Changing Death into Life

Witness Lee

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of nine gospel messages given by Brother Witness Lee. The time and place that the messages were given are unknown. These messages were originally published by the Taiwan Gospel Book Room in separate issues of *The Ministry of the Word* magazine in 1951, 1954, and 1957. The first chapter concerns the first sign performed by the Lord Jesus: the changing of death into life. The following chapters are based on eight cases in the Gospel of John and cover the needs of eight kinds of people—the moral,

the immoral, the impotent, the hungry, the thirsty, the sinful, the blind, and the dead. These cases depict man's true condition and then present the redemption of Christ in order to show how the eternal, uncreated, incorruptible, and unfading life of God is the answer to all of man's needs.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST SIGN—
CHANGING DEATH INTO LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 2:1-11

John 2:1-11 says, "The third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, as well as His disciples, to the wedding. And when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what do I have in this that concerns you? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Whatever He says to you, do. Now there were six stone waterpots lying there, according to the Jews' rite of purification, holding two or three measures each. Jesus said to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast. And they took it to him. And when the master of the feast tasted the water which had become wine and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, Every man sets out the good wine first, and when they have drunk freely, then that which is worse; you have kept the good wine until now. This beginning of signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed into Him."

The Gospel of John speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God coming to people so that they may have His life. Although the Lord Jesus contacted thousands of people when He was on the earth, John selected specific cases to prove that in order to meet all of man's needs, the Lord Jesus causes man to have His life. The event recorded in this portion of John 2 is one of many cases. It is an important and central case that has much significance. This case shows how the Lord Jesus came to change man's condition of death into one of life.

We will consider the record in John 2:1-11 point by point. This portion is symbolic in meaning. Hence, we must consider the symbolic meaning of the things and matters referred to in this portion. The case recorded in John 2

uses physical things to signify a spiritual reality. Therefore, in reading or speaking about this portion of the Bible, we must consider all the items as symbols with spiritual realities.

THE LORD COMING IN RESURRECTION TO PEOPLE

The first point reveals the Lord Jesus coming in resurrection. The Lord Jesus came to a place called Cana on the third day (v. 1). In the Bible the third day is the day of resurrection, because the Lord Jesus resurrected on the third day. Therefore, the symbolic meaning of His coming to Cana on the third day is that He comes to people in resurrection. Chapter 1 presents the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God who bore our sins (vv. 29, 36). As the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus bore our sins when He was put to death on the cross. Therefore, symbolically, chapter 1 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming as the Lamb of God to die for us on the cross for our redemption. Chapter 2 speaks of His being raised on the third day after His death and thereby entering into resurrection. His entering into resurrection means that He is the Lord of life, who is full of life, and that as the Spirit of life, He can enter into people so that they may have His life. Therefore, this portion says that the Lord came to Cana on the third day. After dealing with man's sins through His death, He comes as the Spirit of life in resurrection to people so that they may have His life.

The ancient sages and philosophers knew that there is an immense need within human life, but they were not able to identify this need. They tried to meet this need with many different things, but all their efforts were fruitless because they did not know that this need can be met only by a sufficient life. Man has problems and difficulties because the human life is insufficient. Therefore, in the Gospel of John when the Lord Jesus comes in resurrection to man, He comes in the Spirit of life so that His sufficient life can solve the problems of human life and meet the needs of man's insufficient life.

THE LORD COMING TO THE LOW PLACE WHERE PEOPLE ARE

The Lord comes to people in their lowly condition. In John 2:1 the Lord came to Galilee. Galilee was a province, and it was considered a low, despised, and detested place. No prophet or man of fame had arisen out of Galilee (7:52). Galilee signifies a lowly place, a place of no reputation. In God's eyes all human beings are in Galilee, a place without honor, a place that is low and

mean. The Lord's coming to Galilee means that He humbled Himself, leaving His glorious position in heaven and coming to a low and mean place on earth. The Lord humbled Himself and came to earth because He wanted to contact people so that they may receive Him as their life. If He were high and far above in the heavens, the lowly people living on earth would have no way to contact Him, nor would they have a way to receive Him as life. It is impossible for people to go to heaven, which is high and far above. It is possible, however, for the Lord to come down from heaven in order to approach those who are in a low and mean place. The Lord came from heaven to the earth in order to approach man. He died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven, and descended again as the Spirit of resurrection, the Spirit of life, the Holy Spirit, in order to seek and approach lowly people. To this day He is still searching every corner of the earth, in low and mean places, in order to contact lowly people. As the Spirit, He can approach and contact people in any nation and in any society, and He can be received by them to become their life.

Most people have a wrong concept that someone who wants to seek the Lord Jesus and pray to Him must go to a chapel, because the holy Savior can be found only in a sacred and solemn place. This concept may seem pious and good, but it is wrong and not according to the Bible. The Gospel of John shows that the resurrected Lord Jesus is omnipresent. He is everywhere as the Spirit of resurrection life in order to seek and contact those who need Him. On the one hand, He is exceedingly holy and honorable, but on the other hand, He is willing and desirous to contact the most filthy and lowly of people. No one should think that he is too filthy or too low to contact the Lord Jesus. No one should say, "I have committed too many sins, and I am living a filthy life. Why would the Lord Jesus be willing to save someone like me?" The Lord Jesus came to Galilee, a low and mean place. He specifically came to a place condemned by men in order to save lowly people. No place is too low or mean for Him to visit. No one is too lowly to be saved. This is His great love and compassion. This is the great gospel.

THE LORD COMING TO WEAK AND FRAGILE PEOPLE

John 2:1 says that the Lord came to Cana of Galilee. The word *Cana* means "reed." In the Bible reeds signify weak and fragile people. Isaiah 42:3 says, "A bruised reed He will not break." Hence, reeds refer to weak and fragile people who cannot withstand pressure. Therefore, the Lord's coming to Cana signifies His coming to weak and fragile people.

People in the world are weak and fragile by nature. Both physically or psychologically, we are weak and fragile. We are weak and fragile in our undertakings and in our morality. Our physical body cannot withstand a little blow. An infectious disease forces us to lie down, and a car accident brings us death. The slightest injury can be fatal to us. Our physical body is weak and fragile. Our psychological being also is weak and fragile. Concerning our psychological being, a little difficulty can cause us pain, and a little sorrow can cause us much grief. We shudder and are terrified by something that is slightly unknown. It is difficult to find someone who has no physical weaknesses or who is absolutely sound psychologically. We frequently refer to someone as being psychologically unbalanced. Most people today have some psychological imbalance, but the condition of some people is less serious than the condition of others. Every condition shows that people are psychologically weak and fragile.

People are also weak and fragile in their undertakings; hardly anyone is happy and content with his undertakings. Most people have aspirations that cannot be realized, because of their human weakness and fragility. Those who are cautious and conscientious may have some achievements, but these achievements cannot withstand even a slight blow. We will not consider serious blows, such as the chaos brought in by wars, natural disasters, and man-made calamities. If there is a little change in the environment or in human affairs, everything that a person has spent his whole life achieving can disappear in an instant. How weak and fragile human beings are!

People are morally very weak and fragile; they are not able to withstand the slightest temptation or enticement. Many who consider themselves to be morally strong and healthy fall prey to money, lust, ambition, or addiction. They lose their fortune and honor and eventually end up in a hopeless situation. Human beings are truly weak, fragile, and pitiful.

Further evidence of man's weakness and fragility is his mortality. Those who are weak will die, and those who are strong and healthy will die as well. Those who are poor will die, and those who are rich will die as well. Those who are lowly will die, and those who are high and honorable will die as well. Those who are illiterate will die, and those who are highly educated will die as well. Death is an unconquerable power. Who can escape death's grasp? Man is extremely weak and fragile in the face of death.

Thus, man's condition is portrayed in John 2: a group of weak and fragile people dwelling in Cana, a land of reeds. Human beings can neither withstand nor endure many things. Many things can lead to physical sickness or mental instability. Many things can discourage a person or issue in death. Human beings are weak and fragile. In every respect, whether physically, psychologically, concerning his undertakings, or in relation to morality, man cannot withstand duress. Man is truly weak and fragile. Nevertheless, our Lord Jesus came to weak and fragile people so that they would receive Him as their life. People need the Lord Jesus to be their life because they are weak and fragile.

The Bible says that those who believe in the Lord Jesus receive eternal life. The term *eternal life* refers not only to a life that is eternal but also to a life that is strong. It is called eternal life because it is unchanging. This life is unchanging because it is strong. The nature of this life is the exact opposite of the nature of the human life. The nature of the human life is weak and fragile, but the nature of the divine eternal life is strong. Therefore, the Lord Jesus as the strong divine life comes to the weak and fragile people in a low and mean place in order to take care of, to resolve, the problems of human weakness and fragility.

THE LORD COMING INTO HUMAN LIFE WITH ITS PLEASURES

The Lord came to a wedding feast (John 2:1-2). A wedding feast signifies the pleasure of marriage. Marriage is a great event in human life. Human life depends first on God's creation and then on marriage. Without marriage human life has no continuation, and without a continuation human life will cease to exist. Therefore, human life depends on marriage. Marriage is a symbol of human life because it is the center and the focus of human life. Furthermore, the wedding feast is a symbol of the pleasures of human life. The Lord's coming to the wedding feast signifies His coming into human life and also into the pleasures of human life. The Lord comes in order for people to receive Him as their life so that His life can solve the problems of human life; that is, His life solves every problem related to the pleasures and enjoyment of human life.

When we read portions in the Bible such as John 2, we must understand them figuratively. So much is implied in the wedding feast. The Lord Jesus

came into this situation. Therefore, when He comes to people, He comes into their human life with all its pleasures. He is not only concerned about our human life with its pleasures; He also wants to solve all the problems of our human life.

THE HUMAN LIFE "RUNNING OUT"

The Lord Jesus came to the wedding feast, but the wine ran out (v. 3). Wine is the focus of a wedding. A wedding depends primarily on wine. Wine is different from water. Water does not come out of life, but wine does. In those days the Jews drank wine made from grapes, which is the life of the grapes. Hence, wine signifies life. A wedding feast depending primarily on wine signifies that the pleasures of human life depend on life. If there is no wine, a wedding feast becomes meaningless. When life comes to an end, man loses his pleasure and enjoyment. The pleasures of human life disappear when life ends. Therefore, when life is terminated, the pleasures and enjoyment of human life are also terminated.

The wine in the wedding feast ran out. This signifies that human life is limited and will end. Human life will reach an end. Not only do old couples die, but even young couples die as well. When either the husband or the wife dies, the happiness goes. In other words, the wine in the wedding of human life runs out. When a person's life comes to an end, the pleasure of his human life also comes to an end. A newly married couple is in the happiest time of their human life. If the husband is diagnosed with tuberculosis, the wine in their human life is running out. Suppose an elderly couple celebrates their fiftieth wedding anniversary. This also indicates that the wine is running out. After they drink a little more, it will be finished. This is true not only of the joy of human life that exists between a husband and wife. It is also true in respect to the many other aspects of the joy of human life. We all understand that the aspects of the joy of our human life will eventually end because our human life is limited and will end.

The people at the wedding in Cana did not know the Lord's intention. However, I believe that the Lord knew that their wine would run out and that they needed Him to change their wine into a better wine. This signifies that although man does not know the Lord's purpose in coming to him, the Lord knows that man has a need. Man may be feasting and living an "enjoyable life,"

but the Lord Jesus knows that human life will reach an end one day; it will be finished. Therefore, the Lord comes to man in order to meet such a need.

EVERYTHING OF THE NATURAL MAN BEING DEATH

John 2:6 says that there were six stone waterpots. The number six represents created man, because man was created on the sixth day. The waterpots were made of stone. Because stone is something natural, the six stone waterpots signify the natural created man. Cana, the land of reeds, signifies our being weak and fragile, and the six stone waterpots signify our being created and natural. As weak and fragile human beings, we are the reeds in Cana; as created and natural human beings, we are six stone waterpots.

It is very meaningful that the Lord told the servants to fill the waterpots with water (v. 7). Wine is different from water because wine comes out of life, but water does not. Therefore, just as wine signifies life, so water signifies death. The Lord told the servants to fill the waterpots with water; this indicates that the natural created man is filled with death. We should not think that someone dies because he has been sick for a certain period of time. Rather, someone dies because death is in him. We all have death in us. We are weak and fragile because death is in us. Our physical weakness and fragility and our psychological weakness and fragility prove that death is in us. The factor of death, the element of death, in us makes us weak, fragile, and unable to withstand pressure both physiologically and psychologically. We are fragile, sick, aging, failing, and dying. These conditions prove that we are filled with death. We need the Lord Jesus because we are filled with death. We need the Lord of life to come into us. We need resurrection life, the Spirit of resurrection, to be our life in order to meet our needs. Because we are filled with death, everything that the sages did is ineffective in solving our problems. The sages are not able to impart into us a life that is strong and cannot die, an eternal life. Only the Lord of life is able to give us a life that is strong and cannot die. He can give us a life that is eternal to meet our need.

THE LORD CHANGING MAN'S DEATH INTO LIFE

After telling the servants to fill the six waterpots with water, the Lord asked them to draw out some water (v. 8). When the master of the feast tasted the water that had been drawn out, he did not taste water but the good wine, the

best wine (vv. 9-10). This signifies that the Lord changes the death in man's natural life into the best life. That which was water was changed into the best wine. All that we have is death, but after the Lord Jesus comes, our death is changed into life; it is even changed into the best life. When the master of the feast tasted the water that had been changed into wine, he was surprised and could not imagine that it had previously been water. Through His death and resurrection the Lord Jesus has done such a work of changing death into life in many people. Others are surprised and amazed at the condition that these ones manifest and the "flavor" that they emit. Formerly, these people knew nothing but death in the various situations of their human life; they were morally low, psychologically weak, and pessimistic and weary of human life. However, after the Lord Jesus did the work of resurrection in them, these conditions of death were changed. Those who were morally low became respectable, those who were psychologically weak became strong, and those who were pessimistic and weary of human life became optimistic and interested in human life. These conditions prove that the death within them was changed into the best life.

The Lord Jesus changed water into wine, and that wine was not natural wine. The first wine in the wedding feast was natural, but the second wine was not natural. This means that our original life is natural. The life that is the center of the pleasures of our human life is natural. This natural life will run out; it will end. However, when the Lord came into us, He gave us a miraculous life, the eternal life of God. The pleasure that this life brings us is also eternal. This life causes the "wedding" of our human life to continue for eternity. Only by having this eternal life can we participate in eternity. Only this eternal life can give eternal happiness.

The most crucial need in human life is not this thing or that thing but a change of life. Originally, our condition is one of death. This condition can be resolved only by the eternal life. Only this life brings about a radical change within us, changing our death into life. Only the Lord Jesus can accomplish such a change within us. Only He as the resurrected Lord—the Lord of life and the Spirit of resurrection—can change all our death into eternal life.

MAN BEING SATISFIED AND GOD BEING GLORIFIED

After the Lord Jesus changed water into the best wine, the guests were satisfied. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus manifested the glory of God; that is,

the Lord Jesus manifested God. When the Lord changes our death into life, He gives us satisfaction, and God is expressed through us. Many of those who have believed in the Lord Jesus bear such a testimony. On the one hand, they have the Lord's life as their living water; hence, they no longer hunger or thirst, and their human life is satisfied. On the other hand, the Lord's life enables them to live in God; therefore, the glory of God, that is, God, is expressed through them. When we meet someone who has believed in the Lord Jesus, we can sense that he is satisfied with his human life, and we can sense that he has God's "flavor," God's image. Someone who has the life of the Lord Jesus has the life that is glorious, eternal, strong, and divine. As a result, he is satisfied, and God is expressed through him.

CHANGING DEATH INTO LIFE

BEING THE BEGINNING OF THE LORD'S SIGNS

John 2:11 says that changing death into life was the beginning of signs that the Lord performed. This sign was the first sign, and it signifies that the work the Lord does in us always begins by changing death into life. His giving Himself to us as our life is the beginning of all His work in us. Now He can do His miraculous work in us continually. However, His work is based on giving eternal life to us. Therefore, changing death into life is the beginning, the first sign, of His work in us.

Whatever work the Lord does in His believers is not an ordinary or common work but a miracle. A miracle is something that cannot be performed or accomplished by ordinary people; it can be performed and accomplished only by God. Only such work can be called a miracle. The work that the Lord Jesus is doing in us is miraculous in nature. Such work cannot be performed by man; it must be performed by God. The miracles that the Lord performs in us are all based on one thing: His changing of death into life. This is the first miracle that He performs in us, and it is the beginning of all the miracles that He will perform in us. It is the beginning of all His work in us.

THE CHANGING OF DEATH INTO LIFE

BEING THE GREATEST MIRACLE

The Lord's changing our death into life is not only the beginning of miracles; it is also the greatest miracle, the miracle of miracles. It is the greatest miracle that He performs in us. Dwight L. Moody, a great American evangelist, once said that the greatest miracle that the Lord performs in man is to enliven those who were dead in their sins. We often think that it would be a great miracle for a person who is gravely ill to be healed by the Lord. We think that it would be a great miracle for a dead person to be made alive. However, we seldom consider how great a miracle it is to receive the Lord's life. Those who were dead in sins, filled with death, morally low, and weak are made alive in spirit; they experience a miraculous change. Such a miraculous change is expressed in many ways. It is expressed in our physiology, our psychology, our undertakings, and our morality. There is such a great change within us because the Lord's life is in us. The changing of death into life is truly the greatest miracle that the Lord performs in us.

From these ten great points we can understand the focus and purpose of the Lord Jesus' salvation. The sign performed by the Lord at the wedding in Cana speaks forth His salvation. According to the weakness and fragility of our human life and according to the low and mean situation in which we dwell, we are the same as the people who lived in Cana of Galilee. You may be striving to pursue the pleasures of human life, but one day your wine will unexpectedly run out. Your life will end, and the pleasures of your human life will also end. Everything in your human life is weak and fragile because your natural man is death. But the Lord knows your condition and your needs. Therefore, He comes in resurrection as the Spirit to the low and mean place where you live and into your human life with its pleasures in order to change your death into life, your weakness and fragility into strength, and your dead end into a way out. As a result, you have the joy of satisfaction, and God can be expressed.

HOW TO HAVE YOUR DEATH CHANGED INTO LIFE

The salvation of the Lord Jesus is wonderful. What He does in man is a miracle. He has performed this miracle in many people, and He is also performing it in us. How can you have this miracle of the Lord's salvation? How can your death be changed into life?

First, you need to confess that your condition matches the condition of the people who attended the wedding in Cana. You are living in a low and mean

place, and you are exceedingly weak and fragile and full of death. Your human life and the pleasures of your human life are limited and transient.

Second, you need to believe that the Lord Jesus comes with the purpose of saving you in order to solve your problem of being low, mean, weak, fragile, and filled with death. His way of solving your problem was to become a man in the flesh, live on the earth, and be put to death on the cross. On the cross He bore your sins and removed the source of your weakness, fragility, and death. He was resurrected on the third day and became the life-giving Spirit in order to reach you and be the eternal life in you. This life replaces your low, mean, weak, fragile, and mortal human life.

Third, you need to receive Him into your spirit so that He becomes the center of your human life; He becomes the Lord of life in your spirit.

Fourth, you need to obey His word and listen to His command. When the Lord ordered the servants to fill the waterpots with water, they followed His command. When He said, "Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast" (v. 8), they did according to His word. When they obeyed, a miracle took place. Likewise, you should obey the Lord's word so that you may be saved. The Lord has given you His words in the Bible. His words include, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (3:16); "He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life" (5:24); and "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

You should believe and obey the words of the Lord. The Lord said that he who believes into Him has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life. Therefore, when you believe into Him, you have eternal life, and you will not come into judgment. You must believe this. The Lord also said that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Hence, you should believe and be baptized in order to be saved. When you believe and obey the Lord's word in this way, the miracle of the Lord's salvation will be realized in you. You will come out of death, and you will receive the best life so that you may live a human life that is noble, strong, and full of joy.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NEED OF THE MORAL

Scripture Reading: John 3:1-10, 14-16

John 3:1-10 and 14-16 say, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This one came to Him by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher...Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said to Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, You are a teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?...As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life."

THE CENTER OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is easy to touch and to read. It is the most precious thing in Christianity. The value and the power of the Bible are unparalleled by any publication among mankind, and it has a transcendent place in religion and in literature, even though it does not focus on literature. The Bible also has a place in science, even though it does not focus on science. From every perspective the Bible has a special place.

Regrettably, many people have a superficial and detached understanding of the Bible. They know that the Bible affects individuals, societies, countries,

and human culture, but they know nothing concerning the content of the Bible or the center of the Bible.

There are sixty-six books in the Bible, but there is only one subject, one center. The Lord Jesus is the subject and center of the Bible. Without the Lord Jesus the Bible is merely an empty shell. The Bible has reality because it has the Lord Jesus. Therefore, in order to understand the content of the Bible, a person must know the Lord Jesus.

THE LORD JESUS BEING WONDERFUL

Beginning with this chapter, we will select several portions from the Bible that show who the Lord Jesus is and that explain His relationship with man.

Many people think that the Lord Jesus was merely the founder of a religion. Others think that He was a reformer. Still others think that He was a man who had profound thoughts and a noble morality. The different views that people have concerning the Lord Jesus are inaccurate. I hope that we would set these views aside and consider what the Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus.

Suppose there were a famous person who was far away from us both in time and in space. How can we know him? We cannot rely on rumors, for they are unreliable. If we want to know this famous person, we must read a reliable biography concerning him. There are four books in the Bible that concentrate on the life of the Lord Jesus. These books—the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John—can be considered the biography of the Lord Jesus. These four books describe the Lord Jesus.

Four books are needed to describe the Lord Jesus because the Lord Jesus is so wonderful that He cannot be described by just one book. The Lord Jesus has at least four aspects. These four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—each record a different aspect. The first three Gospels show the Lord Jesus as a perfect man who became our Savior. The Gospel of John, however, is greatly different from the first three Gospels. The Gospel of John says that the Lord Jesus, who is the best of men, is God. He is the God who was from the beginning and who created the heavens, the earth, and all things, including mankind. Before the heavens and the earth, before all things, and before mankind, He was. He was God in the beginning, that is, in eternity without beginning. One day He became flesh; He was found in fashion as a

man and lived among men. He is God who was in the beginning, but at a certain point in time, He took on a physical human body and became a man so that He could be among men.

Outwardly, He was a man, but inwardly, He was God. Hence, the Lord Jesus is wonderful. If we look at Him from the outside, we will say that He is merely a man; but if we know Him from the inside, we will know that He is God. When He was on the earth, His disciples saw Him merely as a man. They knew who His mother was and where His home was. They saw Him rest when He was tired, eat when He was hungry, and drink when He was thirsty. The Lord Jesus had emotions; He expressed pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy. In all respects He was a man. However, He displayed extraordinary wisdom and authority when He spoke, and He had an extraordinary ability to do things. No man could invent the things that He said, and no one could do what He did. Therefore, upon hearing and seeing Him, His disciples often asked, "Who is He?"

The Gospel of John answers this question for us. It begins by telling us that this perfect man, Jesus Christ, is the God who was in the beginning; He is the God who created all things and through whom all things came into being (1:1-3). The Gospel of John then demonstrates that the Lord Jesus is omnipresent—He can see a person who was in another place, far away from Him (vv. 47-51); He is omnipotent—He can change water into wine, which is to make something out of nothing (2:1-11); and He is also omniscient—He knows what is in man (vv. 23-25). He is the eternal God coming to be a finite man. He became a man in order to be among men so that man may have God's grace and see God's truth; He became a man so that man may have God's life and see God. This is the content of the Gospel of John.

THE PEOPLE WHOM THE LORD JESUS CONTACTED

In chapters 1 and 2 the Gospel of John demonstrates that the Lord Jesus is God. Then it immediately presents the kinds of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted when He was on the earth. The Lord Jesus contacted thousands of people, and it would take too much time and space to write an account concerning each person. Therefore, John selected some typical cases to represent man's condition.

In chapters 3 through 11 the Lord Jesus contacted eight kinds of people. The first kind of person whom the Lord Jesus contacted was a moral person in chapter 3. The second kind of person whom the Lord contacted was an immoral person in chapter 4. The third kind of person whom the Lord contacted was an impotent person in chapter 5. The fourth kind of person whom the Lord contacted was a hungry person, as shown in chapter 6. The fifth kind of person whom the Lord contacted was a thirsty person, like the people in chapter 7. The sixth kind of person whom the Lord contacted was a sinful person in chapter 8. The seventh kind of person whom the Lord contacted was a blind person in chapters 9 and 10. The eighth kind of person whom the Lord contacted was a dead person in chapter 11.

These eight kinds of people represent the different people who contacted the Lord Jesus when He was on the earth. These eight kinds of people represent the different kinds of people in the world. Hence, their conditions represent the conditions of all humanity, and their needs represent the needs of all humanity. The Lord Jesus could solve their problems; hence, He can solve the problems of all humanity. The Lord Jesus could meet their needs; hence, He can meet the needs of every person.

These eight kinds of people represent the different kinds of people on the earth and the condition of every person. Everyone wants to be moral but inevitably has an immoral and dishonorable living. Everyone has a desire to do good but lacks the ability to do good. Everyone is discontent with life and hungry. Worldly pleasures leave everyone empty and spiritually thirsty. Everyone lives in sin and is a slave to sin. Everyone is blind in the eyes of his heart and does not know God, himself, his source, his destination, or the meaning of human life. Everyone is dead in his spirit, having lost the sense of God; no one is able to sense God or know spiritual things.

These eight conditions are the condition of every person in the world. Only the Lord Jesus can solve these conditions. Moreover, only the Lord Jesus is sufficient to supply the needs that are generated by these conditions. Let us now consider the first kind of people whom the Lord contacted—the moral.

THE FIRST KIND OF PEOPLE—

THE MORAL

Society considers a moral person to be a person with high standing. Consequently, the Gospel of John considers people with high moral standing as the first kind of people.

In John 3 a man called Nicodemus is a representative of the first kind of people. Such people have at least five characteristics. Nicodemus was a Pharisee (v. 1). In Jewish society the Pharisees, like the Confucians during former times in China, preached morality and ethics. Nicodemus paid attention to morality because he was a Pharisee. Thus, he had the characteristic of noble morality.

Nicodemus was also a ruler of the Jews (v. 1). He was not a common or obscure civilian; he was a noble ruler. Thus, he had the characteristic of being in a high position with a high reputation.

Furthermore, Nicodemus was a teacher of the children of Israel (v. 10). He was an educator. Therefore, he had the characteristic of being learned and knowledgeable.

Nicodemus was also an elderly man (v. 4). He was advanced in age, not young and inexperienced. Therefore, he had the characteristic of being skilled in the ways of the world, having seen a great deal and having gained much experience.

Finally, Nicodemus was religious (vv. 1-2). He was not an atheist. He believed in God, and he came to see the Lord Jesus in order to inquire about matters concerning God. Therefore, he had the characteristic of being filled with religious thoughts.

Some people are moral, but they do not necessarily have a high position. Others have a position, but they are not necessarily educated. There are those who are educated but not experienced. There are also those who are moral, have a position, are educated, and have experience, but they do not have religious thoughts. However, Nicodemus was a moral man in a high position. He was educated and experienced, and he possessed religious thoughts. Undoubtedly, he was a rare and noble person. Therefore, it is fitting for him to represent the first kind of people.

Nicodemus represents people whose morality, position, education, experience, and religious inclinations cause them to be of high standing in society. His condition portrays their condition, and his lack speaks of their need.

Some people are cultivated and moral; they have a position and a reputation in society. They are also educated and knowledgeable. They may also be advanced in age and have religious thoughts. They may be similar to Nicodemus in their manner and heart. If they are not the same as Nicodemus in all aspects, at least they are like him in one aspect. Therefore, he represents them. His needs are their needs. His coming to see the Lord Jesus represents their coming to see the Lord Jesus. The words the Lord Jesus spoke to Nicodemus are also His words to this kind of people.

THE HUMAN CONCEPT

When Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus, he said, "Rabbi,...You have come from God as a teacher" (v. 2). These words show his concept and knowledge of the Lord Jesus. He called the Lord Jesus, Rabbi. The Jews calling someone Rabbi can be compared to the Chinese calling Confucius a teacher. Nicodemus considered the Lord Jesus to be a teacher. Therefore, he said that the Lord Jesus had "come from God as a teacher." Nicodemus had the concept that man needed to be taught and that man could be taught how to be good. He believed that man was bad because man had not been taught. Nicodemus's concern was that man needed to be taught by a good teacher. He thought that the Lord Jesus was a teacher sent from God to teach man how to be good and how to do good. Nicodemus believed that man's problem was related to teaching, that man only needed a good teacher.

Many people today have this concept. They believe that in order to be good, a person must receive a good education. They believe that man can be taught how to be good and that a well educated person will surely be good.

Many moral and thoughtful people are just like Nicodemus. They think that as long as people can be taught how to properly conduct and cultivate themselves, people will be good. The human concept is always focused on man's self-cultivation in order to do good.

THE LORD'S VIEW

People do not realize that this human concept is wrong. Man cannot be good. Man's need is not teaching. The Lord Jesus did not come to be a teacher. When Nicodemus called the Lord Jesus Rabbi, teacher, the Lord interrupted him and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3). Nicodemus had the concept that man needs teaching in order to be good. But the Lord Jesus said that man does not need teaching; rather, man needs to be "born anew." Teaching is a matter of behavior, but to be born anew is a matter of life. Nicodemus thought that man does not have proper conduct because man has not been taught. His concept was focused on how to change one's conduct. He did not see that man's fundamental problem is not with conduct but with the lack of life.

For example, let us consider a tree that bears sour fruit. Such a tree may be trimmed and fertilized, but it will still not bear good fruit. Trimming and fertilizing will not make the tree bear good fruit. On the contrary, the more the tree is trimmed and fertilized, the more bad fruit it will bear. Hence, it is not a matter of outward trimming and fertilizing but of changing the life within the tree. This does not mean that trimming and fertilizing are not needed but that trimming and fertilizing are secondary matters. The primary matter is that the tree needs a new life. The original life within the tree bears sour fruit. Trimming and fertilizing the tree do not change the nature of the tree's life. Trimming and fertilizing improve the outward appearance of the fruit, but they do not change the taste of the fruit. The outward appearance will change but not the inward taste.

Similarly, education and self-cultivation can at best change someone's outward conduct and living but not his inward life. Teaching and self-cultivation are not primary matters. The primary matter is that he needs a new life. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born anew" (v. 7). This means that Nicodemus needed to be regenerated.

THE NEED FOR REGENERATION

The phrase *born anew* is very interesting. *Born* is related to childbearing, and *anew* means "again." Therefore, to be born anew is to be born again.

What should we do if we want a tree to bear sweet rather than sour fruit? Tree cultivators know that they should first cut off the branches of the sour fruit tree. Then they cut off a branch from a sweet fruit tree and graft it into

the trunk of the sour fruit tree. After some time, the tree will blossom and bear sweet fruit. Trimming and fertilizing will not cause a sour fruit tree to bear sweet fruit. This can be achieved only by changing the life within the tree.

Nicodemus was a man of self-cultivation, but he believed that he could be a better person. Hence, Nicodemus came to ask the Lord Jesus to teach him how to cultivate himself to become a better person. However, the Lord Jesus showed Nicodemus that what he needed was not outward teachings but an inward change in life. Nicodemus needed to be born again.

The focus of believing in Christ is not self-cultivation but regeneration. I have two friends who have told me that religion is good, that all religions exhort men to be good, and that all religions are the same. This thought may be applied to other religions, but it is incorrect when applied to Christianity. To believe in Christ is not a matter of being exhorted to be good. Rather, to believe in Christ is to acknowledge that man cannot be good. It is impossible for man to bear sweet fruit. Man has the desire to be good and the thought to be good, but the human life does not have the ability to be good.

It is right to be good. But man does not have the ability to be good. The human life is fallen; it is bad and cannot be good. In order to be good, man must have a change in life. He must be regenerated.

Many say that man needs to imitate Christ. But how can man imitate Christ without the life of Christ? In order to truly imitate Christ, man must first be regenerated; he must first have the life of Christ. Only those who have the life of Christ can truly imitate and follow Christ.

Suppose a flock of chicks and ducklings are brought to a small river. The ducklings will jump into the water and paddle, but the chicks will be scared and stay far away from the river. The chicks have a life that fears water. Even if they are pushed toward the water, they will not go in. The ducklings, however, have a life that loves water. They will jump into the water even if we try to prevent them. They are not taught to love water, nor were they taught how to swim. This is a characteristic of the duck life. Swimming in water is an innate ability of this life.

Parents tell their children not to lie, and teachers also tell children not to lie. However, children still tell lies. Children are not taught to lie, but lying is a characteristic of the human life. It is an innate ability of the human life.

People are capable of committing many sins, but no one goes to "sin school." Who learned how to sin only after attending "sin school"? Man does not need to attend "sin elementary school" in order to know how to sin, nor does he need to attend "sin college." Sinning is a characteristic of the human life. Sinning is an innate ability of the human life.

When someone turns twenty, his parents may tell him to preserve his standing and not be reckless. But what is the outcome of such exhortation? After wasting his time, the young person may go to a dance hall and meet bad companions. Scandalous behavior is an indication of the type of human life we have. If human life were good, there would not be bad conduct. Man would not bear "sour fruit."

Is your history good or bad? Every honest person will bow his head and say that his history is bad. If we consider our history and our living, we will agree that our human life is bad. Some may say that a schoolmate or colleague corrupted them, but we should not blame others. If our human life were good, no one would be able to corrupt us from the outside. The problem is not with the outward conduct but with the life within. Our need is not a change in outward conduct but a change in life. We need to be regenerated; we need to be born again.

Each kind of life can understand only the things that are in its realm. Monkeys cannot understand the things of men, because monkeys do not have the human life. A child can learn what is taught in kindergarten and then learn what is taught in elementary school. After elementary school he can continue to take classes in junior high school, high school, and college. However, a young monkey is not able to learn what is taught in kindergarten. A monkey cannot take lessons even in elementary school, not to mention college. A monkey cannot understand the things that a man can understand, and a monkey cannot be taught to understand the things in the human realm. In order for a monkey to understand the things of man, it must first have the human life.

Likewise, human beings cannot understand the things related to God's kingdom. A person who does not have God's life cannot be taught to understand the things of God's kingdom. No matter how educated or knowledgeable someone may be, without God's life he cannot understand the things of God's kingdom. Only God's life can understand the things of His kingdom. A person must have God's life through regeneration in order to understand the things of God's kingdom. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3).

The Lord Jesus did not come to the world in order to teach man but to give man His life. The Lord Jesus came to the world not to be man's teacher but to be man's life. Teaching is useful only after man has the divine life. Therefore, teaching is not man's primary need; life is man's primary need. Man must first have the divine life. Man must be regenerated.

Many moral and educated men think that moral and educated people do not need to be regenerated. Such people do not know that moral people need to be regenerated just as immoral people need to be regenerated. Educated people need to be regenerated just as uneducated people need to be regenerated. The immoral do not have the divine life and cannot live out God's image, and the moral also do not have the divine life and cannot live out God's image. Uneducated people do not have God's life and cannot understand the things of God, and educated people also do not have God's life and cannot understand the things of God. Therefore, both the educated and the uneducated need God's life, and both the moral and the immoral need to be regenerated.

THE MEANING OF REGENERATION

Nicodemus might have understood the literal definition of the words *born* and *anew*, but he did not understand the meaning of being *born anew*. He thought that to be born anew is to be born again, that is, to enter a second time into his mother's womb in order to be born. He did not know that to be born anew means to be born again with another life. This is not to enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. A person who enters a second time into his mother's womb and is born a second time would still be born of the human life.

Perhaps Nicodemus thought that an old and corrupt person could be rejuvenated and be like a newborn by entering a second time into his mother's womb and being born. He did not know that even if he could enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, he would still be flesh. The corrupted human life would still be in him, and he would be no different than before.

Regeneration is not a matter of entering a second time into one's mother's womb to be born of the human life but to be "born of the Spirit": "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v. 6). Therefore, to be regenerated is to receive the life of God, to have the divine life in addition to one's own life. Regeneration is the Spirit entering into man and giving man the life of God. This life is spiritual; it is invisible and intangible, yet it is still perceptible to man. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said that the life that is born of the Spirit is like the wind (v. 8).

HOW TO BE REGENERATED

After Nicodemus found out that to be born anew is to be born of the Spirit, he asked the Lord Jesus, "How can these things be?" (v. 9). In other words, "How can one be born anew? How can one have God's life?"

The Lord Jesus answered and said to him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life" (vv. 14-15). The Lord Jesus' reply shows that in order for man to be regenerated, there must be two things.

First, the Lord Jesus had to be lifted up, to be crucified. The bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness and judged by God on behalf of the children of Israel so that the dying children of Israel might live (Num. 21:4-9). In the same way the Lord Jesus was lifted up on the cross and judged by God on behalf of sinners so that fallen man might be regenerated and have God's life.

Second, man must believe in the Lord Jesus, who was lifted up, who bore man's sins, and who was judged on the cross on behalf of man. We must confess that we are sinful, that we have offended God, and that we stand condemned before God. We must then believe that the Lord Jesus was crucified in order to bear our sins and that He received God's righteous

judgment on our behalf. Then we can receive the forgiveness of sins and be regenerated.

If you confess that you are unable to change and if you are subdued before God to confess your sins and to receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, the Spirit will enter into your human spirit and give you God's life. As soon as you open your heart to receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, the Spirit will immediately enter into you so that you may have the life of God.

Let me demonstrate. A lamp may not be shining. However, as soon as I turn on the switch, electricity enters into the lamp, and it shines. Similarly, as soon as we open the door of our heart, the Holy Spirit enters into us so that we can have the life of God.

Some may say that it is vague to say that the life of God will enter into us. Others may say that we are superstitious. However, this is real and true. Two hundred years ago people would say that it is nonsense and superstition to think that people in China could hear someone speaking in America, but today we know that this is real. As long as we have a radio receiver and turn on the radio, the radio waves in the air will enter into the radio, and we will hear what is being transmitted.

When someone repents in his heart, calls on the Lord Jesus from his heart, opens the door of his heart, and receives the Lord Jesus as his Savior, the Holy Spirit will enter into him, and he will receive the life of the Lord Jesus, which is the life of God. This is the same as a radio receiving radio waves.

In order to contact anything, we must use the right organ and method. If we use the wrong organ or the wrong method, we will have no way to contact that thing. Let us use sound as an example. We must use our ears as the organ and contact sound by hearing. Concerning smell, we must use our nose as the organ and contact fragrances by smelling. Concerning the air, we must use our windpipe as the organ and contact the air by breathing. If we do not use the right organ, it will seem as if sound, fragrances, and the air do not exist.

Similarly, in order for you to contact God and have His life, you must use the right organ and the right method. God is Spirit. If you use your brain as the organ and thinking as the method, you will never contact God or have His life. Perhaps the more you think, the more you will decide that there is no God.

The more you think, the more you will decide that the life of God is vague. God is Spirit, and His life is spiritual; hence, in order for you to contact Him and to have His life, you must use the organ of your spirit and the method of believing and calling. God and His life are invisible and intangible, but the human spirit can contact and perceive God and His life. If you confess your sins to God and call on the Lord Jesus, you will receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you will contact God in your spirit, and you will have the life of God. When God's life enters into you, you will be regenerated.

THE RESULTS OF REGENERATION

There are at least four results of a person being regenerated with God's life. The first result is that there will be a change in life. The human life is corrupt, but God's life is incorruptible. When God's life enters into man, it brings about transformation, a change within man. When God's sweet life is grafted into our sour life, there is a sweet change within us, and we bear sweet fruit.

Second, a regenerated person is able to understand spiritual things. This understanding is not based on knowledge but on life, it is not in the mind but in the spirit, and it is not a knowing in the mind but a sensing in the spirit. A regenerated person often may not understand a certain matter concerning God in his mind, but he will have a sense concerning the matter in his spirit.

Third, a regenerated person has a share in God's kingdom. Only those who are regenerated can know the things of God's kingdom. Therefore, only those who are regenerated can enter into the kingdom of God. Those who are regenerated are in God's kingdom today because their spirit is God's kingdom, and eventually their whole being will express God's kingdom.

Fourth, a regenerated person will never perish, because he has the life of God. God's life is eternal. Hence, a person who has God's eternal life will never perish.

A moral person needs to be regenerated, which is to have God's life. If you have not yet been regenerated, that is, if you have not yet received God's life, you should believe in your heart and pray from your heart in order to receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEED OF THE IMMORAL

Scripture Reading: John 4:3-21, 23-26, 28-29, 31-32

John 4:3-21, 23-26, 28-29, and 31-32 say, "He [Jesus] left Judea and...had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria... and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from the journey, sat thus by the well; it was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give Me something to drink. For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman then said to Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 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. The woman said to Him, Sir, You have no bucket, and the well is deep; where then do You get this living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well...? Jesus answered and said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water so that I will not thirst nor come here to draw. He said to her, Go, call your husband and come here. The woman answered and said, I do not have a husband. Jesus said to her, You have well said, I do not have a husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly. The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, yet you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe Me...neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness. The woman said to Him, I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when He comes, He will declare all things to us. Jesus said to her, I, who speak to you, am He...Then the woman left her waterpot and went away into the city, and said to the people, Come, see a man who told me all

that I have done. Is this not the Christ?...In the meantime, the disciples urged Him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But He said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about."

AN IMMORAL PERSON

In the previous chapter we saw a moral person. In this chapter we will consider an immoral person. The condition of the immoral person in John 4 differs greatly from the condition of the moral person in chapter 3. The moral man was an orthodox Jew. The immoral woman was a Samaritan, a person of mixed race. He was a ruler. She was a commoner. He was moral, reputable, respectable, and admirable. She was immoral, dishonorable, despised, and contemptible. He was a moral man, whose name was recorded in the Bible. She was an immoral woman, whose name was not recorded in the Bible. Nicodemus had a desire to see the Lord. The Samaritan woman had no desire to see the Lord, but the Lord met her. Nicodemus came to see the Lord secretly at night. The Samaritan woman met the Lord in an open area during the day. Nicodemus discussed the truth with the Lord indoors. The Samaritan woman was contacted by the Lord outdoors.

This racially mixed and immoral woman had had five husbands, and the one she was with was not her husband (v. 18). Her behavior ruined her standing as a woman. She was scorned, rejected, and held in contempt, but the Lord Jesus did not reject her. She had no desire to seek the Lord, but He came to seek her. She had no heart for the Lord, but He had a heart for her. She did not know the Lord, but He knew her. The Lord knew where she was, and He knew her kind of living. The Lord knew she would go to the well at that time to draw water. Therefore, He went there to wait for her. This was not a coincidence; this was the Lord's particular seeking of the immoral woman (v. 23).

The Lord Jesus came from heaven to the earth in order "to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). The more a person is lost, the more the Lord seeks him. The more a person sins, the more the Lord wants to save him. Most people misunderstand the Lord. They think that He wants good people, not bad people, and that He delights in moral people but rejects immoral people. They do not know that the Lord Jesus has come to seek even bad and immoral people, just as He did in this case.

No one is so corrupt that the Lord would reject him, and no one is so immoral that the Lord would refuse him. The Lord is seeking and wants to save those who sense that they are corrupt and are ashamed of their filthy condition, because the Lord needs sinners.

We think that sinners need the Savior. We do not know that the Savior needs sinners. Sinners definitely need the Savior, but the Savior needs sinners more than they need Him. Therefore, John 4 presents the need of two parties, that is, two thirsty parties.

TWO THIRSTY PARTIES

The picture in John 4 presents a Savior, a sinner, a well, and water. The Savior and the sinner met in front of the well and conversed with each other concerning water. The Savior sat by the well and waited in order to ask for water to drink. The sinner came to the well to draw water in order to quench her thirst. A thirsty Savior met a thirsty sinner by the well. Therefore, this picture shows the thirst of two parties in the universe: the Savior and the sinner.

The Savior's Thirst

The Savior was thirsty and asked the sinner for water to drink. According to John 1, this Savior is the God who created all things. He is the Lord of the universe, but He is also thirsty. He is thirsty because He lost man. Man is His delight and satisfaction. He created the universe in order to gain man. However, man sinned and became lost, and the Savior became thirsty. The Savior is thirsty to gain man. Only man can quench His thirst. He has no satisfaction apart from man. Thirst is a need within man that can be quenched by water. Within God there is also a need that can be quenched only by man. God needs man; man is the water that can quench God's thirst.

God became flesh and lived on the earth among men because He was thirsty to gain man. He "had to pass through Samaria" because He had to gain the immoral Samaritan woman. He disregarded His weariness from the journey and the hot afternoon sun and sat by the well, waiting for the Samaritan woman. He was a Jewish man, but He was bold to ask a Samaritan woman for water to drink because He wanted to gain her. He wanted to drink

from her, not the water she drew from the well. Only a sinner such as she could quench the thirst of the Savior. This is what the Savior wanted.

The Savior was thirsty to gain sinners when He came to the earth. If there were no sinners on earth or if He could not gain sinners on earth, His thirst would not be quenched. Many people think that the Savior will not accept sinners like themselves. They do not know that they are exactly what the Savior needs; they are what the Savior wants. Without them the Savior is not satisfied, and His thirst is not quenched. They are the water that the Savior wants to drink. The Savior needs sinners like you and me. The Savior wants you to quench His thirst; He wants you to give Him water to drink. He is still thirsty today. He is thirsty to gain you.

The Sinner's Thirst

In John 4 the Savior is thirsty, and the sinner is also thirsty. The thirsty Savior asked the sinner for water to drink, and the thirsty sinner came to draw water from the well. The universe is a place of thirst, in which there are a thirsty Savior and thirsty sinners. Who is not thirsty? Who is satisfied with his human life and feels no lack? Regardless of whether a person is rich or poor, noble or base, he is dissatisfied and discontent. The human life is a life of thirst, and human history is a record of thirst. Every human culture is a reflection of an attempt to satisfy thirst.

People in every part of society are thirsty. People thirst for knowledge, position, money, fame, a spouse, and children. There is no one who does not thirst, and there is no one who does not want to quench his thirst. Some people study, work, conduct business, or become government officials because they are thirsty and want to quench their thirst. Everything that man does, including his striving and struggling, is governed and driven by his thirst. The thirst within man pushes him to be busy night and day and to run everywhere, both physically and mentally. Man is busy because he wants to quench his thirst.

Man is busy doing many things because of his thirst, and he also sins because of his thirst. Man seeks amusement and entertainment to quench his thirst. Amusement and entertainment have led countless people astray into sin and have trapped countless people in the deep pit of sin. People are trapped in sin because they want amusement and entertainment to quench

their thirst. Moreover, many people do not hesitate to sin in an attempt to quench their thirst. Many sins are derived from man's thirst and from man's desire to quench his thirst. A man who is satisfied, not thirsty, does not commit sin. Every sinner is thirsty, not satisfied. People lead a dissolute life by indulging in eating, drinking, fornication, adultery, gambling, and smoking because they are thirsty and dissatisfied. They want to quench their thirst and be satisfied.

Some people go to movie theaters because they are thirsty. Some people go to dance halls because they are thirsty. Some people are involved in fornication because they are thirsty. Some people gamble because they are thirsty. Even though all these activities are poisonous, people drink this poison in order to quench their thirst. They are driven by their thirst and disregard the terrible consequences because they hope that such activities can quench their thirst and satisfy their empty feeling.

Man is thirsty because he does not contain God. Just as God needs man, man also needs God. Man is God's satisfaction, and God is man's satisfaction. Without man God is thirsty, and without God man is thirsty. Man's existence is for God because God created man for Himself. If man does not gain God and does not exist for God, man cannot find his proper place or fulfill his function. People feel that their human life is empty, because they have not gained God; their life is not for God.

Without man God has a great lack, and without God man has a great void. In order for God to be satisfied, He must gain man; and in order for man to be satisfied, he must gain God. Man is for God, and God is for man. In order for God to be satisfied and to quench His thirst, He must gain and enjoy man; and in order for man to be satisfied and to quench his thirst, he must gain and enjoy God.

The Samaritan woman is an example of thirst. She represents every thirsty person. The Samaritan woman brought her waterpot under the hot sun at noon to draw water. How could she not have been tired or thirsty? It was the custom during that time for women to go in groups to draw water at dusk, or at sunset, when it was cool. Drawing water was a tiring task, but going as a group and chatting together made it pleasant. This woman, however, had an immoral living and was held in contempt. She dared not go with others to draw water, because she was ashamed of her filthy living. In order to avoid

being mocked, she went alone to draw water at noontime, when the sun was hot and everyone was resting at home. Under such circumstances, how could she not feel lonely? How could she not be thirsty?

This woman had had five husbands, and the man she was currently with was not her husband. This proves that she was dissatisfied and discontent with her human life. She had her first husband because she was neither satisfied nor content. She was not satisfied or content with her first husband, so she had a second one. She was not satisfied or content with the second husband, so she had a third one. She was still not satisfied or content after the third husband, so she had a fourth, fifth, and sixth husband. Such a dissatisfied life speaks of the empty sense in her spirit and shows her great thirst.

The Samaritan woman was thirsty in every respect. She was thirsty physically, she was thirsty psychologically, and she was thirsty spiritually. Her whole being was thirsty, and she had been thirsty her whole life. She was a thirsty person. No wonder the Spirit chose her as a representative of the immoral.

The Samaritan woman was thirsty because she did not have God. Her life was not satisfying, because she had not gained God. She had gained many husbands, but she had not gained God. She had her waterpot, the well, and water, but she did not have God. She was thirsty for God, not for other things. Her thirst was not because she lacked other things but because she lacked God.

Therefore, John 4 presents a thirsty Savior and a thirsty sinner. The Savior was thirsty, and the sinner was thirsty. The thirsty Savior came to the well in order to get water to drink, and the thirsty sinner came to the well in order to get water to drink. The Savior was thirsty because He needed a sinner. The sinner was thirsty because she needed the Savior. The Savior wants to drink, to gain, sinners, and sinners should drink, gain, the Savior.

The Samaritan woman was thirsty, but she did not know the reason for her thirst. She sensed a need, but she did not know what she needed. She did not know that she needed God, nor did she know the gift of God and Christ.

THE GIFT OF GOD AND CHRIST

The gift of God is the gift that God freely gives to man. This gift is God Himself, that is, His life. Man needs God Himself; that is, man needs God's life. In the universe only the life of God can quench man's thirst and satisfy man. God has given Himself, His life, as a gift to man. Man can obtain this free gift without exerting any effort or paying any price. If someone knows his need and knows the free gift of God, he will seek God in order to receive God's life. The Samaritan woman, however, did not know her need, nor did she know the free gift of God. Hence, the Lord Jesus led her to know her own need and the gift of God so that she might seek and gain this gift.

There must be a means for God to give Himself, His life, to man. This means is the incarnated Christ. God is embodied in Christ so that He can give Himself to man. A person who believes in Christ and receives Christ gains God and God's life. Christ spoke with the Samaritan woman, but she did not know Him; she regarded Him merely as a Jew according to His appearance. Therefore, the Lord Jesus spent some time to lead her to know that He is the Christ sent by God so that man may gain God's life. If she knew the gift of God and if she knew Christ, she would ask Him, and He would give her living water, that is, God's life.

LIVING WATER

God's life is the living water that man needs. This living water of life is in Christ and is what God wants to give man to drink. If man believes in the Lord Jesus and calls on Him, man will drink the living water. The living water is living because it is God's life, which has vitality; God's life does not lack vitality. God's life is living and powerful. Therefore, in man the living water flows ceaselessly and is full of life and vitality. This life makes man strong to live.

God as the living water of life can quench man's thirst and satisfy man. Man is also refreshed, strengthened, joyful, and full of light. Those who have God as the living water no longer have a sense of emptiness; instead, they are satisfied. Their pain becomes joy, their weakness becomes strength, and their darkness becomes light. Formerly, they sought amusement and entertainment, committed sins, and did evil things in order to quench their thirst. Now that the living water has quenched their thirst, they no longer need amusement and entertainment, they no longer willingly commit sins, and they no longer do evil things. Both the entertainment that they loved and

the addictions that they served fall off because they gain the satisfaction of the living water.

The Lord Jesus did not tell the Samaritan woman to be delivered from her sinful life. He knew that she lived a life of sin because she was thirsty; that is, she sinned because she did not have the living water of life to satisfy her. If she had the living water to quench her thirst and to satisfy her empty feeling, she would no longer need to live a life of sin; she would not need to drink "poison" in order to quench her thirst. She would no longer need to satisfy her heart with the pleasures of sin. Therefore, the Lord Jesus led her to know the gift of God and to know Himself so that she could gain Him as the living water.

The primary need of the immoral is the living water of life, just as the primary need of the moral is regeneration. Even though living water and regeneration both involve the divine life in man, different characteristics of this life are manifested to different degrees in different kinds of people. The characteristic of God's life that is important in the experience of the moral is related to regeneration, but the characteristic of God's life that is important in the experience of the immoral is related to living water that quenches thirst. The moral primarily need regeneration so that their life may be changed. The immoral primarily need living water so that their thirst within can be quenched.

THE WELL OF HER FOREFATHERS AND HER WATERPOT

The Samaritan woman heard the Lord speak of living water, but she did not know that the living water was God's life. She thought that it could be drawn from the well, because she knew the well of her forefathers and her waterpot; however, she did not know the gift of God, nor did she know Christ. The Samaritan woman highly regarded the well of her forefathers. She knew that both she and her forefathers lived by the well and drew water from the well to drink. She did not expect that any source could be higher than her well or that anyone could be greater than her forefathers. She could not perceive that the gift of God is higher than any source, nor could she perceive that Christ is greater than her forefathers. She knew her forefathers and the well that her forefathers had left for her, but she did not know the gift of God, nor did she

know Christ. She treasured her forefathers and the well, but she did not treasure the gift of God or Christ.

She highly regarded the well and her waterpot. She knew the waterpot in her hand, but she did not know Christ, who was in front of her. There was water in the well and a bucket to draw water from the well, but the water in that well could not keep her from thirsting forever. Only the gift of God and only Christ, that is, only the living water as the gift of God in Christ, can cause man not to thirst forever. She did not know that the living water that causes man not to thirst forever is the gift of God in Christ. The fountain of living water is not passed down from one's forefathers; it is given by God. The living water is passed down in Christ. Man does not gain the living water by his own methods or effort. Man gains the living water because it is the gift of God given through Christ.

Many people are like the Samaritan woman. As soon as they hear the Lord's gospel, they say, "We are Chinese and have Confucianism from our forefathers. Confucianism teaches us how to conduct ourselves. What doctrine is higher than Confucianism? Who is greater than Confucius? Can the doctrines of Christ be greater than Confucianism? Can Christ be greater than Confucius?"

The Chinese regard Confucius as being greater than Christ. The Greeks regard Socrates as being greater than Christ. The Muslims regard Muhammad as being greater than Christ. The Buddhists regard Sakyamuni as being greater than Christ. Every group, whether religious or ethnic, highly esteems its sages and regards them to be greater than Christ. People boast in their sages and treasure the things passed down from their forefathers. They do not know that their sages and the things passed down from their forefathers cannot quench their thirst. The teachings and doctrines passed down from their forefathers are like the well in John 4; they cannot satisfy the emptiness of human life, nor can they give man true and eternal satisfaction.

The sages in whom people boast and the things passed down from their forefathers cannot quench the thirst in human life. Rather, they hinder people from knowing the gift of God and from knowing Christ, and they hinder people from obtaining the living water of life. Many Chinese cannot know the gift of God or believe in Christ, because they boast in Confucius and Confucianism. Many Muslims and Buddhists also cannot know the gift of God

or believe in Christ, because they highly regard Muhammad or Sakyamuni and their doctrines. Other ethnic groups also cannot know the gift of God or believe in Christ, because they highly regard various philosophers, philosophies, and doctrines.

People boast in sages and in things passed down from their forefathers, and they believe that the methods they have received are effective and that their labor is necessary. The Samaritan woman is not the only person who highly regarded her waterpot and her labor of walking a long way to the well and of drawing from the deep well. Many Chinese highly regard their cultivation and their endeavoring to do good. Many Indians highly regard their asceticism, diligence, and hard work. Buddhists regard their abstinence, and Muslims regard their pious cultivation. Man invented these methods that require human labor. Using these methods to quench the thirst of human life and to satisfy the void in human life can be compared to the Samaritan woman drawing water from a deep well: it is vain labor that is unable to quench man's thirst or give him eternal satisfaction.

People consider methods to be effective and labor to be necessary. However, methods and labor are like sages and the things passed down from the forefathers. They cannot quench the thirst of human life, and they hinder people from knowing the gift of God, from knowing Christ, and from gaining the living water that causes man not to thirst forever. It is very difficult for cultivated people and ascetics to know the gift of God and believe in Christ. It is also difficult for those who practice abstinence and for the pious to know the gift of God and believe in Christ. Such people depend on cultivation, asceticism, abstinence, and piety; thus, they cannot know the gift of God or believe in Christ. They do not know that such activity merely enables them to walk a long way and to draw water from a deep well. Such activity is to labor in vain without solving the problem of human life. Such people cannot perceive that the living water that solves the problem of human life and causes them not to thirst forever is a free gift from God in Christ to man. This gift does not require human effort, nor can it be purchased. They do not believe that only God's gift and Christ, not human methods or human labor, can solve the problem of human life, quench man's thirst forever, and thereby satisfy man. Such people are like the Samaritan woman, who walked a long way with her waterpot in order to draw water from a deep well but did not know God's free gift or God's Christ.

The Samaritan woman highly regarded her forefathers, her forefathers' well, and her waterpot, but she did not realize that the water from this well could not quench her thirst. Therefore, the Lord Jesus led her to see that her thirst could not be quenched. The Samaritan woman highly regarded her forefathers' well and her waterpot, but she neglected the gift of God. She regarded her forefathers to be greater than the Christ of God, but the Lord Jesus did not debate with her concerning who was greater. The gift of God is greater than the well and her waterpot, and Christ is greater than her forefathers, but the Lord Jesus did not correct her erroneous concept. Rather, He reminded her that the water from the well that she boasted in could not quench her thirst. She focused on theory; the Lord Jesus focused on fact. It is not a matter of what or who is greater but of what can cause man not to thirst forever. No matter how great her forefathers were and no matter how good the well was, they could not cause her not to thirst forever. This is a fact. How valuable were her forefathers and their well if they could not quench her thirst?

We are not considering the theory of whether Confucius is greater than Christ or of whether Confucian doctrine is better than Christian doctrine. It is a fact that Confucius and his doctrine cannot satisfy human life or cause man not to thirst forever. We are not considering the theory of whether Buddha is greater than Christ or of whether Buddhist doctrine is deeper than Christian doctrine. We are not considering the theory of whether Muhammad is greater than Christ or of whether Islamic doctrine is higher than Christian doctrine. We are considering the fact of what can quench the thirst in human life and satisfy the emptiness of human life. You may have venerated Confucius or worshipped Buddha for many years, or you may be deeply rooted in Islam. You may have studied Confucianism, Buddhism, or Islam in depth and learned much. But have these quenched the thirst deep within your spirit? Have they removed the emptiness within you or satisfied you? This is a matter of fact, not theory.

Many people study various religions but neglect the fact that they are thirsty in their spirit. They are just like the Samaritan woman. The Lord Jesus led her to the thirst in her spirit, and He is also leading you to see that you feel empty within. Whether you venerate Confucius, worship Buddha, or believe in Islam, you are still empty within. Confucius may be noble, Buddha may be deep, and Islam may be good, but how valuable are they if they cannot fill the emptiness inside of you, satisfy you, or quench your thirst?

THIS WATER

The Samaritan woman highly regarded the origin of the well, but the Lord Jesus turned her to the effectiveness of the well. He said, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13). The well had a long history, but the water from the well did not have an eternal effect. Everyone who drank of this water thirsted again. People exerted much effort in order to drink this water, but the effect of this water was neither great nor long lasting. This water could quench man's thirst temporarily; it could not quench man's thirst permanently.

This water was from the well given by her forefathers; it was not the gift of God. This water came from the ground, not a heavenly fountain. Man obtained this water with a bucket, not through believing in Christ. This water required human labor; it was not given freely. This water was of the present age; it was not eternal. This water is anything that is handed down, anything that is out of the ground, and anything obtained through methods and human labor. Hence, it cannot quench man's thirst. In other words, this water is anything that is not given to man by the gift of God, anything that is not out of heaven, anything that is not in Christ or through Christ, anything that is not obtained freely from God, and anything that is not eternal.

Knowledge and doctrines that have been passed down from forefathers cannot quench the thirst within man. They cannot fill the emptiness of human life. The doctrines of Confucius can temporarily change your conduct, and the philosophy of Socrates can seemingly enlighten your mind, but they cannot quench your thirst. Knowledge and doctrine are the water of the world that is out of man, not out of God. They have been passed down through generations; they have not been given by God. They may be good and offer temporary help, but they cannot give eternal satisfaction. If you have knowledge and doctrine, your life is still empty, and you are still dissatisfied. You may drink of this water, but you will still be thirsty.

Some people love money and enjoyment instead of knowledge and philosophy. These people say that money is practical and that their enjoyment is real. Let me ask: Can money prevent thirst? Can enjoyment satisfy man's spirit? Gold bars and dollar bills can meet a temporary need for clothing, food, housing, and transportation, but they cannot provide eternal satisfaction. Amusement and entertainment can give a person temporary happiness, but

they cannot give his spirit lasting joy. Various forms of enjoyment, such as dancing and going to theaters, can meet only a physical or mental need; they cannot quench the deep thirst within man. The earthly riches and pleasures of this world are "this water." Whoever drinks of it will thirst again. Earthly riches and pleasures give man a kind of enjoyment, but they cannot give man satisfaction. They are "this water," but they are not the thirst-quenching water.

Earthly things and the pleasures of this world do not merely fail to quench man's thirst; they actually increase man's thirst. The more man gains earthly things and the pleasures of this world, the greater the thirst becomes within him. The more man gains earthly things and the pleasures of this world, the thirstier he becomes. Hence, the Lord Jesus said that everyone who drinks of "this water" will thirst again. The water of this world, the worldly pleasures, make man thirsty instead of quenching his thirst. The more man drinks the water of this world, the thirstier he becomes. The more he drinks, the greater is his desire to drink; and the more he drinks, the greater is his ability to drink. A person who makes fifty thousand dollars wants to make a hundred thousand dollars. When he makes a hundred thousand dollars, he wants two hundred thousand dollars. When a person has a son, he wants a daughter. When a person finishes elementary school, he wants to advance to middle school and then high school. After he finishes middle school and high school, he wants to attend college. When he has a bachelor's degree, he wants a master's degree. After he has a master's degree, he wants a doctorate degree. Then he wants to become a government official or the chief of a bureau. When he becomes the chief of a bureau, he wants to become a mayor. After he becomes a mayor, he wants to become a cabinet member or a minister. He always wants more. He is thirsty even after his death. He will be thirsty in Hades and thirsty in the lake of fire.

The Samaritan woman previously had five husbands, and the one she was with was not her husband. Her thirst was not quenched with her first husband. She was still thirsty with her second husband and third husband, so she had a fourth, fifth, and sixth husband. She was thirsty even though she had many husbands, and her thirst only increased her desire for more. However, the more husbands she had, the thirstier she became. The words the Lord Jesus spoke were true: "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13).

In a gospel meeting in the south of Fukien, I said, “This woman kept changing husbands because one by one they could not quench her thirst. She had one, but her thirst was not quenched, so she had another one. When the second one could not quench her thirst, she looked for another one. She kept changing husbands and did not hesitate to sin, because her husbands could not quench her thirst.” Remarkably, in the audience there was an educated, fashionable woman who had had three husbands. She was amazed when she heard this, and she thought that I was talking about her. Afterward, she went to one of her schoolmates, the wife of a brother, and asked, “Did you tell Mr. Lee about my affairs so that he would speak about me?” The sister said, “No, Mr. Lee does not even know you. He was talking about a woman in the Bible.” As a result, she received the Lord. She admitted that her husbands could not quench the thirst in her human life.

The things and the pleasures of this world only make man thirsty; they cannot quench man’s thirst. Furthermore, they are poisonous and harmful. The people who enjoy them are drinking poison to quench their thirst and are poisoned as a result. Many people have been ruined by money, and many people have been ruined by knowledge. Countless people have been ruined by seeking entertainment in dancing halls, fornication, and gambling. The things and the pleasures of this world ruin not only individuals but also families, and they ruin not only man’s body but also man’s soul in the present age, in the future, and in eternity.

Worldly pleasures are obtained and applied improperly; they are unprofitable and also harmful. Furthermore, they cannot fill the emptiness of human life, nor can they quench man’s thirst. Only the water that Christ gives can satisfy you and cause you not to thirst forever.

THE WATER THAT CHRIST GIVES

The water that Christ gives is His life, which is God’s life. God has given His own life as living water to man. Man needs the living water. God wants man to receive the living water, and Jesus Christ came in order for man to receive this living water. Christ gave Himself on the cross in order to release this living water, and the Spirit enters into man so that man may receive this living water. The living water is the center of God’s salvation and the goal of man’s salvation. Man’s being saved is his receiving this living water. When this living water enters into man, it quenches his thirst and becomes in man a

fountain springing up into eternal life. Only the living water that Christ gives can satisfy the human life and quench man's thirst forever.

ASKING HIM

After the Lord spoke of the water that causes man not to thirst forever, the Samaritan woman said, "Sir, give me this water" (v. 15). Initially, she said that the Lord Jesus was but a Jew, but she now called Him "Sir." The way she addressed the Lord Jesus improved, but her knowledge of the Lord Jesus was still inadequate. In spite of her inadequate knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the Samaritan woman asked Him for this water.

The Lord Jesus had said, "If you...would have asked Him...He would have given you living water" (v. 10). This was a promise. Although the Samaritan woman did not have sufficient knowledge, she asked, and the Lord Jesus had to grant her request and give her the living water according to His word, His promise. For someone to ask the Lord for living water and be saved does not require much knowledge of the Lord. Someone who does not know the Lord adequately will be saved if he is willing to ask. Many people who did not have much knowledge of the Lord have been saved because they were willing to ask. In England there was a well-known, beautiful, and intelligent woman who was born into a family of high standing. She attended most of the parties in her town and liked to dance. One day a large banquet was being held to welcome the Prince of Wales. Everyone told the host that the party would not be a success unless this woman was invited. The party was for the Prince of Wales, but she was the center of the party. That day she danced very well, and everyone praised her; she was also very content and happy. However, that night as she sat alone in her room, everything was tasteless. She asked herself, "What is the meaning of all this? Is this not vanity?" She said to herself, "If a missionary saw me now in this state, he would talk to me about God and say, 'You need God.'" But she was determined not to believe in God, so she said, "I cannot believe in God. I do not want God." She continued to consider and again spoke to herself, saying, "If a Christian saw me in this state, he would talk to me about Christ and say, 'You need Christ.'" But she was determined not to believe in Christ, so she said, "I will not believe in Christ. I do not want Christ." After a little while she decided to pray. She began by saying, "God! I hate You! I do not love You!" Then she said, "I hate You! You said that the world You created is not lovable. But I feel that it is very lovable. I hate You! I

do not love You!" Her prayer was the most peculiar prayer ever recorded in a Christian book.

However, her prayer was effective. The next day she was a different person. The night before she had told God, "I hate You! I do not love You!" But the next day she was changed. She loved God very much. She had joy and satisfaction. From that day onward, she would tell God, "Even if the whole world were given to me, I would throw everything away to love You." This woman did not know God, and her prayer was very odd, but she prayed and contacted God. Therefore, she gained God and received salvation.

There are others who also did not know the Lord. Some even doubted the existence of God. But they prayed, "O Lord Jesus, if You are God, make me believe in You." Others prayed, "God, if You exist, make me believe." Because they prayed and asked in this way, they gained God and were saved.

Ask Him, and He will give you living water. This is the Lord's word. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Lord's words can never pass away; they will be fulfilled. If you ask Him according to His word, He will give you your request. To ask is not to comprehend or to understand. To ask is to request. It is not to study or comprehend with the mind but to request with the heart. It is not to contact dead doctrines with the mind but to contact the living Lord with your heart. Many people study doctrines concerning Christ by exercising their mind and contact Christianity with their mind, but they do not contact Christ with their heart. As a result, they are not saved. Many people understand doctrines, but they have never asked the Lord to give them living water; therefore, they are not saved. If you want to be saved, to have the life of God, you must ask the Lord and contact the Lord with your heart.

THE MATTER OF HER HUSBAND

When the Samaritan woman asked the Lord for the living water, the Lord asked concerning her husband. He brought up this matter so that she could gain the living water. The Lord said, "Go, call your husband and come here" (v. 16). She asked the Lord for living water, but the Lord asked her about her husband. Her husband was her history. Her manner of life was included in the matter of her husband. Therefore, the Lord asked her for her husband in order to lead her to know her corrupt manner of life and to confess her sins.

In order for the Samaritan woman to receive the living water of life, she had to confess her sins related to her husband. How could she confess such sins? The Lord is so sweet! He wanted her to confess her sins, but He did not point out her sins. Instead, He gently brought up the matter of her husband in order to lead her to know her corrupt living and to confess her sins.

When the Samaritan woman heard the Lord bring up the matter of her husband, she sensed her corrupt living, but she was unwilling to confess her sins. Instead, she told a truthful lie, saying, "I do not have a husband" (v. 17). She attempted to deceive the Lord Jesus with a half truth. But the Lord Jesus is God; He knows everything related to man's living, and He knows what is in man. He knew her hidden living, and He knew that she was attempting to deceive Him, but He did not rebuke her. Instead, He said, "You have well said, I do not have a husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly" (vv. 17-18). The Lord took the lead to bring out her secret living when He said, "You have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband." The Lord's word not only brought forth her history, her hidden living, but also confessed her sins for her. The Lord Jesus is great and fine, full of insight yet very considerate, respectable and lovely, and awesome yet approachable.

When the Samaritan woman asked the Lord for living water, He led her to know her corrupt nature and then to confess her sins. If someone asks for living water, the Lord will lead him to know his corrupt nature and to confess his sins. Unless a person confesses his sins, he will not receive the Lord's salvation and the Lord's life. Therefore, no one can ask the Lord for living water without being led by the Lord to know his corrupt nature and to confess his sins. An idol will not lead a person to see his corrupt nature or to confess his sins. The Lord Jesus, however, will lead a person to know his corrupt nature and to confess his sins. Some people sense their sins before they even approach the Lord Jesus. Some sense their sins and defilement as soon as they have the thought to ask the Lord for living water.

The Lord's leading people to sense their corrupt nature and to confess their sins proves that He wants to give them His life. The Lord asked this woman for her husband because He wanted to respond to her prayer and to give her living water. Whenever someone asks the Lord for salvation, the Lord asks him about his sins. Whenever someone asks to be saved, the Lord wants him to confess his sins.

There was a person who was always praised and felt that he was not bad. He despised Christianity and thought that a gentleman like him did not need Christianity. One day while he was recuperating in a hospital, however, he decided to ask the Lord Jesus for living water. While he was asking, he sensed that he was full of sins. He prostrated himself on the floor and confessed his sins to the Lord with many tears. After confessing his sins, his heart was filled with joy, and he knew that he had been saved by the Lord.

If you want the Lord to save you, you must let the Lord lead you to see your sins and to confess them to Him. When you give your sins to the Lord, the Lord will give His salvation to you. Your sins need to be confessed. The matter of the husband had to be brought forth in order for the living water to flow into the Samaritan woman.

After hearing the Lord's words concerning her husband, the Samaritan woman said, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (v. 19). She now considered the Lord to be a prophet. However, she turned the subject from her husband to worship. Her husband was a matter of sin, which was scandalous. Worship, however, was a matter of religion, which was noble. It is not easy to confess one's sins, but it is easy to talk about religion. Therefore, she turned from an embarrassing topic to a convenient topic. But the Lord Jesus is truly the Lord. He could lead this woman from the impersonal topic that she had brought up to the practical matter of contacting God with the human spirit.

CONTACTING GOD WITH THE SPIRIT

The Samaritan woman turned the conversation to an impersonal subject, but the Lord Jesus brought to her a practical and spiritual matter. She asked concerning the place where God should be worshipped, but the Lord Jesus showed her that worshipping God does not depend on the place but on the human spirit. Her question concerned the place for worshipping God in religion, but the Lord Jesus brought her to the reality of worshipping God in spirit. The reality of worshipping God does not depend on a place but on the human spirit.

To worship God is to contact God. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, contact Him, must worship in spirit. Because God is Spirit, He wants man to contact Him in spirit. Therefore, worshipping God does not depend on

a place but on the human spirit. God is Spirit, and He is omnipresent. He is like radio waves. No matter where people are, as long as they worship Him in spirit, they will contact Him.

God is not physical, nor is He mental; He is Spirit. Hence, man cannot use his physical body or his mind to contact God. Man must use his spirit to contact God. The mind, man's psychology, is not the deepest part of man. The human spirit is the deepest part of man. It is deeper than man's mind. Man must use his spirit to worship and contact God. Man contacts God with his spirit, not with his body or mind. Man can use only his deepest part, his spirit, to contact God.

Contacting God with the human spirit is not a matter of thinking with your mind but of praying to God according to the feeling in your heart. If you pray to God with the thoughts in your mind, you are not contacting God with your spirit. If you want to contact God with your spirit, you must ignore the thoughts of your mind and pray to God according to the feeling in your heart because your heart includes the conscience, which is a part of the human spirit. Tell God what your heart feels. You do not need to think of what to say. If you feel pain, tell God that you have pain. If you have problems and burdens, tell God that you have problems and burdens. If you feel that you are corrupt, evil, and sinful, tell God that you are corrupt, evil, and sinful. Tell God what you feel. Only such prayer is contacting God in spirit, and only such prayer can contact God.

If you want to contact something, you must use the right organ and the right method. If you use the wrong organ or the wrong method, you will not be able to contact that thing. For example, you must use your ears to hear sounds and your nose to smell. Otherwise, you will say that sounds and scents do not exist. Similarly, you must use the right organ and right method to contact God. God is Spirit; hence, you cannot contact Him if you merely use your mind to think about Him. The more you think, the more you will say that there is no God. God is Spirit, and He wants man to contact Him; hence, man must use his spirit and pray to contact God. Even though God is invisible to human eyes and intangible to human hands, He is contactable and perceptible to the human spirit. If you pray to God according to the feeling in your heart, you will contact Him in your spirit.

The Lord's step-by-step leading of the Samaritan woman shows that in order to obtain the Lord's salvation and life, a person must ask the Lord. When someone asks the Lord for salvation, he must first let the Lord lead him to see his sins and to confess them to the Lord, and he must also pray to the Lord according to the feeling in his heart. If someone confesses his sins to the Lord and prays to Him from his heart, he will contact the Lord and obtain salvation and the Lord's life.

More than ten years ago we preached the gospel for several days in Chefoo. A customs officer came to hear the message every day and was quite moved. After the last meeting he told me that he wanted to believe in the Lord because the messages spoke to his many problems. However, he did not know how to believe, and he did not know how to contact the Lord in order to receive the Lord's life. I told him to pray, and he asked, "How do I pray?" I explained that to pray is not to compose an essay or an official document. Therefore, he did not need to think about what to say; he only needed to open his heart to the Lord and pray according to the feelings in his heart. He should tell the Lord what he felt in his heart. That night he told his family that he had something important to do. Instead of eating dinner, he shut the door to his room and prayed to the Lord. When he began to pray, the Lord led him to sense his sins so that he confessed all his sins one by one to the Lord. He received the Lord as his Savior. The next morning he discovered that he was a different person. He had been saved and had received the Lord's life.

After the Lord's practical and spiritual word to the Samaritan woman, she asked Him about Christ, and the Lord told her that He was Christ. Then her eyes were opened, and she realized that this One who asked her for water, the Lord who spoke to her, was Christ. She had brought her waterpot to draw water, but she did not know that she would meet Christ there. She could not think of Christ when her heart was consumed with the waterpot, but now both Christ and her waterpot were in front of her.

CHRIST VERSUS THE WATERPOT

The waterpot could hold water from the well, but Christ could give living water. When the Samaritan woman did not have Christ, she had to rely on the waterpot in order to draw water. But now that she had met Christ and knew that Christ could give her living water, she believed in Him, went into the city, and testified to the people, saying, "Is this not the Christ?" (v. 29).

When the Samaritan woman believed in Christ, she gained Christ and the living water. Therefore, she no longer wanted her waterpot, and she no longer wanted to draw water. Instead, she left her waterpot and went to testify concerning Christ. Her life had changed. Initially, she brought her waterpot to draw water, but she now left her waterpot to testify concerning Christ. She went away with Christ. Initially, she needed the waterpot to draw water, but she did not need the waterpot when she had Christ and the living water. Without Christ she had to rely on the waterpot. With Christ she did not need to rely on the waterpot. When Christ came, she left the waterpot.

When Christ comes, everything else leaves. Those who have Christ have no needs. Those who do not have Christ are spiritually thirsty, and their human life is empty; they seek amusement, entertainment, the pleasures of sin, material enjoyment, and worldly blessings to quench their spiritual thirst and to fill the void in their human life. When they have Christ, they are spiritually satisfied, their human life is fulfilled, and they no longer need entertainment or material enjoyment.

Mr. Moody once preached for several days in a place in the United States. Every day he saw a woman in the audience who was very moved. After the last meeting the woman said to Mr. Moody, “I want to believe in Christ, but I cannot live without the theater; I have been going to the theater with my father ever since I was young. Now my husband often takes me to the theater. Much of our time is spent in the theater.” Moody asked her, “I noticed that you have been listening to my messages these few days. Did I say anything about going to the theater?” She said, “No.” Moody then said, “Every day my messages were printed in the newspaper. Have you read in the newspaper that I said something about going to the theater?” She said, “I have not.” Moody then asked her, “Then how did you come up with this matter of going to the theater?” She said, “I thought that you would not want people to go to the theater.” Moody said, “Do not talk about going to the theater. I will speak to you about Christ.” He then quoted some verses and spoke to her about Christ. That evening her husband took her to the theater as usual. As soon as the curtains were drawn, she told her husband, “I am leaving. This is not my place.” Her husband said, “Perhaps you are insane from listening to Moody’s preaching.” She said, “I want to be ‘insane’ like this for the rest of my life!” A person who has Christ has no need and no appetite for the theater.

In 1937 I gave some messages in Nanking. One day someone brought a fashionable and extravagant woman to see me. The woman told me that she was deeply moved by the messages and felt that she should believe in Christ, but she did not know whether she could continue to watch movies after believing in Christ. I realized from her question that she liked to watch movies. I could not tell her that she could continue watching movies after believing in Christ. However, I did not want to tell her that she could not watch movies after believing in Christ, because if I did, she might refuse. I asked her, "If your son were playing with a sharp knife, how would you take the knife out of his hand?" She said that the best method was to scatter some candy and fruit on the floor, because the child would drop the knife to pick up the candy and fruit. I said, "This method is very good. In the same way, when you believe in Christ, your hobbies will spontaneously fall away."

This is the meaning of believing in Christ. This is Christ's salvation. It is not a matter of whether you can keep your hobbies, forms of enjoyment, or love for the world after you believe in Christ. You will not need your hobbies, forms of enjoyment, or love for the world after you believe in Christ. When you have Christ, you do not need these things. When Christ comes, these things will leave. I know of a customs officer who loved to smoke cigarettes and make jokes at parties. However, after he prayed and accepted the Lord, he changed. He forgot about cigarettes and no longer took them to work. Furthermore, he no longer liked to make jokes at parties. Christ came, and these matters left.

SATISFACTION

The Samaritan woman was satisfied when she had Christ and the living water. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus was also satisfied. John 4 shows that two parties were satisfied; the Samaritan woman and the Lord were both satisfied. When the Samaritan woman received the Lord, she gained the Lord, and the Lord gained her. She was satisfied because she gained the Lord, and the Lord was also satisfied because He gained her. She was a thirsty sinner when she went to the well with her waterpot to draw water. Now that she was satisfied within, she left her waterpot because she no longer needed to draw water to drink. The Lord asked the disciples to buy food to eat and asked the Samaritan woman for water to drink because He was both hungry and thirsty. When He was satisfied within, He no longer needed to drink water or eat the food the disciples bought. The Lord satisfied the Samaritan woman, and she

satisfied the Lord. The Lord was her satisfaction, and she was the Lord's satisfaction. Before she had gained the Lord, the Lord did not have her. After she had gained the Lord, the Lord had gained her. When she was thirsty, the Lord was thirsty. When she was satisfied, the Lord was also satisfied.

When a sinner does not have the Savior, the Savior does not have that sinner. When a sinner is thirsty, the Savior is also thirsty. It is not until a sinner has the Savior and is satisfied that the Savior gains the sinner and is satisfied. The thirst of sinners speaks of the Savior's thirst. The satisfaction of sinners speaks of the Savior's satisfaction.

Are you not thirsty deep within? Are you satisfied with your human life? Without the Lord you have no satisfaction, and without you the Lord has no satisfaction. The Lord is waiting for you to receive Him so that you may be satisfied and so that He too may be satisfied. Do not disappoint Him and do not remain thirsty forever!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEED OF THE IMPOTENT

Scripture Reading: John 5:1-10, 14, 21, 24-26, 39-40, 43, 46-47

John 5 says, “After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down from time to time in the pool and stirred up the water; the first then to step in after the stirring up of the water was made well of whatever disease he was being held by. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. When Jesus saw this one lying there and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, Do you want to get well? The sick man answered Him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your mat and walk. And immediately the man became well, and he took up his mat and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day; therefore the Jews said to the one who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your mat...After these things Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, Behold, you have become well; sin no more so that nothing worse happens to you...Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills...Truly, truly, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, An hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son to also have life in Himself” (vv. 1-10, 14, 21, 24-26).

Verses 39 to 40, 43, and 46 to 47 say, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life...I have come in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me...For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote concerning Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

In the previous chapters we saw that the first two kinds of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted were the moral and the immoral. In this chapter we will consider the impotent, which is the third kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted.

THE IMPOTENT

The Lord Jesus can meet and supply the needs of all kinds of people. He can supply the need of the moral as well as the need of the immoral. In human society there is another kind of people: the impotent. People who are impotent know what they should do, but they do not have the strength to carry it out. They know that they should do good, and they are willing to do good, but they have no strength to do good. The Lord Jesus can also meet the need of such people. The man in John 5 was impotent because he had been sick for a long time. He was so sick that his entire body was weak and unable to move.

This man was not only sick and weak but also lonely. He was lying by the pool with the hope that he would be healed. However, he lacked the strength to be healed, and no one came to help him. As a result, he remained in a miserable and helpless condition.

Such an impotent and helpless man is a symbol of numerous people who are impotent, lacking strength. His miserable condition is a portrait of many people who do not have the strength to free themselves from their problems. This man represents all the impotent people in the world. Therefore, when we consider his condition, we are actually considering the condition of all the impotent people in the world. This is also our condition, because every one of us is impotent.

BECAUSE OF SINS

After the Lord healed the impotent man, the Lord said to him, “You have become well; sin no more so that nothing worse happens to you” (v. 14). This shows that his sickness and impotence were the issue of his sins. This also means that impotence, the lack of strength, in human beings is the result of sins. If we consider our condition and the condition of others, we will realize that people are impotent because they commit sins and because sin is in their being. Just as sin made this man sick, impotent, lonely, and miserable, sin

also makes us impotent and helpless. Who is not impotent? Who can help others? Who has someone to help him? Impotence, helplessness, and desolation are commonplace in human society. Everyone lacks strength, and no one comes to help. As a result, everyone is impotent and wretched. Man's impotence and wretchedness come from sins. This condition is the issue of man's sins.

A PROLONGED, INCURABLE SICKNESS

The impotent man had been sick for thirty-eight years (v. 5); he had a prolonged, incurable sickness. Many impotent people are in the same condition. Some people have been playing cards for many years, and they cannot break away from playing cards. People hate gambling and long to break away from this bad habit. Deep within them is the feeling that gambling is a great problem in their human life. They are aware of their sickness and desire to quit, but they are unable. This is what it means to have a prolonged, incurable sickness.

Some people smoke cigarettes. Some may think that this is a small problem, but regardless of how hard these people try to stop smoking, they cannot stop. This is also a prolonged, incurable sickness.

Some people know that they have a bad temper. They do not want to lose their temper, but they cannot overcome it. Once, two women asked me about the problem of losing one's temper. They asked, "How can we get rid of our temper?" They said that if they would not lose their temper in front of their spouse and children, there would be happiness in their family. They had not been able to control their temper from the day they were married. These women had a prolonged, incurable sickness.

Some people tell lies, some live in hatred, some cheat others, and some always quarrel with their parents. They all want to be freed from these weaknesses, but they are unable to free themselves. They all suffer from a prolonged, incurable sickness.

HAVING A WAY BUT NO STRENGTH

People are unable to break away from their sickness, because they are impotent. They are unable to deal with a small problem, and they are unable to drop a small habit. This is called impotence, a lack of strength. It is not that

there is no way to be freed. There is a way, but there is no strength. There is a method, but there is no strength.

The impotent man had been sick for thirty-eight years, but he was not without a way to be healed. In front of him was a healing pool. From time to time the water in the pool was stirred up, and the first person to step in the pool was healed (v. 4). This is a wonderful way of healing. However, this man was so weak that he did not have the strength to take this way of healing. He could not step into the pool before others, because he had no strength. As a result, he could not be healed. As far as he was concerned, there was a way to be healed, but he lacked the strength to take that way.

Is this not the condition of many people in the world? Many people have a way of salvation, but they do not have the strength to be saved. The people in Judaism, Islam, Confucianism, and Buddhism have a "way of salvation," but they do not have the strength to obtain the salvation that they seek. Although these ways are unreliable, these people still do not have the strength to obtain the salvation that they desire. For example, the way of salvation in Judaism is to keep the law of God. The way of salvation in Confucianism is to cultivate one's morality and character. Even though these ways of salvation are not reliable, people do not have the strength to obtain the salvation that they desire. People in the world are seeking salvation in morality. They have a way, but they do not have the strength.

Suppose a man likes to smoke cigarettes. He does not smoke opium; he smokes only cigarettes. One day he says to his colleague, "I hate that I smoke. I will quit smoking today." His colleague replies, "I bet that you cannot throw away the cigarettes. If you can, I will lose the bet and will give you something." The man says, "You are taking me lightly! You think that I cannot throw away a small cigarette? If I can throw them away, you lose." The colleague says, "We do not have to wait for a long time. If you do not smoke for two weeks, I lose." The man agrees. The first day he grits his teeth and does not smoke. The second day he really begins to struggle. When he sees his colleague, he smiles. He is smiling outwardly but suffering inwardly. On the third day he is unable to resist, so he goes to the restroom and smokes secretly. When he returns to his desk, his colleague asks where he went and whether he smoked. He says that he did not smoke. Now he has told a lie. He has committed two sins. Nevertheless, his colleague can tell that something is wrong. On the fourth day the man is truly suffering because of his craving to smoke some

more. Therefore, he sneaks off to the restroom again. This time his colleague follows him and catches him.

This example shows that there seemingly is a way, but the man has no strength. He wants to quit smoking, but he does not have the strength. People are the same in that they try to leave their evil ways and return to the right path. It is not that they do not have a way but that they have no strength.

There is the saying that a general can command an army of two hundred thousand soldiers, but he cannot rule over a small cigarette. Two hundred thousand soldiers listen to him, but he listens to a small cigarette. How weak man is!

Some people are smart, strong, and capable of accomplishing great things, but they cannot throw away a small glass of alcohol. They can control many things, but they cannot control alcohol. Rather, they are controlled by alcohol. This is their impotence. It is not that alcohol is powerful but that they are impotent.

Those who love to go dancing are also impotent. When they see others dancing, they cannot control the urge to dance. When they hear a song, they start dancing inwardly. They cannot stop. Some people dance until midnight and do not want to stop. Someone who loves dancing once said to me, “Mr. Lee, you do not know that dancing is also a suffering. Before I was saved, I danced until after midnight. Then my legs were sore, and my lower back hurt. I would lie in bed and cry out, ‘Why am I in such pain? I will not dance tomorrow!’ But the next evening I was tempted inwardly and had to go dancing.” He did not want to go dancing, but he could not overcome the urge within him. He was tired of dancing, but he did not have the strength to stop this addiction. This is an example of man’s impotence.

Is there even a small problem or a habit, such as a little temper, that you can eliminate? Can you refrain from losing your temper? Many people hate their temper, but they cannot stop themselves from losing their temper. I have seen people who hit and curse themselves when they lose their temper. Then they determine not to lose their temper again. However, on that same day they eventually lose their temper once again. There may even be such people among us. You are capable, but you cannot overcome your small temper. You have many good methods, but you do not have the strength. The

Chinese dictionary does not have the phrase *moral strength,* because there is no such thing as moral strength. The ability to do good, the strength to be moral, is not found in man. Man's sinning can be likened to water flowing downstream. It is very difficult for man to do good. It is very easy to sin, but it is very hard to do good. The reason for this is that we are impotent, having no strength.

There are many philosophies, doctrines, and methods that try to teach people to do good. The Chinese have Chinese ways. The Egyptians have Egyptian ways. The Europeans and Americans have European and American ways. The Indians have Indian ways. However, can people succeed using these ways? In spite of good religions and human philosophies, people are still in a chaotic condition. This is not because there is no way but because man has no strength.

Chinese philosophy concerning human conduct involves honoring parents, loving siblings, being honest, and having integrity. This way and the teaching of the sages are very good. Every Chinese person knows that he should honor his parents, love his siblings, be honest, and have integrity. However, who honors his parents? Who loves his siblings? Who is honest? Who has integrity? We need to consider this matter. We often are willing to honor our parents, love our siblings, be honest, and have integrity, but we do not have the strength. This is to have the way but not have the strength. Because we have the way but not the strength, we do not do what we will. Therefore, we feel pain and are unhappy.

NO JOY ON A JOYFUL DAY

It was during a feast that the Lord met the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years (v. 1). A feast is a day when everyone is joyful. However, let us consider this man who was sick for thirty-eight years. On the day of a joyful feast was he joyful? His condition can be described as having no joy on a joyful day. Others might have been joyful, but he could not be joyful, because he was a sick, weak, and lonely man with a serious illness. Furthermore, his desire to be healed had not been fulfilled.

Many people are like the impotent man. Outwardly, it is a joyful day, but inwardly, they have no joy. The time is joyful, but their heart is not joyful. Their environment is joyful, but their mood is not joyful. As soon as they

think of their habits or problems, they lose their joy. Their longing and desire to be freed from their habits and to be delivered from their problems have taken away their joy. Others may be joyful, but they are not joyful, because their desire has not yet been fulfilled. Some cannot be joyful at their college graduation. Some cannot be joyful at their own wedding because of their problems. People are not joyful when they are bothered by certain habits or problems.

NO REST ON THE DAY OF REST

Not only was it during a feast that the Lord Jesus met this man who had been sick for thirty-eight years; it was also on the Sabbath (v. 9). This man was lying on a mat (vv. 6, 8). We should consider whether this man had peace in his heart. He was lying on his mat on the Sabbath, but he had no peace or rest in his heart. His outward environment was peaceful, but his heart was not at peace, because he had not been healed of his sickness, and his need had not been met.

Is this not the condition of many who are in a peaceful situation? They are lying on a spring mattress or sitting on a top quality sofa; they are supposed to be very comfortable. However, they have sins and habits that they cannot overcome; they have been sick for a long time but have not been healed. They feel comfortable outwardly, but they are miserable inwardly. Whether they are sitting or lying down, they have no peace. Regardless of the time and place, those who have sins and bad habits do not have peace. They cannot have peace, because their conscience condemns them of their sins and the habits that have entangled them. They have no peace in their conscience and no joy in their emotions. Some seem to be joyful when they sin, but they subsequently suffer great misery. A person who is involved with immoral and shameful things indulges his lust and seems to have a kind of joy. However, he is afraid that others will know what he does, so he goes against his conscience and lies. When his wife asks, “Where have you been?” he dares not tell the truth. He also does not want his children or parents to know. His outward environment may be comfortable, but he has no comfort or peace inwardly. He is a sick man. How can he have peace in his heart? Many people have this condition.

AN EMPTY HOPE

This man, who had been sick for thirty-eight years, hoped that he could be healed in the pool (v. 7). He hoped that he would have the strength to take the way of healing in the pool. His hopes, however, were empty and not realistic, because he did not have the strength to carry out the way of healing in the pool.

Throughout the ages, people with bad habits or with problems have always had empty hopes; they hope to be healed by a method, and they also hope that they can carry out that method. However, every method is useless.

It is not easy to set aside even one cigarette. It is not easy to throw away a few drops of alcohol. It is also not easy to stop gambling or dancing. A person may succeed temporarily, but the evil demons are always, permanently, waiting for him. The cigarettes are waiting for him. Mah-jongg is waiting for him. The theaters and dance halls are also waiting for him. Often a person gets sick because he has contracted a bacterial infection. Similarly, people commit sins because they are infected with "bacteria." We should not think that our sickness is solely an outward problem. Our sickness is mainly an inward problem. Sin is not only an outward problem but also an inward problem. The bacteria of lust is in us. The dance halls are waiting for us outwardly, and the dancing bacteria is seducing us inwardly. Sometimes we do not need to go to a dance hall, because we are already dancing inwardly. Those who are obsessed with playing cards sometimes talk about playing cards even in their sleep. They play cards even while they sleep. The bacteria of sin is in our being. We do not have the ability to do good, but we have the bacteria of sin. This bacteria is in us; hence, when it finds a suitable outward environment, it becomes active, and our problems resurface. Initially, a young man may be very good, but in a certain environment he may be corrupt. He becomes corrupt because all the corrupt bacteria within him have found a corrupt outward environment. The combination of the bacteria and the environment brings out his corruption. Once his corrupt nature is manifested, his problem will weaken him, and he will not have the strength to get rid of his problem. Nevertheless, the young man will continue to hope that there is a way for him to be healed and that he can carry out that way. His hopes, however, are empty and futile.

BEING DEAD

The Lord Jesus told the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years to rise and walk (v. 8). After this John says that the Lord Jesus will raise the dead, that those who hear His word and believe have passed out of death into life, and that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and will live (vv. 21, 24-25, 28-29). This shows that from the Lord's perspective, the impotent man was a dead man; he was in death. From our perspective, he was sick. The impotent man also felt that he was sick. However, from the Lord's perspective, this man was not sick but dead, because being sick and weak indicate death. A person becomes sick and weak because death is in him. Death is the source of sickness and weakness, and it is the ultimate expression of sickness and weakness. Sickness and weakness come from death; they are the precursors of death, and they bring in death. Sickness and weakness are the predecessors of death. A person who becomes sick and weak is getting closer to the gates of death. When he becomes so sick and weak that he cannot breathe, he is pronounced dead. Therefore, from the Lord's perspective, the impotent man was not sick but dead. This man was impotent because he was dead.

People are dead. They do not merely have problems; they are dead. They are not only impotent but also dead, and they have problems and are impotent because they are dead. Problems, weaknesses, and the lack of strength and ability to do good are the issues of being dead. People are dead; hence, they are sick, weak, and without strength.

Where does death come from, and why does death exist? Death comes from sin and is the issue of sin (Rom. 5:12, 17). Death is in us because sin is in us, and we are impotent because death is in us.

We do not become stronger as we live longer; rather, the longer we live, the weaker and more frail we become. Young people feel that they are strong and believe that they will become stronger with time. However, in reality they will become weaker instead of stronger. Eventually, they will get old. In thirty years the young sisters will become old women. They will have wrinkles on their faces, and their hair will turn white. Their backs will be bent, and they will have lower back pain. They will walk slowly. The young people will eventually manifest these conditions. When they climb stairs, they can take two steps in one stride and ascend quickly. However, in thirty years they will take only one step in one stride, and they will almost be out of breath. The young people will gradually become weak. But this is not yet the end. Eventually, they will lie on a bed and will not be able to rise. Then they will be

so weak that they are short of breath. After this they will be so weak that their eyes will stop moving. What does that mean? It means that they are dead. I hope that this is clear.

Hence, we are not living daily but dying daily. When a child is five years old, we can pat him on the head and say, “You are so good. Next year you will be six years old, and the following year you will be seven. In three more years you will be ten. Then you will be taller and bigger.” People tell me that I am almost fifty-five years old and that I will soon be sixty years old. I do not like to hear this, because my age is not increasing but decreasing. For example, I initially had eighty dollars, but I spent five dollars. Eventually, I spent sixty dollars. Now I need to be careful because I have only twenty dollars left. If I continue to spend dollars, I will soon have nothing to spend. Am I saving every day or spending every day? A common Chinese proverb says that it is rare to have someone who is seventy years old. This means that to live to be seventy years old is to live a long life. To live to be eighty years old is to live an even longer life. Suppose a person will live to be eighty years old, but now he is seventy-eight years old. What will be his feeling? He has only two “dollars” left. In two more years, after two more birthdays, his life will be over. The more advanced in age a person is, the closer he is to death. Please do not condemn me for saying this. We should ask the older people who have lived a long life whether they are happy. We might say, “Dear sir, you are already seventy-eight years old. You have lived a very long life.” He will say within himself, “I wish I were only eighteen years old. How good it would be if I could subtract sixty years. Alas! I am already seventy-eight years old. This is not a very good feeling. When I am eighty years old, the feeling will be worse!” The longer we live, the closer we are to death. Our life is not getting longer but shorter. The shorter our life gets, the closer we are to death. Therefore, we are not living daily but dying daily.

Those who have contracted tuberculosis have a tuberculosis bacteria that eats away at them every day, making them weak. If these people do not get sufficient rest and also do not deal with the tuberculosis bacteria in them, they will be weak, and one day the bacteria will kill them. Suppose worms are eating a piano so much that it sounds abnormal. If we do not deal with the worms in the piano, one day there will be nothing left of the piano. Likewise, there are worms of death, bacteria of death, that eat us and cause us harm, making us sick and weak. If we fail to deal with these worms of death, one day they will eventually kill us. All our problems and bad habits come from these

worms of death. Our impotence, lack of strength, comes from the bacteria of death. If instead of killing the worms of death, we deal only with our problems and habits in order to eliminate our impotence, our problems will not be solved, and our habits will not be eliminated. Furthermore, we will not be saved from our impotence.

What can kill the worms of death in us? Self-cultivation, teaching, outward methods, and human effort cannot kill the worms of death. Self-cultivation, teaching, outward methods, and human efforts can change only our outward behavior and improve only our outward condition; they cannot terminate the death in us. These can be compared to beautifying a corpse in a funeral home. A corpse can be made beautiful outwardly, but death cannot be reversed so that the corpse becomes living. Likewise, self-cultivation, teaching, outward methods, and human efforts cannot remove death from within man, nor can they make man living. Only life—not self-cultivation, teaching, methods or human efforts—can remove death from man and enliven man. Hence, our need is life.

THE REAL NEED

Our real need is life. The Lord Jesus did not use a method when He told the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years to rise up. Instead, the Lord Jesus made this man alive with life. He did not ask this man to strive or to struggle, but He uplifted him with the power of life. This man had been sick for thirty-eight years; he was almost completely worn out by death. He was barely living under the torture of death. Only the life that is able to swallow up death could save and heal him. This man did not need any method or human effort; he needed the life that can swallow up death.

His need is our need. We have suffered from deadly poison and have sustained deadly wounds. We are dead because of sin, we are dead in sin, we are impotent because of death, and we sin. We cannot break away from sin. Our need is not human teaching or our effort; our need is to be enlivened. No method can extract the deadly poison within us or heal our deadly wounds. No effort can remove the element of death in us or turn back the harm of death in us. Only a living, powerful, and death-overcoming life can swallow up the death in us, giving us the deliverance of life and the healing of life. Such a life is what we, the impotent who are struggling in death, truly need.

Such a life, however, cannot be received by any method or exertion, nor is it given by religion.

NOT RELIGION

Methods cannot give us life, and religion cannot give us life. Methods cannot replace life, and religion cannot replace life. Religion can only restrict people outwardly; it cannot give them life inwardly. Religion teaches people based on a set of beliefs instead of giving people life. Religion is a set of doctrines, teachings, rules, and beliefs; it is not life, and it has no vitality. Hence, religion cannot render salvation to those who are dead in sin. Religion cannot meet the true need of those who are impotent because of death.

Many people think that they should turn to religion because human philosophies and moral doctrines cannot solve their problems or meet their needs. As a result, in addition to receiving the teachings of the sages, they also choose a religion. However, religion cannot solve their problems or meet their needs, just as human philosophies and moral doctrines cannot solve their problems or meet their needs. Human philosophies and moral doctrines cannot give people the life that raises them from the dead, nor can any religion give them this life.

The man who had been sick for thirty-eight years was not without a religion. He was in Judaism, which was the orthodox religion in his time. The beliefs, rules, rituals, and laws of Judaism came from God and were ordained by God. Hence, they were genuine and much higher than the beliefs, rules, rituals, and laws of pagan religions. However, such a high, genuine, and orthodox religion could not give the salvation of life to this sick man. If the water in the pool of an orthodox religion could not render salvation to this sick and impotent man, then no water in any other religion can render salvation.

Some people think that if religion cannot solve their problems and meet their needs, then Christianity can. Therefore, they “join” Christianity. But Christianity without Christ cannot solve their problems or meet their needs. Because some people join Christianity but do not receive Christ, they are still impotent and do not have salvation. They entered Christianity, but Christ has not entered into them. They have become “Christians,” but they have not received Christ. They keep the regulations of Christianity, but they do not have the life of Christ. They are “Christians” without Christ. They have a

relationship with Christianity, but they do not have a relationship with Christ. They participate in Christianity as a religion, but they do not participate in Christ. They are impotent even though they are Christians, because it is Christ, not Christianity, who gives the salvation of life and makes people strong.

ONLY CHRIST

Mere Christianity is a dead religion and cannot give people the divine life. Only Christ can give life, because only Christ is life. Life is not in Christianity but in Christ. Christianity is not salvation; Christ is salvation. Hence, man needs Christ, not Christianity. Just as other religions cannot meet man's need, neither can Christianity meet man's need. Only Christ can meet man's need. Therefore, we are not inviting you to join Christianity; we are asking you to accept Christ. We do not want you to become a Christian who believes in a religion; rather, we want you to become a Christian who receives Christ. Whether Christianity is deformed or proper, it cannot save people. Only Christ can save people.

The Lord Jesus saw the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years lying by the pool and asked him if he wanted to get well. The impotent man thought that the Lord was telling him about the old way of entering into the pool to receive healing. He did not realize that the Lord was going to save him without a method and without his own effort. When he said that he did not have the strength to enter into the pool, the Lord immediately said, "Rise, take up your mat and walk." These wonderful words mean that this man did not need the pool. He did not need a method, nor did he need his effort or strength. He simply needed to receive the Lord's word. The Lord's word has power because the Lord's word contains life. When the impotent man heard the Lord's word, he was immediately made well, and he took up his mat and walked. This was not the effect of a method, nor was it the issue of his efforts. Rather, this is the Lord's salvation of life.

No method can save man, no amount of effort can save man, nor can religion save man. Only the Savior of life, the Lord Jesus, can save man. He is the Lord of life, the living Savior, and He can give the eternal and powerful divine life to man. The Lord Jesus does not give man doctrine, methods, or religion, all of which cannot save man. Only life can save man. Jesus is not doctrine, methods, or religion. He is a living Savior who can bring His living life into anyone. When this life comes, it becomes the vitality and the

motivating power for us to walk. It is also the power that replaces all the weaknesses and problems that originate from death.

Man is dead. Hence, he cannot be saved by a method, human effort, or religion. Man needs a living Savior to bring him the salvation of life. When this Savior enters into man, He enlivens man with His life, thus delivering man from death and impotence.

More than twenty years ago in Beijing, there was a man in his sixties who held a high political position. This man became very ill. Before his illness he had some bad habits. One day while he was recovering from his illness, one of his relatives went to preach the gospel to him and exhorted him to believe in the Lord Jesus. He told her, “I think that Jesus is inferior to Buddha.” The next day there was a gospel meeting in Beijing, where the sick were healed by prayer. His relative invited him to hear the gospel. He thought, “I am sick also. It might be good for me to go,” and he went with her to the meeting. When the meeting was dismissed, some people remained to pray and ask for healing. A sick woman, who had been carried into the meeting, asked the preacher to pray for her. After the preacher prayed and laid his hands on her, she said, “I want to sit up.” Her family marveled. After she sat up, she said, “I want to stand up.” After she stood up, she said, “I want to walk.” Everyone recognized that this was a miracle. When the older man saw it, he was touched. He stood in the midst of the crowd and immediately bowed his head and offered a silent prayer, saying, “O Lord Jesus, You are truly a living God. I have seen You heal this woman. I am sick also, but I am not asking You to heal my sickness. I only ask You to forgive my sins. I have committed so many sins in my life. Please forgive me.” After praying, he walked out of the chapel. While he was on his way home, he felt that his whole being had changed. Previously, Chinese opera had been his favorite pastime. He enjoyed going to the theater and listening to foreign dramas at home. This evening, however, he felt uncomfortable and disgusted when he heard the sound of a foreign drama. Later, he realized that this feeling was the result of his being saved by the Lord. Therefore, he said, “I do not want to be an official anymore, and I do not want any position. I just want to carry the Bible and tell the Chinese everywhere that Jesus is the living Savior, because only He can save people.”

This older man was not saved by methods. He was saved because he met a living Savior; he met the Lord Jesus. This Savior is the Spirit, the living God, and the Lord of life, who gives life and power.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

We are impotent people who are dead in sin and cannot be saved or healed by any method, effort, or religion. Only the living Savior, Jesus Christ, with His powerful life can save us from death and impotence. But how does one receive His salvation?

You first need to hear His word, the gospel of life, which is also His voice. He said, "He who hears My word and believes...has eternal life and...has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). He also said, "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (v. 25). These verses show that in order to receive His salvation of life and pass out of death into life, you must hear His word. His word is the gospel of life, which is His voice. His word comes out of Him as the Lord of life; hence, it contains His life. When you hear His life-containing word, His life will enter into you and save you, and you will pass out of death into life.

That day the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years was saved by hearing the word of the Lord Jesus. This man began to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus when the Lord asked, "Do you want to get well?" (v. 6). This was the voice of the Lord's gospel. When the Lord said, "Rise, take up your mat and walk" (v. 8), this man heard more of the Lord's word. The word of the Lord's gospel, His voice of life, touched the impotent man's inward being, which was full of death, and caused him to have the vitality of life. Therefore, he was able to rise, take up his mat, and walk. He passed out of death into life and was made alive by hearing the Lord's word. As soon as he heard the Lord's word, he lived. Hence, people can be made alive and have the Lord's life by hearing His word, His voice. This is how to receive living salvation.

After hearing the Lord's word, you need to believe in His word in order to receive the Lord. When you hear the Lord's word, you must believe and receive it so that His word can manifest its power. You must believe and receive the Lord's word so that it can enter into you to save you. The Lord's word contains His life. Therefore, when you believe and receive His word, His word enters into you, enabling you to receive the life contained in His word. This life is the Lord Himself; hence, it is divine and eternal, and it possesses the power of resurrection and unlimited strength. When this life enters into you, it will raise you from the dead, changing your weakness into strength and turning your sorrow into joy.

The man who had been sick for thirty-eight years received the Lord's salvation of life by believing and receiving the Lord's word. When he heard the Lord say, "Rise, take up your mat and walk," he believed and received the Lord's word. As a result, the life and power in the Lord's word enabled him to rise, take up his mat, and walk. This was the Lord's life entering into him through the Lord's word in order to be his power for his salvation.

Examples of the Lord's word of the gospel in the Bible include: "He who believes into the Son has eternal life" (3:36); "He who believes into Him is not condemned" (v. 18); "With the heart there is believing unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10); "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 13). As long as you are willing to believe and receive His word, you will receive the Lord's life and His salvation.

You must believe in the Lord's word in order to receive His salvation. The Bible is the Lord's word. Therefore, if you want to receive the Lord's salvation, you must believe in the Bible. If you do not believe in the Bible, you cannot believe in the Lord's word or in the Lord, because the Bible testifies concerning the Lord (John 5:39-40). The Lord spoke many words, and many portions in the Bible refer to the Lord. Nevertheless, to believe in the Bible but not believe in the Lord is not possible. The Bible and the Lord are inseparable. We cannot be saved if we separate the Bible from the Lord. The Jews separated the Scriptures from the Lord. They believed in the Scriptures, but they would not believe in the Lord. They searched the Scriptures, but they would not come to the Lord to receive life; they would not receive the Lord as their life. As a result, they could not receive the salvation of the Scriptures, which is the salvation of the Lord. Many people are like this. They study the Bible, appreciate the Bible, agree with the Bible, and even believe in the Bible, but they are not willing to come to the Lord, to call on Him, to believe in Him from their heart, or to receive Him as their Savior. They contact the Bible without contacting the Lord. They contact the Bible of letters but do not contact the living Lord. As a result, they receive only doctrines and letter; they do not receive a living salvation, the salvation of life.

The Bible of letters cannot save you; only the living Lord can save you. This living Lord is revealed through the Bible in order for you to receive Him. He put Himself in the words of the Bible in order for you to receive Him. Therefore, if you want to receive the Lord, you must receive the words of the Bible, and if you want to receive the words of the Bible, you must also receive

Him. If you believe and receive the words of the Bible in such a way, you will receive the Lord into your being and have His life for your salvation.

You may say, "The Lord Jesus is far away from me in space and in time. How can He come into me?" You need to realize that the Lord Jesus is God and the Spirit; He is eternal and omnipresent. Therefore, as long as you believe in His word and receive Him as your Savior, regardless of the time and the place, He, as the Spirit, will enter into you and give you His life for your salvation. This is not superstition. Many things that we encounter in our daily life are according to this principle. For example, many people have radios in their homes. They only need to turn on the power and tune to the right channel in order for the radio waves in the air to be transmitted into the radio. This is not superstition. The radio waves are everywhere in the air. As long as a radio has a corresponding channel and the power is on, the radio waves will be transmitted into the radio, and there will be sound. Likewise, the Lord Jesus is the Spirit, and He is everywhere in the universe; He is not limited by time. Your heart is like a radio, and repenting, believing, and receiving Him are the way to turn on the radio of your heart and tune it to the right channel. Then He will enter into you, and His life will begin to operate, giving you a living salvation from within. This is not superstition; this is reality. This is as real as radio waves being transmitted into a radio and producing sound. The Lord Jesus is real, the Spirit is real, and His life is also real. It is also real that today He is the Spirit who comes into people in order for them to receive His life. If you repent and believe, that is, open to Him, receive Him as your Savior, and call upon Him, He will enter into you, and you will receive His life and be made alive. Then you will know how effective and real He is.

THE ISSUE OF SALVATION

A person who believes and receives the Lord into his being receives the Lord's life; he receives the eternal, uncreated, divine life of God. This life has the power of resurrection. A person who receives this life will be made alive inwardly and will pass out of death into life. The life of God will become the vitality in his being, motivating him to do what he is unable to do in himself, just as electricity enters into an electrical fan and makes it turn.

Formerly, we were dead and impotent, powerless within. Then the Lord's life entered into us. This life is vitality, a power that motivates us. It is like electricity. The impotent man had been sick for thirty-eight years; he was

lying on a mat and had no strength to move. But as soon as he received the Lord's word, the power of the Lord's life enabled him not only to rise and walk but also to take up his mat. Formerly, the mat carried him; now he took up the mat and walked. The Lord's life is able to strengthen an impotent man to such an extent.

Some people were unable to live without mah-jongg, without smoking and drinking, without dancing, or without watching movies. Movies were their "bed," and mah-jongg was their "mat" from which they could not rise. After they believed in the Lord and His life entered into them, they were empowered to overcome and rule over these sinful things, taking up the sinful "mats" that used to carry them and walking away.

The Lord Jesus is the living Savior. His life is powerful, and He can enliven the dead, strengthen the impotent, and deliver people from what binds them. May you receive Him as your Savior so that you may receive His salvation of life.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEED OF THE HUNGRY

Scripture Reading: John 6:22-35, 37, 47-54, 56-58, 63

John 6:22-35 and 37 say, “The next day the crowd which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there had been no other small boat there except one, and that Jesus had not gotten into the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away alone. But other small boats from Tiberias came near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when did You get here? Jesus answered them and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, You seek Me not because you have seen signs, but because you ate of the bread and were filled. Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for Him has the Father, even God, sealed. Then they said to Him, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe into Him whom He has sent. They said then to Him, What sign then will You do that we may see and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’ Jesus therefore said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Moses has not given you the bread out of heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world. They said therefore to Him, Lord, give us this bread always. 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...All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out.”

John 6 continues, “Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes has eternal life. 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. 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. The Jews then contended

with one another, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Jesus therefore said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life within yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day...He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven, not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread shall live forever...It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (vv. 47-54, 56-58, 63).

The Gospel of John shows eight kinds of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted on the earth. In the previous chapters we saw the first three kinds: the moral, the immoral, and the impotent. Now we will consider the fourth kind—the hungry.

THE HUNGRY

Everyone in the world is hungry. Hunger is different from thirst. However, both hunger and thirst speak of man's inward need. The need of the hungry is that they are dissatisfied inwardly. This kind of person is the most common in humanity.

The eight kinds of people depicted in the Gospel of John do not merely represent eight separate kinds of people in humanity. These eight kinds of people represent eight conditions in every person. Every person has the condition of Nicodemus, the moral person spoken of in chapter 3, and the condition of the Samaritan woman, the immoral woman spoken of in chapter 4. Every person also has the condition of the impotent man in chapter 5, who had been sick for thirty-eight years, and the condition of the hungry described in chapter 6. We are moral because we want to do good, but we do not understand the spiritual things of God. We are immoral because we are always dissatisfied inwardly, and we sin to find satisfaction. We have been sick for many years because we know what we should do and are willing to do it, but we do not have the power. We are also the hungry because we are dissatisfied inwardly.

We have the intention to do good, but we lust after sins, and we continually desire to do good but do not have the power; we also seek after things because we are dissatisfied inwardly. Hence, every one of us has the conditions of these four kinds of people. We should not think that we are represented by only one kind of person. The conditions of the eight kinds of people depicted in the Gospel of John can be seen in each one of us.

John selected these eight kinds of people to show how the Lord Jesus meets the needs of every kind of person. No matter what kind of person we are and no matter what kind of needs we have, the Lord Jesus is able to meet our needs. This is the significance of the eight kinds of people recorded in the Gospel of John. Now we will consider how the Lord Jesus meets the need of the hungry.

BY THE SEASIDE

The hungry people were by the seaside (6:22-25). They wanted to eat bread and be filled; hence, they sought the Lord Jesus (v. 26). They sought the Lord Jesus on one side of the sea and on the other side of the sea. They were by the seaside. This account has symbolic meaning. In the Bible the sea is the dwelling place of demons and symbolizes the world corrupted by Satan, the world filled with sin. The seaside is adjacent to the sea and signifies the place where people live a sinful life. The seaside is adjacent to the dwelling place of demons. People do not live in the sea with the demons, but they walk by the seaside, which is very close to the dwelling place of demons. People do not live the life of demons; people are not demons, but they live a life that is very close to the demons. They are by the seaside; they are close to demons. People in the world live a sinful life by the "seaside." Thoughtful people acknowledge that humanity is full of sins. This sinful humanity is the seaside. It is full of corruption and sin and very close to the demons.

BEING DISSATISFIED

This portion of the Scriptures reveals that the people who walked around the seaside were inwardly dissatisfied. Nothing in their sinful life could satisfy them, and nothing enabled them to live forever. They had a genuine need, the need for eternal life. On the one hand, they lived a sinful life. On the other hand, they were dissatisfied with their human life. These people lived in sin, they lived a sinful life, but they did not sense that they were sinful. They only

felt dissatisfied with their human life. Therefore, on the one hand, they sought the Lord, but on the other hand, they lived a sinful life.

This is still the situation today. On the one hand, people live a sinful life, and on the other hand, they are dissatisfied with their human life. On the one hand, they sin, but on the other hand, they are seeking. Human existence consists of committing sins, being hungry, and seeking. Besides committing sins and being dissatisfied and seeking, there is nothing else for people in the world to do. If we observe humanity, we will discover that everything related to humanity involves these two things. Every product on the market is either related to sin and entertainment or related to meeting people's needs. Hence, people are either sinning or seeking. People are seeking because they feel dissatisfied and sense an inward need.

WORKING NOT FOR THE FOOD THAT PERISHES

The hungry people sought the Lord Jesus because they hoped to receive physical food from Him to satisfy their hunger. However, the Lord Jesus said to them, "Work not for the food which perishes" (v. 27). The word *perish* is quite emphatic. The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying, "You people see only what is present. You see the tangible instead of the intangible and the earthly instead of the heavenly. You care for the body instead of the soul and the spirit, and you care for the temporal instead of the eternal. You seek physical things instead of spiritual things. Everything that you seek will perish. Every physical thing in this world will perish. Hence, do not seek physical food, and do not work for the food that perishes."

Food is for man's satisfaction. In principle, therefore, food is whatever man seeks to be filled with or whatever man seeks to satisfy his need. If someone seeks money, money is his food. If he seeks education, education is his food. If he seeks a good family and a career, his family and career are his food. If he seeks clothing and beautification, clothing and beautification become his food. Whatever man seeks in order to be satisfied is his food. From the perspective of the Lord Jesus, however, this food will perish. A very expensive garment will eventually deteriorate, even if it is not worn. The most delicious food will gradually rot if left untouched. Nothing related to fame, wealth, and position lasts forever.

In northern China people say that one rarely finds a household whose wealth lasts more than three generations. There is no sure way to keep wealth from one generation to the next generation. Wealth continually changes hands in human society. Other things, such as education and position, also cannot be maintained. They are temporary attainments. Everything related to human life is temporary; it will soon disappear. All things perish.

Regrettably, people are willing to be deceived by the things that perish. Although these things perish and cannot last forever, people seek them and refuse to wake up and repent. People are continually deceived by physical things. Many people declare that physical things are practical and that physical things can be realized, but physical things cannot last even if they are practical. Physical things vanish and disappear after a short period of time.

Some people say that material riches also undergo chemical changes. Material riches do not need to be spent. In time they will undergo chemical changes and disappear. Those who rely on material riches for satisfaction must realize that material riches will disappear even if they are not spent.

Everything will disappear. A good son will eventually pass away. A good family may collapse for no reason. A good relationship between a husband and wife may dissolve one day for no apparent reason. All these things are food that perishes; they are deceptions. Even if a person gains all these things, he will still be empty because these things cannot satisfy him. Man does not lack these things; they are not man's genuine need.

People know that they have a need, but they do not know what they need. Because they have the wrong concept that physical things can satisfy their needs, they do their best to gain physical things. This is like the hungry people who sought the Lord but did not know their true need. These people thought that they needed physical bread, but their true need was the bread of eternal life. For this reason the Lord Jesus told them, "Work not for the food which perishes."

WORKING FOR THE FOOD THAT ABIDES UNTO ETERNAL LIFE—CHRIST

The Lord Jesus spoke a long word to show these people that their real need was not physical food but eternal life (v. 27). Eternal life does not perish; it

exists forever and abides unto eternity. The Lord Jesus said that He is eternal life; He is the food that abides unto eternal life. He is the One who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world. He is the bread of life (v. 35). Anyone who comes to Him shall by no means hunger, and anyone who believes into Him shall by no means ever thirst (v. 35). He is what man needs. Only He can supply man and give man true satisfaction. Only He can be man's life and cause man to live forever. He does not give man physical bread but the bread of life. He gives man spiritual life, not physical things.

Man's real need is life. Without the divine life, everything in the human life comes to an end. The human life lacks the divine life. The human life is insufficient and empty; it cannot meet man's need. The human life is also temporary and mortal; it cannot enable man to live forever. Only the life of the Lord Jesus is rich, solid, and eternal. His life can meet every need of the human life and enable man to live forever. The life of the Lord Jesus is the Lord Himself (1:4). He wants to enter into man to be man's life and life supply for man's satisfaction. For this reason the Lord Jesus said, "He who comes to Me shall by no means hunger" (6:35). The phrase *by no means hunger* implies that there will be no lack, no emptiness; it means "being filled and satisfied." The Lord Jesus said that we should work for Him, the food that abides unto eternal life. This means that we should choose Him, receive Him, and gain Him.

We need to be prudent. Those who are prudent make good choices. Why should we choose what is inferior over what is superior? Why should we choose something that perishes over something that abides unto eternal life? Human history proves that physical things do not abide unto eternal life. Why are we still deceived by physical things? Why do we not choose the food that abides unto eternal life? This food is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our real need.

HOW CHRIST CAN BECOME OUR FOOD

Christ said to those who were hungry and seeking Him, "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...He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life... 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" (vv. 51, 54-56). He seemed to be saying, "I came to be the bread of life

for you to eat and enjoy. You can eat Me and enjoy Me. If you eat Me, you will have eternal life; you will receive Me into you as your life." This word is perplexing and hard to understand. It is no wonder that those who heard this word said to one another, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52). They asked how He could be their food.

The Lord Jesus said, "My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink" (v. 55). The significance of this statement is very profound. When we eat mutton or beef, we are eating the flesh of a sheep or a cow. In order for a sheep or a cow to give us its flesh to eat, it must first be killed. When it is killed, it will shed its blood. What the Lord Jesus said has the Old Testament as its background. We may not understand what the Lord Jesus said, but the Jews understood Him. The Jews celebrated the Feast of the Passover every year. During this feast they killed a lamb and ate its flesh, and they applied the blood of the slaughtered lamb on the doorposts and the lintel (cf. Exo. 12). The Jews understood the passover, and the Lord Jesus said this to remind them of the passover. He seemed to be saying, "The blood of the passover lamb redeemed you from your sins, and the flesh of the lamb became your food to satisfy you. I will be the same to you. I will be slain and will shed My blood just like the lamb. My blood will redeem you from your sins, and My slain flesh will become your food to satisfy you. Without My shed blood, you cannot be redeemed from your sins. Without My slain flesh, you cannot receive the indestructible, eternal life. Without Me as your bread of life, you will die in your sins. I am the bread of life. If you eat of Me as the bread of life, you shall by no means die, because this bread of life is the living flesh. In order for you to eat My living flesh, My blood must be shed. My shed blood redeems you from all your sins before God. When you are redeemed from your sins, you will also be delivered out of condemnation and death. Moreover, My living flesh, the eternal life, will enter into you so that you may live forever. Therefore, he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and lives forever."

When Jesus Christ said that His flesh was true food and that His blood was true drink, He was referring to His death on the cross in which He gave His body and shed His blood for our redemption from sins so that we might receive Him as our life.

There are two key points here. First, every person is sinful before God. As a result, according to the righteous law of God, we deserve to die. Therefore, no

one can escape death. Death means perdition. This is our first condition. Second, our human life does not have the ability to live forever. Our life is mortal. Therefore, we are not living daily; we are dying daily. The more we live, the closer we are to death. We live until the day we die. When the Chinese celebrate the New Year or any joyful occasion, they like to write words, such as blessing, prosperity, longevity, joy, and peace from heaven, on red paper and post them. However, no one writes the word death, and no one wants to mention it, because no one likes death. Whether or not we like death, one day death will come and swallow us up. This is our second condition. Thus, we have these two conditions: sin and death.

In order for Christ to give Himself to us as our life, He must first deal with sin and death, because these are our conditions. How does He deal with sin and death? On the one hand, He gave His body and shed His blood on the cross. He shed His blood to redeem us from our sins before God. On the other hand, when His body was broken and slain on the cross, the divine life within Him was released (John 12:24). Now this life can enter into us to be our life, thus delivering us from death. Let us use a grain of wheat as an example. When the grain is sown into the soil, its outer shell is broken, and the life within the seed is released. This life then grows into wheat and bears many grains. In this way the life that was originally in one grain is released into many grains. How wonderful is Christ's salvation! He shed His blood to wash away our sins, and His body was broken to release the life within Him. If you believe that He died for you on the cross and shed His blood to redeem you from your sins, you will receive Him. Then His life will become your life, and His element will become your element.

Animals need to pass through death in order to become man's food and enjoyment, and plants also need to pass through death in order to become man's food and enjoyment. Every living thing needs to pass through death in order to become man's food. Birds, cattle, and sea animals and also fruit, grain, and herbs must pass through death, through breaking, before they can become our food, enjoyment, and nourishment. Likewise, in order to become the bread of life for our enjoyment, Jesus Christ passed through death. He said that His flesh is true food and that His blood is true drink. This implies His death, because death is needed in order for flesh to be separated from the blood. When the Lord Jesus died, His blood and flesh were separated (cf. 19:34). Hence, we can enjoy Him. Through the death that separated His flesh

and blood, He became the bread of life. Now we can eat Him as our life supply.

Jesus Christ the Savior does not teach doctrines; rather, He enters into man to be assimilated by man as man's food, life, and enjoyment. How does the Lord Jesus give Himself to us? He gave Himself to us on the cross when His body was broken and His blood was shed. His blood washes away our sins and resolves our case before God so that our sins may be forgiven. Furthermore, through His death on the cross His life was released and entered into us to be our bread of life and our element. Thus, He is assimilated into us. If you are willing to believe in Him, you will eat His flesh and drink His blood; in other words, you will eat and enjoy Him.

HOW WE CAN RECEIVE CHRIST

Jesus Christ gave Himself to us by dying on the cross and shedding His blood so that He can be the bread of life to us. But how can we receive Him as our life? How can we enjoy Him as the bread of life? In principle, we need to eat and drink Him. If we want to receive nourishment, we need to eat and drink. Likewise, if we want to receive Christ as the bread of life, we need to eat and drink Him into our being. On the cross His flesh and blood were separated so that we might eat and drink of Him and thus receive Him into our being. Eating and drinking is receiving. Receiving is believing. John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him...to those who believe into His name." Hence, to believe into Jesus Christ is to receive Him, which is also to eat and drink Him. In John 6 the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (v. 54), and He also said, "He who believes has eternal life" (v. 47). This shows that to believe into Him is to eat His flesh and drink His blood. When we believe that Jesus Christ died and gave Himself up for us on the cross, we are eating His flesh. When we believe that He bore our sins and shed His blood on the cross, we are drinking His blood. When we believe that through death Jesus Christ gave Himself up for us, shed His blood, and bore our sins on our behalf, we are receiving Him into our being. Such believing by eating and drinking is to receive Him as our Savior and our life. If you believe in such a way, you receive Christ. Not only so, Christ enters into your being as your life for your enjoyment.

Perhaps some people still do not understand how Jesus Christ enters into our being when we believe in Him. They may still ask, "How does Jesus come

into us to be our food when we believe that He died and shed His blood for us? How can He become our life simply by our believing in Him?" This is truly incomprehensible. It is more reasonable and easier to believe that Jesus Christ died for us on the cross and shed His blood to wash away our sins. Many people find it hard to understand that simply by believing in Jesus Christ, He will enter into them to be their life. In John 6 those who heard this word also said, "This word is hard; who can hear it?" (v. 60). They could not understand the meaning of the Lord's words. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said to them, "It is the Spirit who gives life" (v. 63).

THE SPIRIT GIVING LIFE

Here the Lord Jesus made a turn to the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives life. We receive life when we believe in the Lord Jesus, because He gives life to us through the Spirit and because He is the Spirit. We receive life when we believe that He gave Himself up for us on the cross and shed His blood, because when we believe, the Spirit enters into us to give us life. Therefore, the Lord said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (v. 63).

Christ is God becoming flesh to be our Savior so that we may receive Him as our life. On the cross Jesus Christ was crucified, and His blood was shed so that He might redeem us from our sins. Furthermore, on the cross He released His divine life for us to receive. Then He rose from the dead and became the life-giving Spirit so that He might enter into our spirit. Regardless of where a person may be, as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ, the Spirit will enter into him to be his life. This may be likened to a radio broadcast—as long as sound is turned into radio waves, any radio, no matter where it is, can receive the radio waves. Man can contact Christ in the Spirit, and Christ can become man's life as the Spirit.

THE WORDS BEING SPIRIT AND LIFE

Jesus Christ said that those who believe in Him have eternal life and that those who believe that He died and shed His blood have life. We have life by believing in Him because it is the Spirit who gives life. Where is the Spirit? How do we touch the Spirit? How does the Spirit give life? After saying that it is the Spirit who gives life, the Lord Jesus also said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). The Lord seemed to be saying, "My words are the Spirit. When the Spirit enters into you, He is life. If you

receive My words, you will touch the Spirit and receive life." Therefore, the Spirit who gives life is in the word of Christ. Through the word of Christ we can touch the Spirit and receive the life of Christ.

We cannot carry sounds with us, but we can record them on an audiotape. Wherever we take the audiotape, we also take the sounds. Whoever receives the audiotape also receives the sounds on the tape. The Spirit of Christ and the life of Christ are contained in His word. I cannot give you the Spirit of Christ and the life of Christ, but I can speak the word of Christ. When you receive this word, believing this word in your heart, the Spirit of Christ and the life of Christ will enter into you. Sounds are abstract, but when they are recorded on an audiotape, they become concrete. In the same way, the Spirit and the divine life are abstract, but in the word of Christ they become concrete.

As long as you receive the word of Christ in your heart, His Spirit will enter into you, and you will receive His life. The Lord Jesus said, "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 also said, "He who believes has eternal life" (v. 47). Simply grasp one sentence, and you will receive the Spirit and the divine life. You may say, "Lord, I receive You as my bread of life." Or you may tell Him, "Lord, I come to You. I believe in You. I believe what You say." Then the Spirit with His life will immediately enter into you.

The words of Christ are spirit and life because Jesus Christ is God, and God is the Spirit and life. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh." The Word is Christ. He is God becoming flesh. Therefore, He is the Spirit and life. Jesus Christ is God, the Spirit, and life. Thus, the words that He speaks must also be the Spirit and life.

Jesus Christ died for you on the cross. He has released His life so that you may receive His life. He shed His blood to cleanse you from your sins. He has done everything for you. If you believe that He died for you and shed His blood for you, you will eat Him. In other words, you will receive Him into your being by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. As soon as you believe, the Spirit and the divine life will enter into you, and He will become your life. As evidence, He has given you His word; you can hold on to His word. His words are Spirit and life. As long as you hold on to His word, the Spirit and

the divine life will be yours. As soon as you believe in His word, you receive the Spirit and the divine life. It is the Spirit who gives life. The Spirit is in His word. If you believe in His word, you will receive the Spirit, and the Spirit will give you life. You can trust His word. People often say that you need to trust their word. If you have their word, they are obligated to you. Christ has given you His word as something that you can hold on to. If you hold on to His word, you will gain Him. His word is Spirit and life. When you believe and receive His word, you will receive the Spirit and the divine life.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEED OF THE THIRSTY

Scripture Reading: John 7:2, 14, 37-39

John 7:2, 14, and 37 through 39 say, "The Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was near...When it was now the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach...Now 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. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified."

The fourth kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted on the earth was the hungry. Now we will consider the fifth kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted, the thirsty. In John 7 the thirsty people indicate that human life is a life of thirst.

THE HUMAN LIFE BEING THIRSTY

Both thirst and hunger speak of man's need. Thirst, however, is more unbearable than hunger. People can bear hunger for a period of time, but it is difficult to bear thirst. Hence, after telling us how the Lord Jesus met the need of the hungry, the Bible tells us how He met the need of the thirsty. The Lord Jesus is the Lord of life, and He is able to meet the needs of all kinds of people.

In order to portray the thirst of human life, in this portion of the Scriptures a group of people are selected to represent all those who thirst. This group of people was religious, and they were celebrating a religious feast. They were Jews; they believed in the unique true God. They were not atheists, nor were they without a religion. These people were in Judaism and were celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. The children of Israel held seven feasts every year, the last of which was the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23). In most nations a feast typically lasts two to three days, but the Feast of Tabernacles lasted eight days. It was a long feast. It was the greatest feast, and it was the final feast of

the year. Therefore, the people in this feast should have been the most joyful people. However, the Lord Jesus cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). This means that the people were still thirsty. They were still dissatisfied in their human life. If those who should have been full of joy were still thirsty, who is not thirsty? If they were dissatisfied in their human life, can anyone be satisfied in his human life? Everyone is thirsty and dissatisfied in his human life. Even the most noble and joyful people are thirsty and dissatisfied.

THE JOY OF THE HUMAN LIFE HAVING AN END

The Lord Jesus cried out on the last and great day of the feast. The last day of the greatest and final feast of the year was the greatest day of the feast; hence, this day was the most joyful day of the feast. This greatest and most joyful day, however, was the last day of the feast; it also was the last day of all the feasts. When this day was over, all the feasts of the year were over. When the joy of this day was over, the joy of the year was over.

A feast is a time of joy, and it signifies a joyful moment in human life. Therefore, the last day of the feast signifies the end of the joy of human life. There is a limit and an end to the joy of human life. No matter how much joy there may be, every kind of joy in human life comes to an end. There is a common Chinese saying: “A good scene does not last.” When someone reaches a peak in his human life, he has reached the last day.

Everything has a last day. Some people study diligently in college for many years and are joyful on the day of their graduation. But they eventually find that there is a last day to the joy of graduation. At the beginning of a wonderful marriage both the husband and the wife are full of joy, but this joy has a last day. The joy in a wonderful family reaches a last day when there is a death. The joy of possessing a prosperous business reaches a last day when the business fails. The joy of living a long life comes to an end when we die. A beautiful garment also has a last day. The last day is related to thirst. People are thirsty because everything in human life has a last day. When the last day comes, people’s joy ends. When the last day comes, the thirst in human life begins. When the joy of human life comes to an end, people immediately feel thirsty.

The joy of human life, the enjoyment of human life, and the blessing of human life all have a last day. The greater the joy, the stronger the sense of thirst will be on the last day. For this reason the Lord Jesus did not speak of being thirsty until the last day of the feast. The feast lasted eight days. The first two days were the beginning of the feast when everyone was excited; no one felt thirsty. The third and fourth days were in the middle of the feast when still no one felt thirsty. By the fifth and sixth days, however, people began to realize that the feast would soon be over. On the seventh day of the feast their taste changed. The eighth day was the most joyful time, but it was also the hardest moment. The last day of the feast had finally come. Their joy and excitement were over, and a deep and strong sense of thirst emerged within them. At this moment the Lord Jesus stood and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (v. 37).

When I was young, I enjoyed watching Chinese opera and ball games. I was very excited when I went to a Chinese opera. If the opera was in the evening, I was too excited to eat dinner. While I waited for the opera to begin, I felt like I was flying in the clouds. When the opera began, my whole heart was set on the opera, and I was very happy. Halfway through the opera, however, I would begin to worry that the show would soon be over. When the last scene was over, I felt very bad. The same thing happened when I went to a ball game. At the beginning of a basketball game people are excited. However, when the game is in the fourth quarter, the excitement ends. This is the last day of the feast. It is the time when people feel thirsty.

The Lord Jesus knew that people would feel thirsty. Therefore, He did not say anything during the first few days of the feast, but on the last day of the feast, He stood and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” This also applies to preaching the gospel. A couple who are about to get married will not be open to the gospel, because their enjoyment of the marriage is at its peak. Their marriage, however, will gradually come to a last day. Then the couple will be thirsty, and they will also be willing to receive the gospel.

About nine years ago there was a young woman in Nanking who got married after she graduated from college. She and her husband were very happy as newlyweds in a new family. A few days after their wedding they went to visit Xuanwu Lake. The husband went up to the city wall by the lake, and when he was looking down from the wall, he fell into the lake and drowned.

The joy of the wife in her marriage had come to a last day. Then some believers told her the words of the Lord Jesus: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”

About twenty years ago I went to Honan Province to preach the gospel, and I stayed with a Christian couple. The husband and the wife were very capable; they had studied overseas in the United States. When they returned from the United States, they got married. At that time they sought only prosperity and pleasure in the world, and they indulged themselves in material enjoyments. They had no desire for Jesus. Later, they had a child whom they loved very much; their whole heart was in this child. One day as they were crossing a bridge, the child fell into the river and died. It is hard to imagine their grief and sorrow; they wept continually and could neither eat nor sleep. After a period of time they could no longer live in their house, so they moved to a faraway place. There they met a Christian whose son had also drowned. When his son drowned, he repented and believed in the Lord. After hearing his testimony, the couple repented and received the Lord Jesus.

Many people believe in the Lord on “the last day” because it is not easy for them to receive the gospel when they are full of joy and enjoyment. The word of the gospel seems to be ineffective. However, when their joy and enjoyment come to an end on the last day, they begin to feel thirsty and remember the gospel that they heard. At this point it is easier for them to believe and receive the gospel.

There is an end to the joy and enjoyment in human life. One day your joy and enjoyment will come to the last day. Then you will feel thirsty and understand that you should receive the Lord Jesus. Many prominent figures do not feel a need for the gospel while they hold high positions and enjoy their prosperity. It is not until they are on their sick bed and about to die that they realize the joy of human life has come to the last day, and they begin to seek Christ.

You do not need to wait for the joy of your human life to come to an end before you believe in the Lord Jesus. Without exception every person who has believed in the Lord Jesus wishes that he had not waited. The longer you wait, the more you will regret. You should believe today. Your human life is a life of thirst. You should be prudent and anticipate the last day. You should not wait

until the last day to seek the Lord. It is good to seek the Lord at that time, but it is far better to seek the Lord before the last day.

WORLDLY THINGS

BEING UNABLE TO QUENCH PEOPLE'S THIRST

Many people know that they are thirsty, but they will not come to the Lord Jesus. They still want to find ways and things in the world to quench their thirst. Everyone who has such a hope will eventually be utterly disappointed because nothing in the world is able to quench the thirst within man. Instead of quenching man's thirst, the things in the world increase man's thirst. The pleasure and enjoyment of the world can only create thirst in man. The more wealth and enjoyment someone has, the more he wants. The more beautiful and fashionable someone is, the more he wants. A person who has never watched a movie may not have a longing to watch a movie, but if he watches a movie, it will increase his thirst to watch more. If he did not watch a movie last Saturday, he may not want to watch one on the coming Saturday, but if he watched a movie last Saturday, he will be very hungry and thirsty to watch a movie on the coming Saturday. The more he watches, the more he wants to watch; and the more he wants to watch, the more he will watch. No matter how much he watches, however, the thirst within him will not be quenched; it will only increase.

This is the case with watching movies, and it also applies to other things. The more someone gambles, the more he wants to gamble. The more someone dances, the more he wants to dance. The more someone smokes, the more he wants to smoke. The more someone drinks, the more he wants to drink. This is the case not only with sinful and addictive things but also with normal things in human life. Someone with a position wants a higher position. Someone with a business wants a bigger business. Someone with money wants more money. Everything in this world strengthens man's need and deepens his thirst. As a result, man is all the more dissatisfied. Nothing is able to quench man's thirst. The experiences of human life are sufficient to prove this point.

IF ANYONE THIRSTS,

LET HIM COME TO CHRIST AND DRINK

Because people are thirsty and unable to quench their thirst, the Lord Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me...out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). The Lord Jesus cried out on the last day of the feast because He wanted people to know their real need. He wanted them to know that they were thirsty and that He had living water to quench their thirst. The joy of the feast was unable to stop or quench their thirst. Only His living water that flows eternally is able to quench man's thirst forever.

There is a historical background to what the Lord Jesus said. The Jews who heard this word knew their history. When their forefathers were thirsty in the wilderness, God performed a miracle. He split the rock, and living water flowed out to quench their thirst. God performed this miracle to solve the problem of their thirst. However, the split rock typifies Christ, whose body would be split on the cross so that living water would flow out to quench the thirst in the spirit of man.

After the Jews entered into Canaan, they held the Feast of Tabernacles each year to remind them that their forefathers lived in tents in the wilderness. Hence, the Lord seemed to be saying, "Your forefathers wandered in the wilderness, and they drank water that flowed out from the rock. Today you are wandering in the wilderness of this world, but one day you will realize that there is no water, because your joy will come to an end. Then you will feel the thirst of human life, just as you are thirsty on the last day of this feast. If you feel thirsty, come to Me and drink."

The Lord Jesus cried out that day to the Jews, and He is still crying out today. You have sensed the thirst of the human life, so you should come to Him. He is the Savior of life who is able to quench your thirst. His body was broken on the cross, just as the rock was split in the wilderness, and the living water flowed out from Him. After He died on the cross, He rose from the dead and was glorified. Then the Spirit of life descended, and the living water flowed out. If anyone receives the Lord Jesus, the living water will become rivers flowing forth. These rivers will quench his thirst so that he lives a watered and full human life. These rivers will also overflow from within him to reach others and quench their thirst. This is the real need of thirsty humanity. This is the salvation that the thirsty need.

THREE STEPS TO QUENCH MAN'S THIRST

How can man receive such a salvation? How can man receive the Lord Jesus as the living water to quench his thirst? The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes into Me...out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (vv. 37-38). According to the Lord Jesus' word, man must take three steps in order to receive the living water that quenches his thirst.

The First Step Being to Thirst

In order to receive the living water of life, man must first sense his thirst. This inward thirst compels man to come to the Lord Jesus. If you do not feel the thirst of human life, you will not come to the Lord Jesus and drink. If you do not feel thirsty after drinking worldly things, if the feast of your human life has not come to the last day, and if the joy of your human life has not come to an end, you will not come to the Lord Jesus and drink. Some people are prudent; while they are still enjoying human life, they foresee the end in the future and sense their coming thirst. Therefore, they receive the Lord Jesus. It is a sense of thirst that brings them to the Lord Jesus.

The Second Step Being to Come

When you feel thirsty, you need to come to the Lord Jesus in a simple way. You should come without hesitation or reservation. Where is the Lord Jesus? How can you draw near to Him? According to the Bible, after the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was placed in the tomb. Three days later, however, He resurrected from the dead and became the life-giving Spirit. Now He transcends all the limitations of space and time. He is now the Spirit, and He is everywhere. Just as you can contact radio waves everywhere, you can contact the Lord Jesus everywhere. Whether you are in the office or at home, walking on the street or lying in bed, you can contact the Lord Jesus. Even while you are reading this gospel message, you can contact the resurrected Savior with your spirit.

The Third Step Being to Drink

After coming to the Lord Jesus, you need to drink. To drink is to believe. After the Lord Jesus said, "Come to Me and drink," He said, "He who believes into Me." This shows that drinking refers to believing. Furthermore, to believe is to receive. To come to the Lord Jesus and drink means to believe into Him and to receive Him. To believe into the Lord Jesus is to believe that He died

and resurrected and that the living water flowed out of Him. He is the living Savior with living water. This living water is in the Spirit and is the Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is flowing everywhere. If He touches you, His living water will flow into you. If you are willing to receive Him, the living water will flow into you. It is very easy to receive Him. We do not receive Him with our eyes or with our mouth but with our spirit. We cannot use our hands to breathe; we must breathe with our nostrils. Similarly, we cannot use our physical body to receive the Spirit of life; we must use our spirit in our innermost being. When we receive the Lord Jesus with our spirit, we are drinking Him and believing into Him.

To believe into the Lord Jesus is simply to open to breathe in the Lord Jesus, just as one breathes in air. You simply need to pray to the Lord Jesus from your heart. Then you will receive the Lord Jesus with your spirit. Although you cannot see Him with your eyes, touch Him with your hands, or feel Him in an outward way, you can receive Him with your spirit. All you need to do is to pray and tell Him what you feel. There is no need to pretend or to compose something in your mind. As long as you draw near to Him and receive Him, you will drink Him, that is, believe into Him. Therefore, drinking is believing, and believing is drinking. Drinking and believing both mean to receive.

You may have contacted Christianity many years ago and heard many doctrines; you may even praise Christ for being great, but you do not have a relationship with Him if you have not received Him. He is separate from you and cannot enter into you to quench your thirst. Merely hearing messages cannot save you. Receiving the Lord Jesus is the only thing that can save you. You may hear thousands of messages, but they are all useless if you are not willing to receive the Lord Jesus. If you are willing to receive the Lord Jesus, it is sufficient to hear a few sentences. It is sufficient to know that you are a desolate sinner and a thirsty person and that the Lord Jesus is the living Savior with the living water. Just come to the Lord Jesus and open up your heart, saying, “O Lord Jesus! I am thirsty. I need You.” If you feel that you have sins, you need to confess your sins to Him. Tell Him what you feel. This is the way to contact Him and receive Him into you. This is the way to drink the living water into you. This is the way to believe into the Lord Jesus.

It is wonderful that simply by believing in the Lord Jesus, He will enter into you. He is the Spirit of life. As soon as He enters into you, He will quench your

thirst, and you will feel joy and satisfaction. Furthermore, the living water will flow out from you as rivers of living water to quench the thirst of many. The key to salvation is to drink the Lord Jesus. You may have heard the gospel in the past but did not receive salvation, because you did not receive the Lord into your being by drinking Him.

If someone gives you a cup of water, you may receive the cup with your hands and appreciate it with praise. However, the cup of water is useless if you do not drink it. Likewise, your need today is to receive the Lord Jesus in a simple way. He is the omnipresent Spirit. If you open your heart to pray and contact Him, you will receive Him, and the living water will flow into you. This is simple, easy, and wonderful. May now be the time that you drink Him and receive Him. Let us sing a short hymn:

If anyone thirsts, let him come and drink.
He who believes into the Lord Jesus,
  as the Scriptures said,
Out of his innermost being
  shall flow rivers of living water,
Shall flow rivers of living water.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NEED OF THE SINFUL

Scripture Reading: John 8:1-12, 24, 31-32, 34, 36, 39-41, 44, 46, 51, 56, 58

John 8:1-12 says, “Jesus...early in the morning...came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him...The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, they said to Him, Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery, in the very act. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do You say? But they said this to tempt Him, so that they might have reason to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. But when they persisted in questioning Him, He stood up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. And when they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman stood where she was, in the midst. And Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? And she said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more. Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 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.”

Chapter 8 continues, “I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins...Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free...Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin...If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed...They answered and said to Him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You do the works of your father...You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks the lie, he speaks it out of his own possessions; for he is a liar and the father of it...Which of you convicts Me of

sin? Since I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?...Truly, truly, I say to you, If anyone keeps My word, he shall by no means see death forever...Your father Abraham exulted that he would see My day, and he saw it and rejoiced...Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am" (vv. 24, 31-32, 34, 36, 39-41, 44, 46, 51, 56, 58).

John 8 presents the sixth kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted—the sinful. The Gospel of John presents various kinds of people to show that the Lord Jesus is the God of heaven who has come to be man's life in order to supply the needs of every kind of person. Chapter 8 shows the Lord Jesus coming to be man's life in order to solve the great problem of sin. In the Gospel of John only chapter 8 shows that the Lord Jesus' coming to be man's life solves man's problem of sin. Not many chapters in the Bible are as thorough as John 8 regarding the problem of sin. We will consider twelve points in this chapter in order to see how the Lord Jesus meets the need of the sinful.

ALL PEOPLE BEING SINFUL

All the people in the world are sinful. John 8 proves in two ways that all people are sinful. The first way to show us this is symbolic. This chapter is a record of a woman who committed adultery. If we read this record carefully, we will see that the Spirit uses this case to symbolize the sinful condition of all the people in the world. In the Bible the woman represents man's standing before God. The people of the world have the standing of a woman before God. Therefore, this woman represents all humanity, and her adultery signifies that all humanity commits the sin of adultery.

The spiritual significance of adultery is that a person has other loves, other pursuits, apart from God. In principle, we commit sins because we have another love, another pursuit besides God. Our sins can be compared to a woman loving someone other than her husband. Every person in the world has a love, a pursuit of something that is not God. Therefore, every person has committed the sin of spiritual fornication before God.

When the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees questioned the Lord Jesus about the woman who had committed adultery, their thought was that only she had committed adultery, not that they too had sinned before God. The Lord Jesus, however, countered their question by saying, "He who is without

sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). The Lord seemed to be asking, "Who is without sin among you? You say that this woman is adulterous, but before God you are no different than this woman." The Lord Jesus put these self-righteous people on the same standing as the convicted woman.

John 8 is very explicit in proving that all people are sinful. When the Lord Jesus said that the person who was without sin should be the first to throw a stone, He was saying that the scribes and the Pharisees were sinful. The Jews regarded the scribes and Pharisees as the noblest and most moral people. They were also self-righteous. If they could not escape the Lord Jesus' convicting words, who can escape being convicted by Him? Who would dare to say that he is without sin? The scribes and Pharisees brought a sinful woman to the Lord Jesus with the intention of ensnaring Him, but instead, the Lord Jesus confounded them. They brought the woman to the Lord Jesus in order to condemn her, but instead they were convicted by the Lord Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees saw only that the woman had sinned; they did not see that they were just like the woman. Because they did not know themselves, they brought the woman to the Lord Jesus and questioned Him. When they brought the woman to the Lord, they did not realize that they were bringing themselves to the Lord for judgment, because their condition before God was the same as the woman's condition.

The scribes and Pharisees had a high reputation and standing among the Jews; they were very powerful people. They brought the woman caught in adultery in order to threaten the Lord Jesus. That day they were in the temple, and they set the woman in the midst and questioned the Lord Jesus, saying, "Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery, in the very act. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do You say?" (vv. 4-5). Verse 6 says that "they said this to tempt Him, so that they might have reason to accuse Him." The scribes and Pharisees thought that they could ensnare the Lord Jesus and have a reason to accuse Him. If the Lord Jesus said that they should not stone the woman, He would be acting contrary to the law of Moses and could not have been from God. If He had said that they should stone her, He would have been acting contrary to His being the Savior who came to save sinners. Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees must have been haughty and insolent when they questioned the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, however, was fine and wise. He was not quick to answer the scribes and Pharisees; instead, He stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. They continued to question Him, and He continued to write. We can imagine the scene. On the one hand, the scribes and Pharisees were haughty and insolent. On the other hand, the sinful woman was in fear and trembling. Under these circumstances the Lord Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. His stooping down must have given the impression of humility and lowliness. This was in stark contrast to the accusing scribes and Pharisees. When the Lord stooped down, He calmed the arrogant scribes and Pharisees, and He also comforted the woman. Then He gave the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees the opportunity to think about themselves.

Because the scribes and Pharisees persisted in questioning the Lord, He stood up and said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). They questioned the Lord Jesus in order to trap Him. In His reply the Lord Jesus judged and convicted them. He seemed to say, "Look at this sinful woman. You have also sinned before God. Whoever among you is without sin should be the first to throw a stone at her." These words touched their conscience. When the scribes and Pharisees heard this, they were judged. Their morality and ethics were a hypocrisy. The Lord Jesus pricked their conscience slightly, and they could not do anything. "When they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones" (v. 9). Their leaving was their confessing that none of them was without sin. The older ones were the first to leave, followed by the younger ones. The conscience of an older person is often more sensitive. An older person has more sins, and his conscience has more holes. Therefore, the older ones were the first to flee. The younger ones saw that the older ones had fled, and they too fled. They fled because their conscience convicted them of their sins; they could not stand the Lord Jesus' word. The sinful woman was not condemned by the Lord Jesus, but the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, who condemned others, were condemned by the Lord Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees were judged by Him. The Lord Jesus did not plan this, but their self-righteousness forced Him to speak so that they might judge and condemn themselves. The Lord Jesus wanted the scribes and Pharisees to know that the woman whom they condemned was sinful and that they were sinful as well. Even though she had sinned outwardly, they were sinful as well. Both the dishonorable and the honorable were sinful.

When we are about to condemn others for sinning, we should realize that we have the same illness. When we see a thief, we should ask ourselves whether we are "civilized" thieves. We are still thieves if we use different tactics and tricks to get others' riches. Some thieves hold a gun, but other thieves hold a pen. I am afraid that there are more pen-holding thieves than there are gun-holding thieves.

We may say that someone who commits adultery does not have good conduct, but we also should ask whether we have good conduct. Are we inwardly clean? We may pretend before others, but we cannot pretend before the Lord Jesus. From the human perspective, there are good people and bad people, but from the Lord's perspective, everyone is the same. People differ only in degrees. Even if others are big sinners, we can be small sinners. Others may be barbaric sinners, but we can be civilized sinners. This chapter of the Bible proves that all people in the world sin.

ALL SINS BEING SPIRITUAL FORNICATION

All the sins committed by people in the world are spiritual fornication. The standing of people in the world before God is that of a woman. The greatest sin that a woman can commit is fornication. Fornication is unchastity. Therefore, man's greatest sin before God is his infidelity to God, that is, his having other loves besides God. Without exception all the sins that man commits before God are in this principle. From God's perspective, all of man's sins are spiritual fornication. No matter what sins we have committed, they were loves and pursuits apart from God. If we loved only God, we could not sin. We are women, and God is our Husband. Could we sin if we were chaste toward God? We all sin because we pursue other things, not God. From God's perspective, all the sins that we commit are spiritual fornication. The adulterous woman in John 8 is our representative, because before God we are each an adulterous woman who has committed fornication.

SIN BEING OF THE DEVIL

John 8 shows that sin is of the devil. People sin because they have a sinning life. This sinning life comes from the devil. The Jews said that Abraham was their father (v. 39). However, the Lord Jesus said that Abraham was not their father, because they did not have Abraham's God-loving life. Rather, their life was a hating, murderous, and lying life. Such a life is of the devil. Therefore,

the Lord Jesus said that they were of their father the devil (v. 44). They were children of the devil. The Lord Jesus said that the devil was a murderer from the beginning and a liar, and he is the father of lies. Hence, everyone who sins has the life of the devil, is of the devil, and is a child of the devil. As a result, everyone lives the devil's sinning life.

We might not accept or admit that we are children of the devil with the life of the devil. The Lord Jesus said that the devil is a murderer and that the devil is a liar and the father of liars (v. 44). Whether we have the life of the devil can be seen in whether we murder or lie. We may say that we have never killed anyone. Murder, however, comes from hatred. Murder is an outward behavior, but hatred is an inward thought. Hatred is the seed of murder, and murder is the fruit of hatred. Without thoughts of hatred there would not be the behavior of murder. We may not have murdered anyone, because the law or other reasons have prevented us, but do we murder people in our mind? Do we hate people? Can we say that we have never hated anyone? We do not hate people when they flatter us or are good to us. But as soon as they do us some injustice, ill-treat us, or make things difficult for us, we hate them. Some people hold a grudge against their supervisors and look for opportunities to retaliate, because their job was made more difficult. Other people hate those whom they formerly loved because they are no longer affectionate. When hatred is manifested uncouthly and recklessly, it assaults, uses force, disfigures, or murders. When hatred is manifested cleverly and insidiously, it secretly plots, incriminates, supplants, or ostracizes. Many things in the heart are not manifested. Are we free of these things? Those who know themselves admit that it is so easy to have thoughts of hatred toward people. If a rickshaw hits us on the road, we have so much hatred that we want to beat up the driver. If a produce vendor cheats us with old produce, we are so angry that we want to curse him. It is also easy for us to loathe or hate our parents and siblings. These examples prove that our human life is of the devil. God is love; only the devil is hate. The feeling of hatred and the desire to murder prove that our human life is of the devil.

Furthermore, we are liars. We are of the devil because we lie, for the devil is the father of liars. Therefore, whether we are children of the devil is seen in whether we lie. We must admit that we are liars. We all have the ability to lie. We can use any part of our body to lie. Some people wink to tell a lie. Others can lie by shaking their head or waving their hand. We lie, and we also ask others to lie. For example, someone may ask us a question, and our spouse

may want to answer yes, but with a discreet wave of our hand, she quickly says no. In this situation we have told a lie, and we have asked our spouse to lie for us. It is very convenient to lie. Such lying proves that our human life of sinning comes from the devil.

John 8 not only says that all people sin but also that all sinners are begotten of the devil and have the devil's sinning life within them.

ALL PEOPLE BEING SLAVES OF SIN

John 8 says that all people are slaves of sin. On the one hand, people in the world are children of the devil with the life of the devil, and on the other hand, they are slaves of sin under the bondage of sin, having no freedom. When the Lord Jesus spoke of freedom, the scribes and Pharisees impatiently said, "We are Abraham's seed and have never yet been enslaved to anyone. How is it that You say, You shall become free?" (v. 33). The Lord Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin" (v. 34). If we sin, we are under the bondage of sin and have no freedom. What does it mean to be under the bondage of sin and to be without freedom? Man does not want to commit sins, but he cannot withstand the power of sin. This proves that those who are under the bondage of sin are not free.

The Bible reveals that sin is not only outward actions; sin is also a power dwelling in man. Sin is living and powerful, sin has authority over people, and sin can bind people. No one intentionally wants to sin, but there is a power within man that forces him to sin, to take the way of the fall. For example, the addiction to smoking or to drinking is related to power. A person may try to hide these habits, but the history of a bitter struggle remains in his heart. People repeatedly repent and reproach themselves and determine to quit, but they are subdued by the power of these addictions; they are powerless. This is what it means to be a slave of sin. No one in the world is free; everyone is a slave of sin under the power and authority of sin; everyone struggles and moans, having no way to escape.

ALL PEOPLE
BEING UNDER THE CONDEMNATION OF THE LAW

All the people in the world are under the condemnation of the law of God. Because people sin, they are condemned by the law of God. According to the

law, the woman who committed adultery should have been condemned and stoned to death. In the eyes of God we too should have been condemned and put to death. The Bible says, "The soul who sins, he shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). God is righteous; hence, His law condemns sinners. Sin always results in death. This is our standing before God. What a fearful matter this is! How can we overlook this?

THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD DYING IN THEIR SINS

People in the world die in their sins. The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying, "Because you sin, you will die in your sins. Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins. You were born in sin, you grew up in sin, and you are living in sin; therefore, you will die in your sins." If you do not repent and receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior who saves you from the result of sin, you will die in your sins and perish.

RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES BEING INCAPABLE OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF SIN AND INSTEAD RESISTING THE LORD JESUS' SALVATION

Religion and religious ordinances cannot solve the problem of sin; instead, they resist the Lord Jesus' salvation for sinners. The Gospel of John shows that the Lord Jesus came as life in order to save every kind of person. The Gospel of John also describes the strong resistance that the Lord Jesus encountered from Judaism. In chapter 5 He met the impotent man on a Sabbath day and a feast day of the Jews. It should have been a day of rest and joy. But this man had been sick for thirty-eight years and had neither rest nor joy. He had no rest or joy until he was saved by the Lord Jesus. After he was saved, the Jewish religionists said, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to do this" (cf. v. 10). The Lord Jesus came to heal and save man, but Judaism opposed Him. The Lord Jesus came to be man's life in order to supply man's needs and to deliver man from his problems, but the strongest opposition that He encountered was from religion and its ordinances.

Religion and its ordinances resist the life of the Lord Jesus. Wherever there is religion or religious regulations and ordinances, the life of the Lord Jesus is

resisted and restricted. If you join a religion and accept its ordinances, you will see that its ordinances will resist your receiving the life of the Lord Jesus.

In John 8 the Lord Jesus was in the temple. At that time the temple represented Judaism. The temple in John 8 does not have a good connotation, because the people in the temple did not want God; they rejected Him. Hence, the temple represents God-rejecting Judaism. There was also the Judaic law; the scribes and Pharisees said that the Judaic law commanded them to stone the adulterous woman. This picture shows that Judaism and the law could not save the adulterous woman. Only the Savior could save this woman, but Judaism and its laws became a resistance to the Savior. Religion and religious ordinances cannot solve the problem of sin for man; rather, they resist the Lord Jesus' salvation.

Sinners are dead in sin. Religion and religious ordinances are also dead. Dead religion and dead religious ordinances cannot save or heal dead sinners. Dead religion and dead religious ordinances are of no help to dead sinners. Dead sinners need a living Savior, a Savior of life. Only the living Savior can save dead sinners and give them a sin-delivering life by enlivening them. The living Savior is the Lord Jesus. He is the living God, the Lord of life, who comes to the people in the world with His divine life so that He might heal and save sinners who are dead in sin. However, His healing and saving life encounters strong opposition and resistance from religion and religious ordinances. Religion and religious ordinances are dead and impotent, and they are incapable of saving people who are dead in sin. The only thing that they are capable of doing is to resist the salvation of the Lord Jesus, the living Savior.

We must bear in mind that religion and religious ordinances can only resist the Lord's salvation in man; they cannot solve man's problem of sin. A person who accepts a religion or keeps a religious ordinance has something in him that resists the life of the Lord Jesus. If his believing in the Lord Jesus is merely a matter of accepting Christian ordinances, then Christianity with its ordinances will become an element of resistance to the life of the Lord Jesus. Religion and its ordinances are dead and cannot save man. Instead, they become a great hindrance to the practical salvation that the Lord Jesus wants to carry out in man. Therefore, a person should accept only the living Savior, not dead religion or dead religious ordinances.

ONLY THE LORD JESUS BEING SINLESS YET NOT CONDEMNING MAN

Only the Lord Jesus is sinless and qualified to condemn man, yet He did not condemn the woman. The Lord Jesus asked the crowd who opposed Him, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (v. 46). Here we see a stark contrast. A large crowd surrounded the Lord Jesus to ensnare Him. When He countered their question by asking who is without sin, they could not stand. They sensed their sinfulness and fled. Eventually, the Lord Jesus stood before the crowd and asked, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Dare we ask such a question? If we would ask such a question, I believe that all our acquaintances would testify against us. However, when the Lord Jesus confronted His opposers and faultfinders, no one could testify of any sin in Him. This proves that in the universe He alone is sinless.

Since the Lord Jesus is the only sinless One, only He is qualified to condemn others. The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees condemned others, but they too were sinful before God; they were not qualified to condemn others. In the universe only the Lord Jesus is without sin; therefore, only He is qualified to condemn us. Even though the Lord is qualified to condemn us, He said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you" (v. 11). God did not send Him into the world to condemn the world but "that the world might be saved through Him" (3:17).

The scribes and Pharisees left one by one because their conscience was convicted. Only the sinful woman and the Lord Jesus were left. She probably thought, "I escaped the condemnation of one group of people, but I may not escape the condemnation of Jesus." She might still have been in fear and trembling, waiting for judgment. In that quiet and tense atmosphere the Lord Jesus stood up and asked, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" (8:10). The Lord Jesus seemed to say, "These people caught you in order to condemn you, but where are they now? Have they all gone away because of my question to them? No one remains to condemn you." In response to the Lord's question, "Has no one condemned you?" the woman answered, "No one, Lord" (v. 11). Her reply was short, but it is very meaningful. She did not call the Lord Jesus "Teacher," like the scribes and the Pharisees (v. 4). She called the Lord Jesus "Lord." She must have called Him Lord because she had observed that He was extraordinary. She saw that the

scribes and the Pharisees, who were respected by all, could not stand up to just one question from Jesus. She saw how they came with a haughty and imposing air to question the Lord Jesus and sentence her to death. But they all left when He questioned them. She saw that the crowd wanted to deal with Him, but instead, they were dealt with by Him and lost their footing. Therefore, she must have thought that Jesus was an extraordinary man with authority over people. Hence, she called Him "Lord." When she called Him "Lord," she acknowledged that He is the Lord.

She might have thought that although those people did not condemn her, the Lord would. She must have been quite fearful, waiting for the Lord's condemnation. To her surprise, however, the Lord Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you." Please pay attention to the word *neither*. The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying, "None of them condemned you, and neither do I condemn you. They did not condemn you, because they are sinful. They sinned and are sinful; therefore, they cannot condemn you. I am without sin, and I have never sinned. I could condemn you, but neither will I condemn you." This must have given such comfort and release to that sinful woman who was in fear and trembling. It was the gospel, a tiding of great joy, to her.

What sweet words: "Neither do I condemn you"! What a loving voice! This is truly the gospel. The *I* in *neither do I condemn you* is the God of heaven. He became a man, came to the earth, stood in front of a great sinner, and said to her, "Neither do I condemn you." No one in the human race is qualified to condemn man but the Lord Jesus. However, neither does He condemn us. This is the gospel! Although He is able to condemn, He does not condemn. Do you sense that you are sinful? Are you grieved and sorrowful over your sins? Does your conscience convict you? Please listen to the words of the Lord Jesus: "Neither do I condemn you."

ONLY THE LORD JESUS BEING ABLE TO FORGIVE SINS AND TO SAVE MAN FROM SIN AND DEATH

Only the Lord Jesus can forgive sins and save man from sin and death. The Lord Jesus' not condemning man's sins is His forgiving of man's sins. He is the righteous God, who can condemn man's sins according to His righteousness, but He bore man's sins on the cross, suffered the penalty of death on man's behalf, and satisfied the requirement of God's righteousness. Therefore, He, and He alone, can forgive man's sins.

John 8 also reveals that only the Lord Jesus can deliver man from sin. The Lord Jesus could have condemned the adulterous woman, but He did not condemn her. This was His forgiving her of her sins. The Lord not only forgave her sins, but He also said, "From now on sin no more" (v. 11). The Lord's word meant that He would deliver her from sin so that she would sin no more. The Lord Jesus can set man free so that man is free indeed. He can save, release, and deliver man from sin so that he is no longer a slave of sin under the authority of sin and no longer bound by sin.

The Lord Jesus also said, "If anyone keeps My word, he shall by no means see death forever" (v. 51). This is to never taste death. This means that only the Lord Jesus can save man from death. He can forgive us our sins and save us from the power of sin so that we are no longer in sin and therefore will not die in sin. The taste of death will leave us. Therefore, the Lord can save us from sin, and He can also save us from death. His salvation is perfect.

THE LORD JESUS BEING THE I AM

The Lord Jesus is the I Am. How can the Lord Jesus deliver man from sin? How can He deliver man from death? This is a great mystery. In John 8 the Lord Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins." In the following verse the Jews asked, "Who are You?" (vv. 24-25). The Lord Jesus can deliver man from sin and from death because He is the I Am.

What does *I Am* mean? In order to understand this, we must look at the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God is often called by two names, God and Jehovah. God emphasizes His being the mighty Creator. *Jehovah* means "I Am," and it speaks of God's relationship with man. When God reveals this name to man, He tells man that He is everything to man; He can meet all man's needs. Whatever man needs, He is. Therefore, in the Old Testament the name Jehovah is often followed by a secondary name to form a compound name, such as *Jehovah-shalom* (meaning "I am peace") (Judg. 6:24), *Jehovah-jireh* (meaning "I will provide") (Gen. 22:14), and *Jehovah-nissi* (meaning "I am your banner") (Exo. 17:15). In other words, if man needs peace, God is peace; if man needs a supply, God is the provision; and if man needs victory, God is the banner that gives man victory. God has a relationship with man because He is everything to man in such a way.

This is what Jehovah means by *I Am* (3:14). The Lord Jesus is Jehovah who has a relationship with man. Therefore, Abraham exulted to see Him, and before Abraham came into being, He was. Jesus is the God, the I Am, who became flesh to become man's everything. He is the great I Am, the all-inclusive I Am, who can meet all of man's needs. By His name He tells us that He is everything to us; He is all that we need. If we are thirsty and need living water, He is the living water. If we are hungry and need spiritual food, He is the spiritual food. If we are in darkness and need light, He is light. If we are sick and need healing, He is healing. If we are under the bondage of sin and need a Savior, He is the Savior. If we are afraid of death and need life, He is life. Whatever we need, He is. His name is I Am. He has given us His name. There is a blank after the *I Am* for us to fill in. This is like a blank check for us to write any amount according to our need. By faith we can write what we need after the *I Am*. Whatever we fill out by faith, He is. As much as our faith can fill out is what He will be to us. Only such a Savior, the I Am, is the need of the sinful. Only such a Savior, the I Am, can solve the problem of man's sin. Only such a Savior, the I Am, can save man from sin and death.

THE LORD JESUS BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The Lord Jesus is the light of the world. Before the Lord Jesus said that He is the I Am, He said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). His being the light of the world is related to man's sin. John 8 is concerning the need of the sinful and how the Lord Jesus meets this need to save man from sin. The Lord Jesus saves man from sin by being light, because all who are in sin are in darkness. Darkness has blinded man so that he cannot see the defilement and dreadfulness of sin. Hence, man cannot and will not come out of sin.

The scribes and the Pharisees saw only the sins of others, and they were determined to condemn others. They did not know their own deceit, malice, and hypocrisy. They were in darkness and could not receive the Lord Jesus as the Savior to save them from sin.

This is the situation today. Man's heart is becoming increasingly evil and morally depraved. People argue that they live by their conscience but refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus. People sin, commit evil, live in debauchery, and are utterly corrupt, but they do not feel a need for a Savior to deliver them. Even if they are exhorted to turn to the Savior, they are unwilling to take Him, because darkness has blinded them in sin. The Bible says, "The god of this age

[the devil] has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ...might not shine on them" (2 Cor. 4:4).

Therefore, in order to be delivered from sin, a person needs to be delivered from darkness. Only light can deliver people from darkness. People of the world cannot be delivered from darkness, because they do not have light. Without light, a person walks and lives in darkness. The Lord Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness" (John 8:12). The only way to no longer walk in darkness or no longer live in sin is by following Him and receiving Him as the light of the world. This is the way to be delivered from darkness and sin.

The Lord Jesus is the light of the world, and those who follow Him shall have the light of life (v. 12). Therefore, He is the light of life. This light is not the light of the sun, the moon, or a lamp shining on us. This light is His life entering into us and shining, inwardly illuminating us.

Concerning the Lord Jesus, John 1:4 says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The eternal life of God was hidden in the Lord Jesus. When this life enters into us, it manifests a shining function. This shining function is light. This light is of life and is an operation of life; thus, it is called the light of life. When the light of life shines in us, we are brought out of darkness and hence out of sin.

The Lord Jesus does not save us outwardly by religious regulations or ordinances; He saves us by the light of life. The Lord does not save us by teachings, by the restriction of religion, or by religious regulations and ordinances; He saves us by the illumination of the light of life. He is life, and when He enters into us, He becomes our light of life. The illumination of this light causes us to no longer sin and to no longer want to sin. The illumination of the light of life delivers us from sin.

Before we were saved, we were in darkness. At that time the more we sinned, the more we enjoyed sinning. For example, the more we quarreled with people, the more energetic we became and the more we thought that we were right. That was to live in darkness and to not see our own mistakes. However, after we believe in the Lord Jesus and receive Him as the light of life, this light illuminates us from within when we want to quarrel with people. In this way our anger is subdued, and we can no longer quarrel with people.

We are delivered from other sins in this same way. Christianity cannot deliver us from sins, and neither can Christian teachings, regulations, or ordinances deliver us from sins. Only the illumination of Christ's life can deliver us from sins. If we believe in the Lord Jesus, He as light will save us from every sin and enable us to live a life in the light. The salvation of the Lord Jesus is not from without but from within; it is not objective but subjective. It is the light of life that saves us inwardly from darkness and sin.

HOW TO BE SAVED BY THE LORD JESUS

How can you be saved by the Lord Jesus? It is very simple. There are only three steps.

You must confess that you are sinful. You are a sinful person who should be condemned to perish.

You must believe in the Lord Jesus as the I Am. He is Jehovah who has a relationship with man and who wants to be man's everything. He is God, and He is the Savior who has come to be your life. He shed His blood and died on the cross on your behalf so that your sins might be forgiven. Now He wants to enter into you to be your life, your light of life, in order to inwardly illuminate you. When you believe in Him and receive Him, you will be saved by Him from sin.

From the moment that you believe in the Lord Jesus, you should follow Him. He said, "He who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (8:12). Therefore, after you believe in the Lord Jesus, you still must follow Him. The succeeding verses explain that to follow Him is to keep His word, to accept His truth. This means that you should hear and obey His inward speaking and that you should receive the direction and leading that the light of life gives you in all things. In this way your sins will be forgiven, and the light of life will illuminate your life, dispel your darkness, and rescue you from sin. Then you will live in His life, and you will be saved from sin and death. Let us sing a hymn:

Once I was bound by sin's galling fetters,
Chained like a slave I struggled in vain;
But I received a glorious freedom,
When Jesus broke my fetters in twain.

Glorious freedom, wonderful freedom,
No more in chains of sin I repine!
Jesus the glorious Emancipator,
Now and forever He shall be mine.

Freedom from all the carnal affections,
Freedom from envy, hatred and strife;
Freedom from vain and worldly ambitions,
Freedom from all that saddened my life.

Freedom from pride and all sinful follies,
Freedom from love and glitter of gold;
Freedom from evil temper and anger,
Glorious freedom, rapture untold.

Freedom from fear with all of its torments,
Freedom from care with all of its pain;
Freedom in Christ my blessed Redeemer,
He who has rent my fetters in twain.

(*Hymns*, #310)

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE NEED OF THE BLIND

Scripture Reading: John 9:1-11, 35-41; 10:26-29; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:4

John 9:1-11 and 35-41 say, "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but he was born so, that the works of God might be manifested in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had said this, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed his eyes with the clay, and He said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is interpreted, Sent). He went therefore and washed and came away seeing. The neighbors then and those who previously saw him as a beggar said, Is not this the one who used to sit and beg? Some said, This is he. Others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am the one. They said then to him, How then were your eyes opened? He answered, The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash. I went therefore and washed, and I received my sight...Jesus...found him and said, Do you believe into the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is He, Lord, that I may believe into Him? 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. And Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind. Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, We are not blind also, are we? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would not have sin; but now that you say, We see; your sin remains."

John 10:26-29 says, "You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."

Acts 26:18 says, “To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”

Second Corinthians 4:4 says, “In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.”

John 9 presents the seventh kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted on the earth, the blind. On the one hand, the eight kinds of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted refer to eight different kinds of people in humanity. On the other hand, these eight conditions can be found in every person. The first five kinds of people are one group, and the last three kinds of people are another group. The first five kinds of people are the moral, the immoral, the impotent, the hungry, and the thirsty. The last three kinds of people are the sinful, the blind, and the dead. The five conditions of the first group show that man needs the life of the Lord Jesus for regeneration, satisfaction, and strengthening. The three conditions of the second group show that man needs the Lord’s life to resolve three great problems: sins, blindness, and death. Every person has these three problems. In the preceding chapter we have seen how the life of the Lord Jesus solves the problem of sins. In this chapter we will see how the life of the Lord Jesus solves the problem of blindness, the inability to see.

MAN BEING BORN BLIND

In John 9 the Lord Jesus met a man who was blind from birth. According to verses 39 through 41, the spiritual significance of being born blind is that man has no knowledge of God or of spiritual things from his birth. Blindness is the inability to see, the losing of one’s sight. Everyone can see with their physical eyes from birth, but man’s inward eyes are blind and unable to see God and spiritual things. The Lord Jesus said that this was the condition of the Pharisees. Several matters demonstrate that man is born blind.

Man is born blind, because he does not know God. Before we were saved, we may have said that there is no God. However, it is not that there is no God but that we could not see God due to our blindness. Man is born blind, because he does not understand the meaning of the universe. He does not

know how the universe came into existence, the condition of the universe, or what will be the end of the universe.

Man is born blind, because he does not know his origin, course, or destination. Man does not know where he came from, where he is today, or where he is going. This is a matter of being blind. People think that they know many things. Some have academic degrees; they know philosophy, science, and principles and laws. However, they do not know their origin, their present condition, or their destination. This proves that man is blind; he cannot see his actual condition. He does not know the meaning of his human life, and he does not know what his relationship is with God.

Man is born blind, because he is ignorant of the mysteries of God. Spiritual matters, such as God's plan of salvation, His incarnation and life on earth, His desire to be man's life and to be mingled and joined with man, are beyond human comprehension.

Man is born blind, because the Holy Bible is foreign to man. The Bible is God's revelation. It makes known God's intention. However, a person cannot understand the Bible before he is saved, because the eyes of his heart are blind.

There are three necessary conditions in order to see an object. If we want to read a book, for example, we must open it. Without opening the book, we cannot see the printed words. This opening is a "revealing." To reveal an object is to remove the veil in order for us to see it. However, a mere opening is not sufficient. Even though a book is opened, we will be unable to see the printed words if it is dark. Hence, we need light to shine upon the page so that we may see. This is the second condition. The third condition is that our eyes must be opened to see. If we do not have our sight, we will not be able to see. Therefore, in order to see something, there should be an opening, light, and vision. These three conditions result in seeing.

The same principle applies to spiritual seeing. In order for us to see the true meaning of a spiritual matter, we first need the revelation of the Bible. Second, we need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and guide us to understand the truth. Third, we need spiritual eyes. When we have these three conditions, we can understand spiritual things.

God has given us the Bible, and He reveals every spiritual matter to us through the Bible. In the Bible God has revealed His purpose, the meaning of the universe, the meaning of man, the relationship between God and the universe, the relationship between God and man, man's condition, man's destination, the way for man to receive God's salvation, how man can be accepted by God, how to be in God's will, and how to be mingled and united with God. All these matters are explained in the Bible. Furthermore, the Spirit operates to enlighten man. When a person reads the Bible, the Spirit is there to shine in him. However, most people still cannot understand the Bible, nor can they see the spiritual matters contained in the Bible, because they lack spiritual eyes. Man has the Bible, and the Spirit is working, but man still cannot see spiritual things, because he is blind.

Man is not only blind inwardly; he is born blind. The representative in John 9 was blind from birth. This means that man's inner blindness is a matter of birth, a condition by nature; it is not a matter of sin. Therefore, when the disciples asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" the Lord Jesus answered, "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents" (vv. 2-3). Blindness is not a matter of sin but a matter of nature. Therefore, regardless of whether someone has sinned, regardless of whether he has committed many sins or a few sins, regardless of whether he is bad or good, and regardless of whether he is a robber, a prostitute, a gentleman, or an upright person, he is born blind inwardly and is unable to see by nature.

In verse 3 the Lord spoke of the works of God being manifested in him. This means that man is blind from birth concerning spiritual matters because he is short of God's work. Regardless of whether someone is good or bad, his inner eyes cannot be opened if God has not worked in him. Without the Lord Jesus working in him, a noble gentleman with the highest morality is as blind inwardly as the most evil person. An evil and wicked person does not know God, and the most moral person likewise cannot understand God, because man is blind from birth and does not know God by nature. Hence, man needs God to work and open his inner eyes so that he can see.

The natural man does not and cannot understand the things of God, because man is blind. We should never think that being intelligent, wise, noble, or moral enables us to see the things of God. It is possible to have a thorough understanding of the world, human relationships, intellectual

matters, international affairs, and the world's situation but still be blind and ignorant concerning the things of God.

Someone who is blind from birth has never seen light. A blind man, therefore, is in darkness. Likewise, the Bible, the church, many preachers, and many spiritual publications are spiritual lights that can enable people to comprehend the things of God. Many people, however, still cannot understand or see spiritual things. This proves that man, being blind from birth, is in complete darkness.

Someone who is born blind is also poor. The Gospel of John says that the blind man was a beggar (v. 8); he was very poor. Revelation 3:17 and 18 show that poverty is connected to blindness. Spiritually speaking, a blind person is poor. Someone who cannot comprehend spiritual things and who does not know God is spiritually destitute. Someone may be rich in the knowledge of the world and may have accumulated earthly riches; however, when we discuss spiritual things with him, we sense that he is a beggar who has nothing spiritually.

People are poor in spiritual things because their eyes are not open. Such people have a particular need. They need their eyes to be opened so that they can see. Spiritually speaking, nothing is more crucial than having one's eyes opened. When the Lord Jesus sent Paul, His disciple, to go forth and preach the gospel, He first charged Paul "to open their eyes," and then "to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18). Turning from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God to receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance is based on one's eyes being opened. The opening of man's eyes is the basis of all spiritual matters. The blind are unable to understand spiritual things, and they cannot receive them. When someone sees a spiritual matter, he has received it.

THE LORD JESUS BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The Lord Jesus must come to be man's light in order for his spiritual eyes to be opened. After saying that the man was blind from birth in order that the works of God might be manifested, the Lord Jesus said that He was sent by God to do the works of God; the Lord Jesus was sent to open people's eyes in

order for them to see (John 9:3-4). Then the Lord Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (v. 5). This means that His opening of people's eyes so that they might see depended on His coming to be their light. Man's ability to see depends on the Lord Jesus being the light of the world. In order to recover the sight of man's inner eyes, the Lord Jesus must enter into man to be his light. When He, the light, enters into man, He enlightens man, and man's inner eyes are opened.

Spiritual blindness, the inability to see spiritual matters, is the issue not only of losing one's inward sight; it is also the issue of being inwardly dark. Darkness is the same as blindness. Blindness prevents people from seeing, and darkness also prevents people from seeing. Therefore, in order to restore man's sight, the Lord Jesus must come as light to enlighten man and dispel the darkness in man's heart. It is for this reason that the devil, the ruler of the world, always tries to prevent people from believing in the gospel of the Lord Jesus; the devil blinds the eyes of their heart so that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ might not shine on them (2 Cor. 4:4). The devil is clearer than man concerning the gospel. He knows that if a person believes in the gospel, the Lord Jesus as the light will enter into him to illuminate him. Therefore, the devil uses many schemes to frustrate man from believing in the gospel of the Lord Jesus and thus keeps man in darkness. The devil works in man to counter the work that the Lord Jesus desires to do in man's heart. The Lord Jesus wants to be the light of man to illuminate man inwardly so that the eyes of man's heart might be opened to see. As the light of the world, only the Lord Jesus can dispel the darkness in man and heal the blindness within man so that man may have sight. Only the Lord Jesus can solve the problems of darkness and blindness in humanity.

HOW THE LORD JESUS GIVES MAN SIGHT

After saying that He would work the works of God, which is to open man's eyes, and that He was the light of the world, the Lord Jesus spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay (John 9:6). He did this to open the eyes of the blind man and to give him sight. Then He told the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam (v. 7). Although this seems insignificant, it is very significant. If we consider the context of what the Lord Jesus said in these verses, we will understand their spiritual meaning. There are four crucial steps in this portion.

The first crucial step is related to the spittle, which was something out of the Lord Jesus. In this portion spittle signifies something that comes out of the Lord Jesus, or we may say that it proceeds out of His mouth. Therefore, spittle signifies the words that proceed out of the Lord Jesus' mouth (Matt. 4:4). John 6:63 says that the Lord's words are spirit and are life. Hence, spittle also signifies the Lord's words of life.

The second crucial step is related to the clay, which signifies man. The Bible says that man was made of clay (Job 33:6; Isa. 45:9; cf. Rom. 9:21). Therefore, the Lord's making clay of the spittle signifies that His word enters into and is mingled with men of clay.

The third crucial step is related to anointing the eyes of the blind. In the original text the word *anointed* in John 9:6 is related to the anointing of an ointment. This refers to the Holy Spirit as an ointment coming to anoint man. When the word of the Lord Jesus enters into man and is mingled with man, the Holy Spirit must come and anoint man. Man must let the Holy Spirit move in him in order to anoint his blindness.

Hence, if we want our inner eyes to be opened, we must take these three steps. The first step is for the word of the Lord Jesus to enter into us. The second step is to let the word of the Lord Jesus mingle with us. The third step is to let the Holy Spirit anoint us. After we read the Bible and spiritual publications or after we listen to a message, we should spend some time to ponder over what we have read or heard. Then the Lord's word will mingle with us, and the Holy Spirit will simultaneously anoint us through His moving and anointing. In John 8:12 the Lord Jesus said, "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." It is possible to read this verse several times but not have the reality of this verse, because we have not allowed this word to enter into us and be mingled with us. However, if we read this verse and spend a few minutes to meditate on it, this word will mingle with us, and the Holy Spirit will anoint us. As a result, we will be enlightened to realize that we were previously in darkness but have now been enlightened by the life of the Lord Jesus. These three steps, however, are not sufficient. There is a fourth step.

The fourth crucial step is related to going and washing in the pool of Siloam. The word *Siloam* means "sent," and it also means "obedient." Obedience involves believing. Hence, going and washing indicate believing and obeying.

If the blind man had not gone to the pool of Siloam to wash off the clay after being anointed, the clay would have blinded him even more. Likewise, if we do not believe and obey after hearing the Lord's word and being anointed by the Holy Spirit, we will become blinder. Let us consider John 8:12 again. Here the Lord Jesus said, "He who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness." Suppose someone has heard and understood this word but has neither believed nor obeyed it. He may say that this is merely the Lord's reasoning and may question how people living in the world today can be delivered from darkness. Such a thought indicates that he is not willing to "go, wash in the pool of Siloam." As a result, he will become blinder.

Some people seem to be clear when they do not read the Bible, but they become confused when they read the Bible. This is the result of not believing or receiving what they have read in the Bible and of not obeying the work of the Holy Spirit in them. These people allow the Lord to anoint their eyes with the clay mingled with spittle, but they do not "go, wash in the pool of Siloam"; that is, they are unwilling to be sent and to obey. In the end they become blinder.

The Lord ordered the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. There were many places with water in the land of Judah, so why did the blind man have to go and wash in the pool of Siloam? This was to test whether he would obey. When the blind man obeyed, his eyes were opened. When the Lord gives us a command, He is also testing us. We may consider the Lord's command to be irrelevant, but our eyes will be opened if we obey.

It was not sufficient for the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam; he still had to wash away the clay, that is, to bury the clay in the water of the pool. Clay represents the self. The spiritual significance of going to the pool of Siloam and washing away the clay is to put the self to death by believing and obeying. This will open our inner eyes so that we will be able to see spiritual things.

Many people read the Bible, but they do not let the words of the Bible enter into them to mingle with them. Some people let the words of the Bible mingle with them, but they do not let the Holy Spirit operate and anoint them. A few may let the Holy Spirit operate and anoint them, but instead of believing and obeying, they preserve the self, the clay, and are unwilling to wash away the self. Therefore, their inner eyes are still blind, unopened. The self becomes a

veil on their inner eyes. The self, the person of clay, is a veil that covers their eyes and takes away their sight.

Going and washing in the pool of Siloam signify believing and obeying. This is baptism. Baptism is included with believing and obeying. If you have believed in the Lord and received Him, the Lord says, "Good. Go and be baptized." You should answer, "I will go." This is to believe and obey. The Bible says that to be baptized is to bury our old man (Rom. 6:4, 6). Therefore, baptism puts the self to death; it does not preserve the self. This will open your inner eyes and enable you to see spiritual things.

We should not think that this interpretation is unfounded. This interpretation is based on our spiritual experience. Someone may listen to the words of the Bible, but the words will not benefit him if he does not let them mingle with him. Hebrews 4:2 speaks of this. The children of Israel heard the word of God, but they did not mix the word with faith; they did not allow God's word to be mingled with them. As a result, the word that they heard did not profit them. After the word is mingled with us, we still need to let the Holy Spirit move and anoint us. Then we also need to believe and obey. Finally, we need to put the self aside, in the place of death, without any reservation.

A person may have heard the gospel many times but with no result. However, one day when he is reading the Bible, he may notice Mark 16:16, which says, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved," and this time it is as if the Lord Jesus mixed His spittle with clay and anointed his eyes. The word that has proceeded out of the Lord's mouth is mingled with him, and the Holy Spirit works to anoint the Lord's word in him. At this juncture he feels that he should be baptized immediately. He is very clear within that the Lord wants him to be baptized. This is equivalent to the Lord telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Then he decides, "Yes, I will go and be baptized." However, even though he has made the decision, he begins to consider other matters and is unwilling to immediately obey by being baptized in the water. As a result, there is a long delay. While he delays, there is a speaking within him: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Have you not decided to be baptized? Why are you still considering?" Nevertheless, he does not obey. During this time he is confused and befuddled when he listens to a message or reads the Bible. However, the Lord is not willing to let him go and questions him seriously, "Are you still unwilling to be baptized? How long will you wait?" If he obeys, he will be like the blind man whose eyes have been anointed with

clay and knows that he must go and wash in the pool of Siloam. After he is baptized, he will be inwardly enlightened immediately. This indicates that the clay of his self has been washed away in the water. This is why his inner eyes are opened. From that day onward, the Bible will be open to him, and he will be able to listen to messages with understanding.

When the Lord's word is mingled with you and the Holy Spirit anoints you, you should believe and obey and put the self in the place of death. If you want to preserve the self, it will be a lump of clay covering the eyes of your heart and preventing you from seeing. If you take the four steps revealed in John 9 by receiving the Lord's word, letting the Lord's word be mingled with you, allowing the Holy Spirit to move and anoint you, and believing and obeying by putting the self to death, your inner eyes will have sight.

MAN BELIEVING IN THE SON OF GOD TO BECOME THE LORD'S SHEEP

The Lord Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, and then He led the blind man to know and believe that He is the Son of God (vv. 35-38). Man must believe that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God in order to have eternal life. When man's inner eyes are opened, he knows and believes that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. By knowing the Lord Jesus and believing that He is the Son of God in order to receive eternal life, the blind man became the Lord's sheep and was able to hear the Lord's voice and understand His word. In spiritual matters hearing is seeing. When a person hears and understands the Lord's word, he sees the things spoken of by the Lord. Those who become the Lord's sheep have eternal life and are kept by the Lord's powerful hand and by the Father's loving hand. They are secure forever. This also means that they are saved. Such a salvation is not a salvation from ordinary things. Rather, it is a salvation in which the Lord opens man's eyes, gives man eternal life, and then keeps and protects him in His and the Father's hand. Let us sing a hymn.

There is sunshine in my soul today,
More glorious and bright
Than glows in any earthly sky,
For Jesus is my light.

O there's sunshine, blessed sunshine,
While the peaceful, happy moments roll;
When Jesus shows His smiling face
There is sunshine in my soul.

There is music in my soul today,
A carol to my King;
And Jesus, listening, can hear
The song I cannot sing.

There is springtime in my soul today,
For when the Lord is near
The dove of peace sings in my heart,
The flowers of grace appear.

There is gladness in my soul today,
And hope, and praise, and love,
For blessings which He gives me now,
For joys laid up above.

(*Hymns*, #343)

CHAPTER NINE

THE NEED OF THE DEAD

Scripture Reading: John 11:1, 3-8, 11-17, 20-29, 32-44; 5:24-25; Eph. 2:1-5

John 11:1, 3-8, 11-17, 20-29, and 32-44 say, "Now there was a certain man who was sick, Lazarus from Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha...The sisters therefore sent to Him saying, Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick. But when Jesus heard it, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When therefore He heard that he was sick, He remained at that time in the place where He was for two days. Then after this He said to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again. The disciples said to Him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and You are going there again?...He said these things, and after this He said to them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going that I may wake him out of sleep. The disciples then said to Him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. But Jesus had spoken about his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. So Jesus then told them plainly, Lazarus has died. And I rejoice for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him. Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with Him. Then when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days...Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went to meet Him; but Mary sat in the house. Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha said to Him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live; and everyone who lives and believes into Me shall by no means die forever. Do you believe this? She said to Him, Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world. And when she had said this, she went away and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here and is calling you. And she, when she heard this, rose quickly and came to Him...Then Mary, when she came to where Jesus was, saw Him and fell at

His feet, saying to Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Then Jesus, when He saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her weeping, was moved with indignation in His spirit and was troubled, and He said, Where have you put him? They said to Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. The Jews then said, Behold how He loved him! But some of them said, Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man also have caused that this man would not die? Jesus therefore, moved with indignation again in Himself, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was deceased, said to Him, Lord, by now he smells, for it is the fourth day that he is there. Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? Then they took the stone away. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the crowd standing around, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me. And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! And he who had died came out, bound hand and foot with cloths, and his face was bound about with a handkerchief. Jesus said to them, Loose him and let him go."

John 5:24-25 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, An hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."

Ephesians 2:1-5 says, "You, though dead in your offenses and sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

John 11 presents the eighth and last kind of people whom the Lord Jesus contacted—the dead. In principle, every person whom the Lord saves is dead. Furthermore, the Lord's salvation raises people out of death. The first case in the Gospel of John reveals that the Lord Jesus regenerates people. The eighth case reveals that the Lord raises people out of death. The eight kinds of people

in the Gospel of John portray eight conditions of an individual person. Although these eight kinds of people seem to be separate cases, they reveal the Lord's full salvation in every person. The beginning of the Lord's salvation involves regenerating man, and the issue of the Lord's salvation involves raising him out of death. Regeneration is the Lord's life entering into man, and resurrection is the issue of the Lord's life entering into man. At the beginning of the Lord's salvation, every believer is regenerated. As the issue of the Lord's salvation, every believer passes out of death into life; that is, every believer is resurrected. The Gospel of John presents the Lord's salvation by showing that the Lord's life enters into man to regenerate man and then raises man out of death.

After someone is regenerated and enlivened with the Lord's life, there will be several spontaneous issues. Initially, his human life becomes meaningful, and he is satisfied. This is portrayed in the record of the Samaritan woman's thirst being quenched by the living water in John 4. Then his weakness is turned into strength. This is seen in the case of the impotent man being strengthened in John 5. Next, he enjoys the Lord as the bread of life and the living water of life to be his life supply. This is seen in the cases of the hungry and the thirsty ones in John 6 and 7. Further, he is delivered from his sins. This is seen in the salvation of the sinful woman in John 8. Moreover, his inward eyes are opened, and he is able to see. This is seen in the case of the blind man receiving sight in John 9. Finally, he is delivered out of death. This is seen with Lazarus being raised out of death in John 11. The issues of the eight combined cases form the full issue of the Lord's salvation. The full issue of the Lord's salvation is to raise man out of death. Salvation is altogether a matter of life; it is not a matter of improving one's behavior.

ALL PEOPLE BEING DEAD

Now we will consider how the life of the Lord Jesus meets the need of the dead. Everyone whom the Lord saves is initially dead. Hence, in John 11 a dead person is chosen to represent man before the Lord. Every person needs to realize that he is a sinner and that he is dead. In the book of Romans man needs salvation because he is a sinner. In the book of Ephesians man needs salvation because he is dead. Although we are alive, the Bible says that we are dead. Let us consider some practical situations to prove this point.

Being Dead

According to John 11, the first characteristic of a dead person is the presence of death itself. Lazarus was a dead man (v. 14). There are three aspects related to death. The first aspect is the loss of function. For example, if I am blind, my eyes are dead; if I am deaf, my ears are dead. I may have eyes and ears, but they are dead because they have lost their function. A person is dead when his functions stop. From the physical point of view, man is living. However, from the spiritual point of view, man is dead because he has completely lost his spiritual function before God.

Ephesians 2 says that we were dead in our offenses and sins (v. 1). Remaining in offenses and sins proves that we are dead. We all know that we should not live in offenses and sins, but we cannot come out of our sins, because we are dead and do not have any function. If someone falls into a mud pit, he will be able to come out of the pit if his legs are living and functional. But if his legs are withered and functionless, he will not be able to come out of the pit even though he wants to come out. If his legs have lost their function, they are dead. Similarly, electricity is "alive" when it passes through a light bulb and shines light. If the filament in the bulb is broken, however, electricity will not be able to pass through it, and the light bulb will not be able to give light. When the light bulb loses its function, it is "dead."

This also applies to man. Man was created for God, to know God, contact God, fellowship with God, and have a relationship with God. Furthermore, man should pass through God and allow God to pass through him in order to express God. However, man does not know God, contact God, fellowship with God, have a relationship with God, or express God. Instead, man commits sins and does evil. Man cannot do what he should do and cannot free himself from the bondage of what he should not do. Man has lost his function before God. This proves that man is dead.

The second aspect of death is the loss of feeling. Every living part in my body has feeling. If a part of my body dies and withers, it loses all feeling. Likewise, man has lost his feeling concerning sin because he is dead in sins. A person may be well-dressed and well-mannered, but he may not have any feeling concerning his sins. I once met a very well-mannered and highly educated man with a respectable family. However, he used filthy and dirty words that were unbearable to hear. He had no feeling concerning these words. His words were as filthy as sewage water. A living person would never drink sewage water. But a dead person has no feeling concerning the presence

of sewage water in his mouth. The words that come out of our mouth are an indication of whether we are living or dead.

Some high-class people in society like to watch dramas. A whole family may watch a drama together. When they see the worst scene, the father claps, the mother claps, and even the children clap. These people are dead because they have no feeling.

The third aspect of death is impotence. From the Lord's perspective, the impotent man who had been sick for thirty-eight years was dead. Weakness is the precursor of death, and death is the source of weakness. It is as natural for people to sin as it is for water to flow downstream. However, pleasing God is as hard as ascending to heaven. Impotence proves that man is dead.

Nearly everything that people do today shows that they are impotent. Whose behavior matches their intentions? Who wants to be entangled by their addictions or ensnared by their sins? Who desires to do immoral things? People do evil things against their will, and they do improper things against their reason. Some people desire to honor their parents but instead disobey their parents. Some people make up their minds to drop their addictions but instead are defiled by sins. Some people determine to do good but instead do evil. People know that they should not violate the law, but they end up in prison. These situations prove that man is impotent, powerless. Who can do good simply because they desire to do good? Who can eliminate their addictions based on their will alone? Who can determine to conduct themselves properly based on their determination alone? Who can refrain from doing what they know they should not do? Man is impotent because man is dead; the factor of death is in him. Man's impotence proves that he is in death and is dead.

Ephesians 2:1 through 5 presents three conditions in relation to man's being dead in sins. The first condition is walking according to the age, the customs, of this world. The second condition is obeying the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that is now operating in the sons of disobedience, that is, the devil. The third condition is indulging in the lusts of the flesh, that is, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts. When man is dead in sins, he is so impotent that he cannot resist the customs of the world, he cannot overcome the devil, and he cannot subdue the flesh. Man is impotent because man is dead.

The influence of the customs of the world may be likened to wind blowing fallen leaves. People are unable to resist the customs of the world, just as fallen leaves are unable to resist the wind. They are always being blown about by the wind. Fallen leaves are unable to resist the wind because they are dead leaves. Likewise, people are unable to resist the customs of the world because they are dead. Many promising young people resolve to not be blown about or be defiled by evil customs. They are determined to be pillars who stand against the downward current. However, when they step into society, they cannot resist the customs of the world. Just as fallen leaves are impotent before the wind, dead people are also impotent before the customs of the world.

The devil is prevailing and powerful in people's hearts. Who is able to overcome the evil spirit who is operating in the hearts of man? Who does not obey the evil troublemaker? Who is not a son of disobedience? People are captives and slaves under the hand of the devil, and they obey his every order. They are like lambs that the devil can kill at his will. The impotence of man under the manipulation of the devil proves that man is dead inwardly, lacking the power to resist.

The flesh is another invincible troubling force in man. When the lusts of the flesh operate in man, he has no choice but to walk according to the lusts of the flesh and to do the desires of the flesh. Many prominent figures in high positions commit deeds that shame themselves and harm their families because they cannot control the lusts of their flesh. Man's weakness in following the lusts of the flesh prove that he is inwardly dead. Just like Lazarus, the people in the world are dead.

Smelling

The second characteristic of the dead is that they smell. John 11 says that Lazarus was dead and also smelled (v. 39). When someone dies, he smells; that is, he has the odor of death. The odor of death is hard to describe, but it exists. There is an odor of death. If you come into contact with a dead man, you will smell the odor of death. Likewise, you may contact a relative or friend whose conduct, words, and expressions have a certain odor. This proves that he is dead. He is so dead that he smells. He has the fact of death and the odor of death. He has death, and he also emits the odor of death.

Someone who tells stories about his sins is dead and has the odor of death. The more he speaks, the more excited he becomes. However, when I hear such a person speak, I am grieved and smell an odor of death. Telling stories about our sins proves that we are dead in sins. We are so dead that we emit a bad odor. As soon as we open our mouth to tell stories about our sins, others can smell the odor of death.

You may wonder why you cannot smell the odor of death. You cannot smell it because you also are dead. You also have the odor of death; hence, you cannot smell the odor of death in others. Most people in northern China love to eat garlic, and there is usually an odor of garlic in their mouth. Some people cannot tolerate this smell of garlic, but if they ate some garlic, they would not smell garlic in others. If you eat garlic and then contact others who eat garlic, you will not smell the odor of garlic. This is because you also have the odor of garlic. There are many obscene things in the newspapers and many disgusting advertisements, but people do not sense that these things are filthy; they cannot smell the odor of death in them. This shows that people are dead and are soaked with the odor of death.

Being Buried

The third characteristic of the dead is that they are buried. The Gospel of John says that Lazarus was buried in a tomb. After someone dies, he needs to be buried. To be buried means to be trapped in a certain thing and unable to get out. To be buried means to fall into a situation and to be unable to get out through one's own efforts. People in the world are buried in their lusts and addictions. Some are buried in their eating and drinking. Some are buried in fornication and gambling. Some are buried in movie theaters and dance clubs. These places are their tombs. Everyone has a tomb in which he is trapped and buried. What is your tomb? Are you also helplessly trapped in something?

Lazarus was dead and had been buried for four days. Some people, however, have been buried in their addictions for decades. Some people have been buried for half their lives in casinos and cannot come out. Some people have been buried in dance clubs and cannot come out. These situations prove that people are inwardly dead.

Being Bound

The fourth characteristic of the dead is that they are bound. Whether in China or in other places, the dead are not only buried; they are also bound. The Gospel of John says that Lazarus was bound hand and foot with cloths in the tomb (v. 44). To be buried means that someone is trapped. To be bound means that someone is unable to move, having no freedom. If you want to know whether people in the world are dead, check whether they are free to move. People in the world are not free; rather, their whole being is bound. Some are bound by their lusts, and others are bound by their addictions. Regardless of the kind of bondage, man has no freedom, and man cannot break away from the source of bondage. This also proves that man is dead.

THE NEED OF THE DEAD

These characteristics of death prove that man is dead. Let us consider the need of the dead. Do the dead need healing? Healing is useless. Do the dead need correction? Correction is also useless. The need of the dead is the resurrection life, because their problem is death. Healing cannot deal with death, and correction cannot deal with death. Only resurrection life can deal with death. Therefore, the dead need a life that can enter into and enliven them. This is the basic need of the dead.

When Lazarus was sick, his sisters sent a message to the Lord Jesus, hoping that the Lord would come to heal him. They asked the Lord to heal Lazarus. However, when the Lord Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He remained in the place where He was for two more days. Because of the delay, Lazarus had been dead for four days when the Lord arrived. The Lord Jesus delayed in order to show that His salvation raises people out of death instead of just solving their outward problems. For this reason He did not go to save Lazarus until he was dead. If He had gone to heal Lazarus, His salvation would not have been presented in a proper way. It would have meant that His salvation merely “corrects” people. Healing is in the principle of correction, but resurrection is in the principle of regeneration. To heal is to correct a problem; it is a matter of behavior. To resurrect is to give life; it is a matter of life. The Gospel of John presents eight cases to portray the principles of the Lord’s salvation. The greatest principle of the Lord’s salvation is to raise people out of death. Therefore, the Lord waited until Lazarus had died instead of healing him while he was sick. This shows that resurrection is the principle of salvation. Resurrection is the true need of those who are dead in sins.

The Lord's salvation is to raise people from the dead, not to correct their problems. Hence, when Lazarus was sick, the Lord did not go to heal him. The Lord did not do anything. This means that if we merely acknowledge that we have problems but not that we are dead, the Lord will be unable to carry out His salvation in us. If we feel that merely our conduct needs to be corrected but not that we need the resurrection of life, the Lord will be unable to carry out His salvation in us. We must see that the Lord's salvation is not to heal or correct us but to raise us from death and to give life to us. Our problem is not that there is something wrong with our conduct but that there is something wrong with our life. We are not only sick; we are dead. The need of the dead is to receive life in order to be resurrected. The only cure for death is resurrection life. Only resurrection life can eliminate death. The cultivation of one's character and the correction of one's conduct cannot eliminate death.

A funeral home modifies the appearance of dead people. However, a person is still dead, regardless of how much his appearance is modified. Makeup can be applied to him so that he looks very nice, but he will still be dead. A funeral home cannot bring the dead back to life or raise them from death. The work in a funeral home cannot solve the problem of the dead; that is not what the dead need. The dead need life and resurrection instead of modification and correction. Modification and correction cannot solve the problem of the dead. The problem of the dead is death. Only life and resurrection can eliminate death. Therefore, the dead need life and resurrection.

THE LORD JESUS

BEING THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

Where can the dead go to receive resurrection and the life that they need? Who can give the dead resurrection and life? Who has resurrection and life? Who is resurrection and life? The Lord Jesus answered these questions in John 11.

When the Lord Jesus came to the place where the sisters of Lazarus were, everything was under the shadow of death. The people were despondent and full of despair. Lazarus had died! If he had only been sick, there would have been hope. But he had died. There was no hope. Under such a shadow of death and despair, the Lord said to Martha, the older sister of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life" (v. 25). Here the Lord clearly revealed that the dead need Him as the resurrection and the life. Because people in the world

are dead, they need resurrection and life, which are the Lord Himself. He is the resurrection and the life. Hence, He can give resurrection and life to solve the problem of death. Not only does He give resurrection and life; He even enters into man to be resurrection and life. The resurrection and the life that He gives man are Himself. He is the resurrection that man needs, and He is the life that man needs. Only the Lord Jesus can meet the need of the dead. He wants to enter into the dead to be their resurrection life. When He enters into them as their resurrection life, He manifests the power of resurrection and the power of life in them so that they may pass out of death into life.

OPINIONS RESISTING THE LORD'S RESURRECTION LIFE

The Lord Jesus desires to enter into man to be man's life and to raise man out of death, but He often runs into obstacles within man. The main obstacle is human opinions. John 11 also describes this obstacle that the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus encountered. The greatest hindrance that the Lord encountered was the opinions of Martha, the sister of Lazarus. Martha's younger sister, Mary, also had opinions, although not as many as Martha had. The Lord could not do certain things because of these opinions. Opinions resist and hinder the Lord's resurrection life. In this chapter there is a dead man, and there is the Savior, who is resurrection. The dead man needs to be saved by the Savior, and the Savior even needs a dead man in order to express the glory and the power of His resurrection. The Savior needs Lazarus, and Lazarus needs the Savior, but there are opinions that frustrate these needs.

In the Bible women always represent mankind. Therefore, in this chapter Martha represents mankind. The Lord Jesus is resurrection, and Lazarus signifies death. Death needs resurrection, but resurrection also needs death. Without death the Lord's resurrection cannot be manifested fully. The dead sinner needed the Lord of resurrection, and the Lord of resurrection needed the dead sinner. However, Martha's opinions frequently came in to frustrate the Savior. Her first opinion was to notify the Lord Jesus that Lazarus was sick so that the Lord would come quickly. As the resurrection, however, the Lord did not need to come quickly. Martha's request was an opinion. When the Lord Jesus learned that Lazarus was sick, He purposely did not come for two more days. By delaying two days, He went against Martha's opinion. Martha wanted Him to come quickly, but He did not; it seemed as if He did not care about Lazarus. Because of this delay, Lazarus died of the sickness, and Martha was greatly disappointed because the Lord did not answer her

petition. The Lord seemed to ignore her; He did not send a reply and seemingly left her in her suffering. It is not that the Lord did not have the power to heal her brother. Martha had followed the Lord for years. The Lord loved and cared for this family. She had seen the Lord heal many sick people, and she could not understand why the Lord would let her brother die instead of coming to heal him. With such frustration and disappointment, Martha buried her brother.

There are many other opinions in John 11. There are Martha's opinions, and there are also the disciples' opinions. When the Lord Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He remained for two days. When He was ready to go to Lazarus, the disciples exhorted Him not to go, because they feared that the Jews would stone Him to death. But because the Lord Jesus was going, they had no choice but to say, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (v. 16). These are also opinions.

There is hardly any person in this chapter who was without an opinion. There is only one person who did not have an opinion—Lazarus, who was dead. Every living person has opinions. Martha and the disciples had opinions; Mary and the other Jews also had opinions. These opinions were against the Lord's intention. As soon as Martha saw the Lord Jesus, she voiced an opinion. The first word out of her mouth was a complaint: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21). She was saying, "You are too late. Why did You not come sooner? If You had come sooner, my brother would not have died." This was her opinion. When the Lord said that her brother would rise again, she gave another opinion, saying, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day" (v. 24). Then the Lord had no choice but to say, "I am the resurrection and the life" (v. 25). The Lord seemed to be saying, "Resurrection is not a matter of time or of the last day but a matter of Me. As long as I am here, there is no problem. I am the resurrection. Being early is not resurrection, and being late is not death. Rather, I am the resurrection. Whether I am early or late, I am the resurrection. There is no need to wait until the last day to have resurrection. I am the resurrection now." After the Lord said this, He asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" (v. 26), and Martha answered, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God" (v. 27). This was an irrelevant answer to His question. It was an opinion. It is difficult for those who have opinions to hear or to understand others.

Martha's opinions hindered and frustrated the Lord's resurrection life. If Martha had not had any opinions, the Lord Jesus would have been able to manifest His power of resurrection in a simple way. However, there were many troubles that day. These troubles originated from Martha. She was a frustration to the Lord of resurrection.

The obstacle to the Lord's resurrection power is opinions. After Martha finished speaking, she went to look for her sister, Mary; she had not listened to what the Lord Jesus said. Instead, she told Mary, "The Teacher is here and is calling you" (v. 28). There is no indication in this chapter that the Lord Jesus called for Mary. It was not the Lord who called her; it was Martha. This was not the Lord's intention, but it was Martha's intention. Martha was so full of opinions that she took her own opinion as the Lord's will. As a result, Mary was called to the Lord. As soon as she saw the Lord, her first word was a complaint also: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32). Mary also had opinions.

The Lord Jesus did not say anything further. It was useless for Him to say anything. He just asked them about the tomb, so they took Him to the tomb. The Jews who were present were also full of opinions, and the Lord Jesus was troubled because of them. The Lord was not sad because of Lazarus. I believe that such an environment of opinions made the Lord Jesus weep. Their condition was pitiful. Resurrection and life were present, but they did not know Him. He even told them that He is the resurrection and the life, and He also made it clear that Lazarus would rise again (v. 23). However, Martha, Mary, and the Jews were distracted and veiled by their many opinions. Therefore, they could not hear the Lord, nor could they see Him. They were indeed pitiful. They could have rejoiced and had peace, but their numerous opinions kept them from knowing the Lord and from hearing Him. Nothing is as strong as opinions in resisting the Lord's resurrection life. The Lord often is hindered by human opinions and views.

In these circumstances the Lord said nothing. He just went to the tomb and asked them to remove the stone. However, Martha had yet another opinion. She said, "Lord, by now he smells" (v. 39). She seemed to be saying, "My brother already smells in the tomb; what use is it to open the tomb?" This view was right according to a natural view, a human view. Hence, it was an opinion—a frustration and a hindrance. From the beginning to the end, Martha was a hindrance to the Lord. All her opinions were a frustration to the

Lord. The Lord responded to Martha and her opinion, saying, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" (v. 40). Then they took away the stone, and the Lord Jesus prayed and thanked God.

Here we need to see a basic principle. In relation to the Lord's saving man, there is no problem on His side. All the problems are the result of opinions. We need to realize that people are like Lazarus inwardly and like Martha outwardly. Inwardly, people are dead and full of the odor of death; like Lazarus, they are in death. People need the Lord to save them, and the Lord is able to save them. However, outwardly, people have opinions, views, thoughts, and ideas. People are also like Martha. Human opinions, views, thoughts, and ideas are the strongest hindrance to the Lord's resurrection life; they prevent people from receiving the Lord's salvation. When people drop their opinions, it is easy for them to receive the salvation of the Lord's resurrection life. The Lord's resurrection life is in the Spirit, and this salvation has been placed before every person, but the greatest obstacle to resurrection life is the human mind. People often hinder the Lord with their thoughts. If you can set your opinions aside, the great power of the Lord's resurrection life will be manifested in you. Your opinions frustrate the great power of the Lord's resurrection life from being manifested in you. The "Martha" in you is too strong. You must drop your opinions. Anyone who is willing to drop his opinions, intents, views, and perspectives will have the power of the Lord's resurrection life manifested in his being.

HOW THE LORD'S RESURRECTION LIFE ENTERS INTO MAN TO RESURRECT MAN

When someone hears the Lord's word, the Lord's resurrection life enters into him. The Lord raised Lazarus from the dead by speaking to him. This indicates that the Lord's resurrection life enters into man and resurrects man by His word. His word is His voice. His resurrection life is contained in His word. His word is also the gospel, which is the words in the Bible and the words that He spoke. When His word meets the death in man, the power of resurrection life swallows up the death in man and enlivens man. Whenever the Lord visits you, His word will come to you. The Lord's resurrection life is in His word. When His word comes to you, His resurrection life will enliven you.

Unbelievers are enlivened by the Lord's word, and believers are also enlivened by the Lord's word. Initially, we were dead inwardly, but we were made alive when we touched the Lord's word. Now the Lord's word comes to us in our morning prayer, when we read the Bible or a spiritual book, or when we are listening to a message. Before the Lord's word comes, we may feel oppressed and inwardly dead, but after the Lord's word comes, we are enlivened. We may have been dead inwardly, but we are made alive by the Lord's word. When the Lord's word touches us, we are made alive. His words are spirit and are life (6:63).

John 5:25 says, "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Lazarus heard the Lord say, "Lazarus, come out!" (11:43). The Lord's voice made him alive. The Bible contains many words of the Lord. Even the words in this gospel message are the Lord's voice. If you will listen, you will be made alive. At the beginning of this chapter we read John 5:24, which says, "He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life." John 3:36 says, "He who believes into the Son has eternal life," and verse 16 says, "Everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." If you will listen to these words, you will receive the Lord's resurrection life and be made alive.

Everyone who hears the Lord's word has some responsibility. The Lord said, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus had a responsibility to come out. After hearing the Lord's word, Lazarus needed to come out. Likewise, after we hear the Lord's word, we need to believe.

Those who hear the Lord's word need help from others as well. When Lazarus came out from the tomb, he was still bound hand and foot with cloths. Hence, the Lord told others to loose him. This is to have help from others.

There are three steps here. The first step involves the Lord's speaking, which is the Lord's doing. The second step involves our coming out, which is our responsibility to believe the Lord's word. The third step involves help from others, which is to be released from our bondage. These three steps are involved in shepherding others. We should always let the Lord speak first. Those whom we shepherd then need to believe. Following this, we can render them some help to release them from their bondage. First, those whom we shepherd need to hear the Lord's word, which is spirit and life. After they hear

the Lord's word, they need to take the responsibility to believe. However, after they believe, they are still bound; hence, we need to loose them. It is useless to try to help others and loose them from their bondage if they have not heard the Lord's word and do not have the Lord's life, because they are still in the tomb. In this situation our work will be in vain. However, if the Lord's word enters into them, and they rise up, we can help loose them from their bondage. Then our work will be useful.

THE ISSUE OF MAN RECEIVING THE LORD'S RESURRECTION LIFE

A person who passes through the three steps of hearing the Lord's word, believing, and being released from his bondage is not only resurrected inwardly but also released outwardly. By passing through these three steps, Lazarus came out of the tomb and was released from all bondage. Likewise, when someone is saved by the Lord's resurrection life, he will come out of his tomb—casinos, dance clubs, and all kinds of sinful places. Furthermore, he will be released from bondage—eating, drinking, fornication, gambling, and all kinds of addictions. When someone is saved by the Lord's life, he is resurrected and released.

The ultimate issue of man's salvation is resurrection. The Lord does not correct man; He enlivens man inwardly. This is how the Lord saves an unbeliever, and this is the same principle of the Lord's resurrection work in believers. As believers, we should be resurrected daily. We are not being corrected daily but being resurrected daily. Every day we need to allow the resurrection life to operate in our being in order to deliver us from the tomb and from bondage. We need to be delivered by the operation of the resurrection life in us from what buries us and from what takes away our freedom.

Furthermore, the issues of the Lord's salvation are also seen in the resurrected ones. The final condition of the eight kinds of people recorded in the Gospel of John is found in every believer. Hence, a believer is regenerated at the beginning and resurrected at the end. Between regeneration and resurrection, his thirsty human life is satisfied, his impotence is turned into strength, he lives by the bread of life and the water of life, he is delivered from sins, his sight is restored, and he is delivered from death. Thus, he is absolutely in the realm of resurrection. This is full salvation.

If we consider the eight cases recorded in the Gospel of John, we will see that these cases constitute a full picture of the different aspects of the Lord's saving life. Man is in death. He is dissatisfied in his human life. He desires to do good but has no strength. He does not have the supply or the nourishment to live in the world. He is unable to overcome sins. He is blind and in darkness, and he is dead.

This was our condition. One day the Lord Jesus, in whom is life, came. He came that we may have life. He desired to enter into us in order to save us with His life. After we were regenerated, we were satisfied, and our human life became meaningful. Our impotence was turned into strength. We also ate the living bread and drank the living water, by which we live before God. We are also delivered from sins, our eyes are opened, and we are delivered from death. This is the way that we are fully saved. This is the full salvation that we received when the Lord Jesus came to be our life. This is also the full salvation that we should believe, receive, and enjoy daily. May everyone participate in the Lord's salvation. May we all thank and praise Him for His salvation. Let us sing a hymn:

Oh, what a Savior that He died for me!
From condemnation He hath made me free;
"He that believeth on the Son" saith He,
"Hath everlasting life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you;"
"Verily, verily," message ever new!
"He that believeth on the Son"—'tis true!—
"Hath everlasting life!"

All my iniquities on Him were laid,
All my indebtedness by Him was paid;
All who believe on Him, the Lord hath said,
"Hath everlasting life."

Though poor and needy, I can trust my Lord;
Though weak and sinful, I believe His word;
Oh, glad message; every child of God
"Hath everlasting life."

Though all unworthy, yet I will not doubt;
For him that cometh He will not cast out:
“He that believeth”—oh, the good news shout!
“Hath everlasting life.”

(*Hymns*, #1014)