The Key to Experiencing Christ — the Human Spirit

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE KEY TO EXPERIENCING CHRIST—

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

by Witness Lee

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"As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him" (Col. 2:6). Receiving Christ is a very wonderful experience, yet it is only a beginning, only a foretaste of the riches of our Christ. Many Christians desire to experience all that Christ is and live by Him in all things. We trust that this booklet will help to bring them into the experience of a daily walk with "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4).

Let us begin with an illustration. Before entering a locked room, we must know the key and how to use it. Likewise, before we can enter into the reality of experiencing all the fullness of Christ, we must know the key and how to use it. The purpose then of this booklet is to point out the key. If we know what the key is and how to use it, we possess the secret with which we can unlock the door to the experience of all the fullness of this rich Christ who is our life. Therefore, the key is of utmost importance.

A very important verse in the New Testament is 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Man is of three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. These are three distinct and separate parts of one human being.

It is easy to make a distinction between the body and the soul—everyone knows these parts are different. But it is not easy for Christians to distinguish the soul from the spirit. In fact, most have thought that the spirit and the soul are identical. But in the above verse the Spirit of God states clearly in His

Word that there are three parts of man. These parts are joined by two conjunctions: "spirit *and* soul *and* body."

Another verse which shows a distinction between the spirit and the soul is Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit." The soul and the spirit are not one, for this verse indicates they can be divided asunder. The soul is the soul and the spirit is the spirit, and these two must be separated.

In the universe there are three different worlds: the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual; and because man is of three different parts, he is able to contact these three different realms. First of all, there is the physical world, with so many material things. We contact the physical world through the five senses of our physical body: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. Then there is the spiritual world. Is it possible for us to contact the spiritual world by the five senses of our body? Of course not. The *spiritual world* can only be contacted by *our spirit*. In our spirit we have the spiritual sense by which we can sense God.

There is also a psychological world, a world which is neither physical nor spiritual. Suppose someone gives you a large sum of money and you are very happy. Does this happiness belong to the physical or to the spiritual world? Happiness, joy, and even sorrow belong to the psychological world. The English word *psychology* comes from the Greek word *psyche* translated as *soul* in the New Testament. *Psychology* simply means "the study of the soul." So there is the psychological or soulish world, in which there is sorrow and joy. Man has been created in three parts—the spirit (Zech. 12:1), the soul (Jer. 38:16), and the body (Gen 2:7)—in order that he might contact three different worlds—the spiritual, the psychological, and the physical.

The soul is also in three parts. One of these parts is the emotion (Deut. 14:26; S. S. 1:7; Matt. 26:38); it is in the emotion that we love, desire, hate, and have joy or sorrow. Another part of the soul is the mind (Josh. 23:14; Psa. 139:14; Prov. 19:2). In the mind we have thoughts, considerations, ideas, and concepts. The third part of the soul is the will (Job 7:15; 6:7; 1 Chron. 22:19), through which we make decisions. Our joy or sorrow is something of the emotion. When we consider or reason, we are using the mind. And when we make a decision to do a certain thing, the will is in operation. The mind, the

will, and the emotions, then, are the three parts of the soul. By the mind we think, by the will we choose, and by the emotions we like or dislike, love or hate.

When we contact the psychological world, we use the soul, the psychological part of our being. The principle is the same in the spiritual world. If we would contact something spiritual, we must use *our spirit.* Let me illustrate in this way. Suppose someone is speaking with his voice. The sound is real, but if you shut your ears and attempt to exercise your eyes to see his voice, you cannot do it. You are using the wrong organ. If we want to hear the sound of his voice, we must exercise our hearing organ. The same principle applies to distinguishing colors. You may have blue, green, purple, red, and many other beautiful colors. But if you exercise your ears to listen to the colors, you will never enjoy their beauty. The substances are there, but you cannot see them because you are using the wrong organ.

How then can we contact God? What organ do we use? First, we must see what kind of substance God is. First Corinthians 15:45, 2 Corinthians 3:17, John 14:16-20, and John 4:24 tell us that God is Spirit. Can we contact God by our physical body? No! This is the wrong organ. Can we contact God by the psychological organ, the soul? No! This also is the wrong organ. We can contact God only *by our spirit, because God is Spirit.* John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit." This is a very important verse. The first *Spirit* is capitalized, referring to the divine Spirit, God Himself. The second *spirit* is not capitalized because it refers to our human spirit. God is Spirit, and we must worship Him in our spirit. We cannot worship or contact Him with the body or with the soul. Since God is Spirit, we must contact Him, worship Him, and fellowship with Him in our spirit and by our spirit.

Let us now look at another verse in which these two spirits are mentioned. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." We all know that we have been born again or regenerated, but what does this mean? It simply means that our spirit has been regenerated by the Spirit of God. That which is born of Spirit (the Spirit of God) is spirit (the human spirit). This verse tells us *where* we are born again. We are not born again in the body or in the soul, but in the spirit. When we believed in the Lord Jesus as our Savior, the Spirit of God came into our spirit. The Holy Spirit quickened and imparted life to regenerate our spirit. At the moment we believed in the Lord Jesus, the Holy

Spirit came with Christ as life to quicken and regenerate our spirit, and from that time He dwells within our spirit (John 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17).

Jesus Christ came to this earth and lived as a man for thirty-three and a half years. Then He was crucified for our sins; He died, was resurrected, and was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). Second Corinthians 3:17 says that "the Lord [Christ] is the Spirit." We must offer much praise that Christ, the life-giving Spirit, has come into us. We were created as vessels or containers, composed of body, soul, and spirit. It is into our human spirit that Christ as the life-giving Spirit has come. The preceding verses have made it clear that God now dwells in our spirit. However, remember that the God within us is not only God, but Jesus Christ. Whatever Christ is, whatever He did, and whatever He obtained and attained have all been included in this life-giving Spirit. Now this life-giving Spirit has come into us and is mingled with our spirit, thereby joining us to Him as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Praise Him, we are one with the Lord in our spirit. If we know how to *turn to our spirit,* we can contact Christ. *This is the secret! This is the key!*

Unbelievers have only physical life in the body and human or psychological life in the soul. They do not have the eternal life of God in their spirit because they have not received Christ as the eternal life into their spirit. Therefore, unbelievers can only live by the soul or the body. Before we were saved, all of us lived, walked, and had our being in the soul. But now, after being saved, we have another life within us which is Christ Himself, and by this life we must learn to live. Our need today is that we must turn to live in another direction—that is, from the soul to the spirit. Before we were saved, we were living by the human life in the soul. Since we have been saved, we must live by the divine life in the spirit.

Now do you see the need of always turning to our spirit? Christ is in our spirit, and if we would meet Christ, we must turn to our spirit. Before we do anything, go anywhere, or say anything, we must turn to our spirit. If we would learn to do this, what a change we would see in our lives.

This is indeed wonderful! Christ is the Spirit, we have a spirit, and these two spirits are joined as one. Now by turning to our spirit and exercising or using our spirit, we have the way to experience the reality of all that Christ is to us. In 1 Timothy 4:7-8 the apostle Paul told us to exercise ourselves unto

godliness. Perhaps some brothers have daily exercises or gymnastics for their body. This is good; even Paul said that bodily exercise has some profit. It is good, but only to a certain degree. However, Paul describes another kind of gymnastics which is good forever— both for today and for eternity! Therefore, we should pay more attention to this other kind of gymnastics, the exercise of our spirit.

How do we know that to exercise ourselves unto godliness means to exercise our spirit? Let us consider it first from a logical standpoint. Paul speaks of two kinds of gymnastics: one is the exercise of the body, but what is the other exercise? Is it the exercise of the mind, the psychological or soulish gymnastics? It is apparent that we have had enough of this kind of exercise in elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and college. From early childhood we have learned to exercise our mind. We have learned too well to exercise this part of our being. Besides the exercise of the body and of the mind, what other kind of exercise do we really need? Spontaneously we must answer, the exercise of our spirit.

We must realize that as Christians, it is not a matter of *what* we are going to do, but *how* we are going to do it. Are we acting by the body, by the soul, or by the spirit? Many brothers and sisters simply fail to use their spirit. They are constantly using their mind, emotion, will, or their physical body, but not their spirit. We pray, talk, argue, read the Bible, reason, debate, and discuss—mostly by the exercise of our soul. We can even quote the Scriptures from our soul! Now it is time for us to return to our spirit. We must come back!

For example, when we approach the Lord in prayer or come to the Word of God to contact Him, we must reject our soulish life (our thoughts, our feelings, our desires) and turn to our spirit in order to contact and fellowship with Him. We can never meet Christ by exercising the faculties of our soul. Christ is in our spirit, not our soul. Only by using our spirit can we meet Him. Of course, we should not think that the Lord demands that we give up the faculties of the mind, emotion, and will. No. The mind, emotion, and will were created by God to be used for His glory. But the Lord's demand is that we give up the corrupted, Adamic mind, emotion, and will as the center of our life and let the life of Christ in our spirit gain control of our being. Our mind, emotion, and will were damaged to such an extent that the natural man could never contact God or fellowship with Him: "But a soulish man does not receive the things of

the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14). This is why we needed the new birth in our spirit (John 3:6-7).

Before salvation we were one hundred percent fallen. We lived in and by this fallen, soulish life, which was absolutely opposed to God. We must learn never to do anything out from this fallen life again, but live entirely by the divine life which is in our spirit. From henceforth we must never take our fallen life in the soul as our source of living, but the divine life in our spirit. We must realize, therefore, that it is not the mind, emotion, and will that must be rejected and destroyed; rather, it is the *life* of the soul that we must give up. We need to realize that this *natural, soulish life* has already been put to the cross (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6) and that we must now take Christ as our life. But the faculties of our soul still remain as instruments to be used by the Spirit to express the Lord Himself.

We must also be very clear that the exercise of the spirit is not only in prayer and touching the Word of God, but in everything. If you do not have any confirmation or sense in the spirit, then stop what you are about to do and stop what you are about to say, regardless of whether it is good or bad. We must not consider, "Is it good, or is it bad?" Christians should not live this way! Our only consideration should be, "Am I in the spirit or in the soul? Am I doing this by myself or by the Lord?" When we use the expression *by the Lord*, we are not speaking of the Lord objectively but very subjectively. We are referring to Him as the life-giving Spirit mingled with our spirit. We must exercise our spirit at all times and in all places.

To know the difference between the body and the soul is easy, but to discern the spirit from the soul is rather difficult. The following illustration is most helpful. Suppose we find something that we would like to purchase. The more we consider it, the more we feel that we would like to have it. Eventually, we make the decision to buy it. The emotion is exercised since we like it, the mind is exercised because we have considered it, and the will is exercised because we have made the decision to buy it. Therefore, the whole soul is exercised. But when we go to purchase it, something deeper within us protests and forbids. This is the spirit. The spirit is the deepest part within us, the very innermost part of our whole being. In all our living we must follow this innermost sense within us.

Is it not evident to all that most Christians have really missed this mark? We are always considering what is right or what is wrong. We think that if something is wrong, we should not do it, but if something is right, we must do it. This is not the way. Right and wrong is the teaching of religion. If we are acting according to religion, then Christ is of no value. The matter of experiencing Christ and God's salvation is absolutely different from religion. It is not a matter of right or wrong, but of living and doing things in the soul or in the spirit. This mark has been missed and even lost by Christianity. The Lord is going to recover this mark today, for it is the "key" to all things.

We must only discern whether we are in the spirit or in the soul in everything we do or say. It is not a matter of right or wrong and good or evil, but a question of Christ or self, spirit or soul. We must discern whether our whole life and daily walk is in our spirit.

In all four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the Lord Jesus repeatedly tells us to deny the self and lose the soul with its soulish life (Matt. 16:24-26; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:23-25; John 12:25). Then in the Epistles, we are told again and again to walk, live, pray, and do everything in the spirit (Acts 17:16; Rom. 1:9; 12:11; 1 Cor. 16:18; 1 Pet. 3:4; Eph. 6:18; Rev. 1:10). Therefore, we must constantly remain in the spirit.

When anyone exercises his spirit, the Holy Spirit is free to move and flow. But this is a real battle, for Satan knows that if we all release our spirits, he will be defeated. He subtly hits the strategic point of choking the spirit of the saints. As long as he can choke our spirit, we are finished and he is successful. Therefore, we must fight the battle. We must learn to practice releasing our spirit all the time in every place. Whether we are in private or in public, we must constantly exercise our spirit.

In conclusion, we must first realize that Christ is the Spirit in our spirit. Then we must know the difference between the spirit and the soul by denying the soulish self and going along with the Lord in our spirit. When we cooperate with our spirit in this way, Christ will have first place in everything. Then we will experience Christ in our spirit, and we will learn how to apply Him and experience Him in all things.