever a brother in the Lord tells me that he is hopeless, that he falls as soon as he rises, and that the more he tries the more he fails, I rejoice greatly. The more he weeps for his transgressions and failures, the more I laugh inside. I will say, "Today you know that you are a failure. This is something to be congratulated. Although you should have known this earlier, it is not too late to know it now." We cannot obey God's will. God's will can only be done by God Himself, and the commandments of Christ can be fulfilled by none other than Christ.

THE GLAD TIDINGS

Our gospel is also called the glad tidings. Why is it called the glad tidings? Is it because the Bible contains commandments that have a higher standard than all other religions? If so, then we are preaching grievous tidings. In a physical fitness test, if the requirement is only to jump a foot, everyone can easily pass. But if the requirement is ten feet, then we have a grievous tiding.

What is the glad tiding that God gave us? It is the bestowing of His Son to us. By His resurrection we are resurrected. Now He is living inside of us to be our life, so that we may live Him out and fulfill His demands. This is the glad tiding. The glad tiding is that God is fulfilling His own commandments inside of us! The gospel is not a set of do's and don'ts. You do not have to crawl around the earth day and night like crabgrass, telling yourself over and over again that you are not supposed to sin. This is not a glad tiding. This is a

grievous tiding. The gospel is that God is coming into us to live and obey for us.

HE MAKES US ABLE

Not only do we have to see that we are unable; we have to realize that God is able! (Luke 18:27). The young ruler only saw that he was unable and concluded that God was the same and proceeded to leave sorrowfully. But God is able! Do not think that when you are unable everything is over with you. The inability of man is the beginning of the ability of God. It is the time for God to show forth His power. Not that we are able, but His doing a work for us makes us able.

The meaning of Christ being our life is this: formerly man lived by his own life, but the natural life is ousted by the coming in of the resurrection life of Christ. The "I" who formerly lived is gone, and the life of Christ comes in to take its place. Then it is no longer I who live. When the life within is exchanged, the behavior without cannot remain the same. Because our life is Christ, we can fulfill Christ's commandments. It is not the power of Christ helping us to conform to His ordinances. Rather, it is the life of Christ substituting ours to live out His commandments. When His life inside is working, we can keep His laws.

THE OLD COVENANT—A FAILURE

We have to look at one passage carefully. Hebrews 8:8-9 says, "For finding fault with them He says, 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, and I will consummate a new covenant upon the house of Israel and upon the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.'"

How did God establish His covenant with the children of Israel? He did so by taking them by the hand. It was something outward. The laws were written on stone tablets. They were outward. The result was that the children of Israel did not continue in God's covenant, and God did not regard them. God's commandments are one thing. Our obeying is another. The result of that whole experiment was a failure.

THE NEW COVENANT WITHIN

Now let us look at the second covenant. Hebrews 8:10 and 11 say, "For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me. And they shall by no means each teach his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all will know Me from the little one to the great one among them."

Now the law is put within man. It is no longer inscribed on stones, nor is it recorded merely in the Bible; it is written upon our hearts. What is the good of having the law put inside of us? Ezekiel 36:27 says, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Please note the word "cause." It is a strong word in the Hebrew language. The result of God's putting His Spirit within us is to cause us to be able to obey His ordinances and walk in His statutes.

Under the old covenant, man had to struggle to obey God's commandments. Now the Spirit of God is in us. He causes us to obey. Hitherto God gave the commandments, and we supplied our own strength for their fulfillment. Now the commanding One is God, but the supplying One becomes God also. After resurrection, Christ came into us to become our life. The result is that we are enabled to fulfill God's commandments. This is the gospel. Christ's sufficiency has become our ability. Because Christ is living for us, all the problems are solved.

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

I turn the question now to you. Have you given up hope in yourself? Are you still trying to improve yourself and reform to a better status? I have completely abandoned any hope in myself! I am crucified on the cross. My goodness and wickedness alike are terminated. Now everything is Christ. This is the only way. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Do you believe that God has crucified you? Do you believe that your old man is nullified and that Christ is in you? If so, you have to substantiate all these facts. Then you will be able to say that henceforth it is Christ living in you.

NO NEED TO WAIT

Once I was invited to dinner at a missionary's home. We sat and talked for a long time concerning this matter. I asked him, "Can you say that you have overcome all your sins?" He answered, "I have to wait and see if this will work or not." What he meant was, "Paul said that he had died and was resurrected. But I cannot say the same because if I say it and then lose my temper, what am I going to do? Am I not still alive? Therefore, I must wait a few days to see if it works or not."

I told him, "God has put you into His Son; you are now dead with Him. God has also put you into His resurrection that He may be your life within. What you should do is believe. Instead you are just waiting. Do you really believe? You are not believing because if you were, you would praise God for Christ being your life. You would not even worry whether this would work or not. God is responsible for it, and He never fails. All His accomplished works become real when you exercise your faith. What are you waiting for? Are you doubting the Word of God?"

BELIEVING IN THE FACTS

Once again it is a matter of faith. Faith always concerns accomplished facts. Anything for tomorrow is not faith. Nor is anything in hope. Many, after hearing such messages, say that they have faith. But whether or not they really possess it is an open question.

Let me illustrate my point by a real story. I have two co-workers. One is a brother by the name of Nee. The other is a sister called Lee. Both started in their Christian work recently and both are nearsighted. Eventually, both had a pair of glasses. Miss Lee went to the Lord and prayed, "Lord, You have healed the blind. Can't You do the same for me? It is very inconvenient for me to go around preaching in villages with this pair of glasses. Lord, heal me." She made this prayer on a little steamboat on her way to a village. After her prayer she knew that God had answered her request. She had the faith within her to throw her glasses into the river. Her eyes were consequently healed.

FAITH IS NOT FOR THE FUTURE

The news came to Mr. Nee. One day he came to me, saying, "God has healed Miss Lee's eyes. I believe that He will do the same for me." I answered, "You said that God will heal you. This proves that you do not have the faith

yet. You will not be healed." He insisted, however, that God would work a miracle and that he had such a faith.

After two days he was on a steamboat. He took off his glasses and threw them into the water. A month afterward I saw him, and he told me that his eyes had not improved any. It seemed as if God had not healed him yet. I said, "If you are wise, you had better spend twelve dollars to buy another pair of glasses." He said that he was going to preach in Ku-tien and would be back in four months. He had the faith that by then he would be healed. I said, "If you think that four months from now God will heal you, you are putting your faith in the future. This is not genuine faith."

THE PROPER FAITH

Do you see it now? Miss Lee has the genuine faith. She said, "Lord, I thank You that I am no longer nearsighted. For this reason I throw my glasses away." But Mr. Nee said, "When I throw away my glasses I shall be healed." She believed that God had accomplished her healing already. This is what real faith demands. It is a faith that believes that God has accomplished and has fulfilled all His will.

The same principle applies to our salvation and the living of a victorious life. We are not hoping that God will save us. I am afraid some will keep hoping even after they reach hell. Neither are we hoping that victory will come in another two days. What we should say is, "Lord, I thank You. My sins are forgiven. Thank You, Lord, that it is no longer I who live, but You live within me." We have to believe in what is and what has been. When we do this we will be saved.

RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH

There is another passage in the Bible concerning faith. Mark 11:24 should be read with care: "For this reason I say to you, All things that you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and you will have them."

The crucial word in this verse is "received." I have underlined this word in my Bible. "Believe that you have received them, and you will have them." The first clause gives the past tense, while the second is in the future. The Bible gives only this kind of faith. It is faith that believes in having received, not one that hopes to receive. Only the receiving that is through faith is the true receiving. Without the receiving in faith, there is no receiving in reality.

Sometimes my co-workers or I would anoint sick people with oil and pray for them. Often I ask a sick man, "Has God answered your prayers yet?" Those who have faith say, "Yes, God has answered prayers. My illness is gone." This kind of patient may still have a high fever and not look too positive, but he eventually gets well. There are others who say, "God will heal me," or "I will be healed." We have to pray again for these because we detect no faith in them. What they have is not faith, but mere hope. To hope to be healed and to believe that one is healed are very different. Those who believe that they have received will receive.

VICTORY

The same is true of victorious living. If you believe that you are victorious already, then you will experience victory after victory. But if you put your hope in the future, you can only experience victory in the future. The past tense occupies a vital position in our prayers. It is what I have and not what I want. Wanting something is a sign of unbelief. The word want often blocks our prayers from being answered. The word of the Lord is clear: he who believes that he has received shall receive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TOWARDS THE WORLD

A friend asked me once, "I have believed in Jesus Christ and received forgiveness of sins through His redemption. Now that I am saved, what should my attitude be towards my country, towards society, and towards international problems? Should I take a passive stand and close my ears to everything, or should I actively participate in the solution to all problems?"

I have to admit that this is not an easy question to answer. It is a big issue. We cannot give an answer in two or three sentences. However, this matter does have a close relationship to our faith. In order to clarify this matter, I want to spend this chapter to briefly mention the proper Christian attitude towards social and political problems.

THE TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST

First, the Bible shows us clearly that Christ has to come to earth two times. The first happened in the past. The second has not yet come. During His first coming, He accomplished certain things. In the second coming, He will accomplish more things. We hope that He will come soon and that we do not have to wait too long. But He has His time. Christ is not apathetic towards all the social and political problems. But He has His time.

We can see from the Bible that in His first coming, He mainly dealt with sin, delivered the sinners, and dispensed a new life to them. In His second coming He will take care of the social problems and renew the political system. Our personal salvation was clearly settled at His first coming. Our nation, society, and existing systems will be taken up effectively at His second coming.

MANY PROBLEMS IN THIS WORLD

What Christ settled in His first coming has been mentioned in the previous chapters. We need not repeat them again. We want to look at the problems of our present situation, our country, and our political systems.

As Christians, we have certain stands and attitudes concerning these matters. However, we are not trying to solve all the problems. Only when Christ comes the second time will these matters be thoroughly settled.

We admit that there are many vices in our society. We cannot deny that our country has many needs. The system is basically unhealthy; there are numerous contradictions in our political framework. Tensions build up constantly on an international scale, and the future is gloomy. Modern youth are especially concerned about these issues. The more they ponder these matters, the more they are confused. Everywhere there are intelligent men trying to tackle these problems, and everywhere you can find more problems. Some wonder how man can survive on this planet in the next generation. Others study the global impact of food shortage. Then there is the question of the environment and transportation. People ask why there has to be crime and injustice and why the prisons are always filled with inmates. Others challenge the validity of class existence with some members of society being fed well while doing nothing, while others sweat all day only to find themselves in deeper poverty. Everywhere there are crises: between nations, between races, and between colors.

I admit that there are problems everywhere. On the one hand, man is busily enacting laws to prevent catastrophes from happening. On the other hand, the more laws man institutes, the more lawlessness runs rampant. Many issues are attacked and upheld with equal vehemence. Some people kill thousands of animals daily to satisfy the stomach. Others think it abhorrent to maltreat even the smallest creature. Because all these issues arise in our world, there is an endless train of questions passing through our minds daily.

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE

What should our attitude be as Christians towards all these problems? In the midst of all these debates and arguments, where should Christians stand?

First, we have to see that God has already prepared the solution to all these problems. He has also set the schedule for the fulfillment of the solution. God is very clear about these problems. You can see from the Bible that no one is as clear as God towards these issues. For this reason you need not fret, worry, or hastily propose your own suggestions.

When Christ came the first time, He saved us individually. He did not deal with the world or its systems. He did not touch any social problems. His first coming was to settle the spiritual issues, not the material ones. But this does not mean that He ignores the latter. Christ will take up these problems; He will deal with each in a thorough way. But our work and responsibility as

Christians are only to concentrate on that which God concentrates. We only do what Christ is doing. This is our basic principle.

ALL PROBLEMS ORIGINATE FROM SIN

No doubt we see many problems existing in our society and nation. Every one of them is a major issue. Every one demands an immediate solution. But we have to see that the one factor that originates all these problems is sin. All these problems arose because man became fallen and alienated from God. The order in which God works out His salvation is first to save us and solve our problem of sin. This is our regeneration. After man is saved, all the problems related to him are consequently solved.

TAKE CARE OF GOD'S CONCERN

Hence, the redeemed ones must first of all know God's work and concentrate on His concerns. What concerns God most is the problem of sin. We also must concern ourselves with the same. Since God cares for personal salvation and sanctification, we have no choice but to pay attention to the same. The solution to these problems is the work of God today. It ought to be the work of every one who belongs to Him. Today Christ is dispensing God's life to man. We also have to do the same. This is His work. It is also our work.

Because God's ordained work for the Christian today is saving sinners from sins and dispensing God's life, regardless of our rank and file, we have to do the work of saving men from sins. Whether we are kings or slaves, our commission is the same: to dispense God's life to others.

INDIRECT INFLUENCE

You may jump at me immediately, saying, "Are we going to ignore society and betray our country? Are we going to overlook things while races are being oppressed, nations are being harassed, and classes are being exploited?"

I can only give a simple answer to this: we can only be concerned for one thing. The Bible shows us what this one thing is. The rest is not our responsibility. When a man is saved, he will naturally be beneficial to society. He will naturally be an asset to his community and nation, and he will naturally not be injurious to others or animals. There is no question about this. We have only one direct work, and that is to evangelize. The result will automatically be carried over to the community and nation. However, this

result is only indirect fruit. We are primarily concerned with the spiritual outcome; the physical one will definitely be taken care of. When we take care of individuals, society at large will reap the benefits.

SAVE OTHERS

Our job is not to deal directly with the problems of our nation, reorganize our institutions, or revolutionize our political system. We are not here to directly settle the problems among races. We cannot find these kinds of commandments in the Bible. What the Bible shows us is that we should do our best to save others and solve the individual problems of sin and sanctification. When sinners are saved, they will automatically affect their community, nation, and human institutions. But all this help is rendered indirectly. We do not deal with them directly.

LIGHT AND SALT

The Lord Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." Some misinterpret these words and stand up to propose that we should make our world a brighter and cleaner place.

But we have to realize what light and salt are. The Bible only shows what light is in one place. Ephesians 5:13 says, "Everything that makes manifest is light." Light is that which exposes. As a Christian, to be the light of the world means that you expose the people around you. For example, if everyone around you is an alcoholic and none has ever been uneasy about it before, your presence will convict them of their wrong. Or perhaps they are all gamblers and insensitive to their sinfulness. Your presence will make them feel ashamed. Everyone around you is quarrelsome and provocative. But you only smile at them without participating in their activities. Your presence will convict them of their corruption. This is what it means to be a light. When you expose their wrong in their midst, you are a light to them.

We are merely lights. We are not here to burn up the casinos, round up the outlaws, and reform society. To be a light means that formerly others did not know what is evil, but your presence as a Christian convicts them of their vices. Light is what exposes everything.

PRESERVATIVE

What about the salt of the earth? The function of salt is to preserve dead objects from turning stale and stinky. If something is dead already and you apply salt, it is preserved from further corruption and decay. There are many dead objects in this world. If you look around, you will find all kinds of decaying things. They sit there rotting. Your presence as a Christian will stop these things from further deterioration.

Our job is not to clean the house, scouring the world of all its filth. The Lord never commissioned us to reform society or change the institutions. He only gave us authority to save others. We are the salt of the earth. We are merely preventing the dead systems from further decay. We have no responsibility to reform them.

SAVE THE MEN

The world is like a large old ship that is built of different materials. There is wood and metal. But none of them is whole; every piece is corrupted. The rudder is gone and the ship has run aground. There is a big hole, and it may sink at any moment. The time is running out. You have to decide whether you are going to save the ship or save the men on it. If there is enough time, you may be able to save both. But there is not time for both to be saved. Which one would you rescue?

Our Christian attitude is that the ship is useless. It is too old. Even if it is saved, it is nothing but junk. The engine is just a mess of scrap metal. No part can be salvaged. We give up the ship and save only the men. Get the people out and dispose of the container. Besides, our Shipowner is building a bigger ship, a brand new one. That is the one we look forward to. This is our attitude towards the world.

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

We believe that there is absolutely no solution to the problems of the present system, governments, and society. The only way is to ignore them. The problems will be taken care of. When the new heaven and new earth are inaugurated, the old order with all of its problems will be borne away. Today we do not take care of those problems. We only save people. Even though society at large will be somewhat affected after individuals are saved, our commission is not to save the world.

JESUS AS SAVIOR

Let us look again at the Lord Jesus. He never touched the question of politics. There were many Israelites who would have pledged Him their allegiance if He had proclaimed Himself King. But He declined to assume that position. Did He not have the power to revolutionize the system? Could He not save His country? He definitely could. But He did not do it. He came to save individuals from sins. He died on the cross and resurrected only to deliver us from sins and give us a new life.

The first coming of Christ was to accomplish the work of salvation. It delivers us from sin and dispenses life to us. He did not participate in social reforms. But even today, some still see Him as a social reformer. However, He never once instigated people to reorganize the government or stage a revolution.

NO INTEREST IN POLITICS

Once some Jews came to tempt Him. They asked whether or not it was right to pay tax to Caesar. The Romans were a belligerent nation and their emperor a tyrant. How did Jesus answer them? He said, "Render then the things that are Caesar's to Caesar and the things that are God's to God." What He meant was that He was not interested in politics. He swept all worldly things aside. This is our Lord. If He had wanted to overturn the rule of Rome, it would not have been difficult. But His eyes were not on those things. He emphasized only one thing—to believe in Him. We have to believe in Him.

He said that He is the good Shepherd who left ninety-nine in the fold and went to seek for one lost sheep. He is like a woman who has ten pieces of silver but loses one. She lights up her candle and combs through her house until she finds it. He said He is also like a father, who cannot be at rest until his little prodigal son comes home. His purpose is to save men. He has no intention other than this. He never touched social problems. His object is man. All He wants is to save him and secure him.

PAUL'S CONCERN

Then let us turn to His apostle Paul. What kind of work did he do? Never once did he try to change the social order. He came only to solve man's spiritual needs and settle the spiritual problems of the church. He had no concern for the political issues of the day.

In those days Rome ruled over its empire with an iron fist. History tells us that they had an inhuman institution of slavery. Not only was it lawful to trade human beings publicly, but they could also beat or even crucify the slaves at will. What did Paul command the Christians to do? He said that the slaves should be obedient to their masters, and not only to the good ones, but to the ill-disposed and cruel ones as well. Did Paul lack the courage to stand up against the slave system? All who have read Paul's letters would agree that if there was a brave person in this world other than Jesus of Nazareth, it had to be Paul.

SOLUTION TO ALL PROBLEMS

Today God is saving individual men. When they are saved, many other problems will be solved spontaneously and naturally. Among the Christians, there is no difference between the Jews and Greeks. Neither is there the distinction between free men and slaves, or a discrimination between the rich and poor. Even deep-rooted enmities between races and nations are dissolved among them. The Jews have the strongest national pride. They consider the Gentiles to be dogs. They are the most segregated people. But immediately after they come to the Lord, they are brought together with Christians of other cultures. All tensions and conflicts are dissolved.

THE WRONG PERSON

If a Christian does not know the order of God's work, and if he gives up the work of evangelism to engage himself in social and political reforms, the result is not merely a matter of right or wrong, it is a dead-end street.

All the problems of today are caused by man being out of order. It is because man is evil that the system becomes evil. Since man is evil, no system can be good. Even if he is able to set up a good system, his evil nature still does not change, and he can do nothing. There are a number of philosophies which are lofty and logical, but under the hand of corrupted man, nothing can be achieved. However, if the man is right, it does not matter if the system is a little faulty. But if the man is wrong, a good system is useless. The first coming of Christ was for securing men. Without men He has no way.

THE PARABLE OF THE WORLD

We have to look at one passage in the Scripture to see how Christ deals with the world. First we will look at the parable and then the explanation.

Matthew 13:24-30 says, "Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat and went away. And when the blade sprouted and produced fruit, then the tares appeared also. And the slaves of the master of the house came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where then did the tares come from? And he said to them, An enemy has done this. And the slaves said to him, Do you want us then to go and collect them? But he said, No, lest while collecting the tares, you uproot the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Collect first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up, but the wheat gather into my barn."

Again, read verses 36 to 40 of the same chapter. "Then, leaving the crowds, He went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, Make the parable of the tares of the field clear to us. And He answered and said, He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is the consummation of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the consummation of the age."

THE END OF THE WORLD

The Lord said that there will be an end to this world. What will happen at the end of the world? Please note verses 41 to 43. "The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His kingdom all the stumbling blocks and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

THINGS THAT CAUSE STUMBLING

At the end of the world the Lord will gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling and those that cause iniquities. This is an excellent word. He will abolish all that causes stumbling. The racial problem causes stumbling. It shall be taken out. The international power struggle is also a stumbling element. It likewise will be removed. There will only be one

kingdom: the kingdom of Christ. There will not be any more international conflicts. All the stumbling problems such as class exploitation and ideological struggle will be plucked out.

THINGS THAT CAUSE INIQUITIES

This is not all. All that cause iniquities will also be removed. You will not find gambling tables or barrooms anymore. All channels that lead to sins will be wiped out. Even if you want to sin, you will not be able to do so, for all the means for transgression will be gone. But this will happen only at Christ's second coming. All these problems will be solved then.

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE

At that time the kingdom of God will be inaugurated on earth. All the saved ones will become the righteous ones because their sins have been taken away. All these righteous ones will shine in His kingdom. They will rule over His kingdom. Their presence will be as the sun, whose rays reach the farthest corner and whose power transpires throughout the earth. But all this will be brought to pass only at Christ's second coming.

No wonder you will fail if you want to work for Christ today. Only in that day will the kingdom of the earth become the kingdom of Christ and His saints. When that day comes, not only will all social vices be swept away, but the book of Isaiah tells us that even the enmities in the animal kingdom will be removed. Children will be able to play with snakes, and lions will graze in the pastures like cows. Even the beastly nature within animals will be transformed. All this will be realized at the second coming of Christ.

THE STORY OF A BRITISH POLITICIAN

In the last century, there was a British woman politician named Christobel Pankhurst. She was the leader of the woman's suffrage movement. Before the First World War, she tried everything she could to stop the war. But the craftiness and wickedness of the politicians of the day soon triggered the catastrophe. She then tried her best to end the war. But her efforts were in vain; the war came to an end only after four bitter years. She thought that if she could lay her hand on power, she would be able to effect political reforms. But in the end she was convinced that there was no honesty in politics. To be honest would never make one successful in the political arena. She began to lose faith in worldly systems.

One day she was looking for some books in an old bookstore in London. From a pile she pulled out a small booklet written by a Christian. It said that the world situation was going to worsen, and there was no chance of improvement. The final solution would come only when Christ comes back again. She was fully captured by its message. She wanted to know the price of the book. The owner, realizing that she was a famed politician, gave it to her as a gift.

The book was published a few decades before that time, and the author had long deceased. But she realized that what the book mentioned about the world situation was absolutely correct. Other books merely discussed the outward appearance; this one exposed the root of the situation. It said that the Lord Jesus came the first time to save sinners. The second time He comes, He will change the political systems. The booklet also mentioned some prophecies in the Bible concerning the end of the world. Because of this book, she began to read the Bible and accepted Jesus Christ to be her Savior and King. Later she resigned her political career and wrote some good books concerning the work of Christ and His second coming.

WAITING FOR THE LORD'S COMING

What we need today is to be proper Christians. We do not need to try to change the institutions or reform society. All of our hope rests in the coming of our Lord. When He comes, all problems will be solved. Today, we only seek after God. We wait for the coming of His Son, and we trust that in that day we will reign with Him in His glory.

§APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

TOWARDS THE CHURCH

Some people think that as long as one is a Christian, it is good enough; there is no need to be part of a church. Putting it another way, they want Christ but they do not want the church. It is fine to have individual prayers and Bible studies, but it is too troublesome for them to be related to other people. For this reason many Christians refuse to join any church. This is an unhealthy as well as erroneous concept among Christians. When a person has believed in Christ, not only does he have to negatively reject the world, but he has to positively be part of the church.

PART OF A WHOLE

According to the Word of God, there is a corporate aspect to the Christian life. First, we are born into the family of God. We are children in this family. God's family is a big one, and we have to be children with many others. Second, all the redeemed ones are corporately a house for God's dwelling. God makes His abode here. Third, together we constitute the Body of Christ. Individually we are members of this one Body and are related to one another.

Hence, no matter from what angle you look, individual Christians are only parts of a whole. It is improper for us to be Christians individually without relating to others. Such an attitude cannot last for long and is damaging to growth. A Christian who takes such a stand will never be able to touch the riches of God or manifest the glory of the light of life.

BORN INTO THE BIGGEST FAMILY

With this view in mind, we have to realize that we are not the only begotten son in this family. If my father has only begotten me, then I do not have to care about anyone else, because I have no brother. But if I have five other brothers and sisters in my family, then I cannot say, "I just want to be my father's son. I want nothing to do with the other five brothers and sisters. They are not my concern." I cannot do this.

Now that we are regenerated and have become Christians, we have to realize that we are born into the biggest family of the world. In this big family

we have hundreds and thousands of brothers and sisters. The life we possess demands that we have fellowship with them. If there is no desire within you to visit other brothers and sisters or to shake their hands, I doubt that your regeneration is a genuine one.

The desire to regard the children of God as one's own brothers and sisters is something that comes from the life of God. It is something sweet and full of love. The nature of the life of God forbids us to be individual Christians. We cannot merely seek our own gain. We have to fellowship with all the children of God and live in this family of love, which is the church of God.

LIVING STONES FOR THE BUILDING

There are many big revelations in the book of Ephesians which relate to the church. In chapter two we see one of them—the church is the habitation of God. What God has been desiring for a long time is a habitation, or a dwelling place. Chapter two reveals that God's habitation is the church.

The church can be God's habitation because as individual Christians we are living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). But if the living stones are not built up together, there is still no habitation. An individual Christian may not be a dead stone; he may be quite living. But he is only an isolated stone. He is of no use in God's habitation; God can never dwell there.

This is not all. The new life within us urges us constantly to be built up with other stones. It will never be at ease or feel useful until we are built up into a spiritual house for God to dwell in. If we do not do this, we will feel that we are a piece of waste. I have to put myself into God's building. Because of me a gap is filled. When I am being built, I become part of the glory and majesty of this house.

MEMBERS OF THE BODY

Ephesians 4 tells us that Christians are the Body of Christ. It also tells us that there is but "one Body." There is only one church in this universe. First Corinthians 12 says that "the body is one and has many members." This shows us even more clearly that we cannot be isolated or independent.

I am a Christian. I have been fully redeemed by the Lord and received the full grace of God. There is no doubt that I am a child of God. But in this huge Body, I am just a member. I may be a big member, a very useful one, yet I am

still only a member. I am merely a part of the Body. I must depend on the other members. Together we become the Body.

For example, my body has eyes, a mouth, hands, and feet. All these are individual members. My eyes are useful only when they are in my head. If I leave them at home, they will become useless. My hands can only function when they are attached to my arms. If they are locked in a safe they are useless. The members can never be detached from the body. If they are detached, they become useless. This is a very crucial relationship.

Not only are the detached members useless, but they are ugly as well. If there was a human leg lying beneath this table, or if you picked up an arm on the road, how would you feel? It is impossible for you to be detached from the Body. The members cannot be independent. They must be attached together.

A MUTUAL LIFE

We have to realize that the life we received is perfect but not complete. God has not given us a complete life. Our life is one that depends on other lives. The life we received from Christ is a mutual life. It is not independent. I have to rely on you, and you have to rely on me. We cannot live without each other. Therefore, we need the church.

Some institutions in the world have their attached departments, and some colleges have attached schools. In the same sense, we Christians are attached one to another. We live by attaching to each other. From the first day on we have to learn not to be independent. We have to be part of the church and live with other children of God.

Hence, to come into the church does not mean to be converted from being an unbeliever to a believer. It means that those who are already Christians should not be independent; rather, they should be related to others in the church.

NOT AN EASY MATTER

Of which church then should we be a part?

In the old days, this was not a big problem because there was only one church in the whole world. But today the matter has become very complicated. Presently, merely the organized and sizable denominations number at least

fifteen hundred. In some cities you can easily name a hundred organizations that call themselves a church. As a Christian it is not easy to choose one out of the fifteen hundred without being somewhat swayed by others' influence.

THE WORD OF GOD GIVES THE WAY

Due to the confusion, the problem of identifying oneself with a church is a very difficult one. Yet if you would go according to the Word of God and look at the matter from the biblical point of view, there is still a way. The Word of God has a clear revelation concerning this matter. It shows us clearly of which church we should be a part.

However, we have to know a little more about the divisions in the church. Only then will we know what God is after. When we have the discernment, we will know which church is according to the Word of God.

CAUSES OF DIVISIONS

The causes of the present confusion and divisions among churches can be summarized into the following categories:

(1)Groups are denominated according to geographical reasons. The Anglican or Episcopal Church is one example of this. Anglican means it belongs to the Anglos. It is the Church of England. When it was carried over to America, it was called the Episcopal Church. But it was in reality still the Church of England. When it was brought to China, it became the Church of England in China. And when the Episcopal Church also came to China, it became the Church of England in America in China!

Take the example of the Catholic Church. It is in reality the Church of Rome. When it came to China, it established churches in Shanghai and Foochow. Now Rome is mixed up with Foochow. Many denominations that originate according to geographical reasons confuse the churches throughout the world.

(2)Confusion may arise out of the difference in time. For example, when Catholicism was introduced in China during the Tang dynasty, it was called Nestorianism. Then during the Ming dynasty, a new wave came in distinct from the former Nestorians. During the Ching dynasty, all kinds of sects and denominations started to flow in. None of them were related in any way to the

former two groups. When they all came to Shanghai, the time lapse between their establishments had produced a host of different churches.

(3)Churches may be divided according to people. The group that Mr. John Wesley started eventually became the Methodist Church. It has its independent organization and administration and has branches all over the world. Then there is the Lutheran denomination, which was formed after the death of Martin Luther. Now Lutheran churches appear all over the world also. All these divisions are divided according to men. There are many other organizations that denominate themselves in this way.

(4)There may be a difference in the emphasis of truths. Those who emphasize justification by faith set up the Lutheran Church. Those who look to Pentecostal experiences started the Pentecostal churches. And those who believe in immersion, as opposed to sprinkling for baptism, formed the Baptist Church.

Some groups emphasize church administration. Those who believe in the independence of jurisdiction formed the Congregational churches. Those who proposed the order of eldership started the Presbyterian Church. Those who emphasize apostolic succession began the Apostolic Church.

Thus, all these fifteen hundred denominations were formed. Every group has its history and doctrines. If you merely listen to their history or doctrines, it is very difficult to find the way to go. Today if you are in Shanghai or in Foochow, it is a hard thing for you to decide which church you should join.

ONE CHURCH, ONE CITY

But the Bible gives a clear and simple word concerning the matter of the church. It has no confusion. If you read the Acts of the Apostles or the beginning of all the Epistles or the first chapter of Revelation, you can see what the Bible calls the churches. They are called "the church in Rome," "the church in Jerusalem," "the church in Corinth," "the church in Colossae," etc. In Revelation 1 there are seven churches in seven localities. We can see that the Bible designates the churches according to only one way. There is no other way. Rome is the name of a city. So is Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, or Philippi. They are all names of cities. The churches are identified according to the names of cities. Other than the difference in localities, there is no other way for the churches to be differentiated. The church has its locality as its unit.

Other than a division according to this unit, the Bible gives no further ramifications.

NEITHER BIGGER NOR SMALLER

Hence, whether a church is big or small, its unit is the locality. Anything smaller than the locality cannot be the unit of the church, nor can anything bigger. What does it mean to have something smaller than the locality?

The first chapter of 1 Corinthians shows us clearly that there was only one church in Corinth. If some among them should say, "I am of Paul," while some other said, "I am of Apollos," with a third party saying, "I am of Cephas," and a fourth proclaiming, "I am of Christ," the church would be divided into four parts. Every one of these parts would be smaller than the boundary of the locality. The Bible calls this division and walking according to the flesh. This kind of division produces sects which God hates.

But the church cannot be bigger than a locality either. The Bible shows us that Galatia, which was a province containing many cities, had many churches. It calls them "the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2).

Again, Asia is a region. It consists of different areas. The Bible says that there were seven churches in Asia. Note that it does not mention a unified organization. Rather, it mentions seven individual local churches.

In Foochow, God ordained that there should only be one church, which is the church in Foochow. We cannot have a number of churches in one city. Fukien, however, is a province with many cities. In this province God has not sanctioned a church of Fukien. Anything that is bigger or smaller than the locality cannot form the basis for the church.

NO OTHER NAME

This is not all. A church can only be named after its locality. It cannot have any other name. This is also quite clear from the Bible. The church should not be prefixed by the name of any person, system, country, origin, or doctrine. It must only contain the name of the locality.

Hence, you cannot have a church of Rome in Shanghai or the Church of England in Foochow. Even the Church of Christ in China is something not

found in the Bible. Wherever you are, you are the church in that locality. If you want to change churches, you have to move to another locality.

BORN INTO THE CHURCH

After a man has believed in Jesus Christ through the mercy of God, he must realize that God has put him into the church. He is born into it in the same way that a member is born a part of the body. There is no need to join the church, for he is already a part of it. However, for the sake of knowing and fellowshipping with other brothers and sisters, he should find a church that stands on the ground of locality. He should go to them and say, "I am a Christian. Let us have fellowship together." In this way he will be able to function with other members in the Body of Christ and will be able to run a straight course and experience fast progress in his Christian life.

APPENDIX TWO

THERE IS A GOD

Scripture Reading: Psa. 14:1; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 3:19-20

This afternoon we will speak on a difficult subject. In fact it may be quite hard to speak on such a subject. I must admit that this is the second time in my life that I have spoken of this subject. What is the subject? It is what Hebrews 11:6 says: "He who comes forward to God must believe that He is." It is also what Psalms 14:1 says: "The fool has said in his heart,/There is no God." Actually, there is no need to speak about the subject of the existence of God. The Bible does not debate this subject; it assumes that man believes there is a God. There is no reason for man to say that there is no God. It is as though this matter is settled. Yet there are some in the world who consider themselves atheists. They say that there is no God, and they do not acknowledge the existence of a God who rules over everything. This philosophy appears to be quite fashionable and appealing to men. Those who hold such a philosophy appear to be more progressive than others in their mentality and more capable than others. Therefore, they dare to speak in this way. But before I point out their errors, I would like first to show you that there are different kinds of atheists. How many kinds of atheists are there? Some kinds are not worthy of our debate; they are not even worthy of our greetings. Others are more noble, and it is worthwhile to debate with them. There may be some among us who are atheists. I must tell you that it is only worthwhile to speak to certain kinds of atheists. Let me ask you, "What kind of atheist are you?" Although atheists do not admit that there are different kinds, we outsiders are more objective and can classify them according to their kind.

THE IMMORAL ATHEISTS

There is no need to speak with this kind of atheist or engage in any arguments with them. All we have to do is look at their conduct. Although many people will not admit that they are atheists, their conduct tells us that they are atheists. There is no need for them to say anything; in fact, they do not have the ground to say anything, because their immorality speaks louder and clearer than their words. They have become atheists because their

conduct requires that they be atheists, not because they have ample reasons to support their views. Their immorality prevents them from admitting that there is a God in the universe. A robber would like to believe that there is no policeman, a bad student that there is no teacher, a difficult employee that there is no employer, and an evil person that there is no law. This does not mean that they really believe that these do not exist. It only means that their conduct forces them to say that these things do not exist. If a person says, "I do not believe in God; there is no such thing as God in my mind," you can hold his hand and ask him, "Friend, are you moral?" You do not need to say anything else; you only need to ask if he is moral. A man can believe that there is no God, but he cannot believe that there is no morality. Although I am not an old man, ninety-nine percent of all the atheists that I have met throughout the years have had doubtful moral character. I have never seen an atheist whose moral character is trustworthy. Some of you sitting here are older than I am. I do not know if you have met an atheist whose moral character is trustworthy. The atheists among our classmates, colleagues, and friends do not believe in God because they are very evil morally. I must tell you a fact: whenever God goes out of a man's life, immorality comes in.

In America there was a famous preacher by the name of Mr. R.A. Torrey. Once he was preaching in a place, and a college student came and said to him, "I used to believe that there is a God. But I do not believe anymore." When Mr. Torrey asked him for the reason, he said, "When I started college, I acquired more knowledge and did not want to believe in God anymore. After I read this book and that book, God was nowhere to be found." Mr. Torrey said, "No. Don't deceive me. I also graduated from college and have read many books. I have even received a doctorate degree. But I have not put God away through my studying. There must be some other reason. Otherwise, it would be impossible to put God away through your studying. Let me ask you a question. Since your denial of the existence of God, what has become of your moral character?" The student answered honestly, "I can only admit that I am not as morally good as I was before." Mr. Torrey then gave a wonderful answer: "There is no need for me to argue with you anymore, and there is no need for me to give you the reasons for God's existence. If you stop your evil works and if your moral character becomes more noble, God will immediately come back to you." This is a fact. Many people do not believe in God because they have thousands of sins which hinder them from believing, not because they have many reasons. They are forced to become atheists.

THE EMOTIONAL ATHEISTS

What is the emotion? It is the part of man's psychological makeup which controls his wants, likes, and dislikes, his preferences and aversions, and his pleasures and displeasures. Some people do not want God; they dislike God. Since they prefer not to have God, they say that there is no God. Let me relate a story. There is a bird called the ostrich. It has a big body, and it is tall. A man can even ride on it. But it is very dumb. In order to catch it, a few dozen men will surround it and chase it around until it becomes tired. The ostrich has a big body, but its head is very small. When it sees many people chasing it and men all around, it will dig a small hole in the ground with its feet and bury its small head in the hole. The ostrich thinks that it will be safe if it does not see anyone anymore. It does not realize that even though its head is in the hole, the men are still present. Its big body is still exposed and not hidden. There are some people who wish that there were no God. They wish that there were no such thing as God. Can their wish mean anything? Does God not exist just because they wish to have no God?

Once I was preaching the gospel in one place, and a very evil person purposely came and said to me, "Do not say anything to me about Jesus, the Bible, or the gospel. You do not have to speak about these things, because a basic problem has not been solved. How can you talk about the gospel when the most crucial question of whether or not there is a God is not settled?" I then asked him, "Friend, do you not believe that there is a God?" He said, "I have told you already that there is no God. What makes you say that God exists? Please explain it to me." I said, "Of course, you do not believe that there is a God." He asked, "Why do you insist that there is a God when I say that there is no God?" I said, "You know the answer yourself." He seemed bewildered and said, "How do I know?" I said, "You know within." He was a little frustrated and said, "What does it mean that I know within?" I said, "You wish that there was no God. There is no need for me to say anything more. You know within." He seemed to understand a little and walked away embarrassed. There is no need to say anything to these ones or argue with them. Actually, they cannot be considered atheists; they are only trying to reject God in their feelings.

THE "VERBAL" ATHEISTS

These people do not argue from reason; they merely assert with their mouth that there is no God. They are very stubborn, and there is no way to

argue with them. If you ask why they do not believe in God, they cannot give you any reason. They merely tell you that they do not believe. You can give them a hundred reasons why there is a God, and they will come back a hundred and one times to tell you that there is no God. Even if you can give a thousand reasons, they will oppose you with a thousand and one reasons. You can do nothing about these people. They are merely being stubborn. They will not change what they have said. Even if you argue with them for three days and three nights, and even if they know they are wrong, they will still insist and argue with you. Although they may give many reasons, their reasons are all prejudiced and presumptuous. They are very insistent about what they say, and no one can do anything about them. Their minds are empty and void of reason. Yet their mouths are full of atheistic jargon. This is why I call them "verbal" atheists.

It is impossible to reason with the above three groups of people. But there is another group of atheists. There is more hope for this group, yet its number is very small. What kind of atheists are these?

THE INTELLECTUAL ATHEISTS

Who are the intellectual atheists? These are ones who want to reason. If you can give them proper reasons, they will accept your word. There is some justification and value in debating with this kind of atheist. But how many atheists in this world are like this? I am afraid there are very few. I am not saying that there are none altogether. I am saying that there are very few; the number is not great. Today I will not debate with these ones or give many reasons to prove that there is a God in the universe. The Bible has not addressed the question of the existence of God; it only mentions Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc. This means that the question of the existence of God is not essential, because everyone already knows the answer. The existence of God is an unshakable fact; therefore, it is implicitly assumed.

HOW DARE ONE SAY THAT THERE IS NO GOD?

If an atheistic friend (whom we encounter often in our preaching of the gospel) comes today and talks about the existence of God, he will surely say that there is no God. You can ask him why he thinks that there is no God, and he may give you one or two reasons. Every time I encounter such people, I will not give them the opportunity to finish their words. Instead I say, "How dare a person like you say that there is no God?" They may have more reasons,

but I interrupt again, saying, "How dare a person like you say that there is no God?" He may have one or two more reasons, but I will say the same thing to him: "How dare a person like you say that there is no God?" He may wonder why I do this again and again. Then I tell him that we must first settle the issue of his qualification before we can discuss what he is saying. "How dare a person like you say that there is no God?" Some may think that it is presumptuous to answer this way. Truly, such a word may offend people. But the matter of importance is what kind of a person you are. You are not qualified to discuss the existence of God. Putting it more bluntly, what do you know that gives you the boldness to say that there is no God? There are 1,900,000,000 creatures like you on this earth. Who are you? You cannot even know your body or the things that are happening around you every day. How can you say that there is no God? Do you know how your nails grow and how your heart beats? You do not know if it will rain tomorrow or if you will still be eating tomorrow. You cannot know even such a small thing. How dare you say that there is no God? I have only studied chemistry for two years. This is why I dare not say too much about chemistry; otherwise, those who know more about the subject will laugh at me. You are but one of 1,900,000,000 people in this world, yet you dare to say that there is no God! This is why I say that a person or creature, as little as you, is not qualified to say that there is no God. Do you know how small you are? There are now 1,900,000,000 "things" like you on this earth today. Do you know how large the earth is? You may be smart and say that the earth is not that large. Then how large is the solar system? You still may think that it is not very big. Can you bring the sun and measure how big it is? If it were possible for you to empty the interior of the sun, how many earths could you put inside it? One earth would not fill it. Two would not fill it. You could keep on putting more earths into it, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, even a million, and the sun would still be quite empty. How many earths can the sun hold? At least one and a half million! There are countless numbers of solar systems in the heavens that are as big as our solar system. One astronomer said that in the universe there were five hundred million stars as large as our sun. How big are you? How can you say that there is no God?

Let me tell you a story. I have a younger brother. When he graduated from kindergarten at the age of six, he brought back a certificate. He was very proud of himself and thought that he had accomplished a supreme achievement. He came to me proudly and said, "I graduated today!" I asked

where he had graduated from. He answered, "From the kindergarten university." There are too many people who have graduated from kindergarten universities today! There are too many kindergarten doctorates!

Let us come back to astronomy. Astronomers tell us that the speed of light is one hundred eighty-six thousand miles per second. One mile is about three Chinese miles. In one second, light travels one hundred eighty-six thousand miles. How many miles does it travel in one minute? In one day? In one month? In one year? It is not easy for us to imagine this speed. Although light travels at such tremendous speed, astronomers tell us that light from some stars has traveled over two thousand years, yet their light still has not yet reached the earth. How vast is the universe! A man is only six feet tall, and he occupies only a square foot of ground. Yet he dares to say that there is no God! This must be the most presumptuous and comical thing one could ever say. Is it proper for such a tiny man to stand up and proudly announce, solemnly and assertively, that there is no God? I do not have to say anything; all of you know the answer.

WHO RULES THE UNIVERSE?

I do not know if anyone can be so bold as to say that there is no God in the universe. But let us set this question aside for now. Consider the universe again. It is very big, but at the same time, it is very small. Objects that are even undetectable to the microscope have definite structures, laws, and order. This is true with whatever micro-object you consider. Men used to say that atoms were the smallest objects. Later they discovered that electrons were smaller. Recently, men have found that there are particles that are even smaller than electrons. Although these particles are small, they have definite principles, laws, and order governing them. If there is no God, who is organizing these things? How can it be a coincidence? There must be a God who rules and arranges everything. Otherwise, how can we have the wonderful order that we have today? The order of things can only speak of two possibilities. It can either be by chance, or it must be set into place by someone. It can only come by chance or arrangement. Either someone has arranged these things, or they have come about by accident. One of the two must be right.

BY CHANCE?

Anything that happens by chance happens without a reason; anything that comes by arrangement speaks of someone behind the scene who is planning and executing. If no one in this universe is arranging everything, and if everything occurs by chance, then we are truly lost and bewildered. Some friends have said that the universe was formed when one object collided into another and a third object was produced. I cannot understand this logic. I have never seen one object in this world that is the result of two things randomly colliding into one another. My handkerchief did not come about by a few branches colliding with each other to produce cotton, and cotton colliding with cotton to produce threads, and threads colliding with each other to produce a handkerchief. I simply cannot understand this logic. There is nothing in this universe that has come about by chance collision.

Let me tell you a real story to illustrate this point about producing things by chance. A man was visiting a factory in America that manufactured meat grinders, and he talked with the factory manager. These meat grinders can be found everywhere in Shanghai among butchers and meat hawkers; they are small machines that shred the beef into small pieces. During the visit, the man discussed the origin of the universe with the manager. The manager said that there must be a wise and powerful God who had set everything in the universe in order. Another person who was there said, "There is no God in the universe, and everything came by chance." The manager did not argue with him; rather, he led him to where the meat grinders were being manufactured. He told the man, "My little machine is made up of only eight parts. Since you have said that the universe came about by chance, please try and put this machine together by chance. I will put the eight parts and a few screws into a box. Please shake the box and see if you can make a meat grinder out of it. I have a few hundred workers in this factory. The most capable ones can assemble two hundred machines a day. If I hired a simple girl from the countryside, who has never seen such a machine, she could do the job within a few days no matter how slow she was. But if you shook the box like I said, you would not get one machine in a month or even a year. This is impossible!" A little machine that is worth only $3.70 cannot be produced by chance. Could the vast universe have been produced by chance? Is it possible that all the objects in this world were produced by chance? A carpenter can make a chair like the one I am sitting on in half an hour. But if we waited for it to be produced by chance, I am afraid that we would not have a chair to sit on today. It is too incredible for the many things in this universe to come about by

chance. There must be someone who has designed the universe, in order for it to be as orderly and logical as it is. Even the most foolish and uneducated person in this world can come to this conclusion. Unless a man is a fool, he has to believe that there is a God. If he does not believe this, there must be something wrong with his mind. At any rate, there is a God. It is illogical for man to believe that there is no God. Those who do not believe in God must have something wrong in their mind.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CONSCIENCE

The above examples are merely objective proofs of the existence of God. Let us consider the question of God's existence from another angle: the psychological makeup of man. There is a large organization in America called the National Geographic Society. It investigates cultures and geographies of different parts of the world. It has one conclusion concerning its members' many investigations—every race on earth, no matter how cultured or wild, advanced or backward, has one thing in common—a belief in God. Everywhere one goes, even among the uncivilized Miao natives, men believe in God. A man may be unintelligent and not able to think logically; he may not be able to give many reasons. But if he searches his heart, he knows that there is a God. Many people are only stubborn in their speaking; in their conscience they know that there is a God.

In 1925, there was a preacher who passed through a jungle in South America. Suddenly he heard a cry for help, and he ran towards the sound. When he approached a river, he saw a man on a canoe going downstream. The current of the river was strong, and not far from him was a waterfall. If no one came to his rescue, the man would die by falling over the waterfall. At that time, the man cried with all his strength: "O God, O God, save me, save me!" When the preacher saw this, he tried his best and saved the man.

The next day, the preacher passed through the same jungle again and saw a few hundred people gathered around someone who was speaking, and he drew near to hear what he was saying. The man talked about God, and he gave many reasons why there was no God. After the man finished, he challenged the audience: "I have given many reasons for the nonexistence of God. If anyone is not happy with these reasons, he can bring up his arguments now." The preacher went up to the platform and said, "I do not know how to argue, and I cannot give many reasons. But I can tell you a story. Yesterday as I was walking through the jungle, I heard someone crying, 'O God, O God, save me,

save me!' I ran towards the sound by the river and saw a man sitting in a canoe. The water was rapid, and the boat was moving close to a waterfall. His life was in danger, and I saved him and took him home. I would like to introduce this man to you now. The one who was crying to God for help yesterday is the gentleman here today who is giving you many reasons why there is no God. You can ask him yourself if I am right or not."

Indeed, many people have their conscience covered up. Before their conscience is awakened, they can give many reasons for saying that there is no God. But when they are at the end of themselves, when they are about to die, and when they think of their future, their conscience tells them that there is a God. They can brush the matter aside now. They can say that they are young and that such things do not matter. But the day will come when they will step into eternity, and their sleeping conscience will speak out. I have often said that the conscience can sleep, but it will never die. When the time comes, it will speak out. However, it may be too late to know God by then.

There were a father and son in England who were both strong and zealous atheists. One day the father was about to die, and he was tossing about in his bed. He seemed to be very restless. When the son saw this, he was afraid that the old man would be shaken in his conviction, and he encouraged him, saying, "Father, hold tight." His father turned to him in tears and asked, "Hold tight to what?" Since they did not have God, what was there for them to hold tight to? But we have to thank the Lord because there is something that we can hold onto. There is something which we can lean back on. We know whom we believe.

Friends, please listen to the inner voice. Our mind will often give us wrong ideas; it is affected by outside influences. But the inner voice is trustworthy; it represents our true self. Please listen to the inner urge.

I have searched into the matter and concluded that no one is born an atheist; everyone becomes one through the influence of environment. This is why our conscience is the most valuable guide, and we should follow its leading all the time.

A TESTIMONY OF PRAYER

We have seen the greatness and smallness of the universe, the order of the universe, and man's psychology, and pointed out that they all prove the

existence of God in the universe. We will now consider another aspect, which is the Christian experience of God. In this world, Christians know God the best. We can prove the existence of God from the experience of Christians. We know God from His answers to prayers, from the grace of forgiveness, and from God's special protection. If there is no God, there would be no believers.

I will relate to you a little of my own experience in prayer. I do not usually tell others about my experience in prayer, but I will say a little today. During the Chinese New Year of 1926, I was working in the villages. At that time, a few brothers like Brother Wang Lien-chun, Simon Meek, and Faithful Luk were in Foochow preparing for an evangelistic meeting. They invited me to join them, but I thought that there were so many already, and that I did not need to go. I thought that I would go to preach in the countryside instead. Subsequently, I invited six brothers to come with me. Two of them are now helping Mr. ____ in Kun-shan Garden in Shanghai. One is in Pai-ya-tan in Fukien, two are learning to fly airplanes in Amoy, and one is in Lien-jiang. I mention them because they were all involved in this incident, and they can testify to this. We took a boat and went to a village called Plum Flower Village. There are many fish in that place, and the fishermen there make a great deal of money from fishing. Among the six brothers, one was only sixteen or seventeen years old. He was expelled by his school. His mother could do nothing with him, and she brought him to us. During the first month, we had practically given up hope in him. But in the second month, he was saved. After he was saved, he loved to work. In the third month, he went with us to preach in Plum Flower Village. I had made arrangements ahead of time with a teacher whom I knew in that village to stay at a school while we were there. But when we arrived, the teacher rejected us and would not allow us to stay there, because he found out that we were there to preach the gospel. We walked around back and forth until dark and still could not find a place to stay. Finally we came across a herbal shop, whose owner was willing to put us up, and we stayed in his attic.

We went out on the evening of the 7th for the first time. There was one thing that was special about the people there: they were all very courteous. But all of them were quite reserved. Before we would finish a sentence, they would walk away. After we spoke with them a little, they would ask us to stop. We asked them for the reason, but they would not say anything. We were quite bewildered. In the evening when we came home, we realized that we all felt the same way and had the same experience. We asked the owner of the

herbal shop, with whom we had become more acquainted, about our experience. He told us not to be bothered by these things. The next day we went out to sell gospel literature and preach the gospel again. The young brother eventually got into trouble. He was not able to contain himself anymore on that day, and he grabbed a villager and forced him to tell him what was happening. The villager said, "You don't know how many gods we have here already. We cannot have any more gods. We have a Great King (Dah-wang-shen) here who comes out every year for the parade and carnival. You have come at the wrong time because we will have the carnival on the 11th, and everyone is too busy to hear about your Jesus. This great god has been faithful since the Ming dynasty. From the Ching dynasty until now, it has been two hundred years, and every time the carnival comes, it has always been a clear day. Not once has there been rain." The young brother became angry when he heard this and said, "This year it will rain during the carnival." Many young people were there when he said this. When they heard it, they broke into a commotion, saying, "These preachers are saying that it will rain this year when the great god comes out for his parade." In less than two hours, the whole Plum Flower Village had learned of this matter. They spread the word that the preachers claimed it would rain on the day the Great King came out for the parade. Some began a rumor, saying, "If it rains, their God works; if it does not rain, the Great King works." After we returned home, we knew that this was not a light thing for our brother to have said. I told the young brother, "No one can control the weather. How could you have said that?" He said, "We can go and pray." I said, "Yes, we can pray. But will God answer our prayer? Is this something according to His will?" However, we all went and prayed. A meal was prepared, but none of us would eat. We all went and prayed until our anxiety was gone and we were peaceful and confident. Then we went back to eat. While we were eating, we told the owner of the shop, "We all know that it will rain on the 11th when the Great King comes out for the parade." The owner said, "I do not think so. Don't try to talk such nonsense anymore. First, there are over two thousand households in Plum Flower Village, and all of the males depend on fishing for their livelihood. Do you think that they are ignorant about the weather? They can tell the weather a few days ahead of time. Second, please take care of my little shop. I depend on this shop for my living. Don't put my little shop in jeopardy." Yet we were all very peaceful and confident, and we were sure that God had heard our prayer. The next day was the 10th, and we went out again. This time, not only was the young brother telling others that it would rain on the 11th, but all of us were

saying the same thing. We all said that it would rain the next day. When we tried to sell them the gospel literature, they would not buy it and would not receive the word we preached. They all said, "Let's wait and see what will happen tomorrow. If it rains, Jesus is God. If it does not rain, our Great King works."

It was so strange that on the night of the 9th, we received a promise, which was "Where is the God of Elijah?" This was related to God's glory. On the eve of the 11th, that is, the night of the 10th, we prayed again. If it did not rain the next day, it would be impossible for us to preach the gospel to the ten thousand or more people in Plum Flower Village again, and the door of the gospel would be closed there. No one would get in again. One or two among us who were weaker in faith thought that they should ask God to send rain right then. To them, it was better for it to rain that very night. We went to bed and did not get up until very late the next morning. I slept beside a window, and when I woke up, the sun was shining in my eyes. I thought, "Too bad! The sun has come out. What shall we do?" I did not bother to even put on my clothes, and I knelt down to pray. Later all the brothers woke up one by one, and everyone knelt down to pray, saying, "O God, today is the day for You to manifest Your glory. Please send the rain and prove that You are God." We all prayed earnestly. Later we all rebuked ourselves for praying so desperately, knowing that God had already heard our prayer. We went down to take our breakfast. I was the leader among them, and in order to boost their morale, I told the brother who took care of the food, "There is no need to prepare any sack lunch today; we will not be able to go out because it will rain." We blessed the food. After we blessed our food, one brother went on and prayed, "Lord, may You keep our faith and prove that You are God." Of course this was a spontaneous prayer. After this, we went to fill our bowls with porridge. I sat facing the window. Shortly after we finished our first bowl, the sound of dripping was heard on the roof. We looked at each other and began to understand what was going on. We went ahead for our second bowl. I asked, "Should we pray?" One brother said, "Why not? This rain looks too small. It has to rain very hard before others will see that this is a clear act of God and not an accident." We then proceeded to pray again. After our prayer, the sky turned dark and the rain increased. The sound of the rain on the roof became louder. The rain was pouring down harder and harder. After breakfast, we stood outside the shop to watch the Great King come out for its parade. The Great King was scheduled to come out at 9 a.m. But the rain did not stop from

nine o'clock until eleven o'clock. Since the parade could not take place beyond a certain hour, the villagers reluctantly carried the great god out. The rain was truly a torrent that day, and two- or three-foot deep puddles of water were everywhere along the way. When the Great King came out of the temple, it only managed to move a few steps. One of the bearers slipped and fell into the water, and the great god fell with him also. Three of its fingers and an arm were broken, and its head was twisted. The villagers lifted up the Great King again, turned the head back to its original position, and tried to press on. By then many young people were shouting at the back: "The Great King is in trouble this year. It is in trouble this year." They shouted as they marched on. The rain became heavier and heavier, and it was obvious that they could not go on anymore. They moved the Great King into an ancestral hall that belonged to a Chan clan. Some elders of the village went in and asked the Great King why it had rained this year. What a trick they came up with eventually! They managed to tell everyone, "The Great King did not intend in the first place to come out for the parade on this day. You people have made a mistake. The Great King said that he had intended to come out at 8 p.m. on the 14th. Today is only the 11th." The elders proposed that the parade be changed to the 14th. But the young people asked, "Why then did the Great King trip, and why were his arm and fingers broken?"

At lunchtime we prayed that God would give us a clear day so that we could go out to work again. We became strong in our faith and prayed also that the Lord would send another rain on the 14th. After we ate, we went out to preach again. That afternoon, the sky was clear, and the quantity of books we took with us was not enough to meet the need. In a minute they were all sold out.

We had to leave the village and return home on the 15th. Therefore, we prayed for a clear sky on the 12th, 13th, and 14th so that we could work. We also prayed that it would rain on the evening of the 14th so that everyone would know that the Great King was not God. The 12th, 13th, and 14th were all clear days. We decided to hold a gospel meeting in the herbal shop on the evening of the 14th. By then the owner believed. Today he is still a good brother. On the evening of the 14th it began to rain, and many people were waiting outside the shop. We went up to the attic and prayed that God would send more rain. Praise the Lord, the rain became heavier and heavier. When the villagers moved the Great King out of the temple, seventeen or eighteen men were following it. But they tripped five or six times. Many young people were behind it, shouting, "There is God. There is no Great King." We were

able to finish a fine work there. On the morning of the 15th, we left before the day broke. Praise the Lord.

We have received many answers to prayers. These answers prove that there is a God. Our spiritual experiences prove to us that our God is living.

HOW CAN MAN MEET GOD?

We cannot go away from this subject in a light way. We have to ask, "If there is a God, what should we do?" It is not enough to believe that there is a God. Please read Amos 4:12: "Prepare to meet your God." Friends, are you prepared to meet your God? If you know that there is a God, you cannot live foolishly or sit idly. First, you must be prepared to meet your God. Friends, are you prepared to meet God? I hope that no one among us will be deceived by the atheists anymore.

If there is a God, what must we do before we can meet Him? There is only one thing: believe in the Lord Jesus. This is the only way to meet God because He bestows grace to us through Christ. Apart from Christ, everyone is condemned.

Ephesians 2:16 through 18 says, "And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it. And coming, He announced peace as the gospel to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near, for through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." Please pay special attention to 3:12: "In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him." How can we meet God? The Bible tells us that only by believing in Jesus will we have the boldness to come to Him.

There is one thing that frustrates us from meeting God—sin. Once sin exists, we cannot see God's face. Sin turns us away from God. God has prepared a way for us to deal with our sins, which is the Lord's crucifixion on the cross. Through the cross, He took away our sins. He died for our sins, and He was beaten for us. He was hung on the cross for our sins. The Lord Jesus has died and resurrected. Now everyone who believes in Him can come boldly to God because the middle wall of partition has been removed. The problem of sin is solved, and we can come to God without any fear. One day we all will see God. We will either be accepted as God's people or rejected as God's enemies. The Lord has died, and all the problems of sin have been solved. Let us come to

God and receive Him. No one can come to God with any hindrance. Who are those who cannot come to God? Friends, are you a Christian? Are you an atheist? I beg you to believe in the Lord Jesus. Is there anyone here today who will receive Jesus Christ as his Savior?

Friends, remember that one day you will see God. There is no way for you to hide; you will eventually have to come face to face with God. The only way to hide is to hide in the Lord; there is no other way. One day when you see God's face and want to hide, it may be too late. Therefore, all those who desire to receive the Lord should receive Him now. Do not delay.

Some may say that they do not quite understand the Lord's redemption. They seem to have a problem understanding how the Lord's blood could bring us to God. All we have to do is to check with our conscience. There is a case before us—our sins. There is also a witness inside us—our conscience. The precious conscience is testifying against our sins. Many people are afraid to think about God; they try to avoid God because they have such a case in their conscience. They try to reject God. Friends, there is no need for you to fear, because the Lord Jesus is our Mediator.

Our Lord left the splendid and glorious heavens in order to bring us there. He suffered punishment in order that we may have peace. He died for us that we may have life. He was rejected in order that we may be accepted. We can lay down our burden of sin because God has judged the Lord. All we have to do is believe in Him and draw near to God. If we do not believe that the Lord has taken away our sins, our future is indeed bleak. I hope that we will all open our hearts to receive the Lord. If we do this, we will see that God is no longer our Judge, but our loving Father.

Many of us know that there are frequent earthquakes in Italy. Once there was a great earthquake, and many houses and trees were damaged or leveled. Many people took their belongings and ran with their children in their arms. They were all very frightened. But one old lady did not run around frantically like others; she leaned against a doorpost and laughed. She did not take anything with her and did not try to look for a safe place to hide. All she did was laugh at the ones who were running for their lives. Some curious ones said to her, "Old lady, are you mad? Has the earthquake driven you crazy? Dear old lady, pack your belongings quickly and run." The old lady just kept on laughing and said, "I have talked to you about the things to come and

exhorted you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said that unless you believe in Jesus, you would go to hell and suffer the fire of brimstone. But you have ignored me and not listened to me, regarding my speaking as a joke. Today God is only moving a little finger, and all of you are so frightened. You do not know what to do, and you run back and forth helplessly. This is a very funny sight to me." Friends, have you ever thought of your future? When that day comes, will you be like the men who were running for their lives and who were so helpless? All those who have believed in the Lord Jesus will not be shaken; they will be at peace. Are you afraid of earthquakes? If you are, how much worse is hell? Are you afraid of hell? An earthquake is terrible and frightening, but it is nothing compared with hell. Friends, there is no comparison between hell and earthquakes. Consider hell when you think of an earthquake. Do you want to suffer the pain of hell? Friends, please come and believe in the Lord Jesus so that you can escape the pain of hell and enjoy the blessing of heaven.