PERFECTING TRAINING

WITNESS LEE



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee on February 14, 1980, through May 21, 1982, in Anaheim, California.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OPENING WORD TO THE PERFECTING TRAINING

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:11-16

Ephesians 4:11-16 has a number of crucial points, but the focus of these crucial points is the perfecting of the saints. In these few verses the center and central thing in the apostle Paul's mind was the perfecting of the saints.

According to these verses, we are first told that the gifts were given: "He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers" (v. 11). This is the initial step; then the result is unto the work of the ministry, that is, unto the building up of the Body of Christ. How could the Body be built up? By the growth in life. Then out of the growth in life the function will come, the operation in the measure of each one part, to cause the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. Thus, there is the initial stage, and then there is the result. Between these two ends is the perfecting of the saints. If there is no perfecting of the saints, all the gifts given by the Head become vain. Also, there will be nothing to cause the growth of the Body in life so that functions may come out to build up the Body in love. The crucial and central point in this portion of the Word is the perfecting of the saints. Throughout the past years the Lord has been leading us in the ministry to perfect the saints for the growth in life so that the functions may come out to build up the Body in love.

We need to cover several points so that everyone may be impressed with what we are doing in this Perfecting Training. Why, after so many years, must we begin to have another stage? We all know the situation in today's Christianity. Among so many believers in Christianity I would say honestly that there is no growth in life at all. I was with fundamental and formal Christianity, and I saw no growth there. I was also with the Brethren, who may be considered as the best among the Christians. Yet after seven and a half years with them, I was the same; I had experienced no growth in life. In fact, they did not even talk about the matter of growing in life.

What about the functioning among today's Christians? In a large so-called church, with perhaps three thousand, five thousand, or even seven thousand members, not one is a proper functioning member. What they have is just some hired professional preachers and ministers and certain rules and regulations of their organization. They just have an organization with hired professionals to carry out their work. That is not an organism at all; that is an organization. But the Body, which is the church, is an organism, and every member of this organism must be organic.

We have pointed out in the past that every normal person is born complete and perfect. Regardless of how little a baby is, if he is proper and normal, he has all the organs. He has eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, a heart, lungs, a stomach, intestines, hands, and feet. But, although he is complete and perfect in all his organs, he has almost no function. His eyes, feet, hands, and mouth are complete and perfect, but they do not function. Why? It is because there is a shortage of growth in life. This complete and perfect person needs to be perfected, which is mainly through the growth in life. All the mothers know that the way to perfect their babies is to feed them so that they will grow.

This, too, is the way for the saints to be perfected; they need to grow. Then from the growth, a certain function will come out. The more a child grows, the more functions he has. This is to be perfected. In these verses the apostles, prophets, and others function just like nursing mothers. Their work is just to perfect the saints. Verse 11 says that the gifts were given, and verse 12 says that they are for the perfecting of the saints. The work of the gifts is to perfect the saints. Actually, the gifts such as the apostles and prophets do not and should not build up the Body directly. But in today's Christianity the hired professionals do all the work directly by themselves. The Bible tells us that all the gifts should not build up the Body of Christ directly but that they should perfect the saints so that the saints may grow. Then the different operations, or functions, in the measure of each one part will come out of the growth in life. Each member has a measure, but it must have the growth in life for the operation to come out. It is by the operation in the measure of each one part that the Body is built up.

We can see clearly from these verses that the Body of Christ is built up by the function of every member in its measure. The function depends upon the growth. Verse 13 mentions a full-grown man. Verse 15 tells us that we may

grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, out from whom comes the operation in the measure of each one part.

I am so happy that the Lord has preserved us and brought us into the church life. Just to be here is a great mercy and grace. However, although I am very happy and excited, I feel that we are short of something. Many of you have been here for more than three and a half years, attending the church meetings and training meetings. You have come to meeting after meeting, each of which has cost you about two hours. Thank the Lord that we all have a heart for His recovery and that, at least to some extent, we all mean business with the Lord for His move on this earth. Yet I have a big question: how much growth in life have you gained?

Furthermore, many among us still do not function as we should. If we are lacking the growth in life and lacking the proper functioning, how can the Lord's recovery go on? Eventually, we will drift back into the situation of Christianity. Then we will be a repetition of the sad history of Christianity. So this is a crucial matter. On the one hand, I am excited, but on the other hand, I am concerned about the shortage of growth and the lack of function. I realize that a good number do function, but according to my observation, your function is not so effective. You function, but you do not produce any spiritual fruit. Thus, some among us do not have the growth in life, others do not function, and many who do function are not so effective. Why do we lack the adequate growth? Why do we lack the proper function? And why do we function without effectiveness? We need four brothers to come to the platform to help us discover the answers to these three whys. Brothers, please tell us why the saints have not grown so much.

Well, I know from having eight children myself that I have seen the growth through constant and steady eating. Not one of them has stunted growth, but every one continues growing in a very steady way. But I know that many of us do not eat in a constant and steady way. The growth depends very much upon our eating habits. While our habit to come to the meetings is very consistent, we may many times miss our spiritual eating.

Do you other brothers feel that this is right? Do you feel that although the saints would never miss a meeting, they might unconsciously miss the proper spiritual eating?

I feel quite much the same way, and I would make this comparison: it may be compared to children of rich families who have the best food available to them, and when they eat with the family, they eat a proper, hot, and balanced meal. But when they are away from the family, they do not eat properly. Although the riches are available, they may not partake of them adequately. It is one thing to have a heart, but it is another thing to be consistently partaking of the riches that are available.

Actually, brothers, I do not believe this is the problem. You check with all the saints. When they come to the meetings, surely they pick up a lot of spiritual food. You cannot say that the saints come to the meeting yet neglect to eat. They eat a lot.

It may be that they eat in the meetings, but I am thinking more about the private life, the daily walk. Certainly there is an abundance of food in the meetings.

You have to realize that as long as they eat in the meetings, they do get some food. It is not normal to continually eat twenty-four hours a day. Just a few times a day is sufficient. I would say that the reason your children eat regularly and grow steadily is because they have no disease, no sickness. But with so many saints, there is a kind of sickness. Although they eat a lot, they do not grow. Although they eat much food, some disease within them eats it up, and they do not grow. Many among us have this kind of sickness or disease. We must discover what kind of disease is causing this lack of growth. It seems there is another eater within the saints, eating the food that they eat. How shall we designate this inside eater? What is the disease that eats up our food? Please consider yourself, brother. Why do you not grow? What kind of disease keeps you from growing?

It may be that ambition is the disease.

It may be that ambition is the problem. If you really do have some ambition, that is terrible. Surely ambition is a big eater. But I think some other germs may also be here. We need another brother to help diagnose your sickness.

One problem is that his time is very occupied by his work because he wants to be faithful to his job. Due to this factor he spends sixty to seventy-five hours a week on his job. Therefore, he has no time for the church life. This is his real problem.

This is just an outward symptom. You have not touched his real disease.

Another disease is that he was an elder in a certain place and was mistreated. That is now in the past, but perhaps the brother did not take this situation from the Lord. Therefore, he has some doubts and unhappiness concerning the whole situation. Because of this he occupies his time with outward things to replace his inward emptiness. He needs to overcome being mistreated and believe in the sovereignty of the Lord in the situation. He should go to the Lord to see how the Lord wants to deal with him.

This sounds like a pastor using the materials of the Lord's recovery. You are teaching him to take the mistreatment and to consider it something from the Lord. I would like to check with all of you—do you consider this as a proper teaching? If so, then you all are sick. Apparently, this teaching is right; actually, this is a sickening teaching. If taken, it will cause a Christian to be sick. If this brother considers the mistreatment as something from the Lord, his old man, his flesh, will be strengthened to the uttermost. This will become his boast. He would consider himself to be quite spiritual—that although he was mistreated, he did not react but took that mistreatment as something from the Lord. Then he would become a mistreated hero. This would simply strengthen his old man, his self, and his flesh. So you have to realize that this is not a healthy teaching. Rather, this teaching will make people sick. It will strengthen their flesh and self.

What then, for the sake of growth in life, should the brother do? First, he should go to the Lord without being offended in any way. He should go to the Lord, asking, "Lord, what do You want me to learn? I have been mistreated and have lost the eldership, but what do You want me to learn?" Do not pick up the religious teaching that you have to bear the cross and to take every mistreatment and circumstance as something from the Lord. This kind of teaching is not something living, something directly from the Lord. Forgetting all these things, just open to the Lord: "Lord, what do You want to teach me? I believe that this is something of You. What should I learn from this?"

If he is so open to the Lord, the Lord may enlighten him and shine upon his ambition. Due to that shining, he would prostrate himself before the Lord and pray, "Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me, Lord. I did have such an ambition, and I still have such an ambition." The Lord would then say to him, "Drop such an ambition." In tears he would say, "Lord, thank You. I would drop it." This is

the real dealing, the real fellowship, with the Lord. If the brother will have such a dealing with the Lord, he will grow spiritually. We must realize, though, that just because the brother realizes he has some ambition, this does not mean that he has been enlightened by the Lord. He simply has his own realization that he is ambitious. This kind of self-realization does not help him to grow. Even unbelievers realize their mistakes, shortcomings, bad habits, and bad customs. But this does not mean that they can grow in life. Self-realization does not help the growth in life. Only the Lord's enlightenment can effect the growth in life. We need the Lord's enlightenment.

Just to pick up many teachings and doctrines does not help. If you accumulate many teachings and doctrines, you will spontaneously try to apply them when you are in a certain situation without having a direct, instant, and living contact with the Lord. Even if you pick up the most spiritual teachings, they will simply make you a religious person, not a person who is growing in life. Whatever our situations or circumstances, we should not pick up teachings, doctrines, or lessons and try to apply them to our situations. That is something religious; that is not the proper growth in life. The proper growth in life comes only from the direct contact with the Lord. It comes from His living enlightenment and from His instant pointing out of things within our being. Then in His presence, we will respond: "Lord, I love You. I love You. I do not apply any teaching to my situation. Lord, I take You. I take You according to Your enlightenment. I take You according to Your instant, present shining." This kind of prayer will never make you religious but will cause you right away to grow in life. You will take a great step in the growth in life.

Brothers, I feel that we still do not have a proper and thorough diagnosis of this case. Although ambition may be a frustrating factor with this brother, I do not believe it is the vital disease. We need some other brothers to help us diagnose the problem. This is not to criticize or to backbite. No. In a sense we are all sick. We all sympathize with one another, and we would all like to receive the same kind of healing. We all need the same kind of medication, treatment, and even surgery. May we have another diagnosis?

From my contact with this brother, I have never had the feeling that he has so much problem with ambition. But I have felt he needs to realize that he is in Christ and living and functioning unto Christ. This would take his

eyes off others' appreciation or depreciation of him. It would make him more bold in his living unto the Lord, giving him the standing and the strength he needs. Then if ambition or some other things were a problem, they could be rooted out.

You have, no doubt, gone further to touch his crucial problem. According to your word, he should not care so much whether people appreciate or depreciate what he is and what he does for the Lord. In other words, you have discovered that this brother is always hunting for others' appreciation of what he is toward the Lord and what he has done for the Lord.

Here is a dear brother who, no doubt, is absolutely for the Lord's recovery. He does mean business with the Lord for His move. But I feel that through all the years in the Lord's recovery, we did not render him the particular help that he needed. Because of this, his problem has remained, even to this day. What, then, is his real problem? I would say that his problem is just his self. Of course, we all have the self, but he might be considered as a typical case in the matter of the self. His self is not a selfish or bad self; rather, his self is a perfect, complete, and strong self. His self has never been touched by anyone. According to my contact with him in the past, I did pick up the registration that he is a dear brother who loves the Lord so much, who is absolutely for the Lord's recovery, yet he has a strong, perfect self untouched by the Lord. This kind of self causes him, first of all, to be very independent. Although he is among the saints all the time and he is in the church and in the recovery, he is like a drop of oil in a bucket of water. A drop of oil may be in so much water, but it still remains by itself. The drop of oil is in the water, but it is never mingled, blended, and merged with the water. On the contrary, when a drop of water is dropped into a large amount of water, it immediately loses its identification. It becomes lost in the water, and you cannot find a trace of it. Our brother is like a drop of oil in the water—he is among us, but he is very independent.

The second point is that he is altogether not flexible. This means that everything must be up to his standard and consideration. Even when he functions in the meeting, it must be that the situation matches his convenience and standard. If the meeting does not meet his standard or it is not convenient, he will not function. This means that he is not flexible. To be flexible concerning the meetings means that whether the meeting is good or bad, high or low, he would still function. He would make himself flexible

according to the situation of the meeting. It would not matter to him whether or not he is an elder, a deacon, or a leading one—he would still function. This means that he would function under all kinds of circumstances. To function in this way is very hard for him because he is not so flexible. Furthermore, if the church situation does not fit his feeling, he would not grow, but if the church situation fits his feeling, then he would grow. Again, this means that he is not flexible. He should be flexible to grow regardless of whether the brothers and sisters are good or bad. His strong self causes him to be independent, and it causes him not to be flexible.

Third, this brother has the top selections. His self causes him to have his choice. He is not mingled in the church life at all. He remains in his choice. This is a strong self existing in its own surroundings. He has the strongest choice within the church; this is a strong self.

Fourth, his opinion is very strong. I do not think anything could break it. He is a strong person in his opinion. What is this? This is self. I think just these points are sufficient. The sickness of this brother that eats up his growth all the time is a self that causes him to be independent, not to be flexible at all, and causes him to always have his top choice in everything. He means business with the Lord, yet he does not care for the church so much; he cares for his choice. Although he does not say much, he is strongly opinionated. His strong, unbreakable opinion is existing all the time.

You just consider how much nourishment is required to feed this strong self. It is like a cancer, eating up all the nourishment. What then should this brother do? I would say that he should not do anything except go to the Lord and sit there, saying, "Lord, here I am. I still may not have the light from You to see where I am, but at least I have heard something. Lord, here I am. Lord, what would You do?" If the brother will pray in this way, I believe what he heard here will become a kind of living enlightenment to him. Under such a shining he may realize that although he has been so many years in the Lord's recovery and even has paid a high cost, yet he has not had the adequate growth in life. The growth of life does not match the years he has been in the Lord's recovery. Then he would ask for the Lord's mercy, and the living enlightening would come. When the heavenly light comes, it kills, and then it brings in resurrection. This means that there will be a kind of living breaking of the self. The self will be broken not by anyone else and not in a way of self-asceticism. Just to try to "bear the cross" or to "crucify himself" will not

work. These are just doctrines that will either make him religious or ascetic. Our only salvation is the enlightenment of the Lord. We have to go to the Lord; then the light will come. In His light we will see light. Then the rich life, the fatness of the house of God, will be ours, and we will have the growth in life. I believe that the four points we have mentioned are the basic germs within our brother. These are the things that frustrate his growth in life.

Now we come to another brother. Brother, how do you feel about your growth in life?

I feel definitely that my growth in life does not match the time that I have been in the recovery.

I think most of us would say the same thing. What, then, is your sensation about your problem?

It may be that I am seeking for appreciation and that I feel very inhibited if I feel I am not appreciated.

Could some other brothers who know this brother come to help us? We are hunting for help; we want to be healed from our sickness. This is not a matter of accusing, backbiting, or criticizing; this is to have a little diagnosis. Be pure in your motive, pure in your thinking, and pure in your utterance.

To be honest I have never considered too much what might be the hindrance to this brother's growth. According to my realization, few of the brothers whom I know have as much heart for the Lord's recovery as this brother. Also, few brothers really mean business with the Lord and deal with the Lord as he does. I know he has much inward dealing with the Lord, and he receives much light from the Lord regarding himself and regarding his relationship with all the saints in the church. I think he is very healthy.

But he himself admits that his growth is not that adequate. Now we have a good point. Let us not consider whether he has adequate growth or not. Rather, let us check whether or not he has the adequate function in the church. If he does have the adequate function, it would prove that he has the adequate growth. If you say he has the growth, but there is not the function, you have to question the growth. Thus, we have to check whether this brother functions adequately and whether his function is effective. If he does not function adequately or if his function is not effective, then there must be a

problem with his growth in life. Whether he has the adequate growth in life is something ambiguous and invisible, but the function is visible all the time. So would you other brothers tell us whether or not this brother functions adequately?

According to my registration, I would say this brother's function is always a profit to the church.

You say his function is a profit to the church, but is it also adequate? I have discovered that some of the saints do bring a profit to the church when they function, but they function very rarely. They may function only once a year. This means they function and bring in a big profit only once a year. They may bring in one thousand dollars but only once a year. The proper and adequate way is to function every day even though you may bring in only ten dollars. Every day you should function, and every day you should bring in ten dollars. We prefer to see a ten-dollar function daily rather than a one-thousand-dollar function yearly. I am afraid he waits until we all die, and then he functions. He functions and makes a lot of profit, but after we all die. I am afraid also that he would not function at the first of the year but only the last three days of the year.

It may be, however, that this brother does function often. Then I would ask whether he functions on time. We all like to eat lunch between 12:00 and 1:00 P.M., yet he may serve lunch at 6:15 P.M. He may serve lunch but not on time. I have noticed that many dear saints do function and even function often but not always on time. They do not function until the meeting has already been slaughtered; then they function. They function to the dead body. I like to see the saints function before the others die. While this brother may function quite often, I am concerned whether or not his function is on time. It may be hard for him to function on time.

According to my observation, this brother is a person with a very high self-consciousness. He is very sensitive to his self-consciousness. His hesitation, his slowness to function, and his consideration come from his self-consciousness. You have to realize that every self-conscious person is a self-protecting person. He is self-conscious because he is self-protecting. Again, this is a hindrance to the growth of life within him. We all have to learn one thing—when we come together in the meeting, we should sacrifice ourselves. We should care only for the meeting. We should not care for our

condition, our situation, or anything else; we should care only for the meeting. When we have the feeling within that we have to function, we should just function. We should not hesitate, and we should not consider. All of us have this kind of problem. Unless this brother has the assurance that his self will not be damaged, he would not function. He would function only when he has the assurance that his self could be protected. This is why he does not function on time, and this is a hidden factor that eats up the growth of life within him. Without this factor he would have more growth, and he would function more often and on time. He would also have much transformation.

Another point is that this brother always tries not to offend people and not to do anything wrong. This is a kind of self-protecting, which becomes his sensation of himself. He becomes very sensitive concerning himself. This self-sensitivity is what we call self-consciousness. This not only frustrates the function but also secretly eats up the growth in life. I hope this brother would bring this matter to the Lord and not just accept what we are fellowshipping here as a kind of instruction, doctrine, or teaching in the Lord's recovery. To take this as a kind of teaching is not wrong; it is even very good, but it is not so adequate. This fellowship should only help him to realize that he does have some need here and that he needs to go to the Lord in a direct and desperate way. The Lord will then give him the light. Once the heavenly light comes, it will kill all the germs. This is not asceticism or any kind of self-performance. This is different from the teaching that we have to bear the cross. This is also different from the teaching in the book *The Imitation of Christ*. This is a kind of a direct contact that brings you into the light from the Lord. Such a light will spontaneously kill all your problems, even without your consciousness. After a few days you will wonder, realizing that something within you has changed. What has happened? The heavenly light has done some work in you without your consciousness. By such a work your spiritual disease will be cured. The proper medication for a certain disease will kill the germs of that disease. We all have to go to the Lord. Only the life-giving Spirit through the enlightenment from the heavens can deal with the diseases we have within us.

This is why we need such a perfecting meeting. Otherwise, week after week we will hear so many messages just in a general way; what we need is some particular diagnosis, some particular medication, and some particular healing. Only the Lord Himself can give us this particular healing; I cannot. So we all have to go to Him to have a direct contact with Him, purposely, particularly for this one item. Then you will see that something within you will be killed;

something will be diminished; it will be gone. This is the healing. Then the growth will be there, and the function will come.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DAMAGE OF OPINION (1)

The Perfecting Training is a definite work just to perfect the saints. It has only one purpose, that is, the building up of the Body. The Bible reveals to us that God's intention is to get the Body of Christ, the church. This does not mean the church in a loose sense but the church builded up. When the church is mentioned in the Bible, it is mentioned in the context of building up. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church." In the New Testament the church is first mentioned not in a doctrinal way but in a way of building. Whenever we speak of the church, we mean the church builded up.

During the past few years we have realized that the biggest problem in the church is the building up, and the biggest problem in the Body is the matter of function. We are all members of the church, yet even within one locality we could not see much building up. Furthermore, in one local expression of the Body, we could not see much function. We must find the answer to these two problems; then we could be perfected. Actually, these two problems—the lack of building up and the lack of functioning—are one thing. We need some to tell us why we are short of the proper building up and the proper functioning.

Last week we saw that there is a real lack of functioning in the members because we try to hide and protect ourselves. Something of the self has not been broken through, and for some reason, whether because of unwillingness or something else, there is not a real consecration to break through the self to function.

It seems that our problem in functioning and our problem in the growth of life have to do with an element of the self. It may be that the lack of functioning is due to a sense of shortage, to a sense of not being up to a standard, whether the church's standard, our own standard, or a biblical standard. This may cause us to feel that we are not qualified to share.

According to your fellowship, the only reason that we are lacking the building up, or we are lacking the functions, is the self. But we have to realize that there is not one reason or factor only. There are many factors. As a whole we have to say that the lack of building up and the lack of function are due to the shortage of the growth in life. The growth in life is the unique factor for us

to be built up and to function. If we are not built up or if we would not be built up, it means that we are short of the growth in life. If we do not function or we are unable to function, this also indicates that we are short of the growth in life. However, the shortage of the growth in life is due to many factors. We must discover these factors. Many of you have been among us at least three or four years. This is not a short time. If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we do not have the adequate growth in life. Therefore, the building up among us is lacking. Also, the functioning is lacking because we do not have the adequate growth in life. So, what hinders our growth?

According to the Lord's sovereign provision among us, there should be no excuse for not growing in life. The situation among many Christians today is that there is little light, little word, little life supply, and nearly no provision for them to grow with. But in the Lord's recovery we have the provisions. You cannot say that we are short of light or of life supply. You cannot say that the Word of God is not real or that there is no atmosphere or circumstance to help us grow. You cannot excuse yourself by saying that your shortage of growth in life is not due to you but due to the church situation and due to the environment among us. If then, we have the atmosphere, the environment, and if we are in a condition that is easy for growth—with the life supply, the light, the rich word, and all kinds of necessary provisions for life—why do not we grow adequately? We grow, but we grow too little. We grow too slowly, and the growth is not that adequate. Also, the function is not that satisfactory. We must find out what the problem is. We do recognize that the self is a hindrance to our growth in life, but we must consider whether or not there are some other factors. What else hinders the growth in life?

I believe that we have an adequate intake of the supply but that there is some problem in our daily living of going along with the Lord when He touches us; we have a lack of willingness to go along with the Lord.

Actually, the lack of willingness is not so crucial or basic. For example, if a family has a rich supply of food, and the little ones eat, they are nourished whether or not they are willing to eat. They still get the nourishment. But here, we all get the food yet without much growth. I do not feel that the lack of willingness is so crucial. You must realize that there is a negative factor within us that is very great and crucial. In the last chapter we pointed out that we may have eaten a lot, but within us there is another eater that consumes all our nourishment. We eat the food, but some germ within us eats the

nourishment intended for the body. Eventually, we do not get the nourishment; rather, the germs get the nourishment. Actually, the biggest germ in our spiritual life is not the self; it is something else. Although you have been eating and receiving much food, nearly all the nourishment has been swallowed up by this big eater within you. In all of us there is a big eater. You come to the meeting, and you receive the message, accepting the Lord's provision, yet within you there is a bigger eater. Whatever you take in, this eater eats. What is this big eater? Some may answer that disobedience is the big eater. But while disobedience is not good, it is not that bad. Others also may feel that the lack of willingness is a big eater, but again I would say that the lack of willingness is not too serious. Do not, however, take this word as an excuse to be loose. What is the big eater within us?

Opinions.

Do not use the plural word *opinions;* just say opinion. Nothing eats you up as much as your opinion. I believe that after listening to this you all would say Amen. The opinion is a big eater. Although some are stronger than others, everyone is opinionated. You must realize that the more you are opinionated, the more you are swallowed up. The less you are opinionated, the less you are eaten up. The stronger your opinion is, the less you will grow; the stronger your opinion is, the less you will function. Some could realize and testify that because their last function was full of opinion, that function terminated their function. Every time you function with an opinion, it terminates your function. Contrariwise, if you and I would function without any opinion, in the next meeting we would surely function again. We all are opinionated; we all have our opinion. What hinders your growth in life? Your opinion. What frustrates your function? Your opinion. Why have you not been built up with others? Your opinion. When I have been with some brothers, I sensed that they did not have much opinion. To have an opinion is one thing, and to be a person of opinion is another. A person of opinion is always opinionated.

You need to pray, opening yourself to the Lord. Ask the Lord to show you whether or not you are a person of opinion. Has there ever been a time when the church had some activity, and you did not have an opinion? Has there ever been a time when the elders announced something or did something, and you did not have an opinion? Have you never criticized what the brothers and the sisters in your church have done? We all are persons of opinion. None of

us can say that he has been attending the meetings for three and a half years and yet has never criticized anyone.

By this you can see that among us there is a swarm of criticizing germs. With opinions swarming within us and among us, how could we grow and how could we function? According to our concept, something may be just a little opinion; it is not hatred; it is not envy; it is not strife; it is not jealousy. It is just a small opinion. And you may consider that there is liberty and freedom in the church, that we do not have a dictatorship; rather, we have a kind of heavenly, spiritual, divine democracy. Since no one is a dictator, why should you not have your opinion? How can you avoid being opinionated? The more reasonings you have, the more opinions you will have. Even to consider that the church is free, the church is democratic, the church is this, or the church is that, is just an opinion.

Brothers, it is altogether not so easy to stay away from our opinion. It is not easy to drop our opinion. Yet we have to realize that nothing within us eats us up so much as our opinion. Opinion eats us up all the time.

We all agree that we always are short of time to pray. Whenever we pray, we have the sensation that we are short of time, that we do not have time to pray. But if we would drop our opinion, we would have a lot of time to pray. Why? Because most of your time has been occupied with talk. You have to realize that all your talk is an expression of your opinion. For example, whoever likes to talk for a long time on the phone surely must be a very opinionated person. If you do not have any opinion, your phone conversation may consist just of yes or no. You will not have much to say because you have no opinion.

Suppose someone calls you on the telephone to ask you about a certain brother. This presents a great temptation. This kind of question, spiritually speaking, is altogether not healthy. Even if you answer in a positive way, that is a kind of opinion. Do not think that simply to say something negative is an opinion, but to say something positive is not an opinion. Both are opinions. The church must be a kingdom without opinion. Through all the years I have been learning and realizing one thing: to express an opinion concerning a certain thing, a certain person, or a certain church, whether negative or positive, is altogether unhealthy. Learn not to express any opinion. This is not a matter of playing politics. If you speak or do not speak as a kind of politics, that is not good. But you have to learn to drop your opinion. Learn to have no

opinion concerning any person, any thing, or any church. You simply need to love the Lord, to walk in the spirit, to receive the daily portion of grace, and to be actually one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Learn to have no idea about anyone or about any church. This is not easy. You may ask whether or not this is workable. Yes, it is workable, but it is not easy. Often you will be tempted to express your idea and your opinion.

We all must have a desperate prayer: "Lord, deliver me from my opinion. Deliver me from this one big eater—my opinion. Lord, help me to drop my opinion." Whenever I travel, very few saints ask me concerning certain churches or certain brothers. I believe it is to some extent because I have no opinion. If you ask me about a certain church, I simply have no opinion. And I do not like to exercise my opinion. If you ask me about a certain brother, I have no opinion. I do not know the things concerning certain brothers, and I do not have any intention to know those things. I only like to know the Bible; I only like to know the Lord Jesus. I only like to know what is grace, and what it is to be one spirit with the Lord, and how I could minister life to some needy ones. I really do not like to know anything else. So if you ask me about a certain place or a certain person, I do not have much to say to you.

Talk always comes from opinions. Believe me, if you would daily stop your unnecessary talking, you will experience a great rescue. I am afraid that many among us have wasted their time talking over the telephone. All the talk is your opinion concerning certain things, certain persons, or certain places. According to your experience, I believe you all can testify to this one thing; that is, after such a talk in which you expressed your opinion and your concept concerning certain places, certain churches, or certain things, your whole being, especially your spirit, was exhausted. When you went to pray, you had no spirit; when you came to the meeting, you had no spirit; when you tried to function, you had no spirit. Your spirit had been exhausted, even killed. Furthermore, all the positive nourishment in your spirit had been eaten up by your talk of opinion. You need to practice to have no more of this kind of talk. Just speak yes or no according to the fact. Leave off your opinion. If you will do this, you will save a lot of time to pray. Also, your spiritual strength within you will not be exhausted. Rather, you will be strengthened all the time. Then when you come to the meeting, it will be easy for you to function. It will be easy to pray at any time and in any situation. You will simply open your mouth, and a lot of prayer will come out of your spirit because you have a lot of storage in your spirit. Your spirit will not be

exhausted. Because you have had too much talking according to your opinion, all the fatness in your spirit has been consumed. After talking and expressing your opinion, you cannot grow, and even you cannot function. You also cannot pray, because your spirit has been exhausted. Suppose you exercise for a whole day not to talk at all. When you come to the meeting that evening, you would see the difference. The meeting would be in the heavens, full of glory and full of functioning.

I am afraid that many times even your prayer is a kind of opinion expressed to the Lord. Not only your talk but also your prayer is an opinion. You pray, "Lord, help the elders to do things in a different way." That is your opinion. "Lord, You know the situation among the sisters is not that healthy." That is your opinion. Sometimes a sister may pray for her husband: "Lord, Lord, help my husband." Even your prayer for your husband is a kind of opinion. How do you know that your husband needs help? Who told you to pray in this way? It came from your opinion. I am afraid that if you stopped talking, you would also stop praying. If you stopped all your talking according to your opinion, you might also have no more prayer. This simply would prove that your prayers through the years have been mostly opinions. This is why many of your prayers were not answered. The Lord would not answer your opinion. When you drop your opinion, there will be a great change in your Christian life. Exercise one thing, that is, to drop your opinion. You need to pray, "Lord, the church is Yours, all the saints are Yours, and even I myself am Yours. Who am I? What can I do? I am nothing. I have no opinion, Lord. All the saints have been saved by You, and the church has been set up by You, established by You, and is being built by You. Even today I am still in Your hand."

Oh, we all have to realize our nothingness; we have to drop all kinds of opinion. Believe me, if you would drop your talking and drop your prayer of opinion, you would spontaneously have sweet prayers full of thanksgiving and appreciation. You would have no opinion; you would just speak blessing. You would have the well speaking concerning the Lord. You would tell the Lord, "Lord, I love You." If you would drop your opinion, your talking, and your opinionated prayer, the well speaking will come out of your spirit. You have to practice having no opinion. Even the husbands and wives must practice having no opinion.

In the church life the most killing and damaging thing is opinion. It has damaged all of us, and it has damaged the church life. It has damaged and

swallowed up the Lord's blessing. There is much blessing here, but most of the blessing has been eaten up by our opinion. Do not consider whether or not others have opinion. Just consider how opinionated you are. Everyone among us is an opinionated person. The difference is only in degree. All are opinionated. Even if you have the least opinion, it will still cause a problem. Just a little opinion will kill you. We must practice one thing: "Lord, by Your mercy and grace, I would surely learn not to have any opinion. I would only take care of the facts. I would have no opinion." This is not so easy.

If you drop your opinion constantly and daily, you will become a person who is very flexible. Furthermore, you will not be foolish, but you will have the highest discernment. When you are full of opinion, you are the most blind person. Opinion blinds people. When you drop your opinion, you will have the highest discernment, yet you will be very flexible. With your wife, your husband, or your family, you will be very flexible. In the family life or the marriage life, the troubles come mostly because you are not flexible due to your opinion. When you drop your opinion, you will become very flexible. This does not mean that you should build up a kind of virtue of having no opinion. Rather, opinion needs to be terminated in your life. Then there will be nothing within you eating you up all the time. This is not an ethical teaching that you need to be a very flexible person so that you can cooperate and go along with everyone. That means nothing. But when opinion remains in you, it is a big eater; it eats you up. Regardless of what message you hear or read, the opinion that you have within you eats up everything. In every meeting there is an amount of nourishment. Even a very low meeting among us has something to nourish people, because the basic principle of our meeting in the Lord's recovery is absolutely right.

Sometimes, even though you attend a very high meeting, you receive little nourishment because your opinion eats you up. This eater within you needs to be extinguished; it needs to be killed. Then day after day and meeting after meeting you will grow with all the nourishment. I assure you that when we stop our opinion, we will grow. In every meeting the nourishment is rich. If we would extinguish this wild eater, the opinion, we all would grow. Go to the Lord and pray: "Lord, I surely would like to be stopped from any kind of opinion. Lord, shine upon me and shine within me. I want to be in Your light. I want to see this matter of opinion. I do not want to see my brother's opinion or my sister's opinion or someone else's opinion; I want to see my opinion. From now on I do not want to know others' situation, because knowing their

situation may cause me to have more opinion. Because I do not want to have any opinion, I would not like to know anything concerning others."

If you go to the Lord in this way and put yourself under the Lord's enlightening, you will see that day after day you have been exhausted by your opinion. Prayer will then come spontaneously. It will be real prayer, not the prayer of opinion. Then you will be preserved from being exhausted, and all the nourishment will be preserved for your growth. We need some brothers to give a testimony concerning opinion.

First brother: Just last week this matter of opinion came up in my life in three different areas. The first time, I was with some brothers praying and fellowshipping. In that fellowship I expressed an opinion about how to begin a certain meeting. The next meeting I attended, my spirit was very cold, and I had a hard time praying. When I tried to pray, I had no release in my spirit. I can see by my experience that if you hold an opinion, whether it is right or wrong, it frustrates the spirit. It actually killed me in that prayer meeting. The second time, I had an opinion regarding what kind of song should be sung in a meeting, and I even stood up and testified to the saints one night regarding the singing in a previous gospel meeting. As soon as I began to speak, I realized that the spirit was not there; the more I spoke, the deader I became, and I am sure the saints had the same reaction. Finally, I have an example from my daily life. In the purchasing department where I work, we have been having a difficult time recently with a certain manager. Normally, I let other people talk regarding that person, and I do not enter in. But it has been touching me lately, so I began to react and to express my opinion to my fellow workers. When I went to lunch, it was hard to touch the Lord.

Second brother: I too am a person of opinion. At one time in my church life experience, the enemy came in by way of accusation. This progressed to the point where I was full of opinions. The more opinions I had, the more critical I became of the brothers who were taking the lead. Those brothers were perhaps unaware that something was wrong, but I can testify that while I was in that kind of situation and condition, I had no function at all in the church life.

Recently, I have been on a service group in the church that corresponds to my job, and when someone does something that I do not like, I immediately have an opinion. One day as we were fellowshipping, one of the brothers

pointed out that since we had been serving together, we had never prayed. In this kind of situation, it is easy to express an opinion. Because we were not so open to the Lord, we had no time to pray.

Third brother: Now I can see that all types of opinions are a problem. Sometimes in a meeting I may grade the testimonies. I may consider that one is good, and another one is excellent, but that still is an opinion. I realize now that even this can be a hindrance. It matters little if it is good or not; we just want Christ.

According to what we have learned, it is impossible to have a prayer life if we would not drop our opinion. You do not need, though, to try to have a prayer life; you just need to drop your opinion. Spontaneously your spirit will be strong, and you will pray. Then it will always be so easy to release your spirit under any circumstances. In the meeting or outside the meeting, it will be easy for you to release your spirit. Because you have dropped your opinion and spontaneously have gotten into a prayer life, your whole being will be strengthened into your spirit. Then at any time, under any circumstances, it will be easy for you to pray, to speak, to utter something, or to function. And when you do function, your spirit will come out.

I am glad this brother has been honest to tell us that he has been killed by his critical attitude in the church life. I would say a strong Amen to his confession. Even though I was not so close to him and we had not been together very often, yet I have fully realized that he has been killed by his opinion. Here is a dear brother who loves the Lord and knows the church life and who is really for the Lord's recovery, yet he has been absolutely extinguished by his opinion. This is serious. And I believe this may be very common among us, especially with those who have been in the Lord's recovery for some years. You have probably never realized that you have been killed by your opinion. So again I would say, try to drop your talking, drop your opinion, even drop your opinionated prayer. Drop all these things. Do not say anything to man; even do not say anything to the Lord. Then you will see that your praying spirit will be strong, and you will have some well speaking concerning the Lord coming out of your mouth. When you come to the meeting, you will be full of something to present to the saints and to function with. Bring this matter to the Lord and pray. Let us all rise up and throw our stones upon this one thing—our opinion. We all have to stone

opinion to death, to kill opinion among us and within us; then we will be rescued.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DAMAGE OF OPINION (2)

In the last chapter we saw that there is a big eater within us eating the nourishment we receive from the Lord and hindering our growth in life. That big eater is our opinion.

DIVISION AND CONFUSION FROM OPINION

According to church history, the divisions and the confusion among Christians throughout the past nineteen centuries have come mostly from this one source—opinion. Satan, the enemy of God, surely knows how to frustrate God's intention. God's intention is not only to save us but also to build us up. Through the years the Lord has opened our eyes, and we all have seen that God's eternal purpose, God's ultimate intention, is to get a Body. There is also the need of the building up of all the saved ones. Through the years, however, this has been missed. The purpose of the Lord has been lowered from the building up of the Body just to individual salvation or, at the most, to individual spirituality. Individual salvation or individual spirituality has become the goal of many Christians, but in the Bible God's standard is not that low. God's standard is to have a building. Satan knows that nothing hinders, damages, and frustrates this building so seriously as opinion. Opinion may be considered the number one damager and killer of the building up of the Body. This has been fully proved by church history. Even during the time of the Reformation, those servants of God who were the reformers were not one; every reformer held his own opinion. Martin Luther scolded Kaspar Schwenckfeld and even called him the devil. Although Schwenckfeld was not as famous as Luther, he did see something along the line of the Spirit and life.

Do you realize what the denominations are? They are just the issues of different opinions. Every denomination is the expression of certain opinions. It is the same with all the free groups; every free group represents a certain opinion. In fact, nearly every piece of Christian work is an expression of a certain opinion. This is why Christians have been divided and confused through the centuries. All the confusions and divisions have come from this one source—opinion.

We have to admit that even in the Lord's recovery we are slow in the growth of life, and we are not that prevailing in function. Furthermore, compared to the amount of light and revelation we have received, we are short of the proper building up. Why is this? Apparently, by the Lord's mercy and under His enlightenment, we do not have much fighting. Actually, something hidden and secret still remains. What is this secret, hidden, and remaining thing? It is our opinion.

You may be a very good brother or a very nice sister, yet you are somewhat individualistic. This means that you are separated from others. And to some extent, at least some among us are isolated. These dear ones love the Lord, and they love the recovery. They know the church, and they would never go away. Yet, they are so isolated. By what?—by opinion.

We need four brothers to explain to us what is the real source, the real origin, of opinion. Even the unbelievers know that to be opinionated is not a positive thing.

I would say that when man was created, he was not created with any opinions, so opinion must have come in with the fall of man, when man took in the tree of knowledge. So I would say that opinions have their source in the tree of knowledge. It seems to me that opinion is just the expression of the self. The fact that we are so opinionated reflects the self.

You may say this, but still this answer does not hit the mark.

Man did partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but actually even before he partook of that tree, he had to have an opinion, because he had to make a decision concerning what God had told him about the tree. He had to decide that it was better to listen to another's word about the tree. So actually it was the mind. A thought was put into the mind. The mind began to consider, and then eventually the mind developed an opinion. We learned in the past that the self is the source of opinion, but the mind is the leading part of the self that directs the operation. So I would consider the opinion has much to do with the mind. For example, the reformers during the time of Luther were divided over many points. All these things had their root in the mind or in the consideration of the mind.

Doctrinally speaking, you may say this is right, but still it is not so practical. I did say in the past that opinions come from self and that the mind is just the

expression of the self. But now we need something more practical than this. We Christians understand many things in a shallow way. We take many things for granted. Actually, we should pray much concerning opinion.

I would say that in my experience opinion is just what I feel and how I see things. Opinion is just me.

This answer is not bad, but still you have not touched the crucial source. What is the source of opinion?

Culture.

A PERSON AWAY FROM GOD

No, culture is not the source of opinion; culture is the development of opinion. Or you may say that culture is the cultivation of the source of opinion. I would like to define opinion in this way: opinion is simply a person away from God. When a person is without God and away from God, he is the source of opinion. He is even the embodiment of opinion. What was the fall? The fall was a kind of a going away from God. Before the fall, man was with God, and man had God with him. Then the fall came in and took man away from God. From that time, man became a person away from God and without God. Right away this person became the source and embodiment of opinion. By our fallen nature, by our natural being, we are just the embodiment of opinion. Whether you are good or bad, whether your concept is high or low, whether your idea is right or wrong, all these are nothing but opinion. You like this—that is opinion. You like that—that is opinion. You want to be kind—that is opinion. You want to be so strict—that is opinion. All these things are just opinion. A fallen person who is away from God and who is without God is altogether an embodiment of opinion. It is correct to say that at the fall the tree of knowledge got into man and made him the embodiment of opinion. It made him the very source of opinion. Every descendant of the fallen Adam is an embodiment of opinion.

THE EMBODIMENT OF OPINION

Now you can see why the Lord has been suffering, even among us in His recovery. We have come to the recovery, yet we still are the embodiment of opinion. You love the Lord, and you have seen the church, and you are for His recovery, yet you have not seen that you are the embodiment of opinion. Your natural being is constituted with opinion. Even a little baby has opinion. The

little ones always like to express their opinions against yours. When you say sit down, they say no. When you ask them to sing, they say no. When you ask them to be quiet, they want to sing. All this is just opinion. Opinion is just our nature. We are just opinion. We have to realize that this matter of opinion is too hard and too subjective. Sometimes we have condemned our opinion but in a very superficial way. We have never considered that whatever we say is just our opinion.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPINION

Now we need to go on to find out how opinion has been developed and is still being developed. Education and culture are the cultivation and development of opinion. It is much easier to preach the gospel to a person with a high-school education than to a graduate from a university. When you are preaching to a graduate from a university, you may have the sensation that it is too late. You should have preached the gospel to him five years ago. It is very difficult to talk to the professors concerning God and Christ. This is true especially with those who teach courses such as philosophy and psychology. After finishing a course in philosophy some saved ones have almost given up the Christian life. The philosophy course deprived them of their faith. This is the cultivation of opinion.

In fact, if you do not know how to use the Bible, even your Bible study may develop your opinion. Actually, the Bible is not at fault, but men have nourished and developed their opinion through misuse of the Bible. They utilized and misused the Bible to develop their opinions. Not only is it difficult to preach the gospel to a philosopher, but it is also difficult to talk to many Christians about anything of the genuine truth. Why? Because their opinion has become developed to such an extent that they could never have any change. So all of us have to humble ourselves, to be poor in spirit and pure in heart. We need to pray, “Lord, have mercy upon me. I do not want to be a person whose opinion cannot be changed. I do not want to reserve or to keep any cultivation of opinion. I do not want to keep any development of opinion.”

It is very apparent that culture and education are used by the enemy to cultivate our opinion. What else cultivates our opinion?

Religion.

We have to rank religion, culture, and education together. They are neighbors in the same gopher hole. They are different in terms, yet in nature they are the same. So, what else cultivates our opinion?

How about the experiences we go through?

Very good! Many things cultivate your opinion. But you have to realize, no doubt, that education, culture, and religion are the giants. But there is also another subtle development—our experience including our practice and our habit. Our experience, our practice, and our habit are small gophers in another hole. These are one group. The more experiences you have, the stronger your opinion will be developed and strengthened. The young people sometimes have a difficult time with the older ones because all the older ones have been fully developed in their opinion by their daily life and their experiences. There is even a difference between young people who are fifteen and those who are eighteen. Three years makes a big difference. Those who are eighteen years of age have developed more in their opinion.

You also must realize that your background, your environment, and your circumstances are also a kind of development of your opinion. If you grow up in Japan, you have the Japanese opinion. If you grow up in France, you have the French opinion. If you grow up in California, you have the Californian opinion. If you grow up in Texas, you have the Texan opinion. Your opinion is developed by your background, environment, and circumstances. What else develops our opinion?

What about our disposition and make-up?

You may consider your disposition and your make-up as developments of your opinion. But actually they are not developments. Your make-up and your disposition are just your opinion. It is easy for you to have a certain kind of opinion because you have that kind of make-up and disposition. In a sense you are the opinion. Whether your opinions are developed or undeveloped, you are just the embodiment of opinion. Even a few years ago when I talked about opinion, I did not have such a thorough light. I learned to know the opinion not by observing others but according to my own experience. I discovered that I am just the embodiment of opinion. When I am off from the Lord, I am nothing but opinion. During the night, when the room has no light, there is nothing but darkness. What is darkness? It is just something away from the light. What is opinion? Opinion is just you and I away from the Lord.

When we are off from the Lord, we are nothing but opinion. Although I dare not say that I have learned the lesson thoroughly, the Lord has been teaching me quite much that whenever I realize that I am not with the Lord, right away I should stop. I dare not say anything or do anything. Whatever I say and whatever I do away from the Lord are just opinion. In this Perfecting Training I do not care too much for doctrine. Rather, this is a kind of medical work to diagnose the diseases and sicknesses.

Now we have to find the medicine for this disease. Where is the healing for this disease? Do not think that it is only in a casino that people fight over opinions. Even in a Bible school people have opinions that cause them to fight. What is the proper medicine to heal this sickness?

After considering this matter, I realized that the more we go on in the church life, the more we go through certain experiences, and the more we pick up things, spontaneously there is a danger to become more opinionated. So the most serious problem is with those who have been around the longest period of time. This past Lord's day, we were on John 11 in our meeting. Of course, that chapter is full of opinions. Everyone had an opinion. When the Lord came into that situation, all they needed to do was drop their opinion and take the Lord. He was there as the resurrection life, but what frustrated them from experiencing Him as the resurrection life were the opinions. Many times it is the same among us. The Lord is among us as the resurrection life, and He wants to be resurrection life to us, but our opinions cause Him to weep. Regardless of how long I have been in the church, I need the grace to drop whatever I have gained, whatever I have gone through, and hold on to the living Christ in a resurrected way.

This is good, but I would say that it is a doctrinal way and still not so practical. I believe we all have seen that our definition of the source of opinion has really hit home. Now let us do the same thing to find out what is the real medicine to heal this big disease. For this you had better not care so much for the doctrine but should consider your experience. According to your experience, what is the way that your opinion is cut off or healed?

Perhaps it is by contacting the Lord with our spirit. Sometimes when my opinion comes up, if I go to the Lord and deal with it in His presence by exercising my spirit, I am relieved of the opinion.

This is very close.

Do we simply need to have so much light as to what the opinions are in a practical way that every time we see an opinion expressed, we take it as an indication that we are away from the Lord and that we need to come back to the spirit? Are all these manifestations used to turn us back to the spirit to contact the Lord?

This is very close, but still this does not hit the mark. Let me say it in this way: We have surely found out where opinion is. Opinion is in the place that the Lord is not. Wherever the Lord is not, there is opinion. Now you have to tell me where the Lord is.

He is in the Word.

In the Word? This is not bad, but it is not so close. Where is the Lord?

He is in our spirit.

PRACTICING ONE SPIRIT WITH THE LORD

Do you really believe that the Lord is in your spirit? For quite a long period of time I have been trying to practice one thing. Nearly every day I pray not once but several times that I would practice the one spirit with the Lord. He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Brothers and sisters, you need to pick up this practice—to practice the one spirit with the Lord. Brother Lawrence practiced the presence of God, but we need to practice the one spirit with the Lord. To practice the presence of the Lord is somewhat of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, tells us to seek the face of the Lord or to walk before the Lord. What is this? This is the practice of the presence of the Lord. This kind of word is not repeated in the New Testament. Rather, the New Testament says, "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16); it also says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). Now it is not a matter of the face or the presence of the Lord; now it is a matter that you and the Lord are one spirit. By this you can see that at the time Brother Lawrence lived, three hundred years ago, the light they had received was not so much of the New Testament. They used the Psalms very much, but the up-to-date light that we have received is not concerning the presence or the face of the Lord but the Lord Himself as the Spirit being one with our spirit—even that these two spirits are now one. Now we have to practice to live this one spirit.

If you would bring this matter into your daily practice, you will discover that this is the hardest thing to practice. Out of twenty-four hours, you may sleep eight, leaving sixteen hours in the day. If you could have one and a half hours out of the sixteen hours that you practice strictly the one spirit with the Lord, I believe, you must be very holy and very spiritual. You may study the Bible, but in your studying of the Bible you are still not one spirit with the Lord. You are you, and He is He. To say that we trust in the Lord is still somewhat of the Old Testament. The New Testament is not a matter of trusting but a matter of oneness. If you are one spirit with the Lord, you do not need to trust. When you need to trust, that means you are not one spirit with Him. You are separate from Him; He is He, and you are you. So one needs to trust in the other. But when you and He are one, there is no need of trusting. Have you ever realized that much of your Christian understanding is altogether Old Testament? It is not up to the standard of the New Testament. Today Satan is blinding the Christians with all these Old Testament terms and practices from seeing the New Testament. In the past I have told you to go to the Lord three times a day, and I have pointed out that David said we have to praise the Lord five times a day. But when you come to the New Testament, there is no mention of how many times a day. As long as we use the word *times*, that is Old Testament. The New Testament way is to pray unceasingly and to always rejoice. It is to pray continually and perseveringly. To count the number of times is Old Testament. Even in the book of Acts, Peter and John were in a transitory period where they had a time of prayer. We must come to the New Testament. The Old Testament is not adequate to heal your opinion; you must be in the New Testament. The New Testament is a matter of being one spirit with the Lord.

According to my own experiences, whenever I was one spirit with the Lord, there was no opinion. Whenever I was not one spirit with the Lord, although I may have been nice and good and even somewhat spiritual, I was still full of opinion. If we are not one spirit with the Lord, we can have nothing within us but opinion. You may even pray yet still not be one spirit with the Lord. Doctrinally it may be difficult for you to understand this word, but by your experiences you can understand. You may pray and yet not be one spirit with the Lord. Surely you are not one spirit with Him when you quarrel, but even when you study the Bible or pray, you still may not be one spirit with the Lord. At the time when you are not one spirit with the Lord, opinion is there. Your

opinion may be good, it may be in the heavens, but still it is opinion. Opinion could only be healed by the one spirit with the Lord.

In Philippians 1:27 Paul points out that the Philippians needed not only to be in one spirit and to stand firm but also to strive, to contend, for the gospel with one soul. Then in Philippians 2:2 Paul says that in order to make his joy full they needed to be joined in soul. To be one soul is one thing, to be joined in soul is another. Furthermore, in Philippians 2:20 Paul says that he had no one like-souled who would genuinely care for what concerned the Philippians. *Like-souled* means to have the same soul. How could we be joined in soul and be like-souled? In Philippians 2 and 4 Paul even says that we need to think the same thing and that we need to think the one thing, that is, Christ. According to these verses, to be with one soul, to be joined in soul, and to be like-souled, we need to have one goal or one object, that is, Christ. To have other goals means to have opinion. To have other objects than this means to have opinion. Today in the Lord's recovery we need to see two things: first, we should have only one object, one goal; second, we need to practice the one spirit all the time. To have only one goal, one object, and to practice the one spirit is the practical way to kill our opinions, to heal this disease. When you are not one, you are not in the spirit; you are in your soul, in your opinion. In your soul you are not one.

In the past, when we realized that there was a problem of oneness between two brothers, we did our best to help them sympathize with one another. We tried to help one see the other's situation. Actually, this did not work so well. But today, because of my experiences, I would not waste my time in that way. Rather, I would simply fellowship with the brothers, telling them that they have to practice the one spirit. They have to take Christ as the only object and the unique goal and practice the one spirit with the Lord. If the two brothers would simply practice the one spirit with the Lord for a few minutes, they would be one. They do not need to overcome anything. They do not even need to overcome their opinion.

To practice the one spirit with the Lord is the medicine to heal the disease of opinion.

I have tried different ways. I have tried taking the cross, bearing the cross, and living a crucified life. I tried these things, but not one thing is so effective as practicing the one spirit with the Lord. Whether you consider yourself to be

opinionated or you consider others to be opinionated, you can never stay away from opinions. We ourselves are just the embodiment of opinion. When we are off from the Lord and when we are away from the Lord, we are nothing but opinion. How can we heal this disease? It is only by practicing the one spirit with the Lord. If you practice, you will discover that out of the sixteen hours, most of the hours you do not practice the one spirit with the Lord. You simply live by yourself. You may not do bad things; you may be doing good things, but by yourself. You pray by yourself; you study the Bible by yourself; you fellowship with others by yourself; you do many things by yourself. You do not practice the one spirit with the Lord, so whatever you say and whatever you do is altogether opinion.

When you are separate from the Lord, right away you are just opinion. I would ask you to go back and practice the one spirit with the Lord. Tell the Lord, “Lord, I just want to live the one spirit with You. I would like to practice the one spirit with You. I do not care whether I am praying or I am not praying. I only care for the practice of the one spirit with You. I do not care whether I am talkative or I am not talkative; I only care to practice the one spirit with You.” If you will do this, you will be one spirit with the Lord, and your opinion will be over.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW TO DEAL WITH OPINION IN THE CHURCH LIFE

In the last chapter we saw that our opinion is a big eater within us, hindering the growth of life, hindering our functioning, and frustrating the building up of the church. We also saw that the source and development of opinion are just ourselves apart from God and away from God. Finally, we saw that the medicine for this disease is just the one spirit. Just to say, however, that the medicine to cure this big disease is the one spirit is not so adequate. We need to spend more time to consider this matter. Opinion is a very serious disease in the church life and even in the work. For almost fifty years I have been observing that in the church life and in the work there are all the time some problems, some troubles, and some dissensions. For all these years this one thing has been bothering me very much. It is very apparent and so evident, yet it has been only recently that I discovered this big disease. Only recently did I discover such a big eater, which has been eating up the church life and the work. The Lord showed me that the name of this big eater must be opinion. We should not give him a better name, such as idea, concept, or way of thinking. These terms are too good and too nice; you have to call this big eater a cancer. Opinion is a cancer. I hope that all the saints would go to the Lord and spend some time to pray for a clear vision concerning opinion.

Although I have been with you for quite a number of years, I have never given you a message saying that opinion is just ourselves, our person, apart from God. When a person is apart from God, that person's name is opinion. Do not say that opinion is simply different concepts, different ideas, and different ways of thinking. Opinion is just you apart from God. How good you are or how bad you are makes little difference; as long as you are apart from God, you are just the embodiment of opinion. It is not a small thing to have such a definition of opinion. Opinion is just us apart from the Lord. I expect that all of you would bring this matter to the Lord, considering it in a serious way. To consider such a thing in a serious way is to accept the perfecting. If you would just take this definition—that opinion is just you apart from God—and bring it to the Lord and stay with the Lord for some time, praying

about this matter, you will sense the practical perfecting. You will have a practical dealing with opinion. You will see that opinion is just yourself. Nothing kills our spiritual germs as much as the spiritual light. When the spiritual enlightenment comes upon us, that is almost equal to the healing. The enlightenment is nearly the healing. Light heals by killing. Light kills our germs, so it heals.

I am concerned that you may hear this definition of opinion and yet not go to the Lord with it. You need to take this definition of opinion and stay with the Lord, dwelling upon it for a period of time. If you would do this, you will get the healing. More light will come to you. The light will expose you to the uttermost and will help you to understand fully that apart from God you are nothing but opinion. Under the light you will see this. The Bible says, "In Your light we see light" (Psa. 36:9). When you bring this matter to the Lord and stay with Him, in His light you will see light. It is not that you simply accept the word in this Perfecting Meeting but that you will have a kind of enlightenment that kills the germs and even kills you. It kills you as the source of opinion.

Even concerning the matter of the development of opinion, you still need a time with the Lord. Whatever is covered in this Perfecting Meeting as a kind of point, you need to bring to the Lord and stay with Him. Otherwise, you may make all the points of this Perfecting Meeting simply points of doctrines, teachings, and not practical dealings. If you want the practical dealings instead of doctrinal points, you surely must bring all these points to the Lord. Do not pray so much for other things. You should pray, "Lord, confine me within this one point. Lord, imprison me in this point. I want to fellowship with You and look unto You about my opinion. I want to talk to You, and I want You to converse with me." You need to stay and dwell with the Lord upon that point. Eventually, that will become further light. You will receive more enlightenment. That will kill you, and actually that will be the practical healing. Then you will have the practical perfecting, which will transform you. This kind of light and enlightenment will transform you. It will make you very much different just to stay there with the Lord for half an hour, not distracted by anything else but dwelling on this one point. This will transform you.

HOW TO APPLY THE MEDICINE

Now we need to spend more time on the healing. The one spirit is the medicine, but we need to discover how to use this medicine. How are you

going to apply the medicine? You may have the medicine, but you also need to know how to use it. For example, some medicines have to be taken in by eating. That is the way to apply the medicine. The one spirit is the unique and effective medicine for this big disease, but how shall we apply it? How can we use the one spirit? It may sound strange to you to say that we need to use and apply the one spirit. This is because in Christianity all the doctrines are so shallow, and there is little practical application of the doctrines. But with medicine you cannot be doctrinal; you must be practical and know how to use it. How can we apply this medicine?

We have to pray.

To say we have to pray is too general. Yes, we do have to pray, but this answer is too general.

Then I would say we need to enjoy His presence.

This is a question that is difficult to answer. To apply the one spirit is a very complicated matter because the Spirit is altogether a complicated matter. First, you must find out who is the Spirit and what is the Spirit. Medicines come in different forms and substances: some are in liquid form, some are in powder form, and some are in pill form. You must take it according to its form.

Let me explain it in this way: When I was writing the notes on Philippians, I discovered one factor. On the one hand, Paul says, "To me, to live is Christ" (1:21). He also says, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (v. 20). On the other hand, he speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (v. 19). Paul expected that all the things that happened to him would turn out to his salvation. We must see these two sides. If you do not have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, you could never live Christ, and you could never magnify Christ.

If, however, you only know the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, yet you do not have the vision that God wants you to live Christ and to magnify Christ, you could not have a proper life. You may know the bountiful supply of the Spirit, but if you do not have the vision of God's intention and purpose, you could not have a proper life. We need both sides: we need to be filled with the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and we need to see a vision concerning the living out of Christ. We must see what the Spirit is

for. For example, some Christians today are in the Pentecostal movement. Their concept is that the Spirit is for speaking in tongues, for manifesting the gifts, for healings, for miracles, and for prophesying. They do not have the concept that the Pentecostal Spirit must be for living Christ and magnifying Christ. So they become different from God's intention. God's intention in giving the Spirit to His people is that they may live Christ and magnify Christ. It may express and manifest the gifts, but it is not for the manifestation of gifts. It may have healings or miraculous things, but it is not for the healings and the miraculous things; it is for Christ. The one spirit is the medicine not just for healing your opinion but also for you to live Christ and magnify Christ. To apply this medicine of the one spirit, you need a vision of Christ. You need to see Christ; you need to see that Christ is your center and must be your circumference. You have to see that Christ should be the centrality of your living and the universality of your being. If you do not see this, even the Spirit cannot heal you. If you are going to apply the Spirit, you need to see that Christ has to be the centrality and universality of your whole being. In other words, your being has to be occupied by Christ and with Christ.

Philippians is really a book that deals with opinion. It says, "Think the same thing" (2:2; 4:2); "have this mind" (3:15); "thinking the one thing" (2:2); be "like-souled" (v. 20); "with one soul" (1:27); and "joined in soul" (2:2). All these are expressions dealing with what we call opinion. Opinion was there because Christ was lacking among the Philippian believers. They were short of Christ. They had too many thoughts; they had different minds; they had different souls because they were lacking Christ. They could not apply the medicine of the Spirit until they had seen the vision that God wanted them to be fully occupied with Christ. Christ had to be their center and circumference. Christ had to be everything to them; they had to drop all the other thoughts. Their minds needed to be fully occupied with Christ. If you want to apply this medicine of the one spirit, you need a vision to see that God does not want anything in you—your opinion, your thought, your idea, your concept, your thinking—He only wants Christ.

We need to see this not merely in a doctrinal way. If you see this only in a doctrinal way, there will be no perfecting. Suppose that you have had some different concepts and opinions than your wife. How did you deal with your opinions? You have heard that the medicine is the one spirit, but how did you apply the one spirit?

First, I went to the Lord, and I prayed concerning the word that I received. I also prayed concerning different aspects of my living: my church life, my work situation, and my family life. I prayed that the Lord would shine on my opinions in all those areas. I did experience some shining and enlightenment, and some things were exposed in my relationship with my wife. I felt that prayer with that light did something within me, but if I do not enjoy the Spirit and keep myself in prayer, breathing the Lord, when I am with my wife and an issue comes up, even though I received the light, still there is a problem.

I would say that all you have said is very good but rather religious and not so practical. Let me give you a practical illustration. Suppose you want to wash the dishes with warm water, but your wife wants to wash the dishes with boiling water. You argue with her, and she argues back. We all have these kinds of experiences. As a quick person, I do not like to spend much time washing dishes, but my wife likes to wash the dishes inside and outside again and again. That kind of washing bothers me, but I cannot convince her to take my way, nor can she convince me to take her way. How then should I apply the medicine of the Spirit? Just to pray and try to apply all the things mentioned in the points is too religious. In the past I tried to apply the points in this way, but eventually by experience I learned that there is no need to pray, but simply to ask, Is my way to wash the dishes Christ? My way simply is not Christ. Sometimes I might argue: Yes, Lord, my way is not Christ, but neither is my wife's way Christ. But then, right away the vision comes: Is this argument Christ? All the time this question comes: Is this Christ? This question pins you down so that the Spirit can come to heal. This is the way to apply the Spirit.

The sisters' way to apply the Spirit may be to weep. First they weep, and then they apply the Spirit. But I would say there is no need for them to weep. Weeping is a waste of your time. But because you are used to weeping, if you do not weep, you cannot experience Christ. For a long time I could not experience Christ until I either bothered others or others bothered me. Then I went into my bedroom, closed the door, and knelt down. I sighed a while, I began to pray, and then I experienced Christ. But actually you do not need to weep and you do not need to pray. You only need to see a vision that what God wants of you is just Christ. Christ must be basic. Christ must be crucial. Christ must be central in your being. God does not want anything else. But whether we wash the dishes quickly or slowly or well or poorly, whether we

drink tea quickly or slowly—all of these are not Christ. When we hold this vision, right away the Spirit will come.

In like manner, the proper way to arrange the chairs in the meeting means nothing. Only Christ counts. If you see the vision that only Christ counts, you do not need to wait for the supply of the Spirit; you just take it. You have to see the vision that Christ should be everything in your life practically. If you could see such a vision, from this time onward you would have no problem with your wife. Whenever you would have some debate with your wife, the vision would remind you: this is not Christ. Then you would say Amen. Whenever we have an idea different from others, it is easy for us to be offended. When others accept our proposal, we are happy, but whenever our proposal is rejected, we feel insulted and offended. What shall we do? We all need to see a vision. We need to see a vision that Christ is our center and our circumference. We need to see the vision that Christ is the centrality and universality of God in our being. God does not want anything else. We have to check every point of our living by Christ. Is this way to wash the dishes Christ? Once we see this, the eater within us, opinion, will have been already half-killed. Then the Spirit always follows Christ. All the young couples have disagreements on how to deal with the children. The young brothers have their concepts, and the young sisters have their concepts. While you are trying to debate with your wife concerning how to deal with the children, you have to ask, Is this Christ? If you would simply ask, Is this Christ? one-half of your opinion would be killed. Then the Spirit would come to clear up the rest. Then you would have no problem.

All of us have to be occupied fully by and with Christ. Not only in the church life and in the Lord's work but also in the family life we need to be occupied by Christ. In the Lord's work I have been with the co-workers for many years. If it were not for the fact that we always take care of Christ as the center and as everything in our work, there might have been some fighting with the co-workers. It is not that I am nice and you are nice, so we can work together in a nice way. No. I am bad, and we all are bad. Not one among all the co-workers is nice. You can be nice only for a few mornings. I can be nice for a few days among you, but to work together is a lifelong matter just like the marriage life. Sooner or later you will be exposed that you are not so nice. The only altogether nice one is Christ. Whenever a problem arose among the co-workers, the medicine came in by Christ being the center. Why should I fight with my brothers just for my interpretation of certain verses of the Bible?

That is not Christ. For me to insist on a certain thing is not Christ. Therefore, I learned to drop all those other things except Christ. Eventually, we had no problems. At the beginning of the work there were many problems. But now there are hardly any problems because I have been healed by the vision that Christ is everything in the church and in the Lord's work.

As long as you have this vision and you stand with this vision, your opinion will be fifty percent killed. Then the Spirit will always go along with Christ. He always honors Christ. Immediately He will follow Christ to wipe out the opinion and to fully clear you up. The shortest and the most effective way to deal with opinion is not to pray and not to weep. Rather, the best way to apply the medicine of the one spirit is just to stand with the vision that Christ must be everything to you. We all need to practice this. We have the medicine, and we also have the way to apply the medicine. The Spirit is all-inclusive and almighty, but the situation among many good Christians is that they are fighting. The Spirit is there, but He has no way to heal them. The Spirit is there, and the Spirit is strong, but He has no way because we do not practice the way to apply the Spirit.

Sometimes the Spirit will work to some extent after we have struggled a long time. Because of some problem in the Lord's work, we may go to the Lord again and again and may even weep before the Lord. After one week's prayer I may give the Spirit a little way to heal my opinion and to cause me to be one with a brother. But that is too slow and too late. But this has been our way. Even in the marriage life this has been our way. When the husband and wife have a problem, it may take three days for the situation to be cleared up. Is the Spirit so slow? Is the Spirit's healing so gradual? He is not slow; He is dynamic, but our application is too slow. What we need is a vision concerning Christ being everything to us. Otherwise, in our family we will have a lot of problems, and in the church among all the brothers and sisters we will have a lot of problems. Furthermore, in the work among the co-workers we will have a lot of problems. A proper vision of Christ is the only base that the Spirit has to kill our opinion. We must see that God does not want anything but Christ. As long as you stand with this vision, you have no opinion. All the problems come from the sources apart from Christ. When you take Christ as everything, there will be no problem. This should not be a mere doctrine to us; this has to be our practice.

Many of the saints who are in the Lord's recovery surely love the Lord, and they love the Lord's recovery, and they have seen the church. But, I am sorry to say, they do not have the building. They do not have the church life in a practical and full way. What is the problem? The problem is just opinion. We are full of opinion after opinion after opinion. We cannot stay away from the church, because we have seen the church, and we cannot stay away from the recovery, because we know that this is the way of the Lord today. And we cannot stay away from the saints, because they are the members of the Body, yet we do not have that much building up. We do not have the practical church life adequately in full. What is the trouble? What is the problem? Opinion. Something is hidden there—opinion. The opinion is eating, undermining, frustrating, and holding you back. The opinion is the biggest enemy to the Spirit. The Spirit must have a ground to come in to heal this disease and to fight down this enemy. That ground is to have the overall vision of Christ being everything to us. In the church life we only care for Christ. In the Word we only care for Christ, and even in our family life we only care for Christ. In our personal life, our daily life, God only wants Christ. If we have such an overall vision concerning Christ, this will become a base for us to apply the medicine of the Spirit.

Suppose two brothers are quarreling. How will you help them? The general way, the common way, the ordinary way, is to encourage them to exercise their patience, to love one another, to consider others better than themselves. Actually, this will not help. The first point is that you yourself must have the proper and adequate experience of Christ. If you have seen the vision that Christ is everything to you, and you enjoy the Spirit coming to supply you, you will have the adequate experience. Then you will have the way to help two brothers who are quarreling. It is not a matter of being a peacemaker but of ministering Christ to them. It is a matter of revealing Christ into them. If you practice this daily, when you see this kind of situation, the Spirit will lead you and give you a way to approach them and give you the proper utterance. Through the Spirit-given utterance, Christ will spontaneously be ministered to them, and they will see the same vision. They will see that it is altogether worthless to argue. The Spirit will honor Christ and eventually will come to clear them up and heal their opinion.

The hardest thing among human society is to calm down people's opinion. It is almost impossible to calm down another's opinion. Yet in the church life the biggest eater is our opinion. What shall we do? How can we get this big

disease healed? Of course, the only medicine is the Spirit, but how can we apply the Spirit? The Spirit can never work unless Christ is honored. Christ is always the base, the ground, for the Spirit to work in people. If a sinner prays, "Lord Jesus, I love You," the Spirit comes in right away because the Lord Jesus is honored. The Spirit always honors Christ and always goes along with Christ. If in our lives we do not honor Christ, there is no base for the Spirit to come in to work on us. We must stand on Christ in everything. We must stand on Christ in every thought, every concept, and every bit of our opinion. If we would do so, right away the Spirit would come to honor Christ and to wipe out our opinion and to heal us. This is the quickest and most effective way. There is no other way to calm down people's opinion. No husband can calm down his wife's opinion, and no wife can conquer her husband's opinion. But in the church life we need to have no opinion.

According to the human view there is no possibility for this to happen, and this is why the church life has had no way for nearly two thousand years. In Christianity this opinion matter has never been conquered. It has always been there damaging, killing, scattering, splitting, and dividing the Christians. Even among us the building has been going on very slowly, the growth is too slow, and the function is not so high. This is altogether due to one thing: the hidden opinion within you and me. There is always something undermining and damaging, yet hiding. How can we get rid of it? There is no other way except to see Christ so that the Spirit may have a way to come in and heal us. You need Christ as a base, as a ground. If you simply pray without taking Christ as your center, there is no base or ground for the Spirit to come in to kill your opinion. May I speak a strong word? You do not need to pray; you need to see the vision. You need to take Christ as the base and as everything to your life, your work, your marriage, and your church. Once you take Christ, there is the ground for the Spirit to come in to kill your opinion. Then you will be delivered. We must see Christ.

The book of Philippians tells us to think the same thing (2:2; 4:2). This really means just to see Christ as everything. How could we think the same thing unless we see Christ as everything? When we see Christ as everything, we will have no other thinking. Our thinking, our thought, will just be Christ. Then spontaneously, regardless of how many hundreds or thousands we may be, we will still think the same thing because we will have the same vision. We will have the same Christ occupying us fully. Christ will occupy our life, our family, our home, our church, and our work. So we will think the same thing.

When we think the same thing, it gives the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ the way to come in to support us and to heal us from our opinion.

CHAPTER FIVE

KILLING OPINION BY THE VISION OF CHRIST

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for this time. We do worship You for all that You are to us. Lord, we have our confidence in You that You are the best Perfecter. Lord, apart from You we can do nothing. O Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus! We surely need You. We need Your perfecting, Lord. We just humble ourselves before You, confessing that we are nothing and we have nothing. Lord, we can do nothing, so we are seeking before You. We are looking unto You, Lord, that You would keep Your promise to be one spirit with us. Lord, we even claim the fact that You are one spirit with us. Lord, we stand on this fact to ask You to be one with our speaking, to be one with this meeting, and to be one with every attendant. Thank You, Lord, for the seeking hearts and for the open spirits. Lord, do visit everyone through Your message. Do give us another touch. Lord, we need Your touch day after day. Our word is just in vain, but we trust in Your touching. Touch us in a deeper way. Touch us in every way, leaving nothing within us untouched. Lord, do cover all of us with Your prevailing blood. Lord, may You fill the hall with Yourself and even with the strong conviction that You are with us. Lord, we do look unto You desperately. Amen. Lord, thank You for Your cleansing blood, and thank You for the anointing Spirit. Even we thank You for Your precious name. Amen.

In the last chapter we saw that nothing but the Spirit can kill our opinion. We also saw that in order to apply the Spirit we need a clear vision that Christ has to be everything practically to us in the church life. We need a clear view that in the church life nothing counts but Christ Himself. When we have such a clear view, it gives the ground for the Spirit to come in. The Spirit honors nothing but Christ. When we realize that in the church life we should have nothing but Christ, and we give Christ the ground, the Spirit will come in to honor Christ and to kill everything else.

Through the centuries nothing has damaged and is still damaging the church life so much as opinion. Opinion has killed the church life. Who can say that he has no opinion? As long as you are a person, not only do you have opinion, but you are the opinion. Only a dead person has no opinion. It is impossible for you not to have opinion. Opinion is just you and me apart from God. When we are apart from God, we are just opinion. Divisions and

confusions all come from opinion. Opinion is present all the time with Christians. Of course, opinion is present with any kind of community. For example, right after you were married, opinion was there. Even at the time of your engagement, opinion was there. How is it possible that brothers who love the Lord and who have seen the vision concerning God's eternal purpose to have the church life could give up their opinion? How could they have no opinion?

The only way would be to give Christ preeminence in absolutely everything—in all our relationships, in all our fellowship, and in all our considerations.

This is very good, but thus far it is still merely a doctrine. Suppose a brother would say, "My, last week I went to a meeting, and I was deeply impressed. When I entered into their meeting hall, it was so solemn and so quiet. I was deeply impressed; I loved that very much." How would you respond to this word?

I do not think I would even respond.

Why wouldn't you respond to it?

Because I would not want to make an issue out of it.

If I were asked the question, I would not respond simply because I have seen that Christ must be everything in the church life. What would I do? I would just follow Christ. If, in the meeting, Christ leads me to be silent, I would be silent. If Christ leads me to cry, I would cry. I would have no opinion but Christ. Actually, I have a lot of opinions, but I would not care for them; I would care only for Christ. Suppose the Lord would lead a brother to call on the Lord and to praise the Lord and to shout Hallelujah. If this offends the brother who appreciated the quiet meeting, not only would it mean that he has opinion but also that he has not seen the vision that Christ is everything in the church life. If he has seen such a vision, he would not be bothered by the calling and shouting. If we would practice this, Christ would become prevailing in the church life, and the Spirit would have a way in you to kill your opinion concerning being silent in the meeting. As human beings, how could we come together and yet not say anything? Although we may say many things, we should not be offended by others who act or behave differently from what we say.

Suppose I encourage you to call on the name of the Lord, but after two hours no one is calling. If I am offended because no one is calling, it proves that I have a strong opinion—an opinion of calling on the name of the Lord. I might argue that calling on the Lord's name is an item of truth in the Word. Not only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament there is the truth concerning calling on the Lord's name. Yes, this is such a truth in the Bible, but the truth has become my opinion. If I have no opinion, even though I have preached concerning calling on the name of the Lord, I would not be offended if no one calls. If I am offended when you do not call on the Lord after listening to my preaching, not only does it mean that I have opinion but also that I have not seen a clear vision that Christ is everything in the church life. If I have seen that Christ is everything in the church, whether the saints would act according to my teaching or not, I would have no opinion. Christ is everything! This is not easy. Sometimes brothers have told me that they would not function in the meeting because they receive no Amens. This means that they received no okay. You have to realize that this is a strong opinion. All of us have to see the vision that Christ is everything to the church. Then we will give Him the preeminence, and the Spirit will honor Him and kill our opinion.

Thus far, we are still speaking in a doctrinal realm. How can we practice this? I was among a number of saints who had become very knowledgeable. They saw Christ as everything, and they knew the Spirit, yet whenever they came together, they had no oneness. Why? Because they all had opinion. This one had his opinion, and that one had his opinion; everyone had his own self-opinion. They had the knowledge of Christ being everything, and to some extent they knew the Spirit in knowledge but not in practice. How could they practice the church life? The way, first of all, is not to express any opinion.

Second, whenever a certain opinion is expressed, there is no need to say a word either against it or for it, because the church life is not a matter of opinion. The church life is Christ. If you propose something and I respond, my answer would probably be either for your opinion or against your opinion. Then a kind of debate may arise. At least a little unhappiness will come into existence, and reactions will follow. If I have really seen that Christ is everything in the church life, and I really give Him the first place, I would not say anything for your proposal or against your proposal. I just would not say anything. I would only follow the Spirit. Then the situation would depend upon you. If you have seen that Christ is everything in the church life, you

would not be offended even if I prayed in a way that did not correspond to your proposal. When we come together to pray, we must not care for the place or for the arrangement of the furniture. If we have really seen that Christ is everything in the church life, we will not pay attention to anything else. If you could have no opinion concerning the small things in the church life because you realize that Christ is everything to the church life, this really means that you have no opinion. If you cannot overcome your opinion over small things, you can never overcome your opinion over truths and doctrines. The Lord's grace will build you up sooner or later to a level that you would care only for Christ. You would not pay attention to anything else.

You may ask, Suppose some doctrines are wrong, what shall we do? Actually, according to the strict teaching of the New Testament, only a few things are definitely condemned and renounced by the Lord. First is idolatry, the worship of idols (1 John 5:21). This has been absolutely condemned by God, and we also have to condemn it. We should have no idols and no worship of anything other than God. In this matter there is no excuse at all, especially in the New Testament. Second, there is also no excuse for immorality and fornication, which spoils the humanity God created for Himself (1 Cor. 6:18). We all have to condemn these two matters. Concerning the worship of idols and concerning fornication, we should not say that we have no opinion. A third item that all of us must condemn is division (1 Cor. 1:10).

Idolatry insults God Himself. Because God is jealous, He can never tolerate the worship of idols. Fornication damages humanity; therefore, God does not allow it. Division destroys the Body of Christ. The New Testament never allows division. In addition to these three big matters, the New Testament also does not allow the denial of the deity of Christ. This means to say that Christ is not God or that Christ is not God incarnated to be a man. This is fully condemned in the New Testament. You may also include a few other things such as denying the redeeming blood, denying Christ's redemption. Concerning these matters we must be definite; we dare not say that we have no opinion. We must be definite, and we must be strong. Except for these basic things, we may take a very flexible and general attitude toward other things. Toward other matters, such as the eating of the sacrifices offered to the idols, the apostle Paul was very flexible. When I was young and read Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, I was really bothered about whether or not Paul allowed us to eat sacrifices to the idols or not. Some verses indicate

strongly that you should not eat, but other verses say that you may eat. It depends. If you offend your brothers, you should not eat. On the other hand, some verses say that the sacrifices to the idols are nothing, and even the idol itself is nothing. So even in the matter of the idol sacrifices, Paul was flexible according to the situation. In Romans 14 Paul illustrated his flexibility in at least two matters: eating and the keeping of days. Paul was very flexible. When we come together to practice the church life, we must see that in the church life there is nothing but Christ. If one person among us has seen that the church life is nothing but Christ, yet the rest of us have not seen so much, it will surely be difficult for that one. Among the others one may be very talkative, another may be very touchy, and another may be very stubborn. Another may be old and full of human experiences and many opinions. If you are such a brother, clear concerning the vision of Christ and the church life, yet you are among many who do not have such a vision, how will you help them? How will you go on to have the church life?

Well, it seems that in a sense we have to be blind to the other people. We have to forget about what they see or what they do not see, and we have to live our life before the Lord and not before other people or before other men. We should live our life unto Christ.

Quite good! What else would you say?

I would say that it is Christ who attracts, and it is Christ who can gain the church life. So if I am the one who has some vision of Christ and I care for this over a period of time, there would be an undermining of others' opinion by Christ. In other words they would be gained by Christ, gained to be more general and willing not to stand with their opinion.

Quite good! It is not so easy for a brother to practice the church life in such a situation. But if he does have a strong vision that in the church life there is nothing but Christ, he will have a way to minister Christ to them. Actually, because you have the vision of Christ, you do not need to be blind. What the others are speaking is not Christ, although you should not say that to them. If you tell them they are not speaking Christ, that also is a kind of opinion. Because your vision is that Christ is everything, you do not need to be blind, and you do not need to say anything. You may simply let the others talk and express their ideas. After the talk there may be some prayer. Even you do not need to take the lead to pray, saying, “Lord, in the church there is nothing but You. Thank You, Lord, You have made me strong so that I care for nothing

but You." If you pray in this way, you are the most opinionated person, and you practice the strongest opinion. How should you practice? You do not need to take the first chance to pray. Let the other dear ones pray until they are exhausted in their prayer. Then you can pray. Do not pray any politics; just spontaneously follow the Spirit in a smooth way. Simply pray, and let your prayer be far away from their opinion. According to your prayer, it should seem that nothing has happened. No one has proposed anything to you. You simply pray according to the Spirit. Pray to follow Christ. Light or life will gradually be ministered to the others. They will gradually realize that you are a brother who never expresses any opinion, who never says anything. It seems that everything is fine to you, although you would never agree with idolatry, fornication, division, the denial of Christ's deity, or the rejecting of Christ's redemption. But concerning other things, you never exercise any opinion. You only exercise the spirit to minister life to others. This illustrates how you might conduct yourself in the matter of praying with the brothers.

Sometimes you may minister to them in the way of functioning. You must trust in the Lord's sovereignty. You do not need to grasp the first chance to speak. Let everyone have the chance to speak. Eventually, they will be exhausted. Then the Lord may lead you to speak. When you do speak, just speak to minister life and light to others. Gradually the Holy Spirit will honor what you pray and what you speak to help the others. Because they love the Lord, life and light will be ministered to them. Gradually a great part of the opinion of the old man will be diminished. Sometimes if you would pray and speak and minister in such a way to have Christ as everything according to the Spirit's leading, the Spirit will speak to others: "You see, your brother has been meeting with you for some period of time, but he never expresses any kind of idea. He has nothing to say, and yet when there is a time to pray, he prays. And whenever he prays or speaks, life comes out."

This is the way to minister life to others. Gradually the atmosphere in the meeting will be built up more and more in favor of the Spirit with Christ. On the other hand, if you debate, you will create more debates. We must practice this matter of seeing Christ as everything in the church life and of following the Spirit to overcome opinion.

To practice this is not so easy, and to understand these matters in an adequate way is not easy. It does not mean that a brother should not say anything. Rather, it means that when he prays, he must look to the Lord for

mercy and grace that his prayer would always stand far away from any kind of expression, any kind of condemnation, as a reaction to others' speaking. As he prays, there will be a great temptation to correct and adjust the others in his prayer. After listening to this kind of prayer, they would simply rise up. This is not to pray in a proper way of ministering life to others. This is to pray in a manner that irritates others to the uttermost. In my early ministry I learned not to pray in a way to attack others. A number of times I had the burden to pray, yet my natural being was not ready and able to stay away from this kind of involvement. In other words, if at that time I had opened my mouth to pray, surely at least one bullet would have gone out. Simply because I did not have the assurance that no bullet would go out through my prayer, I dared not pray. At that time I even asked the Lord to forgive me: "Lord, You have given me a burden to pray, but I am not clean. This channel is not clean." Suppose a water hose is dirty. When water comes through the dirty hose, the water itself will become dirty. This shows us that even in our prayer it is easy to correct others. Much more in our speaking, we may be tempted to release our anger and our reaction. This is a mixture. This is not a clean channel flowing the pure water of life in a crystal-clear way. The result is just a mixture.

By these illustrations we can see that in order to kill opinion we must see a vision that Christ is everything in the church life. We dare not bring in anything else. Even we dare not bring in our emotion or our ability to stir others up. To practice this is not easy, yet the Lord is here, and He has mercy and grace. We all have to humble ourselves before Him. We need to pray, "Lord, have mercy upon me. Under Your mercy, give me grace. I would practice the church life by You as everything. I really mean it. I have no other care. I do not care for others' opinion, and I do not care for my own opinion. I care only for You." You have to realize that simply to remain silent does not mean that you have killed your opinion. No. Many silent ones are the strongest in their opinion. Brothers, what shall we do?

We need a vision to see that Christ is everything in the church life.

That is very good. Once you have seen this vision, how shall you practice it? How do you practice having a church life killing all the opinion?

First, we need a vision to realize that Christ must be everything in the church life, and we also need to realize that we will always have opinion. Therefore, we need to exercise before the Lord that, although our opinion is

here, we take the Lord's grace not to react and not to insist on any kind of opinion. We also need to look to the Lord that we would not attack others through our prayers or in our fellowship, but rather we would look to the Lord to minister something of Christ as life and light so that others could be helped and built up in life. Hopefully we could all go on together positively.

I still do not have the peace and the confidence that we have seen this in such a clear and practical way. If all the sisters have seen how to practice the church life in a proper way, all the opinions will be killed. Particularly, all the talking will be stopped. As long as the sisters are talking, that means the opinions are there. If a few sisters could come together to pray without any talking, it would indicate that the church life is being practiced with all the opinions killed. The sisters talking or not talking may be considered as a kind of thermometer as to whether the opinions are killed in the church life. It is not a matter of making up your mind not to talk. That could last for only a short time. The problem is a lack of seeing Christ. There is so much talk because there is a lack of seeing Christ. Of course, do not think that only the sisters talk and the brothers do not. The sisters have their way to talk, and the brothers have their way to talk.

Whenever talk still exists in the church life, it means that the church is weakened by opinion. When the church is strong, it means that the sisters' talk is over and the brothers' talk is over. We may illustrate the problem of talking in this way: Our hands become dirty easily, even though we do not intentionally get them dirty. Even if you are not doing any work, they get dirty. It is the same with our talking. To talk is very spontaneous. We may have seen to some extent that Christ must be the practicality of our church life. But we have not seen it so thoroughly. Therefore, our seeing does not stop our talk. In a sense we are addicted to talk. It is not easy to stop our talking. Talking indicates that our opinion has never been touched by the Lord. Our opinion could never be touched by the Lord unless we see such a vision—that Christ is everything in the church life. According to my experience, nothing else can stop our opinion. Do not think that you can stop your opinion. Only one thing can put your opinion aside, that is, to see that Christ is everything in the church life. Do you know that whenever you speak, that is the expression of opinion? Speaking is the manifestation of opinion. If you have no opinion, you would have no need to speak. Why do you speak? Simply to express your opinion. Only one thing can stop this habit—you have to see that practically in the church life there is nothing but Christ. This seeing, this vision, will

spontaneously dissolve your talk. You will have nothing to talk about, nor will you react to others' talk. The seeing of Christ as everything in the church life will kill the talk.

Many of us have been meeting together for five to ten years. We need to be sobered by the fact that even until now our opinion is still quite prevailing. By the Lord's mercy, we have been enlightened to the extent that there is nearly no fighting and no debating among us. But we cannot deny that there is a lot of talking. The talking is just the expression of opinion. You have to realize that this kind of talking does not strengthen us in the church life. Rather, it weakens the church life, and it kills our growth in life. The talking also kills our function and in a subtle, hidden way tears down the building. We all have to admit that a great deal of the building up has been destroyed by our talking. Although you may not have talked with a bad intention, your talking still killed the growth in life, the function, and tore down the building. Believe me, if by His mercy we would not talk all this week, next week's meetings would be living, uplifted, and enriched. The prayer would be much more; the life supply would be more prevailing. I repeat: talking is the expression of opinion. Do not consider this simply as a kind of teaching. You must realize that among us at the present time there is such a need—that we all have to cast our stone at this one thing, opinion. Practically speaking, we have to cast our stone at our talking. However, if we do not have a strong vision that Christ is everything in the church life, even though we may throw our stones upon our talking, it will not work.

So we all have to look to the Lord: "Lord, have mercy upon me! Have mercy upon me! Lord, eliminate my speaking. Lord, I cannot do it, because I have an interest in speaking; I have a kind of addiction to speaking. Lord, show me a strong vision that in Your recovery the church life is nothing but You Yourself." We all need such a killing vision. When we see this, we will hate our talking; we will be disgusted with our talking. Then we can say that we only have Christ; we have no opinion.

CHAPTER SIX

A DOMINATING FACTOR TO DEAL WITH OPINION

Although we have spent several chapters on the matter of opinion, we need to consider once more, not doctrinally but practically, how we can have no opinion. Humanly speaking, it is altogether impossible. We are just the embodiment of opinion. We are just opinionated. How could we as such persons have no opinion? The first point is not how to have no opinion. The first point is that we need to see a vision concerning what God wants. What does God want of you? You must see that God wants only Christ—not Christ *and* but Christ *with* the church. The church is not a strong subject, but it is something subordinate. We must see that God wants only Christ with the church. I am sorry to say that thousands and even millions of Christians have not seen this and do not care for this. So it is impossible for them not to have opinion.

A DOMINATING FACTOR

Furthermore, although you may have seen this vision, it still may not have become a dominating factor in you. What you have seen as a vision must become a dominating factor in your being. You must be dominated with this fact: that God wants nothing but Christ with the church. If you could see this vision and if you could keep this as a kind of dominating factor, you will be ninety percent successful in not having opinion. This is very crucial. Actually, there is no way to overcome opinion or to deal with opinion. Logically speaking, we may say that we have to deal with our opinion and overcome our opinion. But experientially there is no such thing. If you have a way to overcome your opinion, that way becomes a replacing opinion. You simply replace opinion number one with opinion number two. You must see that God wants only Christ with the church. As you see this, everything else drops spontaneously. I do not say that everything *will be* dropped, but everything simply drops. I do not use the passive voice but the active voice. When you see the vision that God's unique desire is Christ with the church, and this vision becomes a dominant factor, everything besides Christ drops. This is really true. We need such a vision.

Every spiritual experience depends upon our vision. For example, we may preach against sin, but if people do not see a vision, they will simply pick up the knowledge that they are sinful and continue to do a lot of sinful things. The principle is true in every item of spiritual experience. We need to see that God does not want anything but Christ with the church. You have to pray, "Lord, have mercy on us." To advise people not to have opinion is altogether not workable. It is impossible. But if the church is under the light, the vision is here. You see that what God wants is nothing but Christ Himself. He does not want your spirituality, your holiness, your prayer, or even your good virtue. He does not want your ability, your capability, your wisdom, your cleverness, your skill, or your patience. You have to see the vision that Christ is everything. This is the main factor that cuts all the roots of anything other than Christ. Opinion may be considered as the main thing among all the things other than Christ. Do not think that if you simply understand what I am saying, you have gotten it. No. This depends upon the Lord's mercy. Out of the nine hundred people who are here in this meeting, if only fifty percent could get into this vision, it would be marvelous. You all need to pray, "Lord, have mercy upon me."

A VISION OF CHRIST

First, if you would see such a vision, you must have a humble heart, have an open mind, and be poor in spirit. You must hold a kind of attitude, aspiring for the Lord's mercy. Then you will see the vision. Learn to not reject even a little enlightenment. Just a little rejection covers your whole being. Be humble, be open, and be pure. Hold an attitude of needing and desiring the Lord's mercy. Then the light will come. We have given many messages through the years that Christ in God's economy is all in all. Christ is the centrality and universality of God's economy. Christ is the hub and Christ is the rim of God's purpose. Whatever God is, is just Christ. We all need to see this. I realize that you know this and you have heard this, but it must become a vision to you. You may know it but still not have a vision that Christ is all in all. When you see this, everything besides Christ drops.

LIVE BY CHRIST

Second, you have to realize that Christ is everything in God's economy. God has ordained us just to live by Christ. Christ is our life, Christ is our breath, Christ is our breathing. Christ is every little matter in our practical life. You have to see that you cannot live without Christ. If at any moment you and

Christ are apart, you are dead. You cannot have life and live apart from Christ. Even though you have been regenerated, even though you have been strongly and thoroughly saved, you have to realize that once you are apart from Christ, you are dead. Why are Christians full of opinion? It is because we lack these two visions: that God does not want anything other than Christ with the church, and that God wants us to live by Christ. The Bible has over one thousand chapters, but you must realize that the crucial point, the critical point, the organic point, of the whole Bible is that you have to live by Christ. I realize that some of you have heard this many times. But it is one thing to hear it, and it is another thing to have it as a kind of dominating factor.

If you have really seen these matters, every time you take anything other than Christ, there will be a kind of condemnation within you. If you have this condemnation, it is a strong proof that you have seen it. Also, whenever you live by yourself, you say something by yourself, you talk to other people by yourself, or you do something by yourself, right away a condemnation is within you. This condemnation is a proof that you are under the light and that you have seen the vision. Otherwise, you may do a lot of things by yourself, but within there is no condemnation. That is a strong sign that you do not have this vision, you do not have the seeing, and you do not have the light. I cannot give you a better way to see these two things. The unique way is to humble yourself and to keep yourself open. Humbling is mainly in your heart, and opening is mainly related to your mind. Also you have to learn to be poor in spirit. You have to learn not to have a filled-up spirit but always to hold an attitude of needing the Lord's mercy. Then the light will come. If you are humble, open, if you are poor in spirit with an attitude that you need the Lord's mercy, that you are nothing, you will get the light. You cannot create light; you cannot send light; you cannot bring in light. Light comes from the Lord according to His mercy. We have no merit, and we deserve no light. There is only one reason that we can have light, and that is God's mercy. No proud person can see light; no full and fully satisfied person can see light. We must be humble, open, and poor in spirit. If this is your case, you will have light. Then you will surely see that God wants only Christ with the church. And you will also see that nothing counts, nothing matters, nothing avails except that you live by Christ.

BREATHE CHRIST

Third, to have no opinion you have to breathe Christ. Now I am using another synonym for calling, that is, breathing. You have to breathe Christ. We all know that to live is to breathe. If you do not breathe, you cannot live. What does it mean to breathe Christ? Sometimes we may misunderstand the real meaning of calling on the name of the Lord. To call on the name of the Lord is not just to cry out or to shout. Many times we do not need to call out or to cry out. You may call on the name, and yet at the same time you may not breathe. To call on His name may be one thing, and to breathe the Lord is another. How can we differentiate between these two things? It all depends upon the deep exercise of your spirit. If you exercise your spirit, your calling on the Lord may be very low and even may be without any voice, yet you are calling by a deep exercise of your spirit. If you have seen that God wants only Christ and that God wants you to live by Christ, deep within you there is a kind of aspiration: "Lord, I need You! Lord, I need You! Lord Jesus! I need You!" This is a spontaneous aspiration coming out of your spirit; this is to breathe, and this is the real calling on the Lord. This kind of breathing should not be stopped all the day long. Such a kind of aspiration from within is the real breathing, and this is to call on the Lord.

Sometimes, even many times, we do need to call out because some things are depressing us and suffocating us and attacking us. Sometimes we need a kind of deep breathing. Normally, we do not have a kind of deep breathing. But sometimes, due to a certain weakness of our physical body, we may need the deep breathing. Many times in our spiritual life we also need the deep breathing. When things are attacking, suffocating, and depressing, we need some deep breathing. So at that time we may cry and shout, "O Lord Jesus!" But you cannot breathe deeply all the day long. However, you have to breathe all the day long. Most of the time we may have just a kind of silent calling. You can call on the Lord silently with a kind of silent aspiration, realizing that you need the Lord.

When these three matters are practical to you—that God wants only Christ with the church, that God wants you to live by Christ, and that you need to breathe Christ with a real aspiration—you will be filled up daily with the Lord. This is exactly what Ephesians 5 says: "Be filled in spirit" (v. 18). Nearly everything has been confused by today's Christians. Even the infilling within our spirit has been confused. It is not a matter of fasting and praying to be filled with the "Holy Ghost." No. To be filled within is just like breathing. When you are filled in your spirit, you will see that Christ is everything in

God's economy and that you need to live Christ. Spontaneously, you would aspire, praying, "Lord, I need You. Lord, I need You to be my life. I need to live by You. You are my breath; You are my life supply; You are joined organically to my whole being." This is a kind of inner and deeper aspiration; this is the spiritual breathing that will fill your spirit.

After Ephesians 5:18 says that we need to be filled in our spirit, verse 19 goes on to say that we need to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Speaking is mentioned first and singing later. We are short of speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We covered this matter in the Ephesians training, but our practice is that we only do the things we are used to. We only do things when they are habitual. If something is not habitual, we hear it, practice it a little while, and then forget it. We do not practice speaking to one another in psalms. We need to practice this kind of speaking to one another, not in ordinary utterances but in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We need to sing and psalm with our heart to the Lord, giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The point is this: when you are filled up from within, spontaneously you will have to "flush out." What is the flushing? It is our speaking. Suppose you are such a person—filled up in your spirit and flushing out all the time—could you still have some opinion? Such a practice will absolutely change your situation. Originally it was impossible for you to have no opinion. But after you are filled up and flushing out, it is altogether impossible for you to have an opinion. All your opinion will go away. The opinion drops, yet you did not drop it. Actually there is no need to drop it. If you need to drop it, that is wrong. The opinion simply drops. This means that you are actually, practically, livingly, organically one with the Lord. At this point it really means that you are not apart from Him. I must tell you strongly, until you reach this point, you are a person apart from the Lord.

How can you have a condition in which you are not apart from the Lord, a condition in which you are filled from within with the Lord? First, you must see the vision that God wants nothing but Christ with the church. Second, you must see the vision that you have to live by Him. Third, you must aspire and you must breathe from within. This is an all-the-day-long matter. By this you can see that it is altogether possible for you to pray without ceasing, to pray unceasingly, because praying has become your breathing. You are filled up

with the Lord, and then you flush out by speaking. In this kind of condition it is altogether impossible for you to have an opinion. In other words, when we have an opinion, it is a strong proof that there is no filling up of the Lord as the Spirit. If you have the filling up of the Lord as the Spirit, the opinion is gone.

Now we need to have a practical illustration. Suppose we have five brothers in one church; three are elders, and two are helpers. We two are the helpers because we are younger. We are helping by learning and learning by helping. We come together to take care of so many business affairs of the church. Let us practice to have an elders' meeting without opinion.

First brother: Brothers, we have a practical need. It seems that we need a meeting place. The meeting places we have now are not so available for the meetings, and we need to make a decision whether we should rent a place or should consider buying a place. How do you brothers feel?

Second brother: I definitely feel that there is a need of a meeting place, but I feel that we probably have not spent enough time together bringing this matter to the Lord, and we have not had a thorough fellowship with the saints to see how they feel. So perhaps we can spend some time going to the Lord concerning this matter. We can pray about it and see how we feel.

Third brother: The church surely needs an adequate place to meet together. We need a place that is fully available for all the church meetings and where we can also have the service for the practical building up of the saints and for the bringing in of all the new ones. I really agree with the brother who said that we need to have a clear leading from the Lord whether to buy or whether to rent. I agree that we need to continue to pray. Right now I do not have a clear leading as to what we should do. What do you younger brothers feel about it?

First learner: I feel that whatever you brothers say is okay.

Second learner: I am just a learner. I know nothing. I am learning of you, and I am following you.

No doubt all this fellowship in the elders' meeting is very gentle, very slow, and very humble. It seems to be so much in the oneness. There was no fighting, no arguing, no debating, and nothing done in rivalry. However, although it seemed very nice, actually every word spoken was an opinion. All

the brothers simply expressed their opinions. Although the three brothers had the same kind of opinion, what they expressed was simply opinion. The elders' meeting was simply a time for the elders to express their thought or their feeling. Thought and feeling are simply synonyms of opinion. If the elders have really seen something and learned something, the elders' meeting must be full not only of prayer but also full of the spirit of prayer. We may have prayers and not have the spirit of prayer. There may be five brothers praying in the elders' meeting, but there may be no aspiration and spirit of prayer. Although prayer is needed in the elders' meeting, the spirit of prayer, the aspiration of prayer, is needed even the more. If we come together as elders with a kind of aspiration and spirit of prayer, spontaneously we will pray. It will not be a kind of prayer simply to carry out our business. It will be an aspiration to breathe the Lord. In all kinds of meetings, whether the elders' meetings or service meetings, there should be an aspiration and spirit of prayer. Simply to pray is not that crucial, but to breathe with an aspiration of prayer is crucial. This demonstration of an elders' meeting began with no prayer and with no aspiration of prayer. So whatever they expressed was simply their opinion. How then could we not have an opinion? If the elders have a spirit and an aspiration of prayer, they may present something in this way: "Brothers, these days in my praying spirit I feel that the Lord wants us to have a meeting hall." You may think that this also is an opinion. No, this is not an opinion. This is an expression of the Lord's move within you. Another might follow to say, "Amen! Brothers, in these days I also have really been burdened before the Lord, and deep within me I have the same feeling. The Lord wants us to have a meeting hall." The third would indicate the same thing, and the two learners would simply say, "We have not prayed that much, but while you brothers were fellowshipping about this, we had an Amen within. We had the anointing within." This kind of fellowship is not simply the expression of opinion.

Suppose, however, the second learner speaks in this way: "Recently, brothers, I have been praying much about this matter, and although I am very young, the more I pray about this, the more the Lord within indicates that we must wait." You say that this is not opinion, and I agree also, but how can there be two kinds of leading from the Lord? Three elders plus one learner have a certain kind of leading from the Lord. But another younger one has a different kind of leading. How can this be? Up to this point we five brothers have really practiced the right way. We have come together with the

aspiration of prayer, and we have prayed a lot. Thus, when we come together, we do not like to express our idea, our thought, our understanding—that means our opinion. Yet we like to tell one another how the Lord is leading us. This is right. But we have to learn one thing: the accuracy of our interpretation of the Lord's leading depends upon the degree of self-denial. If your self-denial is higher than mine, you can interpret the Lord's leading much more accurately than I. All five of the brothers have expressed the Lord's leading, and all five mean business with the Lord. The young learner also means business with the Lord and has the Lord's leading. Yet how accurate his interpretation of the Lord's leading may be depends upon the degree of his self-denial. Many times we need further prayer not simply to know the Lord's will but to get out of ourselves. More prayer helps us to get out of ourselves. The more we get out of ourselves, the closer we will be to the real and accurate understanding of the Lord's leading. This is why our interpretations of the Lord's leading may not be the same. After a week or several weeks of prayer, however, the interpretation of the Lord's leading may be closer and closer. After we pray for another period of time, we may all arrive at the same interpretation. This means that through the prayer we have gotten out of ourselves. In a sense we may have had sufficient prayer before, but we still had some amount of self present. What we spoke was not, strictly speaking, opinion, yet some of the self was there. It really was a kind of leading of the Lord, but it was covered by the hidden and subtle self. By the proper prayer the covering self will be peeled off, much like you peel off the skin of a banana. The fruit is present with a banana, but you must peel off the skin in order to enjoy it. We have the Lord's leading because we have had much prayer, but the hidden and subtle self covers the clear understanding. A banana skin is easy to peel off because it is of only one layer, but our self is of many layers. After you peel off one layer of the self, you may think it is cleaned up. But then another layer is exposed. Then another layer. It is not that the Lord has not revealed His leading to you but that the covering self still remains in a subtle way. The leading of the Lord is here, yet our understanding and interpretation are not accurate. We have no way to drop our opinion unless we see the vision of God and the ordination of God, that is, God's economy, and we aspire all the time to be after the Lord.

In addition to this, we need to be filled with Him; then we will be snatched out of the hidden self. Then the opinion will be gone. We need to pray for the peeling off of the self. To try to peel off your self does not work. You simply

need to have an aspiration for the Lord and to breathe the Lord in more and more. As you are filled with the Lord as the life-giving Spirit, the heavenly breath, you will be rescued, and the self will be peeled off. By this, opinion will have no place among us. Opinion will leave us. Then the real spiritual weight, the spiritual reality, the real spirituality, will be with us. At that time not only will we have no opinion, but we will experience and realize the Lord Himself in our church life.

We may illustrate further with a married couple, a husband and wife. Nothing is so practical as marriage life. Marriage life is an opinion-expressing life. Before you were married, you had a lot of opinions, but you had no object to express your opinion to. But now that you are married, you have a good target at which to dispatch all the opinion arrows. Sometimes both you and your wife realize that this opinion or that opinion is not worthy of the church life, and you restrain yourselves somewhat. You give in, but a lot of opinions are saved. You have a savings account full of opinions. To have such a savings account of opinions will kill you. One day you will blow up. What is the way to get rid of the opinions? The principle is still the same: both need to see that God wants nothing but Christ. Even in a marriage life God wants nothing but Christ. God does not want a husband's love toward the wife nor her submission toward the husband. God wants only Christ. You have to live by Christ. Thus, you need the deep conviction that you cannot live without the Lord—that you need the Lord's mercy. You have to be thirsty after Him and aspire after Him. Then you will be filled with Him, and spontaneously you will pray. Your prayer will be a kind of automatic breathing. By being filled with Him day by day the self will be peeled off. Once the self is peeled off, the opinion also will go.

These illustrations may help us to see the problems. We may know the doctrine and the knowledge and yet not aspire after the Lord. We do not breathe the Lord. When we sit down with our wife or husband or with other brothers and sisters, we sit down with our opinion. We sit down with our concept. But if we are filled up with the Lord, we will realize that nothing counts but Christ. We will realize that we have to live by the Lord and we have to breathe the Lord, aspiring after the Lord. Once there is the inner filling up, there will be the singing, the speaking, the psalming, the flushing. We will not need to deal with opinion and to overcome opinion. Opinion will simply go; opinion will just drop. I hope that we all could see this.

Although many of you have been in the Lord's recovery a number of years, still you may be very far off. You have the messages, you have the knowledge, you have the light, you have the enlightenment, the visions, the revelations, yet you may be off. You do not have the continuous peeling off of your self. You love the Lord and you love His recovery. You have enough light that you can never go back to the world and touch those rough, coarse, sinful things. Yet you have to realize that up to the present time you have been strengthened and consolidated to be a strong embodiment of opinion. Previously, when you were in the world and in Christianity, you were not such a strong embodiment of opinion. But today you are very strong. All the years in the church life have consolidated and condensed you to be a strong embodiment of opinion. Years ago you could be touched and could have a change. But now it is very difficult. The only way of rescue is to go to the Lord: "Lord, have mercy upon me. Give me a humble heart and an open mind, and cause me to be poor in spirit. Lord, have mercy upon me that I may see the practical vision." This will make a difference. Then you will have a real thirst and a real hunger. To lose our thirst is terrible. The longer we have been in the church life, the easier it is for us to lose our thirst. Many newcomers are very thirsty, but this thirst can gradually disappear. Because you are so familiar with the church life, your thirst may have been stolen. You may have no aspiration of prayer. Prayer may have become routine and formal to you. Oh, we need the breathing, the thirst, and the hunger. Then the Lord will become the real breathing to you, and you will have an inner filling up. This will make a difference. It will peel off the hidden self, and the opinion will be gone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO PEEL OFF SELF FOR THE DEALING WITH OPINION

Prayer: Lord, how we worship You for Your gracious move among us. Lord, even we thank You so much for the meeting tonight. We believe that You are with us. Lord, we even believe that we are one spirit with You. Thank You for Your cleansing blood. Lord, we do need Your cleansing. Lord, cleanse us again with Your precious blood. Lord, we are looking to You for Your anointing. Oh, we are looking to You for a fresh word, the word which we need today. Lord, speak to every one of us. We are nothing and we can do nothing apart from You. And we hate to do anything outside of You. Lord, come to visit everyone and touch us again. Day after day we would ask You to touch us again. Lord, touch the hardest place within us. You know what needs to be touched. O Lord, touch us! Touch us according to Your mind, according to Your understanding. Lord, expose us, and grant us the grace we need for this meeting. Even right now all of us need Your grace. Be with us. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

I still feel we have not gotten through concerning this matter of opinion. So we would spend more time on it. Our time now needs to be more subjective than ever. We have come to the point of considering how it is possible for us not to have any kind of opinion. In the last meeting we saw that to get out of our opinion, or not to have any opinion, we need to pray more so that our self may be peeled off layer by layer. We need to continue this one point—how to get our self peeled off layer by layer. This means how to get our self peeled off bit by bit. I would ask these four brothers how they have realized that their self is being peeled off bit by bit. I like this expression *peeled off*. The sisters in the kitchen peel off a lot of things. They peel off the skin from a chicken, and they peel off the skin of a carrot or cucumber. However, the sisters' peeling off is a little too rough. Furthermore, the self could not be peeled off that much or that fast. Within two minutes you may peel the skin off a whole chicken, but I do not believe you can have your self peeled off so fast or so roughly. According to my experience, I can testify that the peeling off of my self is very slow. It seems that the peeling off of my self has nearly no speed. Although today there was a lot of peeling off, there was no speed. It is almost

as if you drive a car for twelve hours and yet remain on the same spot. The driving has been going on, but the car is not moving. There is no effect and no effectiveness. The peeling off of my self has never gone fast. Now I would ask you brothers to speak something in a free way. Please do not believe that after the last four messages all the opinions are gone. I have no confidence in myself or in what we are doing here to deal with the opinions. I would say that probably the opinion situation among us remains the same. Although we have been "driving the car" for five weeks, the car has moved very little. The opinions are still here. I would ask you brothers: after these four weeks of talking concerning opinion, do you believe that your opinion is over?

It is about the same.

This means that we have been driving the car, but the car is still in the same place. Let me ask another brother: do you believe that in you or in your wife there has really been some change due to these Perfecting Meetings?

I think it has made us more aware of our opinions, but as far as reducing the quantity of opinions, I do not believe there has been too much change.

This simply means that we all got some awareness, right? What then shall we do? Do we just stay here with our awareness?

Brother Lee, last week's meeting touched me deeply, particularly when you came to this point of the peeling off of the self. Of all the meetings, this one touched me the most. It seems that after a number of meetings awareness could be raised up within the saints concerning the opinion. Surely I experienced this within myself. And due to that, there was some kind of going to the Lord. But my sensation is that the desperation is not there. In other words, the going to the Lord is still somewhat formal and simply a response to a word in the meeting. And I think the lack of desperation is because we still do not see this eater. My real inner sense is that I myself and probably most in my locality still do not see the evil or the damage that this eater has done and is still doing in us. So when you are not aware of the seriousness of the problem, your going to the Lord will not be that desperate. And without a kind of desperateness, it is hard to get the real light.

Furthermore, when there is not the real light, it is hard for the self to be exposed or to be peeled off. When Brother Lee spoke concerning the self, the

Spirit seems to have really gotten through. I would say at least something is beginning to break within me. This is the point that has touched me most deeply. This week I spent most of my time in prayer on this very point concerning the self. The opinion may not be the real root of the problem. But when the self was mentioned, and especially the fortifying and the condensing of the self after many years in the church life, I felt we had touched the root. It seems that the more we go on, the more the self is built up in a subtle way. It even becomes enclosed.

In the beginning when we came to the church life, we were young, and we were still somewhat open and willing to be touched and changed. But after a period of time in the church life, we somehow acquire a way to have our self fully insulated and protected to the point that we can go on in the church life without having our self touched. Now it is getting harder and harder for the Lord to really penetrate because there are more layers than ever before. Now I really see the need of a definite surgery. This point cannot be touched lightly. The self has been enclosed, built up, and fortified through years of experience in the church life, and to get into it now seems to be harder than ever before. It seems for the Lord to get into it, to peel it off, or to penetrate it will necessitate some pain. I am just desperate and desirous for some light in this matter. I feel that all the saints, especially the older ones who have some history in the church life, really have this great need. This really frustrates the real growth. This also is the reason why the functioning is so inadequate. Even sometimes there is no feeling that we are not growing and no feeling that we are not functioning. This means that the self has really been built up and untouched. Now I feel our self needs to be touched. I feel we need some surgery.

I would answer in this way: for the peeling off of the self, surgery does not work. Surgery is to cut off a sick part of the body. But according to my experience, the matter of self cannot be cut off. If you are going to cut it, you have to cut every part. But the self has become every part of our being. This is why I did not use the word *surgery* but the word *peeling*. I used the term *peel off*. If a part of a cucumber becomes rotten, you cut that part off. But to peel off the skin is different. In the past meetings we have learned about the problem of the opinion and the source of opinion. We are aware of the need, but how to experience the peeling off of the self, which is the very source of opinion, is a real problem. I would ask you brothers to say something more.

The word that comes to me initially that I can relate to my limited experience is light. It is one thing to listen to the fellowship regarding the self, to agree with it, and even for a period of time to let it be a topic of conversation. We may even pray about it, but to have a very subjective light on our self in a particular way is quite another thing. I feel, though, that I have experienced at least a little peeling, and what I have experienced seems to be related to a definite exposure in a subjective way where I can recognize the self. I can see that that motive, that thought, is self. I recognize that that attitude and that concept is self. I do have the feeling that this kind of exposing never ends. Subjectively, right now I am not discouraged, but I spend a lot of my time being discouraged because this matter of exposing never ends. It is like an onion that you never stop peeling. Although you peel off one layer, it is so thin that it hardly changes the appearance at all. The main feeling I have is concerning this matter of light. I think that my self is the strongest when it is the least apparent. And I think that something is peeled off when it is genuinely exposed—not just in knowledge or in doctrine—but by having light in a specific way. That is all I can say.

Do you think that the self really peels off by being enlightened, by receiving some amount of light? Is this your experience? This seems reasonable and logical, but I doubt whether it is practical. Reasonably and logically it seems right to say that the light kills and that the more light we receive, the more self will be peeled off. Doctrinally it sounds quite right, but practically it is different according to my experience. Do you really think that this is practical?

The brother was speaking about light. After a word like we had last week, the more I try to go after the light, the more I simply come up with self-realization. I thought I was clear that the light kills the self, but I am not clear concerning the peeling. Last week I told someone that I feel like the blind man in John 9. I see something, but I am blind. I need a word telling me to wash and to come out seeing. I am simply blind to what it means to peel off the self. This has been my prayer to the Lord. I have been crying out for His mercy. I realize that light originates from Him, but at this point I still feel that I am not clear how to be peeled off.

I believe that through the past meetings we have received some light, some help, and we have gotten some awareness. I feel, though, we have not gotten through with this matter of opinion. Regardless of how much help we have

received, opinion is still here. I am trying my best to present you with a very fine explanation or fine definition of this spiritual experience of having our self peeled off. First, when we came to the matter of opinion, we pointed out clearly that the antidote to heal opinion is the Spirit. The effective dose to heal this sickness of our opinion is the Spirit. Second, the Lord told us in John 15 that apart from Him we can do nothing. So we have to abide in Him. We have to remain in Him, never apart from Him.

Third, we also have pointed out what opinion is—opinion is just us apart from God. When we are apart from God, we are just opinion; we are just the self. If you are abiding in the Lord and letting the Lord abide in you, that is Christ; that is not you. It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20). But when does Christ live in us? It does not mean always or all the time. Galatians 2:20 tells us the fact, but it does not say something practical in time. In the Bible not only do you have the fact, but you also have the practicality in time. This principle applies to many points. For example, we have Christ as our holiness, our sanctification. This is the fact, but this may not be the practicality in time. When you abide in the Lord and the Lord abides in you, you have the practicality at that time that it is no longer you but Christ who lives in you. At the time that Christ lives in you, you are not the self; you are Christ. Or you are one with Christ. At that time you are not apart from Christ. At that time you are one with Christ, and the self is gone. When the self is gone, the opinion disappears because the source of opinion is gone.

The crucial question is this: how can we remain in the situation that we are one with Christ? We have seen that the Spirit is the effective dose to heal the sickness of opinion. And we have seen that if we are apart from the Lord, we are just the self, just the opinion. Also, we have seen that when we abide in the Lord and let the Lord abide in us, we are not the self, or we are not the self at that time. It is at that time that the self is gone and the opinion disappears. But how can we remain in the condition that we are no more the self but the Lord? We have the awareness; we have received the light. All this helps, but still this is not the practical experience of having our self peeled off. We must come to this crucial point.

By past experiences and by pursuing after this kind of experience in these recent months, I have discovered something that I never realized so clearly in the past. For instance, the Bible says, “Unceasingly pray” (1 Thes. 5:17). I have never realized this matter of praying unceasingly as clearly as now. Also I

have never realized the word of the Lord, “Abide in Me” (John 15:4-5), so practically as in these days. What does it mean to pray unceasingly and to abide in Christ? Regardless of how much awareness you have received and regardless of how much light you have received, if you are not abiding in the Lord even at this moment, you are in the flesh. You may have received the greatest light, and you may have received a thorough surgery, but if at this moment you do not abide in the Lord, you are the flesh. The surgery and the light you have received become useless. They do not avail. They availed at the time you saw the light. But still that availing is not the practical experience. That availing was only a kind of apprehension, a kind of realization. Mainly it was a kind of understanding. It was not the real peeling off of the self. Awareness, surgery, and light all are good and helpful, but practically speaking, the peeling off of the self occurs only at the moment when we are abiding in the Lord. In other words, our self peels off only when we pray. I do not mean a kind of shallow or superficial prayer. I mean the kind of prayer that brings us into the spirit, a prayer that prays us into the spirit. When we have this kind of prayer, it is at the very moment our prayer is going on that our self is being peeled off. When you pray yourself into the spirit, at that time the self peels off automatically. The self cannot be peeled off by anything except by the prayer that prays us into the spirit. This kind of prayer is the real abiding in Christ. For many years I did not have a clear word of how to abide in Christ. According to my experiences, the real abiding in Christ is the praying that prays you into the spirit. When you pray yourself into the spirit, that is your abiding in Christ. It is at this time, and only at this time, that your self is peeled off. When your prayer stops, the peeling of the self also stops. The peeling of the self does not work at any other time. It does not work at just any time; it works only at the time when you abide in the Lord.

So we have to pray unceasingly. When we stop our prayer, we are the self again. When our prayer stops, we are the self. When our prayer goes on, we are not the self. In other words, when our prayer stops, we are apart from the Lord. When our prayer continues, we are not apart from the Lord, we are not the self, but we are the Lord. This is not something according to doctrine but according to experience. Regardless of how many years we have been in the Lord and regardless of how holy and how spiritual we may be, as long as we are still living in this tabernacle, this flesh, if we do not pray ourselves into the spirit, we are still the self. Apart from the Lord we are the self. Whether you are a new convert or have been in the Lord a long time, if you do not pray, you

are still in the self. If we do not pray ourselves into the spirit, at that time we are the self. For example, for the electrical lights in the room to continue shining, the switch must be left on. If the switch is turned off, darkness is here. But when the switch is on, there is light. It has nothing to do with whether the lamps are old or new or strong or weak. It is altogether a matter of whether or not the switch is on.

What is the self? The self is just us apart from the Lord. How could we be not apart from the Lord but joined to the Lord? It is only by abiding in Him. Consider the branches. Regardless of how many years they have been on the tree, once they are not abiding in the tree, they are dead branches. Nothing else helps. Only one thing avails; that is the abiding. When we abide in the Lord, we are no more self; when we are not abiding in the Lord, we become self again. In our self, we are self; in Christ, we are not self. So the real peeling off of the self is in this kind of prayer that brings us into the abiding. This experience is not rough but is very, very fine.

Brother Watchman Nee used to tell us that we needed at least twenty years to become mature. When we heard this, we were disappointed. Twenty years seemed like a long time. But now, from 1933 to 1980, it has been almost forty-seven years. But I cannot find that I am much different from forty-seven years ago. Yes, maturity does mean something, but it does not mean that you are qualified to be apart from the Lord. Honestly, forty-seven years ago it was easy for me to speak or to fellowship with others without praying for one day. Many times I was so occupied that I did not pray for the whole day. Many things were piled up waiting upon me. I never liked to see things piled up. Especially in my study room I do not like to have things piled up on my desk. Every night I like to get my desk cleared off. This is not easy to do, and it means a lot of work. If something is left on my desk uncared for, I could not sleep so clearly. I may sleep well but not that clearly. Then when I rise up in the morning, I cannot pray that well and I cannot pray that clearly, because something is left on my desk. Many times I sacrifice the prayer in order to get the desk cleared up. Forty years ago I could still be strong to speak and to fellowship with others without much prayer. But today I am much weaker. Today if I do not pray quite regularly and continually, I could not be so strong. This means that I am weaker than I was forty years ago. Is it better to be stronger or weaker? Actually, as long as we do not pray ourselves into the spirit, we are just the self. When we pray ourselves into the spirit, it is no more the self but the spirit. So the antidote to the sickness is here.

It is easy for the sisters who are wives to check this out according to their experience. When the sisters who are single live together, they maintain a distance of politeness that hinders and frustrates their being exposed. But once they get married, after three weeks or three months there is no more protection of politeness. It is so good that all the sisters who are married have a husband to expose them. Consider your experience. You stop praying and then try your best not to have any opinion. I assure you that whatever situation you face, you will be fully opinionated.

Please do not consider that Brother Lee is over fifty years in the Lord, that he has a lot of experiences, that he is matured, and surely he cannot have opinion; it is easy for him not to have any opinion. This is wrong. I am not a "saint" or a sage. Even the more I am not an angel. Maybe it is easier for me to have an opinion than for you. Why is this? Because the older you are, the more opinions you have. The most opinionated persons are those who are older. Let us check with an older brother. Here is a brother who is always smiling. You can never see him with a long face. He was born with a round face smiling all the time. Let him tell us whether he had more opinion thirty years ago or more opinion today.

I have more opinion today.

Listen to his answer. He has more opinion today. And to my impression this brother is very innocent. He is always so nice, so pure, so clean, always smiling. For more than ten years I have never seen him with a long face. We always think that he has no opinion. But I know this kind of person. This kind of person who is always smiling is even more opinionated. Although I should not offend this brother, the fact is the fact. It is so easy to use a fork to pick up a piece of steak. But to use a fork to pick up vermicelli noodles is very difficult. This is like the opinion of the smiling people. Another brother may be altogether different. It is easy to catch his opinion. He is not like a noodle. Rather, he is like a piece of marble. But with the older brother it is really difficult to catch the opinion. His opinion is so flexible, like vermicelli noodles. However, you have to forget about whether a person is hard or soft or whether he is cold or smiling. We all are the same. The more we grow, the more we become opinionated. The more we experience, the more we have opinion. As the years go by, we pick up a lot of things, even spiritual things. Even the matter of living Christ becomes an opinion. What then shall we do? Oh, wretched man that I am! Who can deliver me out of the sickness of opinion?

Only One can—that is the Spirit. The Spirit is the dose. Yet the Spirit could never be effective if you do not pray. You have to pray not in a religious way but in the biblical way, that is, to pray yourself into your spirit. Only by this kind of prayer can your self be peeled off. This kind of prayer keeps your self peeled off. Now I do believe that the Lord has shown us what it means to pray unceasingly, what it means to abide in Him, and what it means that apart from Him we can do nothing. All these expressions are describing one thing—to be practically one with the Lord. Then you are no more flesh. When you are apart from the Lord, you are nothing but the flesh. You think that if you have been a "saint" for over fifty-five years, you could never be the flesh. No, even if you were like Adam and lived over nine hundred years, yet you do not pray yourself into the spirit, you will still be the flesh. Apart from the Lord we are just the flesh. But when we pray, we have a practical oneness in the spirit with the Lord. At that time we become no more flesh; rather, we become the Lord. "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). That is true, and that is practical. It is at that moment that opinion is gone. I have found out by my experiences that we have no way to get rid of our opinion. It is because we ourselves are just opinion. It is not a kind of cancer that can be cut off by one surgery. It is like a kind of cancer that gets into the cells of our blood. There you cannot operate. The only thing that can cure it is for the Spirit to get into our blood. The Spirit is the dose. The Spirit keeps down this blood cancer. But whenever our prayer stops and the Spirit has no way to get into the blood cells, the cancer is still there.

We need to pray ourselves into the spirit. It is here and it is by this that we abide in Christ. Then we do not live ourselves but we live Christ. Then we are no more self but Christ. When our self is gone, the opinion disappears. There is no other way. Do not think that you can fast for three days and three nights and get out of opinion. Do not think that you will receive a great light that will kill your opinion. It will not work that way. Not only is the cancer in the blood; even we ourselves are the cancer. As a whole we are opinion, so there is no way to cut it off. The only rescue is *the* Spirit, and yet *the* Spirit needs an application, and that is our unceasing prayer. We need to pray ourselves into *the* spirit. It is here that we abide in the Lord, and it is by this that the self is being peeled off. Then the opinion is over. This is the way not to have any opinion. In every kind of meeting of the saints the problem is there. In the service group meetings the problem is there. When you come together and do not pray to keep yourselves in the spirit, after a short time you will be exposed

that you are nothing but opinion. So you can see that this disease is really terrible. Without prayer this disease is incurable.

You may ask, does not the Bible tell us that we have been crucified? Yes, the Bible does tell us that we have been crucified. I have known this fact for over fifty-five years. But without this kind of continual prayer you are not crucified practically. You are still living; you are still here. No matter how many spiritual books you may read, you are still here. The best book to tell us that we have been crucified with Christ must be Brother Nee's *The Normal Christian Life*. Many Christians have read this book. But to my impression there is not much difference in the Christians who have read this book. This does not mean that I am belittling Brother Nee's writings. But you have to tell me whether or not you have been changed after reading that book concerning being crucified with Christ. Before that book was printed, I heard all the messages with my own ears from Brother Nee's mouth. In 1935 he was in my hometown of Chefoo, and he had a conference concerning Christ as the overcoming life. We all were helped very much.

Later in 1937 and 1938 he went to London, Denmark, and Norway where he spoke the messages that were edited, polished, and compiled, and published as *The Normal Christian Life*. On the one hand, I received help, but on the other hand, I was still I. Even today I am still I. I have not been improved one bit. Do not think I am belittling Brother Nee's book. This simply means that I could never be improved. Without the Spirit I am still I. The only difference that can be made is for the dose of the all-inclusive Spirit to be put into our being.

From 1922 to 1939 Brother Nee was continually ministering this kind of message that is contained in *The Normal Christian Life*. But after 1939 he suddenly told us that the experience in Romans 6 could never be ours until we get into the Spirit in Romans 8. He said that the fact of being crucified with Christ could never become our experience until we get into Romans 8. Secretly we somewhat considered that Brother Nee had changed. Surely he had changed! Before 1939 he did not see that much. I appreciated *The Normal Christian Life* also, even encouraging the brothers to translate it into Chinese. We still carry out the Chinese publication of this book. I am for it because it helps people. But you have to realize that regardless of how much help you could get from that book or from any message, as long as you do not pray yourself into the spirit, no help actually avails.

Only one dose can counter our cancer-sick being. As long as we do not have the dose of the Spirit, we are just sick. Whether you have been in the Lord for one century or one month, it is the same; there is no difference. Whether you have read through *The Normal Christian Life* or even a hundred books like that, or you have never read even one, it is the same. We must see this. This is a kind of fine dealing. The peeling off of the self issues only from the Spirit. And this is not the Spirit separate from us but the Spirit into whom we have been mingled. When we are mingled not only with Him but into Him, He becomes the dose. This is the Spirit into whom we have been mingled through our unceasing prayer. Without this kind of abiding in Christ, our self still remains. Regardless of how many messages you hear, how many books you read, or how much help you get, the self still remains. I must admit that I too received much help from this kind of message. In 1935 we had a big revival among us just through this kind of message. Many had a great turn, but the self still remained. Unless we pray ourselves into the spirit, there is no way to get rid of the self. Only at the moment when you pray yourself into the spirit are you no more the self but Christ. When you stop this kind of prayer, you become once again the self.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PECULIARITY—A DEEPER PROBLEM (1)

We have seen in previous meetings that our opinion is simply the embodiment of self. We have also seen that opinion is a great hindrance to the growth in life and also to the proper functioning in the church life. The real experience of dealing with opinion is to be in the spirit. Doctrinally speaking we may say that we need the light and that we also need a kind of surgery. But according to our experience, light and surgery do not help much with our opinion. The only way to deal with our opinion is to be in the spirit. Every time that we are in the spirit, the self, or we may say the embodiment of the self, our opinion, is peeled off. Whenever we remain in our spirit, there is always a peeling off of our opinion.

THE PEELING OFF OF OPINION

We need an illustration showing that when we remain in our spirit, our opinion is peeled off. Suppose I am a person so easy to have opinion. Of course, everyone among us is easy to have opinion. The only things that do not have opinion are inanimate objects such as chairs. A chair has no opinion. But a living person with a living, physical body always has an opinion. Actually, the fallen being is just an embodiment of opinion. Not one person is without opinion. Some are quick to express opinion, and some are slow to express opinion. Some always express opinion, and others have a lot of opinion but do not express it. They may not express it due to their experience or their disposition, but it does not mean that they have no opinion. They have a lot of opinion, but they are just not so expressive. They keep their opinions hidden, but the opinions are still there. When opinion comes out, it causes damage to others, but when opinion does not come out and remains concealed in you, it damages you. Many good brothers and sisters among us have been killed by their concealed opinion. We may consider those who express their opinion so easily as somewhat bothersome, while we may consider those who never express any opinion as good brothers and good sisters. Yes, they are good brothers and good sisters, but all the time they are committing a kind of spiritual suicide. The only good point is that they do not kill others. But in their goodness they kill themselves. The point is that no one is without opinion.

In the past fifty years I have experienced being enlightened, and also I have experienced a lot of surgery. But according to my experience, the only effective way to deal with our opinion is to remain in the spirit. Even when we remain in our spirit, it does not mean that our opinion would be thoroughly rooted out or cut off. I do not have that experience. But when we remain in the spirit, some of our opinion would be spontaneously peeled off. Not only would I not express my opinion; I would even let that opinion go. This is the peeling off of opinion.

PROBLEMS COMING FROM OPINION

We have to realize that nearly all the problems among Christians are due to this one thing—opinion. The problems, the confusion, the divisions, the fightings, are due to opinion. Recently, I received two pieces of mail from one person. These two writings were full of opinion. This person had recently received a booklet or leaflet briefly describing our belief. In his writing to me he pointed out that our way of salvation presented in the booklet is right but that in *The Stream* magazine we had said there was no need to believe, but just to call, O Lord Jesus! three times and you could be saved. His comment was that what we had spoken in *The Stream* was not right, but now in this leaflet we were right. What is this? It is just opinion. He had many comparisons, all of which were nothing but opinion. In Romans 10, which he also referred to, you have the belief and you also have the practice. The belief is to believe in your heart and to confess. Then there is the practice, that of calling on the name of the Lord. Both are right. In belief, you have to believe in the Lord, and you have to confess your sins and also confess His name; then you will be saved. The following verses also say that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. These are not contradictions. You should not have a comparison of these two items. These are two aspects of one way to be saved. This one way of being saved has two aspects: first you must believe and confess; then you practice to call on the Lord's name. We have seen some in the past who were not clear about how to believe and were not clear how to confess, but they did have the heart to call on the name of the Lord. They simply called, "O Lord Jesus!" After calling two or three times they really got saved.

EATING, NOT FAULT-FINDING

When I am invited to any dinner, I only know how to eat; I do not know how to investigate. Sometimes, however, I noticed that when a poor eater was

invited to dinner, he did not eat. Rather, he tried his best to find bones in the chicken. He was not a chicken eater; he was a chicken-bone finder. It seems that his job was to find the bones. We have put out many issues of *The Stream* magazine and many Life-study messages for people to eat. What a shame that this poor man was only looking for bones. We put out these messages only for the eaters; we never put them out for people to find bones. There may be some bones in every message. The American way of cooking fish is to have just the fillet, but the Chinese way is to cook the whole fish. They serve the tail, the bones, the fins—everything—on the table. If you like to find fault, you can find all the faults in the Chinese cooking. But the Chinese cooking is not to afford you a way to find fault; it is to afford you the whole fish for your eating. What you eat and what you taste is the meat of the fish. Forget about the bones. You have to realize that without the bones the fish could not grow. I used to receive many letters and phone calls. Of all the letters I received, some of them were from mental cases. And mental cases always include a strong opinion. Whoever writes me a letter with a strong opinion I always consider that to be somewhat a mental case. This is really true. When you are so opinionated, you are mentally ill. We invite people to our dinner to eat. The Life-studies of Genesis, of Revelation, of Matthew, and of John are all for you to eat. We do not present these things for people to study to find the bones.

In 1936 Brother Watchman Nee and I were in Tientsin, the northern port that is quite close to the old capital of Peking. He was very much sorrowful about one thing. He had put out a booklet concerning how to be comforted. This was a good booklet to comfort some suffering ones. Then a man who was so opinionated criticized Brother Nee, saying that the translation of one of the verses cited in the booklet was not accurate. Brother Nee came to me pointing out that he had published that little booklet to comfort people. But that person did not get one bit of comfort; he was only bothered. Brother Nee had invited people to eat the chicken, but there was an eater who would not eat the chicken. Rather, he was bothered by the chicken bones.

This is a real picture of today's Christians. We all have to learn one lesson: in the church life we only know how to eat the chicken; we do not know how to count how many pieces of bones there are. Learn to get nourishment, forgetting all the faults. If you can do this, it is a strong sign that you have been delivered from the custom, the habit, of being opinionated. How could we be such? There is only one way—remain in the spirit. Whenever you get

out of your spirit, right away you have your opinion concerning everything. If four brothers come together not in the spirit, they will be full of opinions. Without the Lord's salvation in our spirit, our daily life is just a life of opinion. Consider your talk at the dining table with your wife. You talk about this person; you talk about that person; you talk about that thing. All this talk is opinion. If this word concerning opinion would impress you, tomorrow morning you will have nothing to say. Whenever you open your mouth, there is nothing but opinion. Opinion is a strong sign that you are out of the spirit. When you remain in the spirit, the opinion is peeled off.

Five weeks have passed since the last meeting we had concerning the peeling off of opinion. I would like to ask how many of your opinions have been peeled off. This tells us how much you have remained in the spirit. If you say that in these past five weeks no opinion has been peeled off, that is a poor sign. That signifies that you have not been remaining in the spirit.

My experience of the past few weeks has been that mostly I am much more aware of how little I am in the spirit because my opinion is a strong indication that I am not one spirit with the Lord at that moment. I really appreciate what was said the last time we were together: it is at the very moment that we prayed the prayer that brings us into the spirit that we are one spirit with the Lord. I must admit and speak fairly that a good portion of time the opinion is there, and it is so easy to express something with my wife about someone or about something. This has been a real exposure to show me how little time I spend in the spirit.

A DEEPER PROBLEM—PECULIARITY

Very good! Now I feel that we have to go on a little deeper and a little further to touch a subtle thing that is within nearly all of us. I do not believe that any among us could guess what it is. In the Colossians training we saw that the subtle thing that frustrates us from experiencing Christ is our culture, but you have to realize that culture is too general. Since the Colossians training we have dealt mainly with two things: culture and opinion. These two things frustrate us from experiencing Christ. Our opinion is more subjective to us than our culture. Now we have to consider another thing that is even more subjective than our opinion. What is this hidden thing that is a great frustration to our experiencing Christ? In *Hymns,* #840 there is a phrase that says, "From peculiar traits deliver." This hidden matter within us that frustrates us so greatly is our peculiarity. What is peculiarity? It is our biased

and warped characteristics. It does not mean crooked or perverted but biased and warped. The New Testament tells us that we have to live Christ. “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Although these two verses are in the Bible, we do not realize how much these three things—culture, opinion, and peculiarity—frustrate us from actually living Christ. I have never read a book telling us that culture, opinion, and peculiarity are great frustrations to the experience of Christ. But today we must see this very matter. What is your peculiarity? Brother, please tell us what your peculiarity is.

I do think about this a lot, and this song touches me more than any other song in the hymnal. And the line concerning the peculiar traits I can never forget. I well realize that I am a peculiar person. I know also that I appear that way to others. Recently, I was considering another brother who is very different from myself. I considered how normal this brother is, how mild he is in his temperament, and I was considering that I simply was not born that way. Knowing that I have certain peculiarities has given me a kind of longing over the years to be free from the peculiarity. I realize that the way I do things is peculiar, and the way I think is peculiar. Even everything I do is peculiar. Everything I am is peculiar. I am longing to get some help on this.

You have to realize that we all are peculiar. We all are biased and warped. These kinds of things could never be touched by the regular teachings. You may hear message after message, but none would touch you. We need another brother to tell us what his peculiarities are. Brother, what are your peculiarities?

Do I have peculiarities?

Let me help a little. You see that all the saints have laughed at your question. This indicates that no doubt through the years in all the meetings you have impressed them with something. I do believe that what is within their understanding must be this thing—peculiarity. Would you please tell us what your peculiarity is. Then I would ask the others who have laughed at you to tell us what is your peculiarity. Do not think, however, that only this brother has some peculiarity and you do not. It is simply that his peculiarity has been all the time coming out, and yours has been all the time concealed. We all have peculiarity. Please go on to tell us, brother, what your peculiarity is.

I have been very concerned with this one point over the years, and I do not know if others have had the same kind of thought or not. For a long time I have considered this matter of peculiarity and that others must think that I am peculiar because of the typical response that the saints give me in meetings and in just about any situation. In my consideration I have felt that what comes out of me is not the Lord Jesus Christ. It is just me by birth, and this bothers me a lot. I have realized that we should live Christ, yet I am living by my peculiarities day after day, and this really bothers me. I have been condemned, concerned, and worried about this for years. I believe at least in part it has to do with the matter of joking. Deep-seated in my being is a kind of characteristic to slant something toward the humorous side. However, if I felt like being humorous, I would, but if not, I would turn it off like a faucet. Many times when I shut this off, I sensed Christ and not myself. But when I turned it on, I sensed myself and not Christ. This has bothered me for years. Perhaps at least part of my problem is just the tendency to slant something toward a joke. But it may be that that is rather superficial, and there is some root that produces this kind of fruit.

Yes, this is right. I first met you in the Bay Area more than eleven years ago. So for many years we have known each other. I am especially used to paying much attention to the young seeking saints including yourself. I have noticed that you surely love the Lord. You have been much graced by the Lord, and you do have a heart to go on with Him. But there is a big factor, a negative factor, within you that has been frustrating you all the time from the richer experiences of Christ. And this factor is your peculiarity. You do not love the world, and you are not so much in yourself or in your flesh. But the growth in life and the function in the Body have not come up to the standard. I have realized that sometimes you are struggling to grow, to gain more of Christ, to experience more of Christ, and to be more useful in the functioning in the Body. Yet something is there frustrating, and that something is peculiarity. You have realized some aspects of your peculiarity, but now we need some others who know you quite well to help you realize something more concerning your peculiarity.

I do not really know whether I can tell you exactly what our brother's peculiarity is. I have noticed over the years that there is a kind of peculiarity, but I would say it is not just a matter of lightness or of having a kind of joking personality. It comes out that way, but actually something is there

that I cannot explain. It is simply there. It sticks out, and when you think of this brother, that is what you think of. I do not have a definition for it.

We need someone else to help us, perhaps someone who knows the brother better. Please be bold to tell us something, to tell us your impression about this brother.

Our brother seems to be a humorous person, but actually I believe he is a very detailed person. From knowing him in the past, I know he likes to do things in a very fine and detailed way. Because he is such a fine and detailed person, I believe a lot of things bother him.

A STRONG CHARACTER WITHOUT PECULIARITY

Before we continue, let me add a word. To have a characteristic is not wrong. Everyone among us is a character, and as a character, we surely have some characteristic or characteristics. In the Bible you can see that all the apostles had characters, especially the apostle Paul. He had a real character, and Peter and John also had real characters. They all had their own characteristics, but they were not peculiar. They had characteristics, but their characteristics were not biased, nor were they warped. So in their character there was no peculiarity. They had characteristics but no peculiarity. Why? We have to realize that especially Paul and John had been quite transformed. Transformation actually takes away our peculiar traits. It takes away our peculiarities. Our natural man is biased and warped and is expressed mainly in our peculiarities. Do not consider that it is sinful doings and low behavior that is expressed in our peculiarity. No. A piece of paper may not be dirty or torn, but it may be warped. To be biased means not to be so straight or so right. But even this is not the full definition of being biased. We may have a lot of sins or no sins; we may have bad habits or good habits, but these are not the expressions of peculiarity. Peculiarity stands within our being alone, by itself. A very righteous man may be quite peculiar. A very “holy” man, a very “spiritual” man, may be very peculiar. In the New Testament you can see that Paul is so strong, but you cannot find that with him there is something peculiar. According to his writings, there is no peculiarity. It is the same with Peter and John. With these New Testament characters you cannot find any peculiar traits. Their characters were different with different characteristics, but it is hard to find any peculiarity. But with us, nearly everyone has some peculiarities. The church life is full of peculiarities. You have a peculiarity, and I have a peculiarity. We all have some peculiarity.

I feel that our brother's joking is actually a kind of covering for something that is inward. Apparently he likes to joke, but actually I have a sense that it comes out that way because there is a real desire in him to do things right. It may be that this desire bothers him very much and that the only way to relieve this desire is to be humorous. Our brother apparently is not a detailed person, but I know from experience that actually he is super detailed. I never had this impression until I coordinated with him on cleaning and arranging the meeting hall. To my surprise when we came together to pray, it was not unusual for him to have many, many points to cover. I do not believe that the humor that is expressed is the real brother. I believe there is something else within him that is related to his being too fine and caring to be so right and wanting to go on.

We need another brother also to help us.

Since I have known this brother, I have noticed that as he functions in the meetings, he has a strong tendency to present something in a joking way. And no doubt all of us have picked this up. But I would say in personal fellowship with him he is generally very serious with hardly any trace of joking. He is very serious and very detailed and very intent on sharing what he really feels. He will not let you go until he shares fully what is in him. I have known few brothers in the church life who can talk as long as he can and never seem to run out of something to say. It seems as if there is a kind of fountain within him that never runs dry. I realize, though, that deeper within him there is something intangible and indefinable. It may be that we still are touching only the outward things and have not yet hit the mark.

Perhaps another brother could add something.

My personal times with this brother are quite different from the times in the meetings. His concern for what I consider as small things gets to the point of being picky. He is very concerned about details and small things and why things are a certain way. This makes me wonder how he can be so funny in the meetings. Furthermore, he cares for people. He likes people a lot, but I think sometimes when he contacts people, they do not know when he is being serious and when he is not. Every time that I have fellowshipped with him, the fellowship has been even quite heavy. It is very serious, very detailed, and he analyzes everything very thoroughly. I am not sure what this has to do with the humorous side that comes out in the meetings.

I would ask another brother also to say something.

The last time I talked at any length with this brother was about six months ago here at the hall. It is true that I definitely get an impression there are two different things going on. The person we see in the meetings and the person whom we meet personally and particularly in a one-to-one relationship are very different. It seems to me that all the weeks of perfecting have been leading up to this very point so that the Lord can touch this matter. Although I can recognize that this brother has a certain peculiarity, I cannot identify it. I am afraid that many of us have even the same or other peculiarities also. It seems that our brother expresses himself in at least two different ways. I remember that in the book The Experience of Life *Brother Lee points out that the spirit is the genuine part of your being. I believe that how much a person is really in the spirit or not depends on what you can see as a constant or level impression. If a person is not that much in the spirit, it is quite easy to see something of his old man or his natural man. It is easy to see a kind of desire the person has that is somewhat short of the spirit or to see a kind of insecurity expressing itself. I do believe that if this brother and all of us were more in the spirit, we would see something far more constant and normal. It may be that what we see are the symptoms that this brother is not that much transformed and not that much saturated with the Spirit.*

PECULIARITY—THE EXPRESSION OF THE NATURAL LIFE

We have previously pointed out that opinion is the embodiment of the self. But we have to realize that this matter of peculiarity is much deeper than opinion. In principle, our peculiarity is the expression of the natural self or the natural life. We may even say that peculiarity is the last or the final expression of the natural life. To be peculiar is not to be sinful or to be bad or to be evil. But it is to be biased; it is to be warped. Let me also diagnose our brother's problem. I do not believe that humor or being humorous is his problem. According to his peculiarity, deep within him there is a factor. I would say that the factor within our brother may be that he always wants to not be common but to be different from all others. This is the hidden factor that causes him to have the humorous, outward manifestation. Actually, everyone's peculiarity is caused by a certain factor within. Just to deal with the brother's jokes or humor is simply to cut off some branches. The root within him is not the joking; the root within him is the desire to be different from others and not common. In principle, we all have such a factor within us

that causes us to be peculiar. You have to realize that to be peculiar is not wrong; it is not evil; it is not sinful; it is not bad. It is not hating people or damaging anything, but it is the ultimate expression of our natural being. This is the most hidden factor that frustrates all of us from experiencing Christ. I believe that for many years this factor within our brother has been frustrating him very much from the enjoyment of Christ.

I would encourage all of you to fellowship and to pray about these three things: culture, opinion, and peculiarity. Just to speak of our culture is too general, and opinion is also something on the surface. The subtle, hidden thing that most of us would not condemn is our peculiarity. I do believe that many of us have condemned our opinion again and again, but not many of us have condemned our peculiarity. If these three things could be thoroughly dealt with in the church life—culture, opinion, and peculiarity—I do believe that Christ would have no frustration to be our enjoyment. These are the basic problems among us. We do not need to talk that much about worldliness, about sin, or about evil things. But these things—culture, opinion, and peculiarity—are here frustrating us.

CHAPTER NINE

PECULIARITY—A DEEPER PROBLEM (2)

I am still burdened about the matter of peculiarity. I do not believe we can get through this matter quite easily. What do you realize concerning the problem of peculiarity?

Well, last week we saw that peculiarity is a matter of our character being biased and warped. As I considered this week, I realized that peculiarity is the expression of the self. It is the final expression of the natural man. Its root is our desire to be expressed. Because we desire for people to appreciate us, to accept us, this causes us to live out our natural life rather than living out Christ. Because it is the expression of our natural man, and because we have lived with it for so long, it is not easy to identify. Peculiarity separates us from others and even causes us to guard ourselves and protect ourselves so that we cannot be built with others.

GOD'S PURPOSE—FOR US TO LIVE CHRIST

The points you have covered concerning peculiarity are true, but I still feel that this word has not yet reached the bottom of the problem of peculiarity. There is a bottom to this matter, and it may be difficult for us to see. We may consider that peculiarity is simply something biased, warped, natural, not good, and so forth. But as we look into this matter, we need to realize once more that our Christian life is nothing but for us to live Christ. The Christian life is to live Christ. This is strongly and emphatically revealed in the New Testament. Some of the verses are so familiar to the seeking Christians. They know Galatians 2:20, which says that it is no longer I but Christ who lives in me. They also know Philippians 1:21, that to me, to live is Christ. But you have to realize that verses like these are either missed by many Christians, or they are not cared for, or they are misinterpreted. Some have condemned us and opposed us for using this verse: "To me, to live is Christ" (v. 21). They say that this is to uplift ourselves to the level of Christ. They condemn this, but when I read their words, I say, "Yes, it is true! God's salvation is to uplift us to the level of Christ!" Some also have written saying that Witness Lee lowers Christ down to the human level. Again I say, "Yes, that is incarnation! The incarnation really brings God down to man's level!"

Do not forget that Paul wrote Philippians 1:21 near the end of his ministry. At the end of his earthly journey he was going to be offered as a drink offering to the Lord. He was ready to be martyred. He was such a person; he had passed through so many things; he had done much work. But at the end of his ministry, at the end of his Christian race, he said that to him, to live was Christ. This indicates such a mature person in the Lord. At that time he did not care for anything else. He only cared for one thing—to live Christ. To him, to live was Christ. This really means to live Christ. It is not a matter of doing a certain kind of work; it is just to live Christ.

In his earlier ministry he had said that it was no longer he but Christ who lived in him (Gal. 2:20). By these two verses we can see that the apostle Paul lived a life not for anything else but simply to live Christ. We have to realize that, according to our limited experience, the most hidden thing that frustrates us from living Christ is peculiarity. Peculiarity is the hidden thing in you and me all the time occupying us and frustrating us from living Christ. We all could easily realize that the world frustrates us from living Christ. In a sense we do not need to talk about that. I do not believe, however, that many among us have ever condemned our peculiarity. In fact, we may have appreciated it. If we do not condemn our peculiarity, it will keep us away from living Christ.

We have to look into this matter of peculiarity from this unique angle: God's intention is to work Christ into us. God's intention is even to make us Christ. We have to realize that God's salvation is to make us Christ. We are no more ignorant. Through the years we have been enlightened. We know that Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and through Him all of us have been made sons of God, and all of us have been made His brothers, even His members. We are parts of Christ. God's intention is to work Christ into us to make us Christ, that we may live Christ. But we have to ask ourselves: how much do we live Christ? I know that you would not go back to the world. You would never go to Las Vegas and enter the casinos. You probably would not even go to a movie. But do you realize that unconsciously you are very much occupied by your peculiarity? Culture does not occupy us in such a hidden way as peculiarity does. Even opinions do not occupy us so much. The most hidden thing, the most secret thing, the most subtle thing, that almost occupies us in full, is our peculiarity.

Some people are very much manifested in their peculiarity. If I called their names, you might laugh because from the past you have been impressed with their manifested peculiarity. But let me tell you honestly, everyone has a peculiarity. Do not think you have no peculiarity. Even the most common brothers and the nicest sisters have their peculiarities. I have it, and you all have it. In the past I have pointed out to you how difficult it is for us to deal with our little temper. No one can boast that he is fully successful in dealing with his temper. Because I am older, I may not lose my temper outwardly, but inwardly I may lose my temper a lot. It is not so easy to successfully deal with your temper. But there is another thing within us that we have probably never dealt with—that is our peculiarity. We all have been disgusted with our temper, but perhaps we have never been disgusted with our peculiarity. Perhaps we have never condemned our peculiarity. Because some of you have been contacting me for years, you surely have discovered my peculiarity. Because of my contact with you, I too have discovered everything. I have discovered the quick persons, the slow persons, the bad persons, the good persons, the low persons, and the high persons. I have discovered that all these people have their peculiarity. The hardest thing for us to deal with is our peculiarity. Whenever we meet someone, right away we realize they have a kind of peculiarity. Although we may not be able to identify it so clearly, we realize it is there. Deep within, you realize something is there that is not Christ. Rather, something is there that frustrates Christ, that bothers Christ, and that damages our living Christ. You cannot pin it down, and you cannot identify it, but within, you have an inner sensation, an inner realization, concerning the peculiarity. By this you can see that peculiarity is a very subtle matter.

For us in the Lord's recovery it is not so easy to tell a lie or to commit some sins or to do something so apparently in the flesh. It really is not so easy. But it is also not so easy for us to live Christ. What is the problem? Why is it not so easy for us to live Christ? Sooner or later you will realize in your Christian life that your culture is a problem for you to live Christ. Then your opinion is a problem. Ultimately, there is a bigger problem, that is, your peculiarity. Peculiarity is a high mountain within our being that occupies us and gives no place to Christ. Our peculiarity occupies nearly our whole being. It does not give any place to Christ. You love the Lord, and I do too. We all love the Lord, yet we do not live Him so much, and He does not occupy us so much. Why? Because there is no ground, no room, within us. We just do not give in. The

peculiarity within us does not give in, so Christ actually does not have much ground. He does not have much room within us. Eventually, we just live ourselves. Our self is covered with many nice cloaks, but underneath those cloaks is our peculiarity.

I have known a certain brother almost thirty years. In the meetings the brothers and sisters have seen his manifested peculiarity, but probably not many of you know his concealed peculiarity. I have to testify that I know his hidden peculiarity. He loves the Lord very much, but after so many years he has had no growth in life. He is still the same. What is the problem? Peculiarity! I must be honest and fair to say that he has improved a lot, but improvement does not mean growth. In a sense everyone is improving. If a person stays in the church, he will surely be improved a lot. But to be improved does not mean that you are growing. To grow in life is altogether another thing. What does it mean to grow in life? It means to grow by the growth of God, to have the addition of Christ. I have seen much improvement with this brother, but I have not seen much addition of Christ. Why? Peculiarity is still there. The ground given to Christ has not been increasing. Christ has just about as much ground as He had thirty years ago. Peculiarity is there hidden within like a great mountain, frustrating the growth in life.

A HIDDEN PROBLEM

We all have our peculiarity. This is why we may be seeking year after year but have little growth. Year after year we are seeking yet with little transformation. We may have much improvement but almost no transformation. I hope that these meetings may give you a real vision concerning your peculiarity. I hope that you may realize you have a hidden problem. This hidden problem is why you have been at a standstill for so many years. I have been with many of you for years, and I fully realize that you are at a standstill because of your peculiarity.

Another brother whom you know may be considered as a typical and good gentleman. Apparently he has no peculiarities. He always goes along with everybody. No one in the church has ever been offended by this dear brother and his wife. They are a good couple. But do you believe that this couple has no peculiarity? I must tell you that their peculiarity is even much stronger than yours. Your peculiarity might be like a piece of glass, so easy to break. But this brother's peculiarity is like a piece of rubber; you can never break it. When you try to break his peculiarity, it disappears. Although his wife may

behave herself in such a nice way that you can hardly find anything to break, surely peculiarity is there.

I hope we can see that we all have peculiarity. As long as the ground within you for Christ is not increasing, you must realize that your peculiarity is a problem. Sometimes your peculiarity may appear weak, but actually it is very strong. We were born with peculiarity. This is the hidden and strong self under a certain kind of cloak. Many of the brothers and sisters are at a standstill in their growth in life. You are hungry and thirsty, but to some extent you have never gotten any help to deal with your peculiarity. You love the Lord and you love the church, yet you have not had much growth. You have not backslidden to the world, but you have no growth. You must realize that the problem is peculiarity.

In the past you were helped in many different matters, such as dealing with the world. You have cleared up many things, but one thing still remains. That thing is the peculiarity. This one problem causes us to be at a standstill in the growth of life. It is very difficult to break the peculiarity because it is so subtle and hidden. When you try to break the peculiarity, it disappears. When you want to catch it, it hides itself. Do not think that peculiarity is simply the choice of the flesh. That is another thing. Nor is it simply the better part of the flesh. No, peculiarity is something so hidden that you can hardly pin it down. The only way that you can discover your peculiarity is to notice that over the years you have been short of Christ. Although you may not have been wrong in anything, you had a real shortage of Christ. Christ has not been added into you very much. When we get to the bottom problem of peculiarity, it is not that you make trouble for others or that it is hard for you to be built up with others. The problem is that it occupies you and gives no place in you to Christ. You may be very good. You may not be wrong in anything. But you do not have that much Christ. Christ has not been added to you. Only by Christ can you find out your peculiarity. When you try to find out your peculiarity, it disappears.

THE BOUNDARY OF CHRIST BEING REDUCED

With many dear saints the boundary of Christ within them has not changed for forty years. In a sense I would say that the boundary has been somewhat reduced in the forty years. In 1933 I went to Shanghai to work with Brother Watchman Nee. Even though I was quite young, I was charged to bear quite a burden. Even when Brother Nee was home, he still would not speak. Rather,

he charged me to speak. He spoke only in the conferences. Then when he was out of town, he charged me to bear the burden of the church and also of the work. Because of this I got to know many persons. Some are still living today. To my registration, with some of these the boundary of Christ was broader then than today. Their human living has no doubt improved very much, but as far as Christ in them is concerned, the territory has been reduced.

If we have no vision concerning our ugly, bothering peculiarity, the time will come that the territory of Christ within us will be reduced. There will not be addition but reduction. Many things related to our human life reduce as we grow older. But one thing that never reduces is our peculiarity. Rather, our peculiarity always increases. For example, our temper reduces as we grow older. I can testify that fifty years ago my temper was very high. Today my temper is still here, but it has been reduced. Many bad habits are reduced as the years go by, but we have to realize that as we grow older, our peculiarity will increase and develop. This is quite terrible and even terrifying. Once we see this vision, surely we will say, “Lord, have mercy upon me! Have mercy upon me! I have no trust in myself.”

NUMB TO THE GROWTH IN LIFE

Unless we see this vision, we will become numb to the growth in life. I have seen many who became numb to the growth in life. They still love the church; they still attend the meetings. But year after year you cannot see the addition of Christ in them. Rather, you have to lament that the territory of Christ in their life has been reduced and reduced and reduced. But they have become numb so that they do not condemn their lack of growth in life. Meeting after meeting and message after message they are numb. With them there is no sensation. When the young people first come into the church life, they are so sensitive. Just one message helps them. But with many of us message after message is taken in, but no help is received. Something hidden is there that frustrates the growth in life. That is peculiarity.

RESTRICTING CHRIST

Although some of you have been among us for eight or nine years, you have not gotten much growth in life. Christ has not been increasing within you. His territory within you has not been enlarged. Rather, it has been restricted. This is simply because of your peculiarity. Nearly all the ground of your being is occupied by this hidden thing, peculiarity. At the beginning of your Christian

life or of your church life you had a lot of improvement and a lot of growth. You gave Christ more and more place, but after a certain time the territory of Christ in your Christian life stopped being enlarged. Now it is restricted all the time.

We have to consider this as a very serious matter. We have to ask the Lord for His mercy to be rescued from this problem. We simply cannot do anything. The only thing we can do is to realize we have such a problem. If you can realize that you have such a problem, you are very close to the border of being rescued. The realization that comes from such a vision nearly becomes your rescue. Then you will begin to have no confidence in your being. You will realize that some hidden problem is concealed in your being, your peculiarity. Once we have such a realization of this problem, we will become fearful and trembling in the Lord. This will be a great rescue to us.

Peculiarity is very deep within our being and occupies us subtly from experiencing Christ. We may consider that this person is peculiar or that person is peculiar, but, in fact, we all have peculiarity. We are all sick of the disease of peculiarity. Peculiarity is a very subtle thing. If you consider that a certain person is peculiar, it must be that his peculiarity is not so subtle because it is very apparent. Because it is on the surface, everyone is clear about it. But your peculiarity may be very subtle. It may be deeply hidden within you. Not only do others fail to see it; even you yourself cannot discern your peculiarity. You do not realize that you have a serious and terrible peculiarity, because it is so hidden within you.

THE SUBTLETY OF PECULIARITY

Not one person has no peculiarity. Every fallen descendant of Adam is a peculiar person. As long as we are descendants of the fallen Adam, we are peculiar. This is a principle. If it is difficult for you to discover my peculiarity, it simply proves that my peculiarity is more subtle. It is hidden in the many good aspects of my character and being. This kind of hidden peculiarity is the strongest controller and director of your being. Whatever you do is controlled by this hidden peculiarity. Even your spirituality is under its direction. This is even the reason that people can see your spirituality. People cannot see your hidden peculiarity. Your spirituality is like a kite, and your peculiarity is like a hidden person holding the kite string. Your spirituality is under the control of such a subtle, hidden thing—your peculiarity.

Years ago, from about 1932, I began to realize that within the seeking Christians there was a kind of hidden peculiarity. At that time I did not see so much the hidden peculiarity, but I saw the apparent peculiarity. I only saw that certain people were quite peculiar because their peculiarity was on the surface. I did not realize that actually everyone is peculiar. After many years of experience and observation, I realize that not one person is not peculiar. I have met many very spiritual people, and with every one of them there was a kind of peculiarity. This bothered me. Before I met them, I heard about them, and I read their books. I got much help from them, and I respected them. From reading their books I had a very high imagination concerning them. But after I met them and stayed with them, I became disappointed. I cannot say that they were bad; they were all good. But the disappointing thing was that all of them had a kind of peculiarity. I was disappointed when I discovered that these spiritual persons did not match my dream concerning them.

Then I began to consider myself. I realized that my peculiarity might be stronger than theirs. Now I really sympathize with others because I realize that we all have peculiarity. No two faces are exactly the same, and no two peculiarities are exactly the same. Every man's peculiarity is different. People's faces may be somewhat easy to describe: some are round; others are long; others may be square. But people's peculiarities are very difficult to name and to denominate.

PECULIARITY BEING ANTICHRIST

At this point I would like to give a name to your peculiarity, and that name is antichrist. Your peculiarity and my peculiarity is named antichrist. Very few Christians realize that the terrible antichrist is our peculiarity. Actually speaking, today Christ does not have much position and authority on the earth. The whole earth is antichrist. No doubt all the unbelievers are antichrist, but even we the believers who are the lovers of Christ have within us an antichrist. Something is within usurping and occupying us so that Christ has no position. Christ does not have much ground within us. The ground within us for Christ is subtly and hiddenly possessed altogether by our peculiarity.

PECULIARITY AND "SPIRITUALITY"

According to my observations, the Christians who have the strongest peculiarity are those who are the most "spiritual." Many times the common

lovers of Christ do not have such a strong peculiarity, but those who are top spiritual persons have a very strong peculiarity. They do everything "spiritually." They have spirituality, but they do not give much ground to Christ. They live, walk, and behave in their spirituality, not in Christ. Their spirituality occupies their being. Because of this no one can condemn them. Their peculiarity is not in the world, in the self, or in the flesh. Rather, it is in their spirituality. You could only see their spirituality; you could not see their peculiarity. Actually, their spirituality is their peculiarity. In pretense it is spirituality, but in actuality it is peculiarity. In a sense if you are not peculiar, you can never be "spiritual." Many times spirituality is a cloak for peculiarity.

One thing makes me fearful: as I read the biographies of many spiritual people, I realize a number of them did not have a good ending. Some of them had a good beginning and a good process but not a good ending of their spiritual life. Why? Because their hidden peculiarity became the real issue in their life. Their "spirituality," which actually was their peculiarity, caused them to end their lives not in a good way. The older we become, the more peculiar we are. I am concerned that as I get older and older, I will become more peculiar. I fear lest my peculiarity hide itself under the cloak of spirituality and increase. This has happened to a number of spiritual persons.

We are touching a very crucial thing. This is why I call peculiarity within us antichrist. From reading many biographies you can discover a principle: some of the lives in these biographies end with that person's peculiarity. Peculiarity became the very issue of their life. This shows that something is within all of us that can be called antichrist. It occupies us and will not let us give Christ an inch of ground. Our inner being, our hidden being, is fully usurped by this antichrist. It is such a subtle thing because it usurps us, yet it pretends to be for Christ. Many times it pretends to be for Christ under the cloak of spirituality. Actually, it is neither Christ nor spirituality but just us in our peculiarity. This is one of the crucial killing factors within our Christian life. I call it antichrist. It is in us, and it is difficult for us to name. We are short of a proper vocabulary. We do not have the adequate words to express something concerning our peculiarity. It is just peculiar. How can we pin down our peculiarity? How can we discern that such a thing within us is antichrist?

LIVING CHRIST IN A DAILY WAY

First of all, you should not believe that your daily life is really a life that lives Christ. At least you are not living Christ all the time in a daily way. You

must admit this. I surely admit this. During the past weeks my confession to the Lord has been mainly that I did not live Christ. We all must admit that we do not have a daily life that lives Christ. We may declare, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21), but we cannot testify of such an experience. According to our experience, we would have to say that to us, to live is something else, not Christ. Others around you may not be so clear, but you yourself know where you are. You know that you do not live Christ much in your daily life.

LIVING PECULIARITY

Second, you have to ask yourself who is there or what is there all the time that you do not live Christ. Since you cannot say "to me, to live is Christ," you must say "to me, to live is my peculiarity." If you are not living Christ, you must be living your peculiarity. This is the case unless you are living sin or worldliness or the flesh. These things are easy to denominate and to designate. But if you are living something that you cannot designate, that you cannot name, you have to realize that is peculiarity. Peculiarity is always much better than sin or worldliness or the self or the flesh. All these things are easy to designate. But if you are living something that you cannot designate, no doubt that is peculiarity. Peculiarity is neither sin nor worldliness nor flesh nor lust nor Christ. You live something daily. To you, to live is something daily. If it is not sin or worldliness or the flesh or Christ, surely it is peculiarity. Because you have never seen it, you have never condemned it. Yet what you are now proves that there is such a thing. Now you do live something—not sin, not worldliness, not lust, not flesh, not disposition—but not Christ either. Because it is not apparently something bad, you have never condemned it. This is your peculiarity.

PECULIARITY VERSUS ONENESS

Third, we need to see why we have opinions and why we are not absolutely one with others. The opinion, the dissension, the lack of absolute oneness with others, comes from peculiarity. If you have been enlightened, and if your peculiarity has really been dealt with, you will be a person with a sober mind, a strong will, a pure love, and a very rich spirit. You would go along with anyone and have no opinion. You would realize what is real oneness, and you would have no more dissension. You would go along with others in anything as long as it is not sinful. Why do we have the opinions? Whenever a husband and wife sit down at the dining table, opinion comes. This is because you have your peculiarity, and your spouse has her peculiarity. From this peculiarity

comes the opinion. We do not live Christ that much, because we have this antichrist—peculiarity. Christian brothers cannot be one, because there is some antichrist within. Peculiarity is an enemy to Christ and also an enemy to the Body life. You cannot live Christ as long as you have your peculiarity, and you cannot have the proper Body life as long as you have your peculiarity. Bring this matter to the Lord and spend some time to pray about it. If you will do this, I believe you will see more. Many have been among us for at least ten years. But you have been stopped and stuck at this one point by the hidden antichrist of peculiarity within you.

CHAPTER TEN

THE HIDDEN FRUSTRATION OF PECULIARITY

I feel that through the past Friday night meetings we all have come to a very needy situation. This training is very particular. Of course, I realize there are some younger ones among us. They do have a heart, yet I have a deep sensation that according to the life procedure they have not come up to a state that they really understand what we have been talking about these past few weeks. Surely what we have been speaking is very strange. Life matters can be comprehended only by life itself. If I did not have a human life, I could not understand the human life. Regardless of how much I might talk about human life to dogs, they could not understand because they do not have the human life. Even among human beings there may be a lack of understanding. It is difficult for a two-year-old child to understand what a seventy-five-year-old man is talking about. You need life to understand life. But I do have a deep sensation that many of you here do have a stature to understand what we are talking about.

A testimony from my own experience may help you to understand. For more than five years after I got saved, I did not know, and I was unable to know, what is the real experience of the co-crucifixion with Christ. I learned this truth—of being crucified with Christ—in the same year that I got saved, but it bothered me for at least five years. During those first five years of my Christian life I read many books concerning the co-crucifixion with Christ. I even taught others and helped others in this matter, yet I myself did not understand the real meaning of co-crucifixion with Christ. Why? Because for the first five years of my Christian life I did not have the measure, the stature, to understand it.

All the parents know that they cannot teach their children certain things when they are only one year old. As they grow, you begin to teach them more. Even in school, the sixth-grade lessons cannot be taught to the first graders. You cannot go too fast. You must wait. Grade after grade as they are growing, they are picking up, and they are learning. Then you can pass on more and more to them. According to the human educational system, there is the need of altogether sixteen years to finish a university degree. It takes six years for elementary school, six years for high school, and four years for college.

Without passing through the sixteen years, it is hard for anyone to understand the things up to the level of university graduation. You cannot expect a boy fourteen years of age to graduate from the university. There is the need of growth.

In principle, life is the same, whether it is animal life, plant life, or human life. Today we are enjoying the divine life, and the principle is the same. There is the need of the birth; there is the need of the growth; and there is the need of the maturity. Even after maturity there is the need of the top maturity. Although the students may have graduated from a four-year college, they still need another two years to finish a master's degree, and they need another two or three years to finish a Ph.D. All are matured, yet some are at the top of maturity. This Perfecting Training is to perfect the saints in maturity. If you do not grow or if you do not have growth, this training will mean nothing to you, and you will get nothing. This is a special training, not a kind of preaching or teaching. We have come to a crucial point of our need.

THE NEED OF AN ACTUAL BODY LIFE

Why do we talk so much about peculiarity? I have a burden. The vision we have received from the Lord is that what the Lord needs today is an actual Body life, an actual building up of His Body. It is not just to have a group of seeking Christians who meet in the name of the Lord and on the proper ground. Although this is good and this is needed, this must be considered as an initial stage. In the initial stage the Lord's seekers must come together to meet in the name and on the ground of oneness as a proper local expression of the Body. From this stage we all have to go on to reach the point that we will be built up together.

Since we moved into Elden hall in 1965, I have been watching and observing the situation among the saints. Fifteen years have now passed, and I have seen many saints who came into the Lord's recovery since we were in Elden hall. After about eight to ten years some of the dear ones just began to have nothing to do. They sought after the Lord, they turned this way, and they have been practicing the church life. They have been meeting with the saints in the name and on the ground of oneness, but after so many years it seems that they have nothing to do. We know that the church is one. We know that the meeting must be in the name. We know that we must be on the ground of oneness. We know this, and we have been practicing it now for perhaps ten

years. What is the present need? Basically, we need two things today: we need to grow, and we need to be built up.

According to my observation, so many dear ones have come in to practice the church life, to meet in the name and on the ground of oneness, but they do not have much growth. They have picked up a lot of knowledge but not much growth. I do not believe that there is another Christian group today on the earth that puts out so many messages as we put out in the Lord's recovery. Within the past seventeen or eighteen years about three thousand messages have been printed. These have been mainly from Paul's Epistles, from other books of the New Testament, and from the Old Testament. We have the Life-studies of Matthew, John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews, Revelation, and others. Besides these we have messages that were given on the Psalms eleven years ago concerning Christ and the church. We have the *Life-study of Genesis.* We have a study on the Song of Songs. We have a study on Ezekiel. We have over fifty messages given on the kingdom. We have finished more than fifty messages on Exodus.

I do not believe you could study so much from the Bible even in a Bible institute. Yet today I read with the brothers a kind of paper concerning us by a certain group. That paper said that we are people just in our emotions, with no genuine teaching. They say that all we do is pray-read, that we have no genuine teaching. Actually, they do not know where we are. All the time we have been having the life-studies.

However, I am very sorry to say that, in spite of so many messages being given, with some of the dear saints there is not much growth. Because there has been a lack of growth, there is nearly nothing of building. As long as the growth is short, the building is empty. Anyone in such a situation would be jobless. He would have nothing to do. He would consider, and he would ask: What else is there for me to do or to be in the recovery? He knows the church, he comes to the meetings, but he has nothing to do. Thank the Lord that the percentage of saints in this category is very low. Actually, the percentage on the positive side, by His grace, is quite high. So I have the confidence to carry on this kind of Perfecting Training. Here is a crucial point: Why must we talk so much concerning this matter of peculiarity?

Well, I remember from last week, Brother Lee, that you ended the meeting by saying that the peculiarities are the things that keep us from the oneness

with the brothers. If the peculiarity has been dealt with, our opinion has been dealt with, which is one of the main things corrupting the relationship with the brothers. And, of course, this is extremely necessary for the building so that we would not be divided. I feel that our peculiarities make us unique in ourselves. We somewhat treasure our uniqueness. This makes us exclusive in ourselves, and we may have even a desire to be unique and exclusive.

THE FRUSTRATING OF PECULIARITY

Let me say something in a brief and clear way. Why do we talk so much about peculiarity? Because this one thing frustrates us from the experience of Christ and from the building up of the Body. These two matters have been frustrated to the uttermost by our peculiarity. Thank Him that we have been and still are the Lord's seekers in this age. Even the angels cannot deny this. You may say, "Sometimes I do not love the Lord so much." I would say that is a lie. I believe all of you love the Lord, and we are all seeking after the Lord. This is not of ourselves; this is of Him. We love Him, we seek after Him, and we come to the meetings to practice the church life. But we all have to admit that after a certain number of years in the recovery, our advance, our progress, our growth, has become quite slow. In the first two or three years of our church-life experience, the speed was very high—but not today. We are not stopped completely; we are still driving, but the speed is too slow.

It is easy to turn to the recovery. Overnight you can turn. To get into the church life is easy. Tonight you turn, and tomorrow you come to the meetings and begin to practice the church life. You begin to meet in the name, and you begin to stand on the ground. You are happy, and you begin to function. After all this, however, the highway is climbing up and up. After all this you need to grow in life. To grow in life is just to experience more and more of Christ. In the initial stage of our church life we turned this way very fast, we stood on the ground of oneness very fast, and we practiced the church life very fast. After all these matters we have come to the point that the highway is not so flat. The highway began to go up. Why? After all these years, you now need to grow. After all the things we have done, we now need to grow. We have reached a state where we must experience Christ. Without this we become jobless in the church life. You know the church-life doctrine, and you are familiar with the church-life practice. What else do you need? You need to grow.

THE NEED TO GROW

Before 1973 many among us thought it would be good to go to a new place. There they would be busy. Now even though they went somewhere else, still they ask: What else? Still they have nothing to do because the main thing they need is to grow in Christ. They need to experience Christ directly and purely. If we do not experience Christ directly in our present state, we all become jobless. What has caused us to become jobless? Not sin but peculiarity. I thank the Lord that in Orange County at least a thousand saints have been brought to this stage. If these dear saints do not grow in life, they all become jobless. To take the ground of oneness does not mean so much to them because they have it already. For example, when some young ones graduated from elementary school, they were proud. Suppose, however, they did not go on to study in high school. After three years their graduation from elementary school would mean nothing. After graduation from high school, or even from college, or from a master's degree or a Ph.D., if you do not keep studying further and further, after a certain time you will feel jobless.

Why do some in the churches feel that they are now jobless, with nothing to do? They had a good start in the church life. It was so good at Elden hall. Comparatively speaking, they might say that today the church is not as good. I would say that I do not believe this is the case. The church has never changed. I would say the church today is much better than Elden. The church has not changed, but you have changed. You are like the Southern California climate—you have a lot of fluctuations. The church stands the same and even rather is going on and on. Even the angels would say that the recovery in the United States is much stronger and richer than it was seventeen years ago. You say Elden was better simply because you have not grown. You did not grow, and you have become jobless. If you do not grow in Christ, you have nothing to do. If you do not grow in life, there is no possibility of having even a little bit of building up. So of course you become jobless.

Recently, the church in Anaheim has been promoting gospel preaching. Of course, gospel preaching is quite an activity; it is very active. If you have not grown in life and if you do not have some amount of building, you would not go along with the gospel preaching. Whatever the church does, you would not go along, because you are behind. So you are jobless. Those who are growing and being built are all the time one with the church in any kind of activity.

Peculiarity eats up the experience of Christ. This is a germ. This is even a serious disease like tuberculosis. It is a strong, hard germ with hard wax

covering it. So it is hard to deal with. This germ not only eats up the experience of Christ but also keeps people from being built up in the local church. You may be in the local church, but you are not being built up. What keeps you from the building? The peculiarity. The peculiarity eats up your experience of Christ, and without the experience of Christ, there is no way for you to be built up.

A BODY, NOT AN ORGANIZATION

The local church is not an organization. No one is here exercising anything to organize. The pastoring of many pastors is not the real feeding but a kind of organizing just to get a proper link with people. We never do this. In the local church there is no organizational linking. If I go to you, I must have a burden in life for you. If I go to visit you for a kind of link, that is organization.

We all have to see that what the Lord is going to recover is a Body, not a local organization. If the saints do not grow, what is the need to have a link? The need is to grow. You need the real supply of life. You need the real ministry of the life supply. It is not a matter of pastoring to establish some links. It is a matter of growing and ministering a life supply. If you have been an elder in the local churches for at least five years, you will realize that among your brothers and sisters some have come to a certain stage that you cannot do anything to help them. You have prayed for them; you have done this for them and that for them, but now you cannot do anything else. Why can you not do anything? It is because you do not have the skill of a surgeon to operate on the peculiarity. A surgeon may know how to cut on your leg or your nose, but he may have no way to deal with a particular part of your heart. He may have no way to touch it or even to reach it. Spiritually speaking, something is in your heart, and that is your peculiarity. It is there, and yet no one can touch it, and even no one can reach it. This is why I prayed at the beginning that only the Lord can solve our problems. I do not have the skill to touch our peculiarity. I know the disease; I know the problems, but I do not have the skill to reach your peculiarity. This is the very thing that holds us back from experiencing Christ and from being built up. So under this kind of situation, the more days you go on in the church life, the more you feel that you are jobless. On the one hand, you have nothing to do; on the other hand, you are not useful. On another hand, you have no interest in the church life. And on yet another hand, you may be thinking either to drop the church life or to stay home for some time. Although you may not drop the church life and

you may not stay home, you come to the meeting without any kind of meaning. Coming to the meeting becomes meaningless to you. It was not like that ten years ago. Ten years ago every meeting was meaningful to you. You might have missed your meal, but you would not have missed the meeting, because it was so meaningful to you. You are jobless; you are not useful; everything in the church life has become meaningless. Why? Because your peculiarity holds you back and eats you up from further experience of Christ. Thank the Lord that in His mercy and grace through the church you have been edified, so it is hard for you to go back to sin. It may be a little bit easier for you to go back to the world. But although you would not go back to sin, and you would not go back to the world, to stay in the church life becomes tasteless to you. Why? Because your peculiarity eats you up. The eating by this germ holds you back from the building up of the Body.

What shall we do? You and I need a desperate prayer to the Lord. Do not pray for anything else—just pray for your peculiarity. Day and night, three times, ten times, even twenty times a day, pray for this one thing. This is the germ in your heart that eats you up and holds you back. Many of the brothers are really good, but they have become useless. As leading brothers, we do not know how to help them, and we have no way to help them. We really need the Lord's mercy. You have to pray that the Lord would have mercy upon you, that you would have a clear vision of the stronghold within you. Whether you label it peculiarity or you label it the self, there is such a stronghold within you that all the time keeps you from Christ and from the building up of the Body.

A STRONGHOLD

In the first stage of our Christian experience, sin and the world did hold us back from the experience of Christ but not now. Now the holding factor is not sin or the world but just this stronghold within you. Whether you call it *peculiarity* or some other term makes little difference, but I do believe the proper term should be *peculiarity*. For years we have realized that God's salvation is not to correct us. It is not to adjust us. God's salvation is to save us from our fallen being into Christ. We have to admit that we have been saved by God from sin, from the world, and from many other things. But we have never allowed God to save us from one thing within us—our peculiarity. You would even allow God to save you from your bad temper, but you would not allow Him to save you from your peculiarity. There is something so unique, so

basic, and so hidden that subtly remains within your being all the time. You would never allow God to save you from this. You would never allow Him to save you from this stronghold. This is peculiarity. God's salvation is to save you from your fallen being into Christ. And Christ today is not only the Savior but also the life-giving Spirit indwelling your whole being. Up to this point you have been saved from sin, from the world, and from so many other things, yet you do not live by this Christ. You live by that hidden thing—peculiarity.

You may call this hidden thing within us the self. For years I also termed this the self, but within the last years I realized that it is something deeper than self. All Christians condemn the self. Yet you have not realized that a subtle self is under a cloak that you would not condemn; that is peculiarity. This thing is too, too subtle. Although I do not understand much about medicine, when I was sick from tuberculosis, I got some knowledge about that disease. The doctor told me that there is a kind of wax covering this germ. It is difficult for any medicine to kill the tuberculosis because the wax covering is too thick. It needs a burning medicine to kill it. The germ is hidden within the wax.

Your peculiarity is hidden in a thick covering. You do not realize that such a thing is there. But it is there. What shall we do? I have told you already that I have no way to help. I know of only one thing that can help us in this matter, and that is the Lord's mercy. You must pray to have the Lord's mercy. Once you have the Lord's mercy, you will see that within you there is such a hidden thing. So for a number of years you have hardly grown at all. You may have had much improvement in contacting the brothers, in dealing with your wife, in your attitude toward your relatives, and so forth. You may have a kind of improvement, yet you have not grown in life. Christ has not been added into you. There has been no expansion of Christ in you, so there is no building up of the church.

This is why in your feeling today you are jobless and you are useless. You have been in the church life; you have listened to all the messages; you have been edified; but now what can you do? You have to realize that not only can you do nothing here; you can do nothing anywhere. Eight years ago migration may have helped you. From Los Angeles you went to a new place to do something. But today even to migrate is tasteless. The problem is not outward doing. The problem is the inward lacking of the increase of Christ. You do not have the increase of Christ. You do not grow. This "tuberculosis" is biting all

the time and is holding you back from the building. Believe me, once you receive the mercy of the Lord and see this, right away you will grow. Then by growing you will be built up. Right away the church life will become tasteful to you, and you will feel a burden with so many things and so many needs. If anyone feels that he or she is jobless, useless, with no interest and no taste in the church life, the reason is that your peculiarity is biting you, eating you up, and holding you back. It is eating you up from the experience of Christ and holding you back from the building up in the Body. I believe that many of you realize this is your need. From deep within you would say, "Lord, here is my need. I need Your mercy. I need Your mercy." Under this kind of situation where you feel that you are jobless and useless with no interest and no taste, even your prayer is not tasteful. It may become just a kind of religious duty. Although you may pray, you pray without any taste. This is all due to one thing. There is such a germ called peculiarity within you eating you up and holding you back.

In this condition you are also quite touchy. This means that you are so easy to be offended. Especially the elders should be wise. If some little ones touch you, you would not be offended, but if the elders touch you, you would be offended. You are very touchy. You would not agree with the church administration, and you would not agree with the way so many things are done. You hardly agree with anything except yourself. This is because you have a strong peculiarity. You have never condemned your peculiarity. You have never starved that peculiarity to death. Rather, every day you feed your peculiarity. This is not a message but a diagnosis of the unique disease among us.

The recovery began in China since 1922, and I came in in the early days. Even then I was watching, and I found out that many older ones felt jobless and useless and that the church life was tasteless. At that time I was enjoying because that was my church-life honeymoon. I wondered why those people did not feel happy with the church life. To me every meeting was lovely. I heard them criticize the elders. I have heard and observed these things since 1932. They bothered me, but no one could tell me what the problem was. But eventually I myself became in that kind of situation. I began to realize that I was held back from the experience of Christ. I did not grow. By experience I have found that the more I grow, the more I am happy, the more I feel I am useful, and everything is peaceful in the church life. The church did not change, but my feeling changed. It changed according to whether I was

growing or not growing. If I grew, everything was sweet; if I did not grow, everything was gloomy. When you grow in the church, everything is bright. If you do not grow, everything is not only gloomy but also black and dark. So the change is not on the church side; the change is on your side. If I had realized these matters in the early years, I might have been saved from many things. The problem was that I did not have any realization. No one can tell you, and even you yourself do not really understand what is within you. This is why we all need to go to the Lord. No one can help you. According to our situation, our illness is a hopeless case. But you do not need to be disappointed; He is the One who can heal you. The greatest mercy is simply to realize that there is such a problem within you. Otherwise, although you have such a great problem within, you would still be at peace. Yet the actual situation is that you are jobless, useless, and you do not feel that anything in the church life is so tasteful. These are the symptoms of your sickness, yet you are sick without realizing it. So the burden in this chapter is to help you to realize that you do have such a sickness. To realize that you have such a sickness is a great mercy.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DEALING WITH PECULIARITY

Prayer: Lord, again tonight we are all sitting around You. Lord, we believe that You are open to us. Lord, do keep us open to You. Lord, we would like to hear a word from the depths of Your heart. Lord, we do not like to hear doctrine; we do not like to hear knowledge. We like to hear Your voice; we like to hear Your speaking. Lord, tonight do speak a word to all of us. Our needs may be different, yet, Lord, we all need the same word. Lord, speak a word to us that can enlighten us—a word that can heal us—a word that can even kill our problems. Lord, how much we need Your instant, living, and operative word. Lord, we believe we are under Your cleansing, so we have no frustration. Lord, we do not have any sensation that anything is between us and You. We believe there is nothing between. So, Lord, do speak to us. We are here ready to hear Your word. Amen.

In this meeting we would like to have open fellowship with the Lord and open fellowship one with another. My burden is not to pass on some knowledge to you but to open up my whole being to you, hoping that you would open up your being to me and that we would all open ourselves to the Lord. I believe that the Lord is open to us. Let us have some very genuine talk with nothing artificial. Let us talk not only from heart to heart but also from spirit to spirit. Many brothers and sisters have been among us for a number of years and have gained much knowledge through all the Life-studies, but tonight we are not touching knowledge; we are touching the heart and the spirit. We need to have a heart-to-heart touch, a spirit-with-spirit touch.

Although we want to open ourselves heart-to-heart, you must realize that it is very dangerous and risky to know a person's inner condition. In the matter of spiritual seeking, it is better not to know others' condition. Not to know others' condition is a safeguard for our spiritual seeking. If you have learned some spiritual lessons, you will realize that to know others' situation is a snare of the enemy. If you have never learned not to know others' situation, you have never learned what it is to be spiritual. To be genuinely spiritual is to know only the Lord, not to know anyone's situation. Your eyes are one thousand percent open to the Lord but one thousand percent blind to any kind of situation. We need to be blind concerning others' situations. If you

consider your experience, you will realize that when you are down spiritually, you like to know others' situation. When you are fallen and backslidden, you like to know about others' situation. You will be exercising and watching to get information concerning others. But when you are up spiritually, you are not happy to know others' situation; you do not like to know. When you are up, you do not like to know; you do not have the heart, you do not have the intention, and you do not have the desire to know. When you are up and someone comes to you speaking about Christ and ministering Christ, you are happy. When someone comes to you talking about others, it seems tedious to you. It makes you unhappy. This is a strong indication that the Spirit we have within, even the indwelling Spirit, does not like to know others' situations. It is always dangerous to know others' hidden secrets. It is against the spiritual law to dig out others' inner hidden secrets. If you have learned some spiritual lessons, whenever one comes to you trying to open up his inner secrets, you would avoid it. You know that that is risky and that is dangerous.

When I say we need the heart-to-heart fellowship and the spirit-with-spirit fellowship, I do not mean that you open up your inner secrets concerning your wife, your husband, your money matters, your college degrees, your future, and so forth. I mean concerning Christ. To come to me and open yourself in a heart-to-heart way to have some fellowship concerning Christ is safe and is needed. This is altogether profitable and for the building up. We need to open ourselves to one another concerning Christ.

LIVE CHRIST TO BUILD UP THE BODY

In the Lord's recovery God's desire has been made more than clear to us. We have seen God's eternal purpose, His ultimate intention. We know that God wants us to live Christ so that the Body may be built up. Although these are simple words, we all have to realize that nothing is more crucial in the Bible than these two points. When I was young and seeking after the Lord, I was charged, taught, and helped to be overcoming. I was helped to overcome sin, the world, and the flesh. I was told how to be holy, and I was taught how to be spiritual. According to our experiences, these are good, but these are not the crucial and central points in the Bible. The central points in the Bible are that we need to live Christ and that the Body needs to be built. If you check your spiritual situation according to overcoming, according to holiness, or according to spirituality, you may be satisfied to some extent. But if you check your spiritual situation with the living of Christ and the building of the Body,

you surely would not be satisfied. Experientially speaking you may be somewhat overcoming and yet still not live Christ. You may be somewhat holy and yet not live Christ. Even you may be very "spiritual" and yet not live Christ very much.

Moreover, you may be all these things and yet care nothing for the Body. You may not have one bit of the building up of the Body. Within the past fifty years I have seen many spiritual people. I have contacted nearly all the spiritual giants during the past half century, either directly or by reading their writings. In 1958 I was invited to a very spiritual place. After I had been there a while, three of the five leading ones came to me to complain about the non-building situation. You may be overcoming, holy, and "spiritual" and yet not have much experience in living Christ and in the building up of the Body. You may overcome sin to a certain extent, yet you live Christ very little. And for the building up of the Body, your experience is nil. Because we have seen the light in the recovery that God wants us to live Christ and to have the Body built up, I do not believe many among us would consider that they are spiritual. If we test our spiritual situation according to this measurement, we are through. There is not much measure of the living of Christ and not much measure of the building up of the Body. Now I would ask the two brothers on the platform to tell us why we do not live Christ. We have been here for many years; we have the Life-studies of so many books of the Bible, yet we do not live Christ, and we are not that much builded up. Why? We need to ask two brothers to open themselves to us and to consider what is the thing that hinders them, restricts them, and frustrates them from further experience of Christ. What frustrates them from the further building up of the Body?

Just in a few words I would say it is because I am so occupied with Satan, not in a sinful way, yet my whole being is constituted with an element other than Christ. And this causes me not to hunger and not to seek the light. There is a part of me like this, and I stand with it. Too often I agree with it and allow it to have its way. I do not disagree and do not resist it. I passively allow it to have its way because I am "spiritual." I am waiting for God to do something about it. Many times I recognize that there is no Christ and no building, but I do not resist it. This is all I can say.

Okay, now it is your turn.

Brother Lee, quite frankly I am glad you asked this question of me. This last week I have been thinking a lot about this, and even this morning I prayed about it. I have been pray-reading through Matthew in my morning watch, and this morning I read verses in Matthew 6 concerning the giving of alms and praying in public. I began to open to the Lord about this matter of peculiarity. I saw that I was occupied daily, even moment by moment, with something that is not Christ. It is not sin and it is not the world, but it is peculiarity. I saw that the kingdom people should not do something simply to get recognition from other people.

Let me say this: both of your speakings are quite mixed up. The thing that frustrates both of you from living Christ and from being built up in the Body is not Satan. It is not a matter of desiring the recognition as mentioned in Matthew. You need to have your understanding rescued from all these matters. To say that Satan occupies you is a kind of deceiving excuse. I must tell you strongly that none of these things is the frustrating factor. The frustrating factor within you that keeps you from living Christ and from being built up in the Body is simply your peculiarity. Do not blame Satan that much. Satan did not do that much. Your peculiarity did everything.

THINGS REPLACING AND OPPOSING CHRIST

In the Life-studies we have pointed out three books in the New Testament that reveal things either replacing Christ or opposing Christ. These books are 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians. In 1 Corinthians knowledge and gifts are there. It is not secular or sinful knowledge but spiritual knowledge, scriptural knowledge, fundamental knowledge, and gifts. These two categories of things in 1 Corinthians frustrate many Christians from living Christ. The Corinthians had knowledge and gifts. They were not behind in knowledge or in gifts, yet they were short of Christ. They did not live Christ, and they were not built up; rather, they were divided. In Galatians religion, law, and ordinances were replacing Christ. In Colossians we saw that culture and many "isms," such as Judaism, Gnosticism, and asceticism, were replacing Christ. If you dig into these four books, which we call the heart of the Bible—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—you can see a hidden thing. By my experiences I have a term for this hidden thing—*peculiarity*. Although Paul did not mention peculiarity in a clear way, it is implied.

THE STRENGTHENING OF PECULIARITY

Many of you have had a lot of dealings. You have dealt with sin, with the world, with your self, with this, and with that. But still something is hidden within you; it has no name, yet it is hidden within you. Such a thing is within you all day, not only replacing but resisting Christ; something within you is secretly and in a hidden way resisting and restricting Christ. Knowledge and gifts may replace Christ, but they do not resist Christ that much. But your peculiarity is resisting Christ all the time. It is a hidden stronghold. It is not a high tower, so visible and exposed. A high tower is easy to cast down. But here is something small in size yet intense in its solidness. It is small, yet it is so strong within you. It is hidden and even invisible within you; something powerful within you is resisting Christ all the time. Christ has nearly no way to go on within you. The longer you stay in the church life, the more knowledge you pick up; the more attributes, qualities, and qualifications you have; and the harder this peculiarity within you becomes in resisting Christ. I am afraid many of you can testify that today you do not live Christ as much as you did six years ago. According to your qualifications, qualities, and attributes, you are much higher than six years ago, but concerning the living of Christ, you are lower. Why? Because six years ago your peculiarity was not as strong as it is today. It was not as hidden and concealed as it is today. Today it is hidden within your qualifications and spiritual qualities. All these things have become layers of the covering of this hidden thing—peculiarity. I hope that you would not take this merely as a doctrine. I hope that this is a word that can penetrate into the very center of your peculiarity, penetrating through all the strong layers of qualifications and qualities. I must say a warning word because I know the peril. In a previous chapter I pointed out to you that some spiritual people have had a miserable ending to their life. By the time they died physically, they were also dead spiritually. They died with their peculiarity fully developed. This is my deep concern. As the church life is going on year after year, our peculiarity is becoming stronger and stronger and stronger. Eventually, this very thing will confiscate all of us. This hidden factor within you that resists Christ makes you useless.

Why is there no building among Christians today? Apparently, it is because people have different doctrinal opinions. Apparently, it is because people interpret the Bible differently. Actually, the real dividing factor is the peculiarity. I contacted many spiritual giants in the past, and I never saw any two of them who would work together. Every spiritual giant stood by himself. Apparently, it was because they simply held different opinions and saw

different things in the Bible. But if you check into the matter, you could see that this was not the real dividing factor. The real dividing factor was their peculiarity.

By the Lord's mercy we have been preserved and held together by His grace, by the ground of oneness, and by the truth. We thank Him for this, yet we all have to admit that within us this hidden factor is still undermining and restricting us from living Christ. We do not live Christ today as much as we should. Also we have to recognize that we do not have much building. We have very much togetherness but not that much building. We may have even an overcoming situation and an appearance of being holy and spiritual, but we do not have much of the real building up of the Body. What is the undermining factor? Peculiarity. This is the thing that eats us up from within and frustrates the living of Christ and the building of the Body. It is biting, eating, and undermining secretly. Without your awareness it is there working all the time. I hope that this kind of heart-to-heart word could really open your eyes, not to see others but to see yourself. You need to see that the reason you do not live Christ so much and you are not built up so much is your peculiarity.

Christ is unique and Christ is common. Christ could never be peculiar. And the Body is one. For nearly half a century both in speaking and in writing I have fought against all kinds of divisions. But now I realize that the real dividing factor within us is our peculiarity. This is the root of all the outward division. We are here keeping the ground of genuine oneness, yet within us there is a factor keeping us from being built up. What is the reason that you are not built up? It is nothing but your peculiarity. Your peculiarity is the hidden factor that is within you all the day eating you up and all the day resisting Christ and all the day restricting you from living Christ. It is all the time keeping you from being built up. Do not blame anything else or anyone else; the problem is the peculiarity. With the young ones this is the problem, and with the older ones it is even more of a problem. The older you are, the more peculiarity you have. It is really risky to be in the church for a long time and not live Christ and not be built up. The light you have seen has been keeping you here and will not allow you to take another way. You have to stay here. But if you do not live Christ, the longer you stay here, the more peculiarity grows. Eventually, this hidden thing will confiscate you. In the early days of your church life you were useful, but in the latter days of your church life you just become useless.

This is the problem, but what is the treatment? I am sorry, but I do not have the treatment. Only the Lord Himself has the treatment. You must go to Him and put all your blame upon your peculiarity. Learn to condemn your peculiarity. Only the Lord knows when the treatment will come. But you have to pray, “Lord, have mercy upon me. I do not like to stay in the church life until I become forfeited.” There is the danger that this could happen. Go to the Lord and let the Lord say something and let the Lord do something. Only the Lord can deal with the peculiarity.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LACKING OF LIVING CHRIST FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY

Prayer: Lord, we are here by Your grace. We look unto You for a further visitation. Lord, we need Your fresh touch. Lord, we would not be knowledge seekers. We like to be Your seekers. We pursue You and we seek after You. Tonight, Lord, do bring us all into Yourself. Even in this training meeting, Lord, bring us all into Yourself. Oh, we need You! We need You even tonight. In this meeting, Lord, we need You desperately. Oh, come to touch us. Lord, we need Your touching. Oh, just touch us afresh that we may be fully brought into You. Grant us a clear direction. Lord, even clear up the situation that we may have a crystal flow of life. Oh, we do not like to have any mixture. We like to have a clear flow, a transparent flow, of Yourself. Lord, lead us on and grant us the liberty and the freedom in fellowship that we may utter something out of You. Do speak Yourself out of all of us. Amen.

We need three brothers to tell us their realization concerning the Perfecting Training. Either in the way of a testimony or realization or analysis, tell us your feeling concerning this kind of training.

First brother: I just feel that these Perfecting Trainings you have been sharing with us are really a graduate school. These Perfecting Meetings are not something on the basic matters of our Christian life. But this is something to help us grow in life after we have reached a certain point in life and in the church life and in the building. It seems that after we have been in Christ and in the church for some period of time, we grow to a certain point, and we become somewhat satisfied with our progress in the faith and in life. What we have seen in this Perfecting Meeting is that at a certain point there are elements in our being that become a kind of frustration. Unless we would pursue and break through in some of these matters, we would not grow anymore. Although the Lord is not satisfied with our progress, we may be satisfied. We come to a point where our growth in life levels off. I feel that these Perfecting Meetings are a real incentive for us to realize that we have much further to go and also that we could see the frustrating elements in our being so that we could break through.

Second brother: I cannot help reflecting how these meetings began and the burden from which these meetings came. These were the three things that Brother Lee observed and presented to us in the very beginning of these meetings. First, that there was a shortage of the growth in life. It seems that we have been growing in the Lord's recovery, but we have come to a point that we are frustrated in this matter. We are slowed down; we are somewhat frustrated in the growth in life. Second, because of the shortage of growth in life, there is the lack of the real and solid building up among the saints in the churches. Third, there is also a lack of the proper and adequate functioning of the saints. I feel these are the three reasons that gave rise to the burden within our brother. I believe also that these are the points that the Lord wants to get through for our growth, for the building up among us, and also for the proper and adequate functioning among the saints.

We began, of course, in the matter of culture, but as the meetings have progressed, it seems that the leading of the Spirit is into deeper and deeper matters that are blockages within our being.

We went from the matter of culture into the matter of opinion. Although at first we thought that this might be the depth of our problem, later we found out even that was still superficial. We saw that the Lord still needs to touch us in a more subjective and even deeper way. Then we began to touch the matter of peculiarity. Through all the fellowship in the meetings there was one exposure after another. In a sense there was no answer, but there was much exposure. Brother Lee told us that there is no easy answer or quick solution to these matters. Our rescue, first of all, is to realize that we have these problems, and second, our rescue is in our willingness to go to the Lord for His mercy and grace to be rescued in a genuine way out of these great frustrations. I would even consider the training on Philippians as a furtherance of this burden. All during the Philippians training, I felt that the Lord was continuing on this same line. In that training we saw that there is a psychological tumor that needs to be removed. Also we saw that within us there is the domestic logic and the national philosophy. Although I do not fully see what these things are, the Lord has led us to this point. The fact that we are all sitting here must mean that the Lord wants to get through. I feel that we are in some critical times and in some crucial days. We really need to give ourselves again to the Lord for Him to go on further and deeper within all of us.

Third brother: I agree with what the brothers have said thus far. First, Brother Lee began to touch the matter of culture as something replacing Christ. Then he went deeper to touch the matter of our opinion frustrating us from experiencing Christ. Then he went on to say that culture is general and opinion is on the surface, but there is a root problem. In the recovery our need is to live Christ. We need to live Christ and to have His Body built. But there is something in us deeper than culture and deeper than our opinion, which resists Christ. We have not realized that it is there, and we do not know what it is, but it is there all the time resisting Christ. I am just barely beginning to see how much I resist living Christ. We saw that our problem is not so much outward sin or that we are not spiritual enough or that we are short of knowledge or that we are not overcoming. The test is: do we live Christ, and are we building the Body? When I check myself under this test, I feel dissatisfied. This peculiarity that frustrates us or resists us from living Christ is something in us that we do not know. It is invisible; it is small; it is real; even it is hidden and concealed. In the last Perfecting Training meeting, Brother Lee made a statement that it is risky to be in the church life and not grow in Christ. This shook me up. I feel that there is such a danger here—I am in the Lord's recovery, I am in the church life, yet it is risky because if I do not grow in Christ, then automatically my peculiarity grows. I want to grow for God's economy, but something else grows to resist my going on in the recovery.

These meetings have mainly left me with the sensation of how much we need the Lord's mercy. One thing that helped me was that to realize we have this problem is ninety percent of the cure. I have never realized like I do in these days that I do not live Christ. I am satisfied if I simply do not sin. I believe that this is really in line with the Philippians training. Our need is to live Christ. Also, this little word that we need to open up our heart and our spirit is a real help. I know I do not live Christ, and I feel frustrated in this, yet I feel that this is where we are. We just pray that the Lord will bring us through. I feel that we all need to stand with the Lord and stand with our brother to take us through this problem. We need the Lord to get us through this matter of peculiarity so that we can live Christ and build the Body.

CHRIST AND HIS BODY

We all have to realize that in the Bible the kernel is Christ and His Body. This is the reason that we consider these four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians as the heart of the divine revelation. In no other

book or books are Christ and His Body, the church, so thoroughly, adequately, and richly revealed to us. Paul even considered this kind of word as the completion of the word of God. He received a commission with a burden to complete the word of God, that is, to complete the divine revelation with these two mysteries: the mystery of God, Christ, and the mystery of Christ, the church. These two mysteries in Paul's ministry are the word to complete the divine revelation. We must emphasize Colossians 1:25, which indicates that Paul was commissioned to complete the revelation of God, that is, to reveal these two mysteries to God's people: Christ as the mystery of God and the church, the Body of Christ, as the mystery of Christ. I do believe it is the Lord's sovereignty that through nearly eighteen years the Lord has brought us through so many messages to these four books. First, we covered Ephesians, then Colossians, then Galatians, and then Philippians. It is in these four books that the completion of the divine revelation is revealed. In all the trainings given on these four books, even we ourselves have seen something more. We cannot deny that we have seen something concerning Christ as the mystery of God and concerning the church as the mystery of Christ. The revelation is here, and the light is shining within us. We cannot deny this, yet my burden is that still too little of what we have seen has become our real daily experience. In our daily life we cannot say strongly that we live Christ. We can hardly say that even to some extent we live Christ. Regardless of how much we are out of the world, regardless of how much we would not touch any sinful thing, regardless of how pious we are, how godly our Christian life is, and how much we are for the Lord and for His recovery, we have to admit that in our daily life Christ has not been lived out as much as He should be. We must admit that in our daily life the portion of the element of Christ is not much. I would say that it is very little. This is the one thing that I have been condemned about day after day. This is the one thing that I am burdened to confess to the Lord and ask His forgiveness. I feel that day after day in our daily life there is not much element of Christ.

On the one hand, we do not live Christ, and on the other hand, the issue of our daily life is not much for the building up of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is just a term, and the building up of the Body of Christ is just a kind of knowledge. We have to admit that we do not have much building up of the Body of Christ in our practical daily life. In our practical daily life we do not have much Christ, and our daily life does not issue much in the Body of Christ. Although we may pray, we may pray-read, we may love the Lord, we may live

outside of the world, we may not sin, and we may be quite godly and pious, yet we have to check how much Christ is really there. You may attend meetings and have the church life. Apparently you are blameless. But you have to check how much of Christ is there in your daily life, and how much of the building up of the Body has issued out of your daily life.

In other words, everything is fine and everything is good, but Christ is very lacking, and the building up of the Body of Christ is lacking. What we call the Body life may be just a kind of spiritual, communal, or social life. We may be Christian brothers standing on the proper ground, meeting together into the name of the Lord, and handling some spiritual things. You may consider these items as the Body life, but actually these are not the Body life. Actually, this is some kind of church life without that much of Christ and without that much of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is just the issue of the experience of Christ. It has to be altogether Christ. Look at the Word as a whole, and learn to be bothered by the Lord concerning these things. If you read the Bible again and again, you could see that all these things are revealed there. They have been revealed over nineteen hundred years. Paul completed this revelation.

After Paul's ministry, of course, there is the mending ministry of John. Even John's ministry has also been there over nineteen hundred years. Dear saints, would you not be bothered and troubled and burdened to see today's situation? Where is Christ lived out? In the Orthodox Church? In the Catholic Church? In the Protestant denominations? In the small free groups? In the individual seeking Christians? How about among us? We have to admit that Christ is not lived out much even among us. If you and I were the Lord looking at this kind of situation, we would surely be very much disappointed. Where can you see a group of Christians who are really living out Christ and really having the Body of Christ as the issue of their daily life? If we have such a vision, we will be bothered. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Verse 4 goes on to say, "Blessed are those who mourn." Now we can realize why the matter of mourning comes after the matter of being poor in our spirit. When we are poor in our spirit, we will surely see some vision concerning God's economy. Will we then be joyful? The situation would not allow us to be joyful. If we have seen the vision concerning God's economy, we would surely weep day and night. We would mourn day and night because the situation is too sad.

Where is the thing that God is after, and what is the thing that God is after? Christ and the church! He is not after the doctrine or the theology but the real Christ lived out in your daily life with the issue of this kind of living being the Body of Christ. If you see this, you will be bothered and troubled and burdened and puzzled. It seems that there is almost no way out of the problem. For nearly two thousand years the Lord has not gotten through. Even with us in the Lord's recovery, the Lord has not gotten fully through. Many of us have been here in the Lord's recovery for over ten years. Where are we today? You may consider that this word is quite disappointing. Actually, the whole situation is disappointing. Today the Christians, including us, are poor. We talk about a lot of things in the name of Jesus Christ. We even talk about the Bible and spiritual things, yet how much is Christ in our daily life? And how much is there the issue of Christ, that is, His practical Body? We all have to admit that there is not much of these two things.

This is why we need to have such a Perfecting Training. Of course, this is not a church meeting but a meeting to see the completion of God's revelation, that is, to actually and practically see Christ and the issue of Christ, the church. This training is to help all of us realize that there is a big lacking. Something is crucially lacking here, that is, Christ and the Body of Christ. We all have to humble ourselves. The enemy is so subtle to raise up this or that problem for us to talk about. He would try to catch our attention to this matter or distract our attention to another matter as long as he can keep us occupied with anything other than Christ and the Body of Christ. We need a lot of humble prayers. We need to pray, "Lord, as You have opened up Your Word to me and as You have opened up my eyes to see Your Word, I need Your mercy and I need Your grace to be brought into this reality. I need to live You for the issuing out of the Body. I need such a reality. Lord, would You give me the grace that I could forget everything else? I would forget every problem, and I would not care for anything else except for Christ and the issue of Christ, the Body." We need such a prayer, a desperate prayer. If you do not have such a desperate seeking within you, these meetings will simply disappoint you again and again.

Let us consider our real situation. I know our real situation because I have learned it by my own experience. God's intention is to work Christ into us. This word is very familiar among us, but how much Christ is actually and practically in your daily living? We must check this. For over forty years I have been ministering to people that Christ is our life and that Christ must be

our life and that God's intention is to work Christ into us as our everything. But even now every time that I check before the Lord concerning how much Christ is in my daily life, I have to admit that I am not satisfied. I have to admit that there is not much Christ. By His mercy I can boast that I do not love the world, and I do not touch sin. I cannot deny that I really love the Lord, and I do live a godly life. Yet whenever I check my real situation before the Lord concerning how much Christ there is in my daily life, not once have I had a satisfactory checking. Every time after such a checking I have to confess, and I have to pray mourningly. I have to ask for forgiveness even today. Christ is not so adequately lived out in my daily life. Here is a big lack. Nearly every day I have been bothered by this.

I must tell you that all the environment, the oppositions, and the dealing with the oppositions do not bother me that much. But one thing bothers me very much—the lacking of Christ in the daily life. I do not mean that I do not have Christ in my daily life. I do have Christ but not that much. Out of fifteen waking hours, how much of Christ is in your daily living? How many hours or how many minutes do you live Christ? I believe you will have to admit that ninety percent of the time you do not live Christ. You live yourself. Not only do you sisters live yourself when you are cooking, even when you talk with people about the Bible, you live yourself. Even when you talk about the church life, you live yourself. Sometimes even when you pray, you live yourself. Only at the time that you pray yourself into the spirit and pray out from the spirit do you not live yourself. At that time you live Christ. If you came to stay with me, you might find little fault, but I am very bothered by the lacking of Christ. We all have to see the real situation. How much has Christ really gained us? Not how much has He gained you out of the world or out of sin or out of self, but how much has He gained you to live Him? Many of you have been with the Lord for years, but if you check your daily life in this way, you will discover that there is not much Christ.

Furthermore, we have many gatherings, as many as five a week. But how much of the real and practical Body of Christ is here? We all have to admit and realize that there is not much. Although in the brothers' houses or the sisters' houses there may not be much gossip, yet neither is there much Christ. This is why I am bothered. This is the Lord's recovery, but in the Lord's recovery how much Christ could God see? In the Lord's recovery how much Body life could God see? It is hard to answer. Even if we could be perfect in our human living, what does that mean if there is no Christ? Do you think

God would be satisfied with the perfect human life without Christ in it or with Christ in it only a little bit? Surely not!

PAUL'S DESPERATION

In no other book of the Bible is the writer so serious as Paul is in those four books of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. When you read the book of Philippians, you can especially realize that Paul is serious. In that book he is very sharp and even impolite. He uses the term *dogs*. "Beware of the dogs" (3:2). I do not think that any good, refined, or polite writer would write a book using this term *dogs*. If such a term were not written in the Bible, and I had written such a term, surely people would say that I am from a barbarian country. Paul also uses the word *concision*, which, language-wise, is even worse than *dogs* (v. 2). *Concision* means to cut yourself foolishly, to mutilate a part of the body foolishly. The Judaizers considered their circumcision as their glory, but Paul uses a word that means mutilation. It means to cut yourself foolishly and to make yourself ugly. If you cut off your nose, that is not circumcision; that is concision. Paul is altogether not polite, because he is desperate regarding the lacking of Christ. Because he is desperate, he uses other terms, such as *thinking the one thing* (2:2). No other book has been written in such a desperate way. This kind of desperate aspiration represents God's desire. God is desperate. Look at the situation. Not only in the first century but also in the twentieth century, where is Christ? How much Christ can God see in His chosen people? Not much.

In our life-study of Revelation 2 and 3 I pointed out that Judaism is satanic, Catholicism is demonic, and Protestantism is Christless. Although some may have been offended by this, this is not my speaking; this is the study of Revelation 2 and 3. Revelation 3 shows us that Christ is outside the door of the church in Laodicea. This means that they were Christless. You may consider that others are Laodicea, but you have to realize that you yourself might be also in Laodicea. Why? Because Christ is not so much in your daily life. So we have to condemn ourselves that our daily life is somewhat Christless. Christ is actually not so much in our daily life. This is why I have become bothered. I am bothered by the little amount of the element of Christ in our daily practical life. Even the more, the church life, the Body life, is lacking. We do not have much Body life in our daily life.

For a number of months I have been practicing one thing—to live Christ. During this time I have confessed a few times daily. After a certain period of

time I would confess, “Lord, forgive me. During this period of time I did not live You.” I did not do anything wrong or bad. I did not offend people. I just habitually, spontaneously, unconsciously lived myself. After rising up in the morning I had a good time with the Lord, but right after that I habitually and unconsciously lived myself. There was no warning and no reminder. If I lose my temper, right away the warning rises up from within. But if I do not do anything wrong and everything is fine, I just live myself habitually. There is no warning, no condemnation, and no reminding until after two or three hours. Then I realize, “O Lord, forgive me; again I am not living You.” Because I am used to it, I do not need any kind of exercise or intention to habitually, spontaneously, unconsciously live in this way. I simply live myself; I do not live Christ. Today the Lord is after a group of people who actually and practically live Him. This is not a small matter, and it is not a light matter for Paul to say, “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Paul had the boldness to declare this, but today I do not have the boldness. I have to admit that, to a certain extent, to me, to live is not Christ. To me, to live is mostly just myself. I do not live a sinful self, a worldly self, a defeated self, a self that loses its temper, but I do not live Christ that much.

Among Christians today there is not much speaking concerning the matter of living Christ. You can hardly hear a message about this matter. The charismatic Christians may speak about speaking in tongues, healing, the lengthening of the legs, or other things. But you can hardly hear a message on living Christ. You can hardly hear a message that it is no more I who live but Christ (Gal. 2:20). People do not have this kind of living. Although I have been speaking concerning this for years and years, I did not pay attention that there was such a serious lacking of Christ in the saints’ daily life. But within the past few years I have become seriously bothered by my own situation because in every section of the day I checked my life, and I discovered that there was not much Christ. In the past most of my confession was concerning wrongdoing, but now most of my confession is concerning the lacking of Christ. I have done nothing wrong during the day so that after the whole day when I go to sleep, I do not regret anything. But although I have done nothing wrong, I deeply regret and am bothered because there was not much of Christ lived in my daily life. There was no sin, no worldliness, no self, no temper—nothing on the negative side. Still there was not much of Christ on the positive side. What God is after is not a life without any negative things; God is after a life that is full of Christ. This is lacking.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PRACTICING TO LIVE CHRIST

Now we need a little turn in the Perfecting Training. I would like to ask two brothers to tell us their conclusion of the past chapters concerning this ugly matter of peculiarity. After listening to so many messages, what is peculiarity according to your understanding? I am concerned that perhaps some may not have understood this matter of peculiarity in a proper way. Please tell us what is meant by peculiarity.

First brother: Praise the Lord! Maybe, brothers and sisters, my understanding is still quite doctrinal concerning this matter, but I think that one thing we have all seen through these Perfecting Meetings is that we are peculiar. We may not have a very specific definition of what our peculiarity is, but we do have the realization that all of us are peculiar. It seems to me, Brother Lee, that you have been sharing very much on peculiarity, and at the same time you have been sharing very much with us concerning living Christ. It seems that, on the one hand, we have peculiarity, and on the other hand, we have the lack of living Christ. Although my understanding may be quite doctrinal, it seems that peculiarity in our being is just that element that frustrates us from living Christ. It is a kind of blockade or a kind of frustration in our being that just keeps the Lord as our person from living out of us. I guess peculiarity is just what I am without Christ.

Second brother: I was not here last week, but according to the fellowship in the other meetings, I would say simply that peculiarity is what we are apart from Christ.

PECULIARITY—TO LIVE YOURSELF

This is quite close, but still I do not think you have hit home with the answers. After many messages that may have puzzled you, I would like to tell you now that peculiarity is just to live yourself. Peculiarity is to live one's self.

GOD'S INTENTION

God's intention in having man is for man to express Himself. Man was made in the image of God and according to His likeness. It is clear that God's intention is to have man to express Himself. It is easy for any vessel without

life to contain something and to express the content. The vessel has no life and no personality. So whatever you want to put into a vessel without life and personality causes no problem. But man as God's vessel is a living person with personality. God created us this way—with a mind, a will, and an emotion. So it is not simple for man to contain God and to express God.

THE RESULT OF THE FALL OF MAN

What is the fall of man? The fall of man is just to bring man away from God and to make man a biased character. As a result of the fall, man became biased. Man became not so cooperative with God's intention. Furthermore, man's eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge made him independent. All the mothers know that in the children there is the independent fallen nature. You do not need to teach your children to say no. From a very early age they say no. *No* represents the independent nature of fallen man. Every fallen man is independent. As an independent person, no one would live the life of another. Everyone likes to live herself or himself. In marriage life this is the biggest problem. Regardless of how much a husband and wife love each other, each still likes to live himself or herself. According to God's ordination, the two should be one. One is the head, and the other is in subjection to the head, so the two become one. Yet in nearly every marriage, the two still remain two. Why? Because we are fallen. We do not like to live the life of another; we just like to live ourselves. Regardless of how much you love your wife, you still like to live yourself. And regardless of how much your wife is submissive and how much she loves you, if you touch her living of herself, she will react. So the wisest policy of the husband is just to honor his wife's living of herself. If you honor that point, she will be happy all the time. If you let her live herself, she will be happy. Do not touch that part. When you touch that part, she will rise up. It is the same with little children. If the parents let the little children live themselves, they are happy. Why are many American children eagerly expecting to reach eighteen years of age? It is because when they reach eighteen, they are like birds out of a cage; they have the freedom to live themselves.

FLEXIBLE TO LIVE GOD

God's purpose is to have man live Him. God's redemption and transformation have this same goal. Since 1963 I have given many messages on transformation, but I did not point out strongly that transformation is just to make us flexible to live God. Transformation is not just to change us but to

make us flexible to live God. However, we may get a lot of transformation yet still not like to live God.

What then is our peculiarity? It is just to live ourselves. According to our dictionary, peculiarity may imply some strange trait. That is the human interpretation. From the spiritual point of view you may be a very common and very general person with nothing particular and nothing strange, yet you are a strong person to live yourself. You just like to live yourself. You have to realize that the most common person, the most general person, lives himself the most. Some peculiar person may not live himself that much. Some who are very peculiar are also very flexible, but some who are very general and very common are altogether definite with no flexibility. Many peculiar people are very flexible. Yet some very common and very general people are not flexible, because they like to keep their way.

So the human way to define peculiarity is different from the spiritual way. The spiritual way to define peculiarity is just to live yourself. The common ones from the spiritual point of view are the most peculiar because they do not live Christ. They only live themselves. It does not mean that they are selfish. Of course, they condemn their selfishness. But probably they have never condemned themselves for living themselves. You may have condemned yourself that you did not live Christ, but probably you have never condemned yourself that you live yourself. We do not live Christ, because we live ourselves. Unconsciously, subconsciously, unintentionally, even habitually, we live ourselves. You do not need to intend to live yourself. To live yourself is a habit. As long as you have life, you live yourself. We need to see a vision that regardless of what kind of good Christian we may be, we do not live Christ. We all must believe that we do not live Christ. Although I have tried and tried, still I do not live Christ that much. If you would receive such a vision that you do not live Christ that much, you would condemn yourself.

Furthermore, you need to hear an even sharper word; that is, you live yourself. This is your peculiarity. Your peculiarity is not a peculiar trait; it is just to live yourself. In a sense I do not need to ask you to condemn your living of yourself. As long as you know that to live yourself is your peculiarity, it is good enough. Then you have to practice all the day to live Christ.

PRACTICING TO LIVE CHRIST

Now we need to consider a few doctrinal points: who is Christ? and what is Christ? Doctrinally we know that He is the life-giving Spirit and that He is now in our spirit. You are clear that your peculiarity is just to live yourself, so you would reject this. You would practice to live Christ, realizing that He is the life-giving Spirit right now in your spirit. But what shall you do practically? Once again I tell you that you have to pray all day long. By prayer I do not mean prayer in your regular way; I mean prayer in your daily life. At anytime and anywhere you must always pray from your spirit, saying, "Lord, live in me. Lord, live out of me." This brings us to the very crucial point—you must practice to live Christ. This is not a doctrinal matter; this must be a daily, hourly, moment-by-moment practice. Do not say something without praying, "Lord, You say it. I am going to say something to this man. Lord, You say it. You be my life." Pray every moment in anything, in everything, and everywhere.

Again and again I have confessed that I did not live the Lord so much because this practice has not been fully and absolutely built up in my life as a habit. But you must believe that some day this will be built up in you as a habit. Then you will live Christ habitually. This needs some practice. If I were to play the piano, I would use my fingers in a wild way. To learn to play the piano is to practice using the fingers. It is to touch every key not in a wild way but in a trained way. We live ourselves in a wild way, but now we must have a change of habit. Instead of living ourselves, we must practice living Christ. Do not say anything before praying; do not go any place before praying. You must pray. Now you understand why Paul told us to pray unceasingly. And now you also understand how we could pray unceasingly. If you simply pray according to the way you have all these years, it would be hard to pray unceasingly. You cannot kneel or stand there unceasingly. Nor can you concentrate yourselves to pray all the day. But you can pray in this way. Before doing anything you can pray, "Lord, You live in me." Pray in this way all the day long. Then you will build up a habit always not to live yourself but to live Christ.

Because we are fallen, we were trained according to some ethical points and also by some religious teachings. After we were saved, we desired to be sinless. We desired to be overcoming and victorious over sin. Although these matters are apparently in the Bible, actually the Bible does not want us to live a sinless life. The Bible wants us to live Christ. When you really live Christ, you are away from sin. If you are really living Christ, there is no need for someone to tell you not to love the world. When you live Christ, you are away from the

world. If you do not live Christ, although you might overcome the world, you are still in the world. No one can be separated from the world if he does not live Christ. The Lord wants us to live Him all the day long in everything. Even when you are going to rebuke or discipline your children, you have to do it by living Christ. Before you discipline, you have to pray, "Lord, live Yourself through me." If you would take this word and put it into your daily practice, I believe we could stop the Perfecting Training. You must realize that you have to pray unceasingly.

NOT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

According to the context of the verse which says that we need to pray unceasingly, we should not quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:17, 19). This means that we should live Christ. It is not to pray unceasingly for your business affairs, for good food, for good blessings, for this, or for that. No. To pray unceasingly is to pray that the Spirit within you would never be quenched. This simply means that Christ lives within you. You need to pray that the Christ in you would live and that you would live Him. For this we need to pray all the day long. This is breathing. Our breathing never changes. Twenty-four hours a day we breathe in the same way. We do not change the subject in our breathing. We may change our diet many times, but we never change our breathing. Even while I am speaking, I am breathing unceasingly in order to stay alive. You have to pray this kind of breathing prayer unceasingly in order to keep you living Christ.

BEING FOUND IN CHRIST

This is an encouraging word. The only way to deal with your peculiarity is to live Christ. When you live Christ, you do not live yourself. Then your peculiarity is gone. As long as you live yourself, peculiarity is there. When you live Christ, you do not live yourself; spontaneously, peculiarity is terminated. Whether you are straight, peculiar, common, or general, do not deal with your peculiarity. As long as you do not live Christ, your peculiarity is there. Forget about the peculiarity. Just practice one thing—to live Christ. Paul says, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). If you get into the spirit of Paul in his writings, especially in Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Galatians, you can see that he surely practiced to live Christ. He made this his habit. Before he got saved, he practiced to live the law. Wherever he was, he was found in the law. But after he was saved, he aspired to be found in Him. How could he be found in Him? There is no other way but just to live Him. When he lived

Christ, surely he was found in Christ. We may be good Christians, yet when people find us, they do not find us in Christ; rather, they find us in culture, in politics, in education, in dollars, in business, or in other matters. They may find us in many things but not in Christ.

But if we live Christ moment by moment from morning to evening, wherever people find us and whenever people find us, they will find us in Christ. By Paul's words you can see that he was serious and desperate, so he, no doubt, practiced this habit a lot. From this point in the Perfecting Training I would give you one charge; that is, we all have to receive this word—to live Christ. Go practice this one thing. Every day, every hour, every minute, even every second, in whatever you are doing, you must practice the living of Christ.

This must be by the unceasing prayer. All the time you have to pray, "Lord, live through me. Lord, live through me." At work, in your kitchen, doing your laundry, pray, "Lord, live through me." We all need to practice this. When children are learning to play the piano, they need the proper daily practice. They do not need that many lessons, but they need much practice. To become a good pianist requires one to practice many hours a day. Some top pianists may practice as many as fifteen hours a day. If they were to miss three days of practice, an expert could tell from their playing that they had missed the practice. We need to practice not fifteen hours a day but twenty-four hours a day to live Christ. What we are speaking in this Perfecting Training is like a lesson. The crucial thing is that you need to go home and practice. Paul says, "To me, to live is Christ...that I may gain Christ and be found in Him...to know Him." This is his aspiration for his practice of living Christ. For many years I tried this way or that way in order to go on, but now I can tell you that the crucial thing is for you to practice living Christ. Take this lesson and practice. Let us take the next half hour for you to ask questions.

Question: When did Brother Paul first learn the lesson of living Christ?

I do not know, but anyhow, he learned the lesson. In a sense you do not need to find out these things. He practiced it, so you can practice it. To ask this question means that you are like a theological student, studying time, geography, and so forth. Do not ask these theoretical questions. Ask some practical questions.

Question: Brother Lee, I believe that when you say we need to practice living Christ, it is the same as saying to practice exercising your spirit. The problem is, although we have known this for several years, and we know we should exercise our spirit, we do not. What can cause us to want to exercise our spirit?

Truthfully, you have to pray, "Lord, send me twelve angels to remind me minute after minute that I have to exercise my spirit, that I have to live You, that I have to practice You." My experience in this is exactly the same. I knew that I should live Christ, and I knew that I should exercise my spirit, but every day I did not practice it adequately. But after many days of practice, my habit is better. This does not mean that I am so successful. Even when Paul wrote Philippians, he said that he had not obtained, that he was still pursuing. The matter of living Christ is not so simple. Although the apostle Paul never tells us that he was not successful, his writings indicate that he was not absolutely mature in this matter. Nearly every morning I have prayed, "Lord, remind me all the day that I have to live You." One of the psalmists asked the Lord to set a watch before his mouth (Psa. 141:3). This means that we need a reminder from the Lord. It is so easy for us to forget this practice. We must be desperate to build this kind of habit. We need much prayer. "Lord, live through me." We need to practice.

Question: It seems as though sometimes when you try to live Christ, you do not, and at other times spontaneously you just live Christ. I do not understand that experience. Yesterday I was trying to speak to someone. I really wanted to flow something of life out to her, but I was so dead. I was trying to exercise and to get myself into the spirit, but nothing came out. But today when I saw the same person, without even trying, something spontaneously rose up. Was that from my prayer of yesterday?

According to my limited experience, I would say this: If we try to live Christ beyond or apart from praying, we cannot make it. If you try to live Christ without praying, you will fail. Do not try to live Christ, but pray. It is only by a continual living prayer, a breathing prayer, that we spontaneously will live Christ. If we make up our mind to try to live Christ, that is actually the living of our self. This is why Paul charges us to pray unceasingly. To pray unceasingly simply means to stop our own effort. If you do not pray, yet you try to do something, that is your own effort. This point is like a small screw in a large machine. When a large machine works, it depends upon some small

screws. Not to try to live Christ but to pray is a small thing, yet it is very crucial. Do not make up your mind to try to live Christ, but all the day long pray, "Lord, live through me." Do not have an intention to live Christ before someone. Simply have an aspiration to live Christ. This needs prayer all the time.

Question: The kind of work I do requires a lot of concentration. A lot of times I get into the Word, but I find that I am out of my spirit and not living Christ. What do we do when we are working or studying and find ourselves out of Christ? How do we keep this kind of living prayer going on while we are concentrating on our work?

Again, we need to practice to pray. Regardless of how busy we may be and how heavy a burden is upon us, we must practice to pray. While you are under the burden of the work, you have to pray. Practice this. Of course, this is not habitual to us; this is why we need to practice. Regardless of how busy you are, you do not stop breathing. So we must practice this kind of prayer regardless of how much work we have. Even while I am speaking, I must keep a kind of contact and prayer with the Lord—a kind of praying spirit. Learn to practice this. This is very, very crucial. The real holiness, the real victory, the real spirituality, is here. Even the real church life is here. When we practice this way, we will live Christ, and then we will have the victory. So no matter what kind of situation we are in, we have to practice this kind of breathing prayer.

Question: How much is the matter of growth in life related to the living of Christ? You said that transformation is just to make us flexible. Is that only a kind of outward working upon us, or is there still the aspect of being saturated and permeated with the Lord? This aspect of transformation seems a little different from what you have shared with us in the past.

When we practice living Christ, no doubt we give the Lord much ground and much opportunity to change our being. You have to realize that our natural being is so raw and so wild. Our natural being just does not fit the living of Christ. As a new learner, it is hard because your being is raw and wild. Even when you pray, your being is wild and raw. But if you would practice and continue to practice, the Lord will gradually do something to transform your natural, raw, and wild being. Then your being would become so fitting in the living of Christ. This is the proper definition of transformation. We may have thought that transformation was just to change our nature. Although this is correct, the purpose is also for us to live Christ. Transformation is not

just to change us but to adjust us to fit in to the living of Christ. The key is to practice. If you practice the living of Christ, all these things will transpire in your being. Gradually, things will be happening to you if you practice Christ.

Question: Brother Lee, would you share more to guide us so that our practice may not turn into a form of self-improvement or a kind of behavior? Otherwise, we may decide to pray without ceasing and set our energy to do it. Then we will get into the cycle of trying and failing and being condemned and giving up. I find there is such a capacity in our being to distort what we hear and to turn it into a kind of behavior. Is there anything you could share with us that would help us to take the word in a simple and pure way? Otherwise, we may try to behave as if we are living Christ.

You do not need to make up your mind, and you do not need to make a strong decision. You do not need to think about trying to improve yourself. Forget about all these things. You only need one thing—to pray. Learn to pray all the time. Learn to contact the Lord. To make up your mind in this matter does not work so well. To make a decision always becomes a failure. If you try to behave yourself, you may make it for three weeks, but eventually you will fail. Forget about these things and simply practice one thing, that is, to pray. Practice to pray all the day long.

LOVING THE LORD

The basic foundation for us to pray is that we love the Lord. We just love Him. Therefore, we seek Him, and we like to contact Him, and we like to pray to Him. We like to call upon Him. The basic stone is the loving of the Lord. I just love the Lord. Here you can remember the Song of Songs. In the Song of Songs the seeker became so desperate that she only knew one person, and she was only seeking after that one person. The Song of Songs shows us this. Even the Song of Songs is full of prayer. All the time the seeker was praying to her beloved. There was a kind of praying atmosphere. The most helpful thing to us is to pray the unceasing and breathing prayer. But we must have a foundation of loving the Lord.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A HABIT TO LIVE CHRIST

We need to change the subject of the Perfecting Training from the matter of peculiarity to the matter of habit. We need to see that we must build up a habit to live Christ. For some time now I have been bothered that it is so hard to have a habit to live Christ. All of you love the Lord. Your being here is a sign that you love Him. Because you love Him, you have been stirred up to seek how to live Him and to practice the one spirit with Him. According to my experience, the hardest thing is to get into the habit to live Christ and to practice the one spirit with Him.

Years ago I learned the fact that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), but I never realized that this should be an experience to us. It should not be just a doctrine remaining there in the Bible and in our apprehension. It should be an experience. But when I began to practice this matter, I discovered that it is hard. It is hard because seemingly there is nothing sinful and there is nothing wrong if you do not practice the one spirit with the Lord. You can still be a good person; you can still be a "proper" Christian. No one would condemn you, and even you would not condemn yourself. We are all unconscious of this matter. It is something beyond our thinking and beyond our memory. In the morning you may have prayed concerning practicing one spirit with the Lord. After that you went to breakfast, and right away that matter was in the air, not in your living. Not until the night came did you realize that you did not practice the one spirit with the Lord. Then you confessed your failure, and the next morning you prayed again concerning living Christ.

It is really hard to build up such a habit of living Christ. To build up a habit of living Christ in our experience is not only in the air but just like the air. It is altogether not solid. You do not need to intentionally forget it; you just forget it. It is easy to pick up the doctrine of living Christ. We started to use this term about two years ago. Before that time we used the terms *live by Christ* and *live out Christ*. We never used such a direct expression—*to live Christ*. Since that time we learned this term, and we put it into our doctrinal memory. Yet it is very little in our practice. Although you may have appreciated this term very much, yet you have never put it into practice. It is

hard because it is an all-day-long matter. It is like breathing and living. Both breathing and living are continual. To live Christ is just living, and to practice the one spirit with the Lord is just breathing. These two matters should be lifelong and all the day long. Yet our experience is altogether different. Occasionally we live Christ in the morning. Then we die for twelve hours, or at least we sleep for twelve hours. Later we wake up for a while and live Christ for a short time. From my experience I have fully realized that this is the hardest thing to practice. Whenever I have a little time, I contact the Lord: "Lord, I surely would like to learn the secret that I may continually live You, that I could live You without interruption and without ceasing." Nearly every day I have had this kind of prayer.

WATCHING AND PRAYING

Today as I went to the Lord concerning this matter of the secret of living Him, I had the inner feeling that it has something to do with the matter of watching, of watchfulness. So let us read a very familiar verse, Matthew 26:41: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." In this verse the word *weak* means sleepy. The word *watch* has at least two meanings: the first meaning is "to look at, to observe, or to see"; the second meaning is "not to sleep, to stay awake." M. R. Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament,* says that the word *watch* in Mark 13:35 is derived from a word composed of two parts. The first part means "to hunt or to seek." The second part means "sleep." Thus, it means "to hunt sleep." Vincent says, "The picture is of one *in pursuit of sleep*, and therefore *wakeful, restless.*" It means that you are addicted to sleep. You are a sleeper. Because Peter was sleeping and pursuing his sleep, the Lord Jesus said, "Watch." When the Lord Jesus went to pray, Peter and the others went to sleep. When the Lord Jesus told them to watch, He meant do not sleep. Wake up! According to the context, it means that their spirit was willing, but their flesh was sleepy and weak. So Vincent says that this matter of being watchful must be a habit. The Lord Jesus joined these two words, *watch* and *pray,* together.

PRAYING AT EVERY TIME

Colossians, a book on Christ, the Head, and Ephesians, a book on the Body, both end with the same charge. Ephesians 6:18 says, "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints." *Praying at every*

time means not only on every hour or every half hour but all the time. *All prayer* means all kinds of prayers—short prayers, long prayers, loud prayers, silent prayers, public prayers, private prayers, prayer by yourself, prayer by a number of saints. It does not mean that whenever you pray, you need to do these things; it means that at every time you need to pray; even every minute you have to pray. Pray at all times, pray at every time, in spirit watching unto this. *Watching unto this* refers to the prayer at all times. This means that you should be wakeful to such a prayer. You should not be sleeping. It even says, "Watching unto this in all perseverance." This means not only one kind of perseverance but all kinds of perseverance. You have to persist; you have to insist to the uttermost. This indicates that there may be something holding you down, holding you back, suppressing, oppressing, depressing, and hindering you. So you have to persevere; you have to be persistent; you have to insist; you would not give up.

Thus, Paul also picked up the thought to combine *pray* and *watch*. The seed of praying and watching was sown in Matthew, and the development is here in Paul's Epistle. All of us know that Ephesians is a book on the Body. But how can you have the Body life? It is not just to understand it, although we surely need to understand, because we are complicated people. The enjoyment of food comes from the taste of the food. If you do not have any knowledge of the taste of a certain food, you could never love that food. Once you have some knowledge concerning a certain food, you will have an emotional aspiration for that food. Then you need a strong will to get the food. Then you will eat. Likewise, to have the church life we need Ephesians to teach us. But after being taught, shall we simply keep the knowledge? No. After being taught with the knowledge concerning the Body of Christ, we need to pray. And we need to pray at every time, not only in the morning or at noontime or in the afternoon or before bedtime. We have to pray at every time.

According to the revelation of Ephesians, we have to pray in order to have the church life. Although you may have the knowledge concerning the church, without praying unceasingly you cannot have the church life. The church life does not remain with your knowledge; it remains with your praying, even with your continual and persistent prayer all the time. At the end of Ephesians such a charge is given, indicating that the church depends upon our prayer life. If we do not have a prayer life, we are through. We may have a lot of knowledge, a lot of revelation concerning the Body, but this does not

mean we can have the church life. To have the church life depends upon our continual prayer. Ephesians 6:18, like other verses in these four books, uses many modifiers: “By means of all prayer...praying at every time in spirit...in...petition.” We have to pray and watch unto prayer in petition. This is the way to watch unto prayer. This means you have to pray every minute, and then you have to be awake, not sleeping. We have to be awake to this kind of continual prayer, and this watching is in all petition. This means that while you are praying, you are watchful; while you are praying, you are awake.

According to the Lord’s word in Matthew 26, we are all sleepy persons. If you do not sleep physically, you sleep spiritually. And many times you sleep psychologically. While I am speaking, some may be sleeping physically, and others are sleeping psychologically. This means that their mind and their attention and their hearing and their realization are absent. Sometimes you are sleeping spiritually. This means that your perception is dormant. To be a person who prays unceasingly, you must be a watchful person, a person fully awakened, fighting against your sleeping nature and your sleeping being. How do you fight? By petitioning. Prayer is a general thing; petition is a special, particular thing. You have to watch unto the general prayer by special petition.

In Matthew the Lord Jesus only said watch and pray, but Paul developed it very much. Paul’s speaking corresponds with the Lord’s. The Lord said, “The spirit is willing,” and Paul said, “Praying at every time in spirit.” Paul’s word indicates that we should forget about our flesh. We should not let our body sleep so much but should let our spirit pray much. But nearly all the day long we have been subdued and controlled either by our body or by our psychology. So we have to let our spirit rise up over our body and over our psychology. Then we can pray, and we can watch unto prayer in the way of all petition. Of course, this will tire you out, but you need to exercise. If you are going to get strength, you have to spend strength. If your automobile does not run for a certain period of time, the battery will be run down. While the car is running, it exhausts the battery, but it also charges the battery. How do you get more strength? Exercise. If you do not pray today, you cannot pray tomorrow. If you do not pray in the morning, you cannot pray at noontime or in the evening. One time of prayer strengthens you to pray two more times. Two times of prayer strengthens you to pray four times. The more you pray, the more you will have to pray. The more you pray, the more you will like to pray. And the more you pray, the more you will be able to pray. I am in good

physical condition because I get a lot of exercise. If I miss two or three days of walking, I feel awkward when I begin to exercise again. I may start out walking only sixty minutes a day, but every day I add a minute, and soon I can walk one and a half hours. When I exercise every day, my walking is so refreshing to me. It does not give me an awkward feeling. Exercise increases your strength. If you do not pray, you just do not like to pray. If you pray, your appetite for prayer will be increased. So you have to pray and watch unto prayer in all petition. This means do not cease in prayer. Do not stop your prayer. Pray all the time and keep yourself all the time wakeful. You have to fight against the threefold sleep: physical, psychological, and spiritual. This word concerning prayer is the concluding charge in the book of Ephesians, a book that reveals the Body of Christ. Is this not meaningful? If you do not have such a kind of watchful prayer, it will be difficult to have the church life.

PERSEVERING IN PRAYER

Colossians, a book on Christ, also has a concluding charge. Colossians 4:2 reads, "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." For the third time these two words *watch* and *pray* are put together in the Bible. Of course, they are also mentioned in Mark 13:33 and Luke 21:36. But the accounts in the Gospels should be counted nearly as one because they were spoken by the Lord. But Paul repeated it in these two books on Christ and the church. This means that if you are going to experience Christ, it is not altogether adequate just to have the revelation in Colossians. It is not adequate merely to have the extensive and all-inclusive revelation of Christ. After receiving such a revelation of Christ, you have to pray and you have to persevere in prayer. Do not let yourself be subdued by anything. Do not be oppressed, suppressed, or depressed by anything. Do not be distracted or held back or hindered by anything. You have to be persevering. So Paul says to persevere in prayer.

PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Unceasingly pray." Now you understand how to pray without ceasing—just be watchful. To be watchful helps you to build up a habit of prayer. The ultimate and consummate conclusion of all the charges in the Bible is that we need to live Christ and walk in the spirit. It is not to love this or love that, nor is it to do this or to do that. The final word is to live Christ and to walk in spirit. We need to do this by the way of watching unto prayer in all petition. There is no other way that we can live Christ continually, and there is no other way that we can walk in spirit. Actually,

here the word *walk* equals the word *live*. To walk in spirit actually means to live in spirit. So to live Christ is a matter of living in spirit. This can never be possible unless we have a prayer life with a continual watching in all petition.

We need the Lord's mercy. If we do not pray and we do not watch unto prayer in all petition, even the Lord can do nothing. When a person is sick or dying, the first step to recovery is the regaining of his appetite. The more the sick person eats, the more life supply he gets. Then the more life he will have, which will produce more appetite. Gradually the appetite will be altogether restored. You may consider that you are weak and that you cannot pray unceasingly; it is too hard. You have to realize, though, that you are not yet dead. At the most you may be sleeping or dormant or sick. You still have life. You still are living. So do not reject the eating. If you reject the eating today, tomorrow you may die. As long as you have a little appetite, take in a little bit of food. This will help you. Do not despise that little amount of food. Do not be so dormant and so restful. You have to shout a little bit; you have to cry, "Lord Jesus! I like to pray! Make me watch!" I have experienced this very much not only in my spiritual life but also in my physical life.

In 1943 I became sick with tuberculosis of the lungs. Because it was so serious, I was confined to bed for close to a year and a half. Just to walk from my bed to a chair caused my temperature to rise. But gradually I could walk from the bed to the chair without affecting the temperature. Slowly and gradually I increased my distance of walking until after six months I could walk out the door and into the yard to lie down under the sunshine. Day by day I added a little more time to my exercise until I was fully recovered. By 1946 I was fully recovered, and today I am very strong because of that practice and exercise. During that time I learned to be patient and not to be disappointed. In my physical practice I was a success, and I do believe that in my spiritual practice sooner or later I will make it. I believe also that you will make it too. So let us practice praying without ceasing. There is no shortcut. You must pay the price, and by His mercy you must pick up the patience. You may be defeated for a long period of time, but do not be disappointed. Continue to practice. One day the help will come.

Let me repeat: to live Christ, to practice the one spirit with the Lord, is by the continual and unceasing prayer. To have such a prayer life, we all must learn to watch. We also must be on the alert to be awake. We have to watch unto this kind of prayer. When you discover that there is something within

you reluctant to pray, you have to fight against it. When something within you tells you not to pray, you had better pray twice as much. Although you may say you have nothing to pray, Paul tells us we have many things to pray. He said to pray at every time in spirit and watch in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints. Do not say you have nothing to pray about. The church in Anaheim has over three hundred members. Pray for every one of these. Once you finish praying for all these saints, you can pray for the other churches in Orange County and then the other churches throughout the country. You can never finish your job of prayer.

AN ASPIRATION TO PRAY

We must remember Ephesians 6:18: "By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints." We have to admit that there is much possibility for us to have this kind of prayer life because we have so much in the environment and in our own life to pray for. I have the assurance that all the saints in the Lord's recovery do have an appetite, an aspiration, to pray. In the Lord's recovery the saints are praying people. Perhaps when you were somewhere else in the past, you did not have that much aspiration for prayer, but after you came into the Lord's recovery, you began to aspire to pray. Although you may not have been successful to such an extent, still you had the desire and the hunger and the thirst to pray. Now please practice the hunger. The more you pray, the more you will be thirsty to pray. I can assure you, it is not too hard. The habit of living Christ must be the habit of prayer, and the habit of prayer is not so hard to build up. Practice this yourself, and eventually you will be a good coach to help so many into this kind of praying life. I have the assurance that after a few years many saints in the Lord's recovery will be coached into this kind of prayerful life to live Christ and to practice the one spirit with the Lord.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LIVING CHRIST BY PRAYING UNCEASINGLY

We have now come definitely to a very crucial point; that is, for us to live Christ, we must practice the one spirit with Him. And for us to practice the one spirit with Him, we must exercise our spirit to pray unceasingly. First Thessalonians 5:17 says we should pray without ceasing, and Ephesians 6:18 says that we should pray at every time. These two verses indicate to what extent our prayer life should be. Our prayer life should be all the day long and at every time. We must pray continually and without ceasing. For many years it was very difficult for me to be clear how to practice this kind of prayer life. Previously, I indicated that before doing anything, you had better pray. Before saying anything, you had better pray. Before going anywhere, you had better pray. Even before thinking something, you had better pray. Now I would add something more: even before you love, you have to pray. Before you weep, you have to pray. Before you lose your temper, you need to first pray. Before you criticize, you need to first pray. Before you gossip, you need to first pray. We need two brothers to represent all the trainees and to tell us what they have learned concerning this matter during the past seven days. After you tell us what you have learned, I will tell you what I also have learned during these past seven days.

First brother: Personally, I was very much impressed with the word last Friday. Several things that were shared have really stayed with me throughout at least a part of the week. One thing we saw was that this matter of living Christ has to be a habit. The Lord really spoke to me that I have a lot of habits inwardly and outwardly, but one habit that I surely do not have is a habit of living Christ. And until this becomes a habit, the Lord cannot be satisfied, and my practice will always be very deficient. Throughout this last week I found myself praying, "Lord, build up such a habit in me." I found myself opening to the Lord and confessing to the Lord that I am very short as far as having any kind of real habit, even of praying. As you mentioned, to live Christ habitually, we have to pray without ceasing. To build up a habit of living Christ is directly related to building up a habit to pray. We need to pray in the way of contacting the Lord and of being one spirit with Him before doing anything. I was definitely reminded by the

Lord and through the word that was ministered last week to turn to the Lord. Even a few times before speaking or a few times before doing things, I was reminded.

You also mentioned last week that most of us are not condemned because of our lack of living Christ. We are condemned for sin or for other things, but we are not condemned when we do not live Christ. I would have to confess that this is my experience. I am rarely condemned that I do not live Christ. But at least this last week on a few occasions I sensed a kind of condemnation at the end of the day that I had not lived Christ. Why had I not lived Christ? Because I had not been praying without ceasing. What you shared about prayer really gave me a handle for the matter of living Christ. This whole week I have checked one thing: how much have I prayed, and how often have I prayed? By that I knew how little I had lived Christ.

Finally, one thing that was shared last week is very encouraging to me; that is, at least within me there is a seeking to live Christ, and this seeking has been intensified. I was especially aware this week as I endeavored to practice to pray more often that the thirst within to live Christ was greater, and this was an incentive to practice more and more this matter of prayer. My only sense after one week is that, as you said, this will take many failures. I just hope that after two years I could be a person who prays before doing things and saying things. But I realize that this is altogether dependent upon our daily practice and that I have to make this a daily matter. If I do not make it a daily practice, I will be at the same point two years from now. I also appreciated that we have to watch and pray. The reason we do not pray is because we do not watch. Within our being we have this threefold sleepiness—physical, psychological, and even spiritual. I was more aware this past week that there is a tendency to forget to contact the Lord and to forget to pray. At times my mind is on other things, and I am not watching unto prayer. The only way to keep the life of prayer and to build up the habit of prayer is to increase the watching. I do not know how the watching can be strengthened, but at least through this word I was more infused that I need to watch unto prayer in order to live Christ. At least this last week I was more consciously practicing to pray and to watch and to live Christ. I feel I have just had a beginning in this matter. The more I endeavor to practice, the more I realize how little I live Christ and that this is not an easy matter. It needs a daily, hourly practice.

Second brother: I feel that these meetings should help us in two areas: First of all, they should help us in our realization concerning this matter of living Christ. I think we all have to confess that before Brother Lee got on this matter, we did not even have the understanding that what God is after is for us to live Christ. I can testify that my realization for the need of living Christ and the praying unceasingly has definitely deepened. Second, I feel that these meetings should help us in our practice, that is, in our day-to-day actual outworking of living Christ and praying unceasingly. I have had much consideration this week that it is so easy for us to do something for Christ, but it is so difficult for us to live Christ by praying in an unceasing way. For example, this week I was considering my future. I have a job offer that would be very demanding, and my tendency is to stay away from that kind of job because I think I should spend more time in the church life and so forth. In other words, I would like to spend more time for the Lord. But because of last week's fellowship, I began to realize that what the Lord is after is for me to live Him rather than for me to be for Him. I had some realization that it might be of the Lord for me to get a very busy job so that I could learn to live Christ in that situation rather than to take another job where I might have more time to be for the Lord. At any rate I had the realization that what the Lord is after in these days is just for us to live Him.

I had a further realization this week. At the end of each day I checked my day, and I came to the realization that although I was so busy, I did not have too much time to sin; I had a horrifying realization of how little I lived Christ during the day. So I realized that this is really a matter of habit. Not only am I short of the good habit of living Christ, but I have a bad habit of not praying and not living Christ and not checking with Christ before I do everything. I must admit that in my practice I have found myself coming back to the Lord after a period of time and confessing that I had failed to live Him during this period of time. I was encouraged to realize that even as a person can gradually be recovered back to health physically, he can also gradually learn to live Christ. I feel that through our daily practice eventually the Lord will surely bring us into the full practice of living Him by praying unceasingly.

UNCEASING PRAYER

Very good! Now it is my turn to tell you what I have learned within this past week. I practiced a lot this past week, and through this practice I have been brought to a kind of understanding by the Lord, which is that unceasing

prayer is not just to pray before doing something. Unceasing prayer is also to keep praying while you are doing something. This is the way to live even physically. We live physically by breathing. To live means to breathe. Breathing is the real, actual living. If you do not breathe, you die. As long as you live, you breathe. In the spiritual mathematics breathing equals living, and living equals breathing. In the Chinese language, when you say that a man is dead, you say that he stopped breathing. So when you stop breathing, that means you die. As long as you live, you breathe.

LIVING CHRIST

This matter of living Christ is altogether a spiritual living. Such expressions as *to live Christ* or *Christ lives in me* are only used in the heart of the divine revelation. Galatians 2:20 says, "It is Christ who lives in me," and Philippians 1:21 says, "To me, to live is Christ." No other verses even in Paul's writings use these kinds of expressions. These are unique. Of course, Paul's ministry is the completing ministry. It is the ministry that completed God's divine revelation. Then John's ministry came in to mend the broken ministry. So John's ministry is the mending ministry. Paul in completing the divine revelation says that we need to live Christ and that Christ lives in us. In no other of Paul's books does he mention these expressions. In the other writings of the New Testament, such as Peter's and James's writings, there is not such an expression. But in the mending ministry by John, this expression has been used again. In John 6:57 the Lord said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me."

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Because Paul's completing ministry was damaged, John's mending ministry came afterward to mend it. Within a short time during the first century the degraded church damaged Paul's completing ministry. So in the latter part of the first century, John was raised up to mend the broken ministry. In his mending ministry he once more picks up this expression that was used by Paul in his completing ministry. John 6:57 says, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me," and John 14:19 says, "Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live." This verse indicates that the Lord will be in resurrection and will also be living forever in His resurrection. It also indicates that while He is living in His resurrection, we shall also live. We live with Him, we live in Him, we live by Him, and eventually we just live Him. Twice in John's writing, the thought

of to live or living is picked up. Thus, this expression is used not only in Paul's completing ministry but also in John's mending ministry. This is not a small thing.

In the divine revelation of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the climax, the top point, is nothing but to live Christ. Even in eternity we will live Christ. To live Christ is different from living for Christ. In eternity we will not live for Christ only, but we will live Christ. Our eternal job will be just to live Christ. To me this is so sweet. Eventually, even with the apostle Paul, God's sovereignty put him in prison where he could do nothing but live Christ. In the prison he was neither idle nor busy; he was just living Christ.

In the mending ministry, which is much richer and stronger than the completing ministry, there is such a chapter as John 15. In John 6 and John 14 there is the plain word concerning living Christ, but in John 15 there is an illustration showing us what it is to live Christ and what it is to have Christ live in us. There we have the vine tree with its branches. The branches abide in the vine, and the vine abides in the branches. They two live together. So the branches are doing nothing but living the vine. The branch of the vine is neither idle nor busy. It is simply living. No fruit tree is busy in doing work. Two years ago a small peach tree was planted in my backyard, and this morning, to my surprise, a small peach was on a branch. It was fully ripened, so I picked it and washed it and tasted it. It was so sweet! The little tree had been there in my backyard for over two years, but I never noticed that it was busy. I never saw it running back and forth doing so many things. This illustration of the vine and the branches is so simple, yet it is profound. As a branch in the vine, you need to stop your working and learn to live. The branches of the vine do not do anything. They do not work; they just live. We must stress this one word—*live*. Some might argue that Paul said he worked and he labored. That of course, is another side, but now we need to stress the side of the living.

SPIRITUAL BREATHING

According to our physical life, we could understand and we could see a full illustration that to live is simply to breathe. Now we need to discover what is our spiritual breathing. No doubt our spiritual breathing is just our praying. But this does not mean prayer in the traditional way. Prayer in the Bible in actual practice is calling. I do not believe you can pray adequately without calling on the name of the Lord. At the very beginning of the ministry in this

country, I strongly said that we do not need to exercise our mind merely to study the Bible that much. Some dissenting ones argued, saying that the Bible says we need to meditate. They pointed out that Psalm 1 and Psalm 19 use this word *meditate* several times. That really bothered me, so I spent further hours to study the word *meditate* in Hebrew. I found out that this is not a simple word. It is a very complicated word. *Young's Concordance* tells us that this word includes the thought of bowing down. Then Darby in his New Translation for Psalm 55:17 translates this word as "pray." So according to the biblical usage, to meditate is to bow down, to worship, and to pray. It is not just a kind of mental exercise to think about something, to ponder something, to consider something. At the end of Genesis 24, Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. Some versions translate this as "to pray." If you did not know the original Hebrew word, you might be bothered. How could one version translate it as "to meditate" and another translate it as "to pray"? It is because this one simple word *meditate,* in biblical use, includes bowing down to God and implies praying.

MANY KINDS OF PRAYERS

In the same principle, when the Bible says to pray, it implies to call on the name of the Lord. How could you pray without calling on the name of the Lord? When you hear the word *call,* you may understand that this means a kind of loud cry. It does mean this, yet many times we may call without crying out. But still we are calling. In Ephesians 6 this term is used: *By means of all prayer*. This little word *all* bothers the expositors. *All* surely indicates many prayers or many kinds of prayers. The best word studies all agree that *all* here in Ephesians 6 means all kinds of prayer. But what are the different prayers? I would say this: the kinds of prayers should have no limitation. You may say that we have only three kinds of chairs, but you cannot say and you should not say that we have only ten kinds of prayers or eight kinds of prayers. The number of the kinds of prayers should be innumerable. There are many kinds of prayers. You should not limit yourself in the kinds of prayers. You have to pray in any way. And to pray is to call. When you speak of praying, you may not realize that praying is a kind of breathing. But if you go on from prayer to calling, calling surely indicates some amount of breathing. So in the spiritual life to pray is to breathe, and to breathe is to live. What I have learned this past week is that to live Christ is to pray unceasingly, and to pray unceasingly is just to call on the Lord while you are doing anything.

PRAYING BY CALLING

Now I would add a word that is very crucial. You may ask, For what do you need to call on the Lord? During the last meeting I indicated that you have so many members of the church to pray for. That is right, but let me tell you that according to what I have discovered in this past week, while you are doing anything, you should pray. You should call on the Lord. While you are doing anything, you must spontaneously check with yourself: are you doing this very thing, or is the Lord doing this very thing with you? Are you doing this very thing by yourself, or are you doing this very thing by the Lord with you? We need to build up this good habit. As you talk with your wife and your children, you must exercise this habit: "Lord, is this just myself speaking, or are You speaking with me?" You must have such a spontaneous checking habit. That checking is the calling, and that calling is the prayer, and that prayer is the breathing. Even you have to drive your car with such a habit: "Lord, are You driving? Are You driving with me?" Previously, I told you not to do anything without first praying. But now I would add another word: do not do anything without praying. You have to pray. And to pray is just to call on the name of the Lord. And to call on the Lord is just to breathe. By this you will live Christ.

I would like to cut a way so that this word may have an entrance into you. Do not look down on such a word, considering that it is nothing. You need to breathe. If you look down on and despise this point, you will die spiritually. For so many years you have not been living Christ, because you have been lacking in this matter. You have learned so many things—how to do this and how to do that. But not one of the how-to's is workable. You learn how to overcome, but you have no overcoming. You learn how to be holy, but you have no holiness. You learn how to be patient, but you have no patience. You may have learned many how-to's, but you have neglected one thing; that is, you do not live. All the time, instead of living, you die. This simply means that you do not pray unceasingly. If you are an accountant working on your books, you have to keep praying. Do not do your accounting work by yourself. Do it with the Lord Jesus. Do it by having the Lord with you. The best way to have the Lord with you is by calling on Him. It is here that you have the victory. It is here that you are sanctified. It is here that you have everything you need, not only constantly but even instantly. If you live such a life, doing everything by having the Lord with you, how could you lose your temper? How could you gossip? How could you speak an idle word?

BOUND TO THE LORD

When I was a child, we had many three-legged races. Two people each had a leg tied to the other person's leg so that they had to coordinate as one. You have to realize that today you and the Lord Jesus are bound together. You and He are racing in a three-legged race. Do not run just by yourself. If you do, you will fall. Do not forget that you are one with Him and that you are living with Him. Not many can run a three-legged race. You would not care for the other party. You would cut off the binding. You would free yourself. We all have done this concerning the Lord Jesus. In a sense we all have told the Lord, "Lord, You stay here. Let me go ahead. Do not come along with me. If You come, I cannot get my thing done. Lord, give me a little freedom for just half a day. Just for Saturday afternoon I am on vacation." But we all have learned that regardless of how much we would ask leave of the Lord, He would never give it to us. You may cut the binding, but He would bind it again. Whenever we would try to take a vacation, we simply get in trouble. The point is this: God's economy is just to put Christ together with us. We have no choice. This is our destiny whether this seems poor or whether this seems very much blessed. It depends upon our realization. This is our destiny.

MARRIED TO THE LORD

For example, the marriage life should be a life always with two together. Although we love the marriage life, sometimes we realize that it is a binding and bothering life. If you open the window, your husband may complain. If you put some water on the plant, he says you put too much. Also, whatever you do, she would say something. In the marriage life we all are good complainers. What shall we do? The disciples told the Lord Jesus that it is better not to get married (Matt. 19:10-12). But the Lord said that it was not up to them. You must have the gift. You need a gift not to have a wife. But most of us did not receive such a gift. This is our destiny.

In like manner God has ordained that we must have a Husband, Christ. God does not want us to live single or as a widow. We must have a Husband. This is God's ordination, and this is our destiny. We must live a life of two together. God had no intention for you to live a life just by yourself. If you try to live in that way, you will get into trouble. That is against God's divine principle, and that is kicking against God's ordination. You can never get through. So we have to take Christ as our life and live with Him like two persons who are living one life together. We have to live such a life, and to live

such a life is to always call on Him. In other words, using our daily expression, we just talk to Him. Do not stop talking with Him. Talk to Him all the time. While you are talking to your wife, talk to Christ. While you are talking to your boss or employee, talk to Christ. Do not do any talking just by yourself. Do not forget that you should never be single. You are not destined to a single life. You are now living a marriage life, and your Husband is Christ. We all have Him as our Husband. We must live with our Husband. Do not go anywhere without Him. Do not do anything without Him, and do not say anything without Him. All the time you have to do things with Him. This is to pray unceasingly. Now I have the assurance that I know what it means to pray unceasingly and how we can pray unceasingly. It is this: all the day long you should call on Him; you should talk to Him. By this you are breathing. This is to live spiritually, and to live spiritually is just to live Christ. I do believe that this kind of fellowship hits the mark. You have to come back to this point: you must do all things by talking to the Lord, by praying to Him, by calling on Him. This is to breathe so that you may live Him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LIVING CHRIST BY THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

In the past few chapters we have covered two main points concerning how to live Christ. First, we pointed out that we have to pray before doing anything. The New Testament charges us to pray unceasingly, so we have to pray before doing anything. Prayer must be prior to our doing. Do not do anything without first praying. We know too definitely that without prayer or without praying quite often, no one can live Christ. The only way to live Christ is to pray. If you do not pray, you have no way. Second, we have gone on to see that not only do we need to pray before doing, but even while we are doing something, at that time we need to pray. Our prayer must go along with our doing. This means that we need to pray unceasingly.

GOD'S SPEAKING

In the Cleveland conference I continued to give more messages on the experience of Christ and how to live Christ. In those six messages I was more and more deeply impressed that, no doubt, practically speaking, the Lord has really shown us the right way to live Christ. We all know that not only the New Testament but also the Old Testament was written in the way of a puzzle. This is why so many teachers of the Bible like to systematize the things in the Bible. Isaiah 28:10 and 13 tell us that God speaks His word here a little and there a little. He spoke a little to Moses and a little to Joshua and a little to another one and a little to David. In the Bible God did not speak in the way we do. Whenever we speak, we like to have a completion to our speaking. But God did not speak in that way. God spoke just a little bit to Abraham. Then, of course, God spoke a lot to Moses. At least two full books were God's speaking to Moses, especially the book of Leviticus. From the first verse of chapter 1 to the last verse of the last chapter, it is altogether God's speaking. That speaking of God to Moses was longer than God's speaking to anyone else. Even Psalm 119 has only one hundred seventy-six verses. The book of Exodus has forty chapters; Leviticus has twenty-seven; Numbers has thirty-six; and Deuteronomy has thirty-four. This means that there are one hundred thirty-seven chapters of God's speaking just to one man, Moses. Yet still that was only a little of God's entire speaking. Why? Because it was not completed. After speaking to Moses it may be that the Lord spoke to over forty different

people in different places at different times. Still God's speaking was not completed until Paul. Paul says that his commission was to complete the word of God (Col. 1:25). Paul was bold. No other one ever had the boldness to tell people that he had a commission to complete the word of God. In the Bible not one chapter is complete in revealing God's economy to us, but a little is here, a little is there, piece after piece, like a big puzzle. All the pieces are scattered and mixed up, so you need to spend many hours to put the pieces together. Then you can see the picture.

A CHARGE TO LIVE CHRIST

The New Testament never tells us how to live Christ. You have to realize that there is not even such a charge—to live Christ. The first time the matter of living Christ was referred to by the Lord in John 6:57, He simply said, "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." This was not a charge. He simply mentioned it. The second time is in John 14:19: "Because I live, you also shall live." That means Christ will live in resurrection. When He lives in resurrection, we live Him. Again this is not a charge.

The third verse is Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." The fourth time is found in Philippians 1:21: "To me, to live is Christ." Two of these verses were written by John, and two of these verses were written by Paul. Paul, of course, wrote them first because he was a completing minister. John wrote later because he was a mending minister. He mended the same thing that Paul had written. Paul had written something in Galatians 2:20 about thirty-five years before John wrote something in his Gospel. Paul wrote something concerning the living of Christ, but that was broken. Later John came in to mend the broken matter of living Christ.

You cannot find a verse that charges us to live Christ; we are only told that there is such a thing. After Christ came and after He went through all the process of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, He is here to live with us so that we can live Him. There is no charge to live Christ, so, in a sense, the New Testament does not tell us how to live Christ. However, in the New Testament, according to all the words and experiences, you surely can see that there is a way demonstrated and presented to us. By reading the New Testament carefully we can find out how to live Christ. Years ago I did not have the light that we need to live Christ. So I did not pay attention to the matter of how to live Christ. Within the past few years we have seen the new light that we have to live Christ. Very few other books have used such an

expression—*to live Christ*. Recently, though, I was told that a Brethren teacher used this term—*to live Christ*. Anyhow, it is in the Bible. Because we have paid much attention to this matter of living Christ, I have been bothered because it has been hard for me to live Christ. Because it is hard to live Christ, I got into the New Testament concerning how to live Christ. Gradually, I picked up one piece of the puzzle here and another piece of the puzzle there, in this book and in that book. I found many pieces, and I put all the pieces together. By putting all these pieces together I have seen a full picture of this matter of living Christ.

GOD'S DESIRE

We know that the entire desire of the Triune God is to work Himself into us so that we may live Him. God's desire is that we live Him. God created us in this way. Now we can understand Genesis 1:26. God created us in His image and according to His likeness because His desire was just to put Himself into us. We have repeated this kind of word for many, many years. In 1950 I went to the Philippines, and right after my arrival, I began to speak concerning the mingling of God with man. Today I am much clearer concerning the mingling of God with man than I was thirty years ago. God created us in His image and according to His likeness because He wants to work Himself into us to be our life and to be our nature. He even wants to work Himself into us to be our disposition, our character, our living. First He becomes our life, then our nature, then our disposition, and eventually even our character and our living until we live Him. This is the central thought of the divine revelation in the Bible. This is the life pulse of the divine revelation.

The situation among Christians today is altogether too poor. Not only do they not know that God wants to put Himself into them to be their living, their character, their disposition, and their nature; they do not even know that He wants to be their life. What they have is simply an objective religious God in a remote place. Most of them just have God as an object of worship. They just have a religion. But this is not the Bible. The Bible says, "Abide in Me and I in you" (John 15:4). If anyone loves the Lord, the Father and He will go to him not just to have a visit but to make Their abode with him (14:23). Then it says that Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20), and even the more that Christ will make His home in us (Eph. 3:17). Furthermore, he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), God is Spirit (John 4:24), and we are one spirit with Him.

We have a clear picture in the Bible that we are a vessel made in God's shape, God's image, God's likeness, and through Christ passing through so many processes, He has entered into our being and made us one spirit with Him. For what purpose? That we may live Him. He comes into us to be our life, our nature, our disposition, our character, and our living. We need to remember these five things: life, nature, disposition, character, and living. He first becomes our life, and He wants to travel through three things—our nature, our disposition, and our character—to become our living. He needs to become our disposition, our nature, our character, and eventually our living. Life is different from nature, nature is different from disposition, and disposition is different from character. Disposition is something within, and character is something expressed with our disposition. Life implies nature, nature implies disposition, and disposition expresses character. All this added together is just our daily living. According to the Bible, I can say strongly that the Triune God today should be not only our life but also our nature, our disposition, our character—and eventually and ultimately—our living. So we have to live Him.

How could this objective God become our life subjectively? And how could He become our nature not only subjectively but very intrinsically? He becomes our nature, and then He becomes our disposition. I like to see your disposition changing year after year because God is being subjectively and intrinsically added to your disposition.

FOUR STRONG CHARACTERS

In the New Testament we have four strong pictures. We have Paul, Peter, John, and James. These are four big characters. In the four Gospels you could see Peter's old disposition. It was not Peter; it was Simon. But when Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter, you could see a kind of Petrine disposition. It is quite different from Paul's, but both are quite divine. The third is the old apostle John. When he wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, you can hardly find any trace of the old disposition. You just see a kind of disposition that is transformed and becoming very divine. James also has his kind of disposition, which may not be as shiny as John's. They are all precious but in different degrees. It was Paul who said, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). God's desire is to be our life, our nature, our disposition, our character, and our living. Hallelujah! At least God could succeed in these few persons. Not even the angels could deny that God succeeded in Paul, Peter, John, and

James. There are four people with such a history that God became man's life, man's nature, man's disposition, man's character, and man's daily living. How could this be? You must realize that all four of these assimilated God. They absorbed God all their life by two things: by the divine Word and the divine Spirit. Actually, the very subjective God becomes our portion by these two things: the Word and the Spirit.

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Electricity is a good illustration. With a small wireless microphone there are two wires, the antenna and the ground wire. In the Chinese language these are called the heavenly wire and the earthly wire. When these two wires work together, you get the transmission of electricity. Today electricity is still a mystery. Although it is very real, material, and scientific, it is still a mystery. There is at least one point concerning electricity that no one understands. God is even more mysterious than electricity. Although electricity is mysterious, it is very real. Electricity is more than crucial for our daily life. In America almost everything depends upon electricity. It is mysterious, yet it is practical. This is a good illustration of our God. Our God is the pneuma, the Spirit, altogether mysterious yet very practical. How can this mysterious yet practical God be transmitted into our being all the time? By the Word and by the Spirit.

Now we come to the point of how to live Christ all the time. We must be plugged into the contact with these two wires, the Word and the Spirit. We must be kept in contact with these two wires. Although electricity has been installed into this building, if a certain utensil is insulated even by something small, it will receive no electrical current. If we are going to live Christ, we must have ourselves plugged into this current. We must have no insulation at all. There must be no stopping and no ceasing of the current. Now we can understand what it means to pray unceasingly—it is to keep ourselves plugged into that heavenly current. Once we are cut off from the heavenly current, we are through. It does not matter how many years of experience we have in Christ. Although this room may have received electricity for fifty years, once it is insulated, the current is cut off.

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Unceasingly pray." Colossians 4:2 says, "Persevere in prayer." In addition to these expressions Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying at every time." This means praying at every second—not only praying at every hour or every minute but every second. We have already seen

that praying in the Bible is spiritual breathing. Among all the matters that maintain our human life, our breathing never ceases. So the New Testament says to pray unceasingly, pray continually, pray at every time, and pray at every time in spirit. How could we pray all the time? By putting Ephesians 5:17-20 and Colossians 3:16-17 together, we can be clear. These two portions are parallel portions, sister portions. Ephesians says, "Be filled in spirit." No doubt this surely refers to prayer. There is no other way for you to be filled in your spirit. You cannot just sit and think and meditate and be filled in the spirit. You have to pray. To pray is to put more pneuma into you. If I do not pray before I come here to speak, I am like a flat tire with no pneuma within me. I have to pray twenty to thirty minutes. If I pray, constricting my whole being to the spirit, twenty minutes might be sufficient. I get pneumatic, filled with the air, so that when I come to speak, I am not flat. I have some pneuma within me.

Ephesians 5 also says, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord, giving thanks at all times" (vv. 19-20). This word pins us down and exposes us. I believe many among us do not give thanks to God more than ten times a day. If you are a person giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, surely you are a person praying. You are singing, psalming, thanking all the day long. *Hymns*, #308 says, "This is my story, this is my song, / Praising my Savior all the day long." Thousands of Christians have sung this hymn, but few have ever practiced praising their Savior all the day long. Whoever practices praising the Savior all the day long must be the one who lives Christ. The way to live Christ is to praise Him. We have to sing, we have to praise, and we have to psalm. Nearly nobody practices this. Although some may praise their Savior in a gospel campaign, they do not praise Him all the day long.

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." How do you let the word of Christ dwell in you? It should be in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. Then verse 17 says, "Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." The very next verse says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." This is a hard job. For years I have not liked to speak at a wedding. Nearly everyone who speaks at a wedding would say something so sweet, so pleasant, so colorful, and so full of scenery. I do not

like to say this kind of thing because, in some sense, it is a cheating. The marriage life may not be that straight, not that colorful, not that pleasant, not with so many beautiful pictures. So if I were to speak, I might say, “Your wedding is a warning to you, the beginning of lamentation. This is not the beginning of your honeymoon but the beginning of your vinegar week.” Since I realized that nobody likes to hear this kind of word, I did not speak at the weddings. Forty-five years ago I spoke at every wedding and painted a picture so sweet, so pleasant, so joyful, and so beautiful. Eventually, after every wedding I regretted it. Later I still spoke, but I changed my tune. I said you have to realize that marriage is not a thing so happy as you dreamed. Marriage causes you to put your neck into the yoke. I did this a few times and convinced them that my word was right, but in a wedding it is better not to say this, so I made a strong decision that I would not be a performing, acting, wedding, marrying pastor. Mostly I did not go to the weddings. Sometimes when I did go, I would not speak.

You have to realize that in the whole universe the hardest job is to be a wife or to be a husband. It is not that difficult to be a teacher or a nurse or an electrician, but to be a wife needs the whole universe to sustain you. To be a husband is really hard. I have done many things, but not one of them is so hard as being a husband. But what shall I do? I have to be a husband. I have no choice. This is my destiny. So to be a wife you need the Triune God to be in you as your life, your nature, your disposition, your character, and your daily living. If you do not have the Triune God to be your life, nature, disposition, character, and living, you can never be a proper wife. It is the same with the husband. To be a good husband, we need Christ.

Colossians says, “Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God” (3:17). How could we do all things in the name of the Lord? There is no other way but by praising, thanking, and praying. When we do all things in the name of the Lord, that is to live Christ. When you do everything in His name, you have become Him, and He has practically become you. If you are not one with Him, how could you do things in His name? If you do things in His name but are not one with Him, you are cheating people. If you are not one with me, but you do things in my name, you are deceiving people. But if you become me, whatever you do, you do it in my name. This is to live me. The way to live Christ is to plug yourself into the Word, into the prayer, and into the singing, the praising, and the psalming all the day long. If you remain in this plugging, you live Christ.

All day long you need not only to pray-read the Word but also to sing-read the Word. It is not so adequate just to pray-read. You have to sing the Word.

The Psalms were written not mainly for speaking or reading but for psalming and singing. If we only read Psalm 119, that may kill us and tire us out. But if we psalm this psalm, singing it all the day long, the psalming will keep us in that plugging. Spontaneously, the heavenly electrical current will come through us all the day long. So we will just live Christ. An electrical instrument lives electricity. Whatever it does, wherever it moves, it acts electricity. This is the right way; there is no other way. Then you may think, we do not need to do anything; we can stay home and kneel and pray and praise and do nothing. We cannot. God did not ordain it in this way. We have a lot of duties and responsibilities. But we have a good illustration that regardless of how busy we are, we still breathe. While we do things, we breathe. We must build up such a breathing habit. We all need a clear vision; we have to condemn our prayerless life; we have to condemn our praiseless life; we have to condemn our psalmless life; we must have a prayerful life, praiseful life, and psalmful life all the day.

We have the Spirit as the antenna wire and the Word as the ground wire. The antenna wire is in us, in our spirit, and the ground wire is in our hand; we just need to remain here with these two wires. Then we will get the transfusion and the transmission. We will get the permeation and the saturation; then whatever we do, we will do it in His name. This is to live Christ. This is not a kind of teaching and doctrine. This is a little vision with some instruction. It altogether depends upon our daily practice. We must practice continual prayer and continual praising and continual psalming and singing and thanking because we are breathing Him in, making Him our saturation and making ourselves practically one with Him. Spontaneously we will live Christ. This is not a matter of doctrine and teaching but a kind of practice. Everything apart from this is vanity.

The Life-study messages and even the study of the Bible are vanity if you do not practice this. If the Bible remains letters of death killing you, it is vanity. The Bible could be living to you only when you breathe it, when you pray it, when you praise it, when you sing-read it, when you psalm-read it. All the lines of the Holy Writings will become the living God to you, the living pneuma, to you. Then you will get the transmission, the transfusion, the permeation, making Him everything to you and making you one with Him.

Then whatever you say and whatever you do will be Christ. This is to live Christ. You must put this into practice.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LIVING CHRIST BY BEING FILLED WITH THE WORD

We must be clear that any life matter does not depend so much upon knowledge. You may know this and you may know that concerning the matter of life, but knowledge does not work out anything for the matter of life. The matter of life must be something by itself. So regardless of how much we know concerning the spiritual life, if we are off from that life, it means nothing.

TRAPS FRUSTRATING THE LIVING OF CHRIST

Through all the years in the Lord's recovery, the Lord has shown us that His intention is just to be our life that we may live Him. This is simple. You may have heard this for years, yet truthfully I must say that you have not gotten into the habit of living Him. There are many reasons why you have not gotten into the habitual experience of living Christ. Your intention to do certain things may be a reason. You may like a small thing, such as a pair of shoes or a pair of eyeglasses or a ring. These things may have kept you from getting into the experience of habitually living Christ. Although you may realize many reasons that keep you and frustrate you from living Christ, it may be you have not realized some of the reasons that are in the religious field. Anything in the field, the circle, the sphere, the realm, of religion may be a trap. If you are not in your spirit contacting the living Lord through the Spirit and the living word, everything in the so-called Christian religion is a trap.

From my youth, although I did not know anything concerning Christianity, I heard that we have to pray. I still remember when I was around ten years of age, and my second sister was away from home studying at a school. We used to correspond, and my mother helped me compose a simple letter. My mother always told me to conclude the letter with this blessing: "The Lord be with you." I did not know what that meant, but every time I wrote, I concluded with that kind of word. Sometimes I wrote, "The Lord's peace be with you." Who was the Lord? I did not know. What was the peace? I did not know. That was just a religious clause to close the letter. This illustration may help you to know that you have been saying a lot of things and you have been writing a lot of things, including good biblical terms, spiritual terms, and holy terms, yet

those were just terms. You did not really realize what they meant. You were trapped there because you thought you knew what they meant. Actually, you did not know what they meant.

Many Christians pray, but their prayer is a trap. Before I met Brother Nee, when people asked me to pray for them or for their father or for their mother or for this or for that, I was quick to say I would do it. Then I stayed with Brother Nee, and I noticed that a number of people came to him asking him to pray for them. When they asked him to pray for them, he was very cold. He had no expression, no reaction, no response—nothing. I saw this happen not only once but time after time. I was with him for quite a time, and when people came to him, he liked to have me there so that I could see the situation. Old people, young people, pastors, ministers, and sinners asked Brother Nee to pray for them. But he was cold; even he was frozen with no expression. Eventually, through further talk I got to know he had a reason for doing that. He indicated that he could not promise a man that he would pray for him, because prayer was not up to him. It should not be initiated by him. Prayer is up to the Lord. If He initiated, he would pray; he would have no choice. If the Lord did not initiate, then his prayer was something presumptuous and a kind of presumptuous sin. He did not like to have any kind of presumption. By this you can see that many prayers have become a trap to you, trapping you to do something apart from the living One.

The Lord said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5), but actually we can do a lot of things apart from Him. Apart from Him we can pray, we can read the Bible, we can preach the gospel, we can do everything in today’s Christian religion. But all these are done by ourselves, not by the Lord. Some may say that they cannot do miracles apart from Him. Thank God that you cannot do miracles apart from Him! It is wonderful that there is some restriction, that there is something you cannot do. But all the ordinary things you can do, and you have done a lot, yet you never realized that all these are traps used by the enemy to trap you. Do not consider others; consider yourself. Day after day you have been trapped in this thing and in another thing. I do not mean that something worldly or sinful is trapping you. Everything that traps you is quite “Christian.” I would not say spiritual, but anyway these things always trap you. They trap you and keep you away from living Christ. All these things have one goal and one object from the enemy, and that is to keep you from living Christ. Christ’s words in John 15 are so simple: “Abide in Me and I in you...Apart from Me you can do nothing” (vv. 4-5). This word is

so simple, but I can tell you that not even a few are really abiding in this word. You have been trapped from this word. When you pray, do you really abide in Him? When you read the Bible, do you read it abiding in Him? If not, you are trapped. If you are not abiding in Him, prayer is a trap; if you are not abiding in Him, even reading the Bible is a trap.

Many Christians only care for the knowledge of the doctrines; they do not care for the substantial, genuine experience of a living person. I was with the Brethren, who are famous for knowing the doctrines, for many years. All the help I received of them was just knowledge; nearly not one bit was the experience of the living Christ. Then I got the help to experience Christ, and I looked to the Lord that I would surely have the experience of such a living Christ rather than a lot of knowledge that had nothing to do with Him. You can see that the doctrinal knowledge or paying your attention to doctrinal points is a trap. This is my experience.

RELIGIOUS TRAPS

Let me tell you also some of the experience of the Brethren. At the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, it may be that Andrew Murray was one of the top among the inner-life people. He put out a number of very helpful books on life, such as *The Spirit of Christ* and *The Holy of Holies*, a study on Hebrews, and a number of other books. Many Brethren teachers never recommended Andrew Murray. They said that he quoted the Bible and used it in a wrong way. Second Timothy 2:15, concerning cutting straight the word of the truth, is very much used by the Brethren teachers. But if you pay attention only to cutting the word straight, and you do not care for the real experience of the living Christ, you will be trapped. So even to read the Bible, to pay attention to the Bible, to know the Bible, and to collect knowledge from the Bible may be traps.

Today many Christians have been trapped by the charismatic things. Many have been trapped by healing. Some have been trapped by the lengthening of legs and other miracles. You may laugh at them, but how about yourself? You may not practice leg lengthening or healing or other miracles, but you do practice a lot of Christian, religious things, which are small traps to you. Even today a number of you are probably still walking by stepping into traps. Everywhere you step is a little trap. Your prayer is a trap; your reading of the Bible is a trap. If you say, though, “I would give up the prayer; I would give up the Bible reading,” even your giving up of these things is a trap.

This is the problem today. Many Christians have gotten trapped in Christian, religious, biblical things. Actually, to live Christ is very simple. The most simple thing is life, but at the same time life is the most complicated thing. No one can finish the study of the science of life. It is too complicated. To study life for the sake of knowledge is very complicated, but for experience it is very simple. Even a little baby can live. After being conceived, a little baby can live even before it is born. To live is easy. We have never taught any child to breathe, yet right away after birth they breathe. To live is simple. Why is it so hard to live Christ today? Because we all have been trapped, entangled, wrapped up, and bound with so many "Christian" things.

In this Perfecting Training I have been speaking for at least three months on living Christ. I realize that some of you are really bothered and puzzled. The more I speak, the more you are puzzled. I must say that I do not bear the blame. In my speaking I am trying my best to untie you. You have been tied by this and by that because you have picked up a lot of things. Tonight I would like to repeat a word: you had better let everything go. This is the best way—let everything go. Just remember that our Triune God desires to be your life, He desires to live in you and with you, and He desires that you will just take Him as your life and live Him. In a sense you have to forget what is prayer, what is Bible reading, what is this and what is that. Just remember that God wants to live in you, and He wants you to take Him as life and live Him. Today you have to consider where He is and what He is. When you come to this matter, you have to forget about the so-called systematic theology. You have to realize that our God, our Savior, after all, is just the Spirit. He is in the heavens, but He is also within me and within you.

THE ENJOYMENT OF THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE SPIRIT

Titus 2:13 says, "Awaiting the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Here, four titles, *our great God*, *Savior*, *Jesus,* and *Christ* are compounded together to be a long title—*our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.* Through the centuries Christian teachers began to debate concerning this verse. Even up to this day the problem has not been settled. Out of so many debates two schools came. One school says that this title indicates two persons: our great God, that is, the Father, and our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son. The other school says that this title indicates that Jesus Christ is both our great God and our Savior. Even the authorities on the Greek New Testament disagree on this point. Henry Alford stands with

the first school, whereas M. R. Vincent follows the second. Vincent says that the verse should have a comma after *Savior*: "The great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus." This means that Christ Jesus is both the great God and our Savior. The Concordant Version, the Wuest translation, and the New American Standard Version all put a comma in that place.

Concerning the Trinity, many like to systematize the Father away from the Son and to systematize the Son away from the Father. But the Bible does not systematize this way. The Bible says, "Our Savior God." In 1 Timothy and Titus this title has been used six times (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10, 13; 3:4). When J. N. Darby interpreted this term, he called it "Savior-God," with a hyphen between *Savior* and *God*. The point is: He is our God; He is our Savior; He is Jesus Christ; He is the Lord; He is the Spirit. We need to make it so simple. The Berkeley Version of the Bible says that our Savior is not only Christ but God Triune. This is good. However it goes on to say God Triune represented by Christ. We can agree with the first part but not with the second. In the Triune God there is no representation. How could the Son represent the Father? How could the Father be represented by the Son? Our Savior God is not only Christ but God Triune embodied in Christ as indicated in Titus 2:13, which has this long, compound divine title *our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. Do not fall into the snare of the so-called systematic theology. They only care for theology, but we care for the living *Theos*. We do not care for the "-ology." We only love and treasure and appreciate the living *Theos*, the living person of the living God who is triune.

You do not need to ask, Is this the Father? Is this the Son? Who is the Savior God? Who is the God Savior? No! On His side the Triune God is for dispensing, and on our side He is for enjoyment. Even we do not need to say that we do not have an objective God but a subjective God. This too is a kind of theology. Today Christianity has made the experiential God absolutely an objective object for worship. Their God is altogether objective. They do not care a bit for the experiential enjoyment of God. To them there should not be verses such as, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21), or "It is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). There should not be verses like John 15:4 and 5, which say for us to abide in Him and He in us. Some have even said that to abide in Christ and to let Christ abide in us simply indicates a kind of intimate relationship. Because they insist that Christ is there high in the heavens, they ask, How could you abide in Him? And how could He abide in you? He is so far away, and this is just an intimate expression indicating how close you and

He are. This is their interpretation; they just annul these verses in the Bible. Yet they like to speak in tongues. This is not logical. If you ask them what kind of Spirit they have received, they cannot tell you explicitly. Three hundred years ago people spoke of the Spirit as a kind of instrument, a kind of power, a kind of channel. Today, because they have more scriptural knowledge, most of them would not say this. But it is so strange! They would say that the Spirit is upon them, yet God Himself is not there. They would say that the Spirit is upon them, yet Christ is not there. Then, of course, they use the word *represent*, saying that the Spirit represents the Father and the Son.

When John 14:9 says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," they say that this is a kind of representation. Why? They annul all the experiential enjoyment of the Triune God. So whenever we apply these verses to our experiential enjoyment, they say it is heresy. They say we are making ourselves God, that we are deifying ourselves into God. For them to speak in this way indicates blindness. Today a line has been drawn between dead, theological, historical Christianity and the living Christians. We should not be bothered by all these things. We should only remember that our God today is the Triune God who has passed through all the necessary processes, and today He is so ready for us to enjoy Him. He is a ready God, a processed God. He is the Spirit. Now the Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). Then they argue that the Lord in 2 Corinthians 3 is not Jesus Christ but God the Lord. But according to the text of 2 Corinthians 3 and 4, *the Lord* refers to Christ. This problem comes from the source of systematic theology. Jesus Christ is the Lord, and the Lord today is the Spirit who gives life (3:6).

We need to forget about the theological talk and simply remember that He wants us to take Him as life, and He wants us to live Him, and today He is the Spirit. He passed through creation and through incarnation, He lived on this earth, He passed through crucifixion, and He entered into resurrection. In His resurrection He is the Spirit, and the Spirit must be the Holy Spirit who gives life. Do not be trapped into caring for the knowledge; just care for the experience of life.

ENJOYING THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE WORD

I would stress again that for us to realize and to touch the solid and concrete substance of the divine element, He has given us the Bible, the Word. You must realize that the Word is divine, and the Word is a very particular writing. It is the condensation of the breathing of God. This is why you do not

need to exercise your mind, your mentality, so much. Of course, you need your mind, but you have to realize that the Bible is not a kind of human, secular, worldly writing. It is the very condensation of God's divine breath. So you must love Him, and you must love His Word, not in a way of knowledge but in a seeking and living way.

Remember these three points: First, God wants you to take Him as life and live Him. Second, He is now the Spirit, and third, He is the very Word as well. When you apply these two to your experience, you will find that they are one. The Word and the Spirit are one (John 6:63). When this wonderful One gets into you, that is the Spirit. When this wonderful One remains outside of you, it is the Word. But these two are one. Do not consider that the Bible is something separate from the Spirit. They are just one. It is somewhat like your body and your physical life. Your physical life and your body are just one; you cannot separate them. If you separate your body from your physical life, your body will become a carcass. If you separate the Bible from the Spirit, the Bible is just a dead body. This is what the Bible calls the letter (2 Cor. 3:6). *The letter* means the dead writings. We must keep these two one in our experiential enjoyment of our God.

Because the Bible is a writing, you need to read it. But from Psalm 119, Ephesians 5 and 6, and Colossians 3, I have been deeply and strikingly impressed that to touch the Word of God in the way of reading is just the initial step. You can never finish anything just by taking the initial step. The initial step is just the initiation; you need to keep on. What are the following steps? You must sing; you must pray; you must psalm; you must thank the Lord all the time. In addition to your reading, you must exercise the prayer, the singing, the psalming, and the thanking. Reading is only one part of these five. In the past we were out of proportion because we made our reading too big. Reading is the initial step; then it should be followed by praying. Then it should be followed by singing, by psalming, and by thanking. All these are in the Bible. In all three of the above portions, the word *read* is not used. But in our mentality and on our lips there is nothing but *read*. However, in these few chapters a lot of other predicates are used for the touching of the living word. How many different predicates are used in Psalm 119! Ephesians and Colossians say that we need to receive the word of God by means of all prayer and petition, even praying at every time.

THE NEED OF PRACTICE

Do not take this word just as a message. I do not like to see all these things taken as a kind of doctrine. This is not a mere doctrine. If you do not practice these things, you are wasting your time coming to this Perfecting Training. You must practice these things. Do not pray for other things; pray the Word. I surely hope that we all could pray through these four books: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Then not only pray through them but sing through them. Then you can psalm. Psalming does not need much of a melody for singing. You can psalm with your own tune and even with all kinds of irregular tunes. You will see what will come out. There will be a sweet and strengthened receiving of the divine element. Then we need to practice thanking through the Word. If we all would practice praying the Word, singing the Word, psalming the Word, and thanking through the Word, the church life will be much uplifted.

This is a direct word. Just these three or four things are worthy to talk about: First, our God today wants us to live Him. Second, He is the Spirit. Third, He is the Word. Last, He wants us to take Him in through the Word and the Spirit by praying, by singing, by psalming, and by thanking. We all can testify that when we pray in our spirit, we get the infusion of the divine element, of light, of life, of love, of sanctification, of all the divine things we need. When you sing, that is a real musing upon the Word. To muse upon the Word is not just to have a deep consideration or a deep apprehension of the Word. To muse is to enjoy the Word. The best way to muse upon the Word is to sing. A deeper musing is psalming. Psalming even gives you more enjoyment than singing. Thanking may be considered as a kind of conclusion. You must pray, you must sing, you must psalm, and eventually you must give thanks to our God.

LIVING CHRIST

If we would practice this all the day long, we would not need to talk about living Christ; spontaneously we would live Christ. If we do not practice singing the Word, praying the Word, psalming the Word, and thanking the Lord for the Word, yet we try to live Christ, we will find it impossible. I hope we all could realize that this is crucial. We must practice this. It does not matter how much you know. But if you will practice this, you will be fully infused, saturated, and even permeated with the Triune God. This is being one spirit with the Lord. When you are infused and permeated with Him, you are actually one with Him, and you are practically one spirit with Him. So

whatever you do, that is to live Christ. Whatever you do, you spontaneously do it in Him. You do it in His name, and that is not you; that is He. Because you have been fully saturated with Him, He surely becomes you, just like you become Him. This is to live Christ. This is what the New Testament terms *in Christ* and *Christ in you* mean. Do you think the words *in Christ* and *Christ in you* are just a kind of terminology? What do these mean? For many years I was bothered by these kinds of expressions. When you practice these matters, you will experience the real fact that you are in Him and that He is in you. It will not be just a kind of expression or terminology; it will be a kind of real experience. You will really experience that you are in Him and He is in you. You need to contact and receive Him and be saturated with Him and enjoy Him. Then you will live Him.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

OUR HABITUAL LIVING VERSUS LIVING CHRIST

Prayer: Thank You for Your mercy that we all have been brought into You—into Your mercy. Lord, we have to be all the time in Your mercy. Thank You, Lord, that it is Your mercy that brought us here. Even, Lord, we have been preserved in Your recovery. Oh, it is altogether by Your mercy! We have no trust in anything else. Lord, even we do not deserve Your grace. But, Lord, there is such a mercy that bridges the gap, that brings us into Your grace. Lord, we trust in Your mercy. We say again, it is altogether a matter of mercy. And You will have mercy upon whom You will have mercy. Thank You, Lord, You have chosen us to be the object of Your mercy. We stand on this standing to meet together to look unto You for Your mercy. Have mercy upon us all tonight. We need some further mercy, Lord. The whole situation among the Christians is just pitiful. Oh, what we need is Your mercy. Oh, do bridge the gap with Your mercy! Thank You, Lord, You are the merciful God. You are full of mercy. Amen. Amen.

I feel that I should speak a very direct and very practical word to you. This training is not merely for doctrine or for knowledge or for anything else but for the practical experience of Christ and of the church. In the last meeting we pointed out that all the Christian doings and practices have become a kind of trap. Bible reading has become a trap; even prayer has become a trap. Everything has become a trap. Why? Because all these things have distracted us from the living of this living person, Christ. God's intention is nothing but for us to live Christ. God's intention in this universe is so simple and so central—it is for us to live Christ. If you have really seen this vision in such a simple way, you will begin to hate everything else. Whether it is good or bad, you will hate it because it is not to live Christ. Ever since I got this vision concerning the living of Christ, I have been very much bothered. In a good sense I have peace with the Lord, and I have a lot of enjoyment with Him, yet in another sense I have been bothered because I have discovered that I do not live Christ that much. I have labored for the Lord, for the Word, and for the churches, but I could not say with much confidence that this was living Christ. I surely have discovered that to live Christ is one thing, and to labor for Him

is another thing. To live Christ is just to live Christ. God has no intention simply to do a work.

Most Christians misinterpret Acts 1:8, which reads, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Yes, the Lord did say go from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth. This was not, however, to do a work but to be His witnesses. The Lord never charged us to do a work; rather, He charged us to be His witnesses. According to the Bible, to be His witnesses is just to live Him. If you do not live Him, how could you be His witness? Of course, many Christians’ interpretation is that it means to preach the gospel. But here is the snare. To change the wording from being a witness to preaching the gospel is a snare.

I have gotten bothered that I do not live Christ that much. I have the confidence and boldness to tell people according to my pure conscience that I do not love sin, I do not love the world, and I do not even love myself. I do believe the Lord can testify for me. Yet I do not have the confidence to say that I am living Christ. This bothers me.

During the time of this Perfecting Training I also have been bothered by another point: how to live Christ. I have discovered that I need to live Christ and that I do not live Christ that much, but thus far I do not know the way to live Christ. You have to permit me to say that I am not a young man or someone who knows nothing of the Bible. I have passed through all kinds of Christianity. From my early childhood I saw all the things in organized Christianity. I saw how the Western pastors did things, and I saw how the native Chinese pastors did things. As a little boy, I saw how they celebrated Christmas and how the Western pastors and missionaries celebrated the Chinese New Year. As small boys, we went to see that, and we got some candy. I saw the Sunday school, and I saw all the different kinds of practices in organized Christianity. I saw how they were fighting, and I also saw how they were united in a falsehood. I even joined in a kind of Christianity march where all the denominations joined together to march and sing “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

Furthermore, I passed through fundamental Christianity. For seven and a half years I was under the fundamental Brethren education. Then I got into

the inner-life matters. I read through a lot of inner-life books. I had many experiences, and I was there for quite a period of time. Even today I would not leave this inner-life field. Then I also got involved with Pentecostal Christianity. Finally, I got into the Lord's recovery. For forty-eight years I have been involved in these things, and I have been observing these things. In July 1932 we had the first Lord's table meeting in my mother's living room.

I passed through all these things, but I was never told by anyone how to live Christ. I read many books on "how to," but not one book was on how to live Christ. So over the years I got so much doctrine and knowledge, but now I have been brought to a crucial point; that is, God wants us to live Christ. We could do a lot of things yet still not be living Christ. As long as we do not live Christ, whatever we do means nothing in the eyes of God. I surely agree that in one sense God is sovereign. God even uses Satan. Even Paul used Satan. Paul said he delivered an evil man to Satan for Satan to do something (1 Cor. 5:5). Furthermore, God used Satan to perfect Job. Some would ask: Is it not good enough that people go to the mission field to bring the name of the Lord to the heathen? Is it not good that someone would sacrifice their country, their family—everything—to tell heathen people the name of Jesus? I surely would say that is good. However, there is a big "but." But God's desire is for us to live Christ. According to the light I have received, I simply could not do anything else. Especially within the last two years I have been much strengthened and charged, confirmed, and even forced to this point. Even if today you offered me the biggest Christian work, I would have no interest in it, because I have surely seen something of what God wants. What God wants is just for you and me to live Christ.

HOW TO LIVE CHRIST

In the last few months I have been bothered for a further step, that is, how to live Christ. No doubt while I have been so seeking, the Lord has answered His promise that if we seek, we will find (Matt. 7:7). Recently, I have told you that the first way to live Christ is that you have to pray before doing anything. Second, I also discovered that you have to continue your prayer. While you are doing certain things, you have to pray. Third, we have seen that we must practice a kind of breathing prayer. We have to make our prayer a matter of breathing. This means that we have to pray unceasingly; we have to pray continually.

Fourth, I also shared with you that we have to get into the Word not only by reading and not only by praying but also by singing, psalming, and thanking. You must get into the Word because the Holy Bible is God's word, God's breath. It is even the consolidation of God's breathing. Do not get into the Word like a scholar or a student, but get into the Word to pray-read it, to sing it, to psalm it, and to thank God all the time through it. I believe all these give us the way to live Christ. Although our experiences in these matters may be limited and shallow, yet we can testify that this is the right way to live Christ. When we pray-read, when we sing, when we psalm, when we thank God for the Word, we have the inner conviction that we are really one with the living One. At that time we really get some fresh air into our inner being. Every day I need about one hour's exercise, either to walk or to do this or that. Otherwise, I could not sleep well. But by exercising I breathe, and it refreshes me. In the same way when you pray-read the Word, when you sing the Word, when you psalm the Word, and you thank God for the Word, you get the fresh air into your inner being.

OUR HABITUAL LIVING

In the last meeting we saw that many Christian practices become a trap to keep us from living Christ. Now I would mention a further thing that keeps us from living Christ and is a kind of current that carries us away unconsciously and subconsciously. We may be able to avoid stepping into a trap, but we are simply in the current. When the current flows, we are carried away. What is the current that unconsciously and subconsciously carries us away from living Christ? It is our habitual living. In our daily life we live according to habit, and this habit is a current carrying us away from living Christ. Although we know we need to pray and we need to sing, still we do not practice these things that much. Our habitual living frustrates us from practicing these matters. We have to see that our habit of not living Christ is even sinful.

When a married couple sits down to eat, they nearly always talk in a habitual way. Sometimes they may have some good news or bad news to talk about, but at other times they may hunt for some material to talk about. They may talk about a brother's new suit or a sister's testimony in the meeting. This is a kind of trend. Unconsciously and subconsciously, all the day long we are living in a trend. Years ago I learned that there is a kind of lust to know things about others. This is evil. If we have learned the real spiritual lessons, we would not like to know things concerning others. To know things concerning

others always kills us and always damages others. It does not help, and it does not build up. When I come to your home, I do not like to look around. I do not like to look at your kitchen or your bedroom or your closet. I have learned that this is a temptation. To want to know how many suits someone has and what color they are is an evil, lustful desire. Many Christians today and even many among us have not been delivered from this desire. This is why so much death has been carried on and on. It is because we have gotten to know too many things about others. If I never get to know anything about you, I could never carry out any death.

When we sit down together, whether as a husband and wife or as brothers with brothers or as sisters with sisters, we must be alert not to speak things, to talk of things, and to do things in a habitual way. Recently, when I have wanted to talk about some brothers or some churches, I have been stopped. The question came to me: why talk about this? This is just your habit. Why do you not pray? Why would you talk about that church? Why would you not pray? To talk about things, to talk about certain persons, to talk about certain churches, is our habit. I do not mean that we criticize others. We may talk about others in a nice way, but still it is just a habit. Why not spend that time pray-reading the Word? Why not spend that time singing or praying? Do not talk about the things that you do not need to talk about.

By this you can see that we have wasted and misused our time by our habit. We say that we do not have time to pray, but we all agree that we have a lot of time to talk. Consider how much time you use daily for talking. You talk concerning that sister being weak and that brother being sick and that church not being good and another church being pitiful. You do not need to talk about these matters; you need to pray for them. You do not need to tell people that a certain church is pitiful; even you do not need to say that a certain church is wonderful. Why do you need to talk about it? I do not mean that we always are talking in a way of evil gossip. Even if we talk about things in a so-called holy way, it may be a waste. It may be just a habit. For you and me to talk is very easy, but for us to stop talking and to pray is very difficult. Why? Because a habit has been built up. Even today we are still living in that habit unconsciously and subconsciously. This means that we are in a trend, a current. This is a crucial point. God wants us just to live Christ, but we like to do this, and we like to do that. All the Christian practices become a trap to us. We have a kind of living that has altogether become a habit to us. In this habit we do a lot of things habitually without any thought. We just talk

spontaneously. We need to be bothered by this matter, and we need the Lord's mercy. We need the Lord's mercy to rescue us from anything of our habit. We have to hate our entire habit, not only our bad habit. It is not that we simply need to hate a drinking habit or a smoking habit or a gossiping habit; we need to be rescued from our habitual living. Our habitual living is the biggest frustration to living Christ. Our habitual living is a kind of trend, a kind of current, a kind of downhill current, carrying us away from Christ unconsciously.

When we come together, we do not have the habit to sing. Our singing is altogether formal, not habitual. Habitually, you simply ask about a brother's wife or children, or you discuss a certain word of fellowship that a brother gave in a previous meeting. This is just habitual talk. Ever since I have been bothered concerning the matter of living Christ, and since I have seen some light concerning this matter, when I hear this kind of habitual talk, I am disgusted. When we come together, why do we not have the habit to pray-read? If we just pray-read two minutes, how good it would be! Let us pray-read John 1:1 even for half a minute. Do you really have that much concern in your asking about that brother's wife and children? Actually you do not; you just ask habitually. Eventually, that is a kind of hypocrisy. Do you really have a loving concern? I am afraid you are just talking habitually. Based upon this you can see how much time has been wasted day after day by our habitual living.

How could we give up our habitual living? We need the Lord's mercy. On the one hand, to see some practical light in this way is a pleasant thing, but on the other hand, it is not a pleasant thing. This is why the Lord said we have to weep and we have to mourn (Matt. 5:4). Look at the present situation among Christians. Who is living Christ? Not only among the denominations but even among us, how little we live Christ! It is altogether a pitiful situation. How much has the Lord gained for His purpose even among us? I am afraid not much. We know a lot, yet we do not live Christ that much. So we need the mercy of the Lord. Only one thing is true, that is, to live Christ.

To live Christ requires us to drop everything, and the hardest thing for us to drop is our habitual living. Do not think this means that we need to be a mental case. I do believe that the more we give up our habitual living, the more we will be sober. Many times we are not sober; we are just habitual. Many times the things we do are a waste of our time because of our habitual

living; that is not sober. If we would drop our habitual living and gird up our loins (1 Pet. 1:13), we would be sober. In our home we would sing and pray, and when we see each other and come together, we would sing, pray-read, and psalm together. We all have to admit that nearly every day we are committing a kind of unconscious sin in our habitual living. Hardly any of our habitual living is something that God wants us to do. We simply do it unconsciously; we do it subconsciously. We just do it because that is our habit. I feel that this is a very practical word. If we would drop our habitual living, all the sinful things would be gone; all the negative things would be gone. No time would be wasted. To redeem the time (Eph. 5:16) is mainly to drop the habitual living. If we do not drop our habitual living, every bit of our habitual living is a waste of time. But if we do, then spontaneously we will be persons praying unceasingly, praising our Savior all the day long. If we become persons like this, we will not waste our time.

Also we will be so simple. The more we live Christ, the more we become simple. What I mean by being simple is that we do not know anything concerning anyone or any church or anything; we only know Christ. Many among us know too much concerning others. They are like an information desk. If you want to know something concerning a certain brother, you go to that desk, and you can get the full information. But if you would drop your habitual living, you would not know anything about any brothers or any churches. Then you would never spread any death. You would never pass on any rumor. You would never be involved with any gossip.

But the point is this: you have been carried away from living Christ by your habitual living. This is the problem. We all can testify that many days in the morning we had a good time in prayer. But right after the prayer we came to breakfast, and our habitual living began. And this caused trouble. Later in the morning and at noon we endeavored to have another time to contact the Lord. After that we went back to the habitual living. Later during the day, we endeavored to have another time to be with the Lord. We did this many times day after day. What caused us this trouble? Our habitual living. We do not condemn it, and we do not hate it. What wasted our time? Our habitual living. I hope that we all may see a vision concerning this matter and that we would pray, “Lord, have mercy upon me and deliver me from my habitual living. Lord, I do not like to have one wasted word out of my mouth. I do not like to live a habitual life. I want to live a life of being watchful and on the alert

minute after minute. I want to watch and pray with no idle word, no wasted word, no unnecessary word, coming out of my mouth."

For many years I have been ministering the Word to God's people, yet I must confess I was there still so much in the habit. I do not mean in a bad habit. I must boast to you that for over fifty years I have not had any bad habit. But I have a lot of habits that have wasted my time. We all must stand up against our habitual living. Stand up against your habit. Rise up against your habit. You must do this in order to be emancipated and released from your imprisonment. Your habitual living is a strong imprisonment.

This applies even to functioning in the meeting. Have you noticed that through all the years the functioning ones are the functioning ones, and the unfunctioning ones are the unfunctioning ones? Sometimes in the prayer meeting we know who will pray tonight and who will not pray. You must realize that probably those who do not pray do not pray out of habit. It is their habit not to pray. Even with those who do pray, it may be only half spiritual and half habit.

Our meeting is not that normal because the brothers' habits are there and the sisters' habits are there. The Texas brothers have their habit, the California brothers have their habit, and some particular ones have their particular habit. I do not like to offend you or hurt your feelings, but this is our situation. When you come to the meeting, you do not like to be bothered. You just come to the meeting in your habit. If a brother says, "You need to function," you feel he is forcing you to do something. This is a matter of your disposition. Disposition, character, and habit are three demons forming one company. They are the board members of one company. This is the executive committee of your being. You are under this administration of your disposition, your character, and your habit. So we have to rise up against these three things.

In the Northeast there is a clear summer and winter season. I notice that sometimes certain brothers and sisters also have seasons. When some brothers are in the winter season, no one can open their mouth. They are absolutely frozen. They become a frozen port. After this winter season is over, though, summer may come, and they get very excited. Then they have not only a loud mouth, but they seem to have twelve mouths. This is all habitual.

My point is this: the habitual living carries us away from living Christ. We fail to live Christ not because we are sinful but because of our habitual living. The most striking item of our habitual living is our talk. If, by His mercy, we would be delivered from our talk, we would be mostly delivered from our habitual living. This is not a kind of doctrine or theology. This is a discovery that has come to me through much pain. Now I am fully occupied by one thing, by one burden, that is, to live Christ. Through all the years my ministry has been to minister something concerning Christ for the church life, yet it has been even more so in these past two years. No doubt, the Lord has zeroed in on this one point of living Him. If we do not live Christ, although we may minister Christ to people for the church life, there will not be much reality. The church life will not be that rich, that strong, or that uplifted.

We need this focal point—to live Christ. If we are going to pray, if we are going to sing, if we are going to psalm unceasingly, if we are going to pray continually and daily, we must be delivered from our habitual living. We need a great amount of mercy for this. Be assured that one day the Lord will open your eyes, and you will see a wide gap, a deep gap, that only mercy can bridge. You have gotten to know a lot concerning the spiritual things, yet you are still living in your habit. To pray, to sing, and to psalm are still something formal and not habitual to you. We must have a kind of life that lives Christ habitually. Our habit must not be to talk but to pray. Our habit must be to sing and psalm and thank the Lord. These things must be built into the fibers of our being so that they become habitual. But today the opposite is true. All other things are habitual, and these things are formal.

We need morning watch, but morning watch is not something habitual to us. It is still a kind of formal thing to us. Habitual living does not need any practice. As a wife, you do not need practice to talk to your husband. It is simply habitual. But to pray-read, to sing, and to thank are not habitual to us. A husband or a wife would never have the consciousness to say, “Let us talk.” But they may say, “Let us pray,” or “Let us pray-read.” Why? It is because it is formal. This is a kind of demonic, subtle thing. It is unconscious and spontaneous. It kills you from living Christ. We do not live Christ that much mostly because of our habitual living. I hope that one day our spiritual living will be habitual so that we do not need to practice. We will not need to say, “Let us pray-read.” We will simply pray-read. We will not need to say, “Let us pray. Let us sing.” We will simply pray and sing. Praying and singing will become habitual. From these examples we can see how little we live Christ.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

UNLOADED TO LIVE CHRIST

In this meeting we need four brothers who will represent all the attendants and tell us three things: First, what real help have you received from the Perfecting Messages? Second, in what aspect has your Christian life been improved by these messages? Third, what kind of further help do you need, if anything?

First brother: To be honest I would say that the change in my life in the last ten months has been as significant as when I first came into the Lord's recovery. During these last ten months, something has definitely happened to me, and I really feel that it is directly related to the Perfecting Training. When we began the Perfecting Training in January, we were in the midst of building our meeting hall, and the Lord was so faithful that I should experience an environment where He could definitely and directly touch me. When we were on the matter of opinion, I was also experiencing being full of opinion concerning the meeting hall. Those were not easy months, probably because of me. I was totally unaware of how opinionated I am until we had those meetings. In many meetings it was difficult for me to look up because the Lord was touching me directly, and it was hard. The light was there. Outside the meetings I had a corresponding experience with the brothers while we were building the meeting hall. When definite decisions had to be made, my whole inner being many times just got exposed. The Lord was faithful in those months, and I would say that the basic help I got was to see my real situation. I would say that I was a blind person. Eventually, I went to the brothers, telling them that I was blind and that I needed help. I really needed to be opened up more. I need what is being shared in the meetings. I need mercy. I do not think I ever had such a sensation before we began to have these Perfecting Meetings.

Concerning the improvement in my Christian life, I would say that because of these Perfecting Meetings, I have gone to the Lord in a definite way, and the Lord has really touched the way I was living. I would say that the Lord has shown me that I was simply living in myself a lot. When I would have an opinion, I felt that it was simply living in myself a lot. When I would have an opinion, I felt that it was the right opinion. And even though

many times I realized I had to drop it, it took the Lord some time. But in these last months something in me has been more opened up just to want the Lord. I really do not want to be stuck or closed.

Finally, I feel that what the Lord has been speaking to me is that I need the Body. The more we have talked about living Christ, the more I feel a need for the corporate side. I need more building up. The more I open to Christ to live Christ, the more I see the need for the Body and for the brothers. Many times in these months I have experienced that there is no way to get through, even on these matters of living Christ, without going to the Body. I have more consciousness not only of my need for the Body but also of how much the Lord has a need. I never before realized how much we can be in a routine, how we can go through so many things, even having a pleasant and comfortable church life. Although we are happy here, still the Lord needs something. I feel as if I am in the middle of a change. I would not say that I have by any means arrived, but something has been put into me to pursue. I feel that the Philippians training was a kind of concentrated dose of what we had been receiving in the Perfecting Training, and it opened my eyes even more to the matter of culture. Through some circumstances and certain situations, I realized how much I am living in my upbringing, my background, and how easy it is to stay there. It is good, it is upright, it is proper, but it is not Christ. I also saw a brother at that time who was very similar to me, but who is no longer in the recovery simply because he would not drop his culture, his good opinion, his right way. His leaving shocked me. This helped wake me up to see that if the Lord does not get through, we are in serious trouble. I could be here many years in the church life, apparently so good, apparently doing fine, but inwardly my constitution is not really Christ. This is a serious problem. I would say that my desperation since that time has definitely increased; if there is any kind of change in me, it may be a change in desperation. Within me has been a kind of cry, "Lord, get through in me. For Your Body's sake, get through in me. For Your recovery on this earth, for what You are doing, get through in me." I realize that the Lord has so much that He desires, that He is after, but if I am not living Him, what can He do, and where can He go? If we in the Lord's recovery are not in this kind of way, what can He do?

Second brother: Before we started the Perfecting Training, I remember thinking that I was doing better than I had ever been doing before. Then right away in the first meeting you shared with us that you realized

something among us needed to be operated on. I was very surprised at this. I had a kind of feeling that everything was all right until I came to the Perfecting Training. Then I gradually began to realize that everything was not all right, but that there were problems with many things. These times of sharing concerning culture and opinion and habitual living have caused me to go to the Lord in a way of genuinely opening to the Lord that He would have mercy upon me. I would say that the main help I have gotten from the Perfecting Training is a kind of awakening spiritually to realize how much genuine experience of Christ I do not have. I cannot believe that I was so blind before, thinking that I had so much when I had so little. I would say that these meetings have given me a real awakening and awareness and also a real desperation that I would be one who lives Christ, that I would not be caught by so many things. This has become practical to the point that many times the Lord comes to me in my daily living and points out things that are my habitual living or that are my opinions. So I have an awareness and even a pressure arising from within that will not let me get by with simply living myself in such an easy manner.

As far as what change I have experienced in my Christian living, I would just say that this kind of desperation has produced in me more of a willingness to go along with the Lord. It has caused me to see how short my real consecration to the Lord is, and it has given me a willingness to go along with the Lord. I cannot say that I go along with the Lord so much; many times I see that I just choose myself; I love myself; I love my habit. But there is an increasing desperation that makes me go along with the Lord more and to go to the Lord more.

As to the further help I need, I do feel a real need that something within needs to be broken down or shined upon. I do not know what it is, but I feel a real need not simply to live Christ myself but to be able to flow and to be so genuinely open and free with other brothers. I feel a real blockage within me. This may be something purely personal, but I feel a real need to be genuinely and freely open to flow, to fellowship, to be mingled with the brothers, and I would say even with people in general, even the unsaved. I feel a real lack in this way. I would say this would be the further help I would ask for.

Third brother: I would say the thing that has helped me most is to see that I do not live Christ. Even I do not have the desire to seek to live Christ. I can honestly say that when every subject was brought up, I was wide open, and I received it as light and as help. When the matter of culture was shared, I

realized that my whole being was culture. When peculiarity was shared, I felt that I am just peculiar. Truthfully, I can say that if you take these items away—culture, habit, and peculiarity—there is not much left of me. I feel that this is really the case. As to the change I have experienced, there are some practices. I go to the Lord more often during the day. I notice that I relate to brothers in more of a relaxed way. There is not a tenseness that things must be according to what I feel is the right way. I am more relaxed. And perhaps there is some dealing with my peculiarity. But I feel that it is simply a small outward change. There is not much of an inward fundamental change. The help that I would like to get is a fundamental change. Sometimes the lid on a jar will not come off although it may move a little bit. I would like to get the help to completely take the lid off. I do not know what form it may come in, but I am open to the help. I feel that corporately we must take the step. Personally I am willing to take this step for a fundamental change. I cannot say why, but I still feel unsatisfied. I would like to get the lid open.

Fourth brother: For me to share how the Perfecting Meetings have helped me, I need to share a little of my history as a Christian and in the church. For a good number of years in the recovery I had a great deal of confidence in my experience of Christ. I felt that I was enjoying the Lord and that I could go on with the Lord in a strong way. I do not think that I was ever fully pleased with my Christian life, but I felt very confident in it, and I felt that I was growing into the proper Christian life and church life. But as I went on, things began to happen, and I began to have the experience of more frustration and to have a sense that I was letting the Lord down, letting the brothers down, and not really going on in an adequate way. As time went on, I felt that it was getting harder and harder to live Christ. Eventually, I felt that I simply could not live Christ.

A few years ago a brother asked me whether we should worry if we are not in the Lord's presence in our daily life. At that point I thought it was impossible, and I even told him that I did not feel I could really be in the Lord's presence during my daily life. I just felt so frustrated. In the meetings I would hear a word, and I would realize that I should experience Christ in my daily life, but the more I tried, the more I was frustrated. Eventually, I despaired in this matter of living Christ. I enjoyed the church life to a certain extent, but it seemed that there was a problem with a kind of double standard. I lived a certain kind of life during the day, but when I got

together with the saints, I turned to the spirit. This made things very difficult. Although my church life in the past few years has improved greatly, I still have this problem, and I really have thought that it could not be resolved. I felt that I knew the ropes, and I had gone to the limit of my experience, and now I was simply going to hang on and hope for the Lord's coming. This was basically my situation when the Perfecting Training started. Every time Brother Lee brought up the matter of living Christ, although I wanted to be open to the ministry and trust the ministry as much as I could, I felt as though I had tried this before. I felt frustrated. I knew that I could enjoy the Lord with the brothers, but I did not see a way to live Christ in my daily life. I knew that I was not living Christ in my daily life, but who was? So basically I had to reconcile these two sides and still go on in the church life. I felt that I could not live Christ, but maybe a few others could. Then the Perfecting Training began, and Brother Lee once more brought out the matter of living Christ. I just could not see any way. Then he began to point out all the shortcomings—the peculiarities, the opinions—and it was torture to me because everything he said was exactly my case. All my shortcomings were brought out, and I began to despair. I had thought I was doing pretty well, but then I found out I was doing terribly. What would I say at the judgment seat of Christ? My idea of the condition of my Christian life had been destroyed. I had thought I was doing well, but I was not. I did not know how to get out of this.

Then, of course, Brother Lee began to share on the positive side of living Christ, and by the second or third meeting, I finally was convinced that it was possible to live Christ. It seemed as if the heavens opened to me. I was not sure that I could do it, but at least I finally realized that this was something we should do and something we should aspire to. I was overjoyed because even if I failed, at least this was something to aspire to. This was the biggest help I have received—that God does want us to live Christ, that my Christian life is not adequate, and that I need to aspire to live Christ.

As to my practice, as the weeks went on, I became more and more encouraged about living Christ, and I really feel that this has made a difference. If I were discouraged and did not think that I could live Christ, I would not even try. To my surprise, as I began to open to the Lord, I began to have experiences of the Lord that I had not had for years. My confidence in experiencing Christ began to grow. I would say that my daily life has changed drastically. I am not saying, of course, that I have arrived. Some

days are glorious, and other days I forget all about living Christ. But I think that the Lord has restored the heart in me to live Christ. As far as how to go on, I just need more encouragement. Because I have so many habits of not living Christ and of doing other things and of being preoccupied with so many other things, I feel that I need more encouragement to live Christ.

Very good. This is quite helpful to me. In the past months we have covered a number of negative things: culture, opinion, peculiarity, Christianity traps, and habit. Do not think that we have covered all the negative things. There are still some very negative, deeper, more damaging, and more subtle things that we have not covered. The five or six items that we have covered already are somewhat adequate, yet they are still so shallow. They are still mostly outside of you. Your being has not been touched yet. What are the deeper, more subtle, negative things? If you check with the experiences of Christians today, you may realize that very, very few Christians live Christ. It may be that a good number, at least among us, are desiring and have such an aspiration to live Christ. They have practiced this to some extent, and to some extent they may consider that they have had some success. Actually, though, if you get into the matter, you will realize that they still do not have much experience of Christ.

A MANAGER OF CHRIST

Let me illustrate it in this way. Almost every Christian is a kind of manager of Christ. I do not use the words *control* or *rule over* but the word *manage*. Every Christian is a boss. Christ is not the boss; you are. If you are a worldly Christian, you would always direct Christ to go your worldly way. Even the sinful Christians would somewhat direct Christ to go their sinful way. When you criticize other brothers and sisters, you would direct Christ to go your way. Even the best Christians direct Christ to go their way. You may be reading the Bible, praying so much, loving to fellowship, but in all this, you are the boss. You direct Christ to take your way in reading the Bible; you direct Christ to take your way in prayer.

By seeing the situation and experiencing this matter, I realize that very few Christians let Christ live. You say that you live Christ. I would say this is correct: you live Christ. It is not Christ living but you. You live Christ in directing Christ to take your way. When you are worldly and sinful, you dare not say that you are living Christ. But when you are reading the Bible, when you are praying, when you are fellowshipping, when you are walking in the

spirit, when you are living Christ, you dare to say that you live Christ. That is right; you live Christ. It is you who are living Christ. And you have to realize that the more success you have in living Christ, the more you live Christ. Eventually, it is not Christ who lives Himself but you who live Christ. Paul said that he had been crucified, and that it was no more he who lived but Christ (Gal. 2:20). You have been crucified, yet still you are here living Christ. You are the boss, and Christ is the employee. You are the employer, and He is the employee to help you accomplish the employer's business, that is, to live Christ. You live Christ. You have to realize that this is altogether a subtle matter.

Before a person has surgery, the situation must be thoroughly cleansed in order to get rid of the germs. All kinds of germs are there. Every direction you turn, there are more germs. This is a good illustration of our problem today. We are persons of problems. We turn away from worldliness; that is very good, but we turn to some other problems. Then when we turn away from those problems, we turn to yet other problems. Some problems are always awaiting you. Even the best Christians still exercise a strong self. Years ago I heard people talk in a somewhat arguing tone that it is self, but it is the "holy" self. They said that it is a kind of sanctified self, a spiritual self, a heavenly self. Of course, they dared not say that it is a divine self, but they were bold to say that it is a holy, spiritual, heavenly self. Why did they argue in this way? Because they did not apparently do anything worldly, sinful, or fleshly. Every day the Bible was in their hands, and they really prayed unceasingly. But they always directed the Lord. The Lord was their slave, and they were the master.

THE NEED TO BE UNLOADED

By the end of last year I began to realize that we need a kind of training not to pass on more knowledge to you but to unload you in this matter and in that matter. In the past nine months we have unloaded many things. We have unloaded your culture, your opinion, your peculiarity, your treasured traps, and your habitual living. You have yet many more things that need to be unloaded. What is the main purpose of unloading all these things? It is to perfect you in one matter: that Christ will really live in you and that the church will be your practical living of Christ. So far we have not reached the goal. We have a long way to go. We have too many things to unload. I do not mean that only the negative ones, the dissenting ones, the worldly ones, the

fleshly ones, or the sinful ones need to be unloaded; I mean also the positive ones. I mean *you* need to be unloaded.

Even today we are still the manager. Today we are still here managing; we are still living. We live Christ, and then we manage the living. We would like to have a perfect living, an absolute living, a living of Christ. But we still cannot say as Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."

In a strict sense, in the New Testament you probably cannot find such a sentence that says, "I live Christ." You have to be careful when you say, "I would like to live Christ; my goal is to live Christ." I am afraid when you say that, the "I" becomes the prison. You get imprisoned there because it is you who live Christ and not Christ who lives Christ. It is not Christ living Christ; it is you living Christ. Do not think that I have made a kind of hook to catch you. Actually, you made the hook. My messages in the Perfecting Meetings simply make a claim for Christ. Whenever the claim comes, a hook is manifested. You have a lot of hooks. You do not know how many hooks you have made for yourselves.

I believe that a number of us are not able to relax and have a rest concerning this matter because we are serious, and we mean business. However, in your meaning business you may turn from some small germs to some big germs. Small germs are easy to kill, but it is hard for you to kill the big, the strong, the covered, the concealed germs. What kind of germs are like this? Your "spirituality." I would say that even your living Christ may become a germ. When you did not live Christ, I encouraged you and charged you to live Christ. But now that you are endeavoring to live Christ, I say this is a strong germ. What shall you do? Right now I would not tell you what to do; rather, I would simply tell you the problems. This is why I wanted to hear from these brothers concerning what help they have received and what kind of improvement they have made. Because they are somewhat humble, they would not tell us definitely what kind of help they had received or what kind of improvement they had made. But I would like to have heard that. You have to realize that the more help you have received, the more germs you have gotten. Then you may consider that you do not need to come to the meetings. But if you remain home, you remain in the germs. If you do not come, that means you do not like to turn away from the germs. But if you come here, you receive more germs.

A CLOUDY SITUATION

This is why even today the Lord has no way to come back. Israel has been restored, and the city of Jerusalem has been returned to the hands of the Jews. But if you look at the situation among Christians, there is nothing encouraging and nothing promising. All you can see among today's Christians is blindness, arrogance, ignorance, and darkness. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy say that some are blinded with pride (1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:4). This is the situation among most of today's Christians. This Greek word for *blinded* means a kind of smoke that covers the sky and covers your sight so that you are blinded. What is the smoke? It is the pride and the arrogance. Today's Christians are full of arrogance and pride. Their arrogance and their pride are spreading a kind of smoke to cloud the entire situation to make their sight so foggy. So they are blind. Paul uses this word for predicting the degradation and decline of the church and also for the dealing with the decline of the church. Why has the church declined? Because of the blindness through the pride.

NO POSITIVE MESSAGE

This is the situation today among so many Christians. Where is there a way for the Lord to do something? There is no way. If I am simply criticizing, I ask the Lord to forgive me, and I beg you all to give me grace. Even I would ask the whole of Christianity to forgive me. But you look at today's Christianity. America is the leading country in everything, especially in Christianity. If you look into all the Christian papers, there is nearly not one paper with a positive message.

When they began to defame us, one book would just blindly quote another. They do not even know what they are talking about. Even in defaming us, they are in darkness. They said we practice Oriental mysticism. There is not such a thing in the Orient as Oriental mysticism. They invented this term. So I wrote to one of the opposers in a nice way asking him to explain to me what is mysticism in the Orient. He had been there as a missionary for years, but I do not believe he has anything to tell me, because there is not such a thing. They just invented this term to smear our name, to smear our face, and then others followed. If we had not taken legal action, even more books would have come out. Why? Because they have nothing positive to print. If they do not print these things, what else would they print? The Lord said that whatever our heart is filled with, our mouth would utter (Matt. 12:35). If they were full of

Christ, they would not use even one page for the defamatory things. The pages we put out are not sufficient to minister Christ. Week after week we put out three to four messages, yet we do not have enough pages to cover all the positive things of Christ. This is the poor situation today. We are very much privileged by the Lord to be in His recovery. So from the beginning of the year we picked up the burden to spend some time with the Perfecting Training. But do not think that this is a training to give you some knowledge. This training would not load you with more things; rather, this training is unloading you. This training is taking things off from you.

If we mean business with the Lord, the day will come when we will be no longer managing anything. We will not manage in reading the Bible; we will not manage in prayer; even in living Christ we will not manage. No. He will have the full position to manage; that will be the real living of Christ.

All of us, especially the seeking ones, like to set up a schedule. The more you are seeking, the stronger your schedule would be. The sloppy ones do not have a project; they do not have a schedule. Which is better? Of course, it is better to have a schedule. I appreciate that you have a morning-watch schedule. You have a schedule that tells you how many chapters you would read a day and how many messages you would read a week. This is very good, even much better than those sloppy ones who do not have any schedule. Eventually, when they come to the meeting, they do not even know where their Bible is. When they start to the meeting, their Bible is in the linen closet, and their hymnal is under the sofa. They do not have any schedule. This is sloppy. I do not appreciate this. I surely would like to encourage you all to have a schedule.

But listen, when you have a strong schedule, you become a strong master. You have a schedule for Christ. But it is you and not Christ. You need to grow into a stage where you are not loose nor are you managing. This is wonderful, but it is not so easy. For us not to be loose yet not managing is not easy. This is why we need this Perfecting Training. This training would not send you back to a stage of looseness. That stage has to be condemned. But you have to realize that while you are having a strong schedule, you need to be unloaded and released from your schedule. Do not go back to be loose. Remain here, but remain here to be unloaded. In our living of Christ we are too bossy.

Surely this training has brought you to a kind of troubling situation. You are here, but you do not know whether you have to go back or go on. You do not know whether to advance or retreat or stay. I would say, do not go back, do not advance, do not stay. Maybe after another year you will appreciate these words: do not go back, do not advance, and do not stay. Then it will not be you living Christ; it will be that He lives Himself. It will not be so much you who are reading the Bible with a strong determination. It will not be you who are praying unceasingly with much gnashing of teeth.

The past nine months of the Perfecting Training have helped you enter into a strong decision or a strong practice to live Christ. This is good; it is not bad. But it is also a strong frustration because it is *you*. You have been trained, and in a sense it is helpful, but in another sense it eventually becomes a frustration. What shall you do? There is no answer. Many of you today are still in a strong stage with the strongest determination to practice Bible reading, to practice morning watch, to practice the prayer, to practice the living of Christ. All these are good and are needed, but all of them have probably become frustrations. These things are building you up.

This is why I asked the brothers to tell us what more they wanted and what more they needed. Three of the brothers did not tell us definitely what they wanted. Either they were somewhat humble, or they were clever, not wanting to expose themselves. Or perhaps I was dull and did not get into their speaking. But one brother told us he feels that now he needs the Body. This is a proper understanding. But when I asked you to tell us what you want, I did not expect that any one of you would say that you want the church, the Body. I expected that you would say that you want to pray more, that you want to sing the Word, that you want this and you want that, and you want a lot of things. It was wise that you did not say this. If you had said this, you would have been caught by me. I would have said that you want more reading of the Bible, more prayer, more singing, more psalming just to strengthen your holy, sanctified, spiritual, heavenly *self*. But whether you said this or not, you have been caught already, because I know that within you, you do have some want. Either you want to read the Bible more, to pray more, or to live Christ more.

This message is to lay a foundation for the coming Friday nights when we will cover deeper, more subtle, and more negative things. I believe that a number of you have already entered into a stage where you do not know how to go on. Your church life is not that pleasant, nor is it that bad. Some of you

may have even considered that you should leave the church life. Yet you realized that if you left, it would be terrible. So you have no way. You have been brought to a stage that you have no way. You have no way to go on, no way to stay, and no way to leave. This is a very good sign. This is a sign that you have been improving. Yet you have been brought to a stage by the Lord that you need to get yourself unloaded. What we have been speaking about now is a practical reality in our Christian life. I believe that you have the ears to listen to my speaking, although others might consider it nonsensical. I surely know what I am talking about. I am pretty sure that I have presented you the right picture. And I do believe that someday your sky within may be clear, and then you will see that it is the seeking you, the improving you, that bothers Christ. On the one hand, you love Him to the uttermost, and you seek after Him, but on the other hand, you are bothering Him, and you are frustrating Him because you are the boss. Every day in your spiritual schedule you give Him the orders; you ask Him to do something for you. One day our sky will become clear, and you will see this.

CHAPTER TWENTY

BEING ACTIVE-PASSIVE TO LIVE CHRIST

The King James Version translates Acts 2:40 as "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Do you believe that this word, *Save yourselves,* is okay? Could you save yourself? Could anyone of you, including Peter, save himself? But according to the Bible, Peter charged the people to save themselves from this crooked and perverted generation. According to the King James Version, the theologians would surely have a problem. To save yourself means that you save yourself. If you save yourself, this must be a kind of saving by your work. And to be saved by any kind of work is heretical. Salvation is not by works; salvation is by faith through grace (Eph. 2:8). This is the basic principle. Why then does Peter say, "Save yourselves"?

ACTIVE-PASSIVE

Suppose a message was given in a meeting exhorting people to save themselves from today's dark age. Could you take it? Surely I would not take it. Salvation is by grace; I cannot save myself. In Peter's time people were in a crooked, perverted generation. How could one fallen to the depth of a crooked generation save himself out of it? If you were drowning in the ocean, could you save yourself? No one could do it. Darby's New Translation of the Bible and the Recovery Version say, "Be saved." According to English grammar, you have the active voice and the passive voice. *Save yourself* is active voice; *be saved* is passive. Both are imperative. One is imperative active, and the other is imperative passive. Actually, it is not only active or only passive. It includes both sides. It is an active-passive voice. The grammar in English is not adequate; you need an active-passive voice. *Be* is active, but *saved* is passive. It does not mean that you save yourself but that you are to be saved by something or someone. So it is passive.

Some might say that active-passive is not good language, but I would say that the language should be improved. Language is a kind of culture, and culture depends upon invention and improvement. Today we have a lot of new words that we did not have two hundred years ago. This is why the King James Version of the Bible is out of date. You need a new translation. Both

the English language and the Chinese language have active and passive voice, but neither has an active-passive voice. Language is always according to human culture. If you do not have a culture, you will not have a language. In human culture there is not such a thing as active-passive, but in God's economy active-passive is too great a matter. Even in human culture, some things are really active-passive. Suppose you are floating on the ocean and a boat comes by. You cannot save yourself, but the boat comes to save you. But you have to want to be saved. You have to cooperate. If you do not want to be saved, people cannot save you regardless of what they do. Or if you do too much to help yourself, you cannot be saved. If you are drowning and someone comes to save you, you had better not do anything. Just let him save you. Otherwise, you may drown the both of you. This is to "be saved." This is the active-passive voice, and it has to be applied to our spiritual life.

In the last meeting I told you not to go backward, not to go forward, and yet not to stay here. Then you wondered: What shall we do? Do not do anything. Be saved! The problem is this: as fallen human beings, either we would not care for our salvation, or we would do everything to save ourselves. The more we do to save ourselves, the more we cannot be saved. The best way to be saved is to desire to be saved yet do not do anything to save yourself. This principle is hard for you and me to apply. Perhaps you were bothered by the two preceding messages. In the first one I told you that your prayer is a trap, your reading of the Bible is a trap, and whatever you do even spiritually is a trap. In the second one I told you not to go forward, not to go backward, and yet do not stay where you are.

Actually, what the Lord wants is that we return, we repent, and then let Him do everything. Not many believers would do this. Most would either forget about God, or they would turn to Him and do so many things. Some might testify that they got saved thoroughly because they cried for two nights and fasted for three meals. All of a sudden joy came to them. Yes, a kind of joy came to them, but it was a joy created by themselves because they had been crying for two nights and fasting for three meals. Surely they needed some happiness, and surely some joy would come to them. They got saved. Another may simply say, "O Lord, save me." Many dear ones got thoroughly saved by this kind of quiet salvation. Some of those who cried for two nights and were on fire for two months may have gone back to the beach.

A PICTURE IN LUKE 15

You must see the principle. We have been talking about living Christ. So you may consider that you like to live Christ, and because you cannot make it, you need to fast and you need to pray. You may want to do these things, but He does not. What is religion? Religion is that you and I would do something to please God. You and I would initiate something to please God. What is God's economy? God's economy is that He has prepared everything. The Father has prepared the best robe and is waiting for His son to come home. The Father has also prepared a fattened calf. According to Luke 15, everything was prepared for the prodigal son's return. When the son came home, the father had the best robe put upon him. This is to be saved. He comes back to be saved. He cannot save himself; only the father can save him. But he needs to come back to be saved. If the son never came back, how could the father save him? But if, after coming back, the son was too busy doing things, how could the robe be put upon him? The father stopped the son's talking and put the robe upon him. Then he said to kill the fattened calf and to be merry. This is to be saved. The picture in Luke 15 shows what it is to be saved.

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

The principle was the same on the day of Pentecost. While Peter was speaking there, the best robe was already prepared, and the fattened calf was already killed. Everything was there, and salvation was ready for the people to receive. So Peter said, "Be saved." To be saved simply means to turn to God and calm yourself down. Let the Lord do everything not only for you but upon you and in you. The more we do to get salvation, the more the Lord is frustrated. He cannot do anything. This is a real picture of the situation with so many Christians. Many turn their back to the Lord. Others listen to the Lord and turn to the Lord. After turning to the Lord, they get involved in too much doing. Sometimes when the Lord would see that we are so active, He would just wait until we have done everything and have been thoroughly disappointed and have given up. When we are tired out, the Lord would say, "Very good! Now is the time for you to be saved. Let Me save you. Do not do anything. Do not pray; let Me save you. Do not read the Bible; let Me save you. Do not do your good work; let Me save you. Stop. Just turn to Me. Love Me, and tell Me that you want Me. You cannot do anything."

Do not come to the law saying that you will do it. You cannot do it. You had better tell the Lord that you love Him, you love His Word, but that you cannot do it. Tell Him that you have no intention to do it, that you will let Him do it.

This is to be active-passive; it means, "I am here, Lord, to let You do it." *Let* shows the active, but *You do it* shows the passive. To the Lord it is active, but to me it is passive. We must be an active-passive person. Peter had that kind of experience. So based upon his experience, he charged the people to be saved. This means that the Lord is here; salvation is ready; everything is prepared for you. The Lord is saving now. Are you willing to be saved? You must be willing. Be saved! On that day over three thousand responded in a willing way (Acts 2:41). This means that they regretted their past, they repented, and now they were willing to be saved. Then they were all baptized. Even they could not baptize themselves. They were baptized by someone else. This is the basic principle of God's economy—this is the active-passive voice.

Very few Christians really know the active-passive way for us to enjoy the Lord in His salvation. Consider your own experience. For years you may have been a good Christian—seeking, doing, praying, studying the Bible. This means that you are doing, doing, doing. All your doings have been a kind of frustration to the Lord. Then you may consider not to do anything. This also is wrong. If you do nothing, you are absolutely passive.

TWO EXTREMES

Two extremes can be seen in Christianity. One school is the Pentecostals who are too active. They believe that their fasting and different kinds of maneuverings can accomplish everything. Although God may have no intention of healing someone, they think that if they fast and pray, eventually their fasting and prayer would heal this person. This is why they invented a lot of false healings. After fasting for three days and praying for seven days, there must be some healing. So they just manufactured healing. I was there and I studied it thoroughly, and I can tell you that very few of the healings are genuine. It is the same with their tongue-speaking. Most of their tongue-speaking is also humanly manufactured. After fasting for tongues, they have to speak in tongues. When the tongues did not come, they told people to turn their jaw and to exercise their tongue; then a tongue came. What kind of tongue is this? This is humanly manufactured. I am not criticizing. I am strong in this matter because I was there. I studied it; I was in it; I practiced it; and I discovered all kinds of human manufacturing. The Pentecostal school may be considered at the "south pole."

Another school may be considered at the "north pole." They teach people not to do anything. They tell them that they do not need to do anything. This

also is to the extreme. The scriptural way is neither at the south pole nor at the north pole. It is halfway. It is midway. It is neither active nor passive; it is active-passive. To say this is easy, and to demonstrate it also is easy. But to get into the practicality takes time. When you first begin to practice certain things, they may seem to be very strenuous. But when you get into the experience, your practice becomes so natural. When you practice playing ball, your skill of playing ball becomes very natural. In principle, it is the same spiritually.

NOT COMMANDING THE LORD

Four or five years ago I would not have given you such a message. I learned these things over thirty years ago, but I would not release a message like this until I saw the right situation. Now I feel that the time is right, and many of you need this message. If you consider that my word is quite discouraging, it means that you are not qualified to hear it. This word is not discouraging. This word is just to give you a timely help to bring you into the spiritual, natural way. I do not mean that you should not pray, and I do not mean that you should not read the Word. Rather, you should pray a lot, and you should read the Word a lot, but do not be the boss. Let the Lord be the boss. You do not realize that in your spiritual seeking you give the Lord a lot of commandments. Your prayer is a kind of commanding, and your study of the Word is a kind of commanding. You fast because you are commanding the Lord to do something. Even in your prayer concerning living Christ, you may be giving a kind of command to the Lord. You are commanding Him to live Christ for you. Gradually, you will see that your command does not work. He does not and He would not honor your command. This is why you can testify that the more you pray, the worse you are. It is because the Lord would not honor this kind of prayer.

One day you will simply say, “Lord, I love You. I surely would like to live You, but I cannot do it. Lord, I will not do it and I cannot do it. Even, Lord, You do not have the intention for me to do it. But, Lord, I am here.” This is good enough. This is the kind of prayer that the Lord is wanting. Then from morning till evening you will be such a person telling the Lord that you love Him, that you want Him, that you surely would like to live Him, but that you would not do it. Last year we began to talk about living Christ. I know that many of you have prayed about this. Have you had any success? I believe that you have all gotten bothered because the more you prayed, the more you

could not live Christ. Some of you may have considered that since I said no other way works, that probably this way does not work either. As long as you are giving the commandment, this way does not work. It does not work until one day you do not care for the practice of the one spirit, nor do you care for not practicing the one spirit. You only care that you love the Lord. You do not care for living Christ, nor do you care for not living Christ. You only care that you love the Lord. You would tell the Lord, "Lord, I love You. I love to be one spirit with You, and I love living You, but, dear Lord, I would not do it. Lord, I just love You." When you reach this stage, spontaneously you will have a life that lives Christ from morning till evening.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

During the years of 1932, 1933, and 1934 I was seeking to abide in Christ. By reading the Scriptures, I realized that John 15 is a most crucial chapter. "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4). I even gave message after message telling people that all other teachings are not necessary. They only needed to do one thing, that is, to abide in the Lord. I spent as much money as I could afford to buy books concerning abiding. For nearly three years almost every day I was commanding the Lord, "Lord, help me to abide in You." But the more I told the Lord to help me, the more the Lord did not do anything.

I believe that all of you who have sought the Lord in this way can also testify that this kind of seeking does not work, and this kind of prayer does not work. It took me a long time to realize that this did not work. Finally, after a certain period of time, I did not give the Lord the commandment to help me to abide in Him, but I lived a life spontaneously abiding in Him. Suppose a branch on a tree knows that it has to abide in the tree and has to let the tree abide in it. The more this branch would practice abiding, the more the branch would be off. The real abiding is a natural thing; it is not a practice. But for us today to get into the natural condition is not so easy. It is hard even for me to speak such a message to you.

TRYING TO BE ABSOLUTE

I hope that through these messages you could see something. Many of you have checked whether or not you love the Lord. You have realized that you love the Lord, but you may have considered that you do not love Him so absolutely. Sometimes people without experience would say, "Yes, you love the Lord but not absolutely." Then you go back home and try to be absolute. I

did these things. Eventually, I began to question how absolute is absolute. Some people and even some books would say that you are still not absolute. One even gave an illustration that if on the balance you need a hundred ounces to balance and you have only ninety-nine, you are short until you put on another ounce. But in our experience, if we put on another ounce of absoluteness, still it is ninety-nine. Regardless of how many additional ounces of absoluteness I put in, always it is still ninety-nine. So I discovered that it is a kind of nonsense to talk about absoluteness. How absolute is absolute? I am not a sloppy person, and I really tried to be absolute. The more I added another ounce of absoluteness, the shorter I was of ninety-nine ounces. That was a wrong way. By trying to be more absolute you get nowhere.

I know that you have all practiced to be absolute. I do not blame you, because I passed through this stage. You, too, have to pass through. You tell others that they need to be absolute. You tell others that three years ago we had a cause, and we were so absolute, but now we are not so absolute. According to your sensation, you were more absolute three years ago. Actually, you are more absolute today. But I have not said a word, because you have to pass this stage. I would be foolish to tell you not to pass this stage, because you would stop and not go on. Thank the Lord that you have come here to this point. Now you may look back and see that your teachings on absoluteness mean nothing. You just need to love the Lord, to seek the Lord, and to stay with Him. Tell the Lord that you love Him, that you want everything of Him, but that you would not do anything, that the Lord must do it. Tell Him that you love to be one spirit with Him but that you would not do it. However, do not imitate. Imitating does not work. It is altogether a matter of growth in life.

ACCORDING TO THE GROWTH OF LIFE

I do believe that now is the time when at least some of you have come to the stage where you need this help. This help will be a rest to you and a release to you. Eventually, from morning to evening, you will just enjoy the Lord living Himself out of you. Day by day you will not be saving yourself, but you will be saved. Some of you may say that you understand now what I mean and that you will do it. If you would do it, that is very good. Do not try not to do it. If you try not to do it, you are performing. Recently, my daughter and her two sons came to visit me. The first is a little over three years of age, and the second is close to two years. The first one has grown up to a stage that he spoke the best Chinese to me, with the best tone and the proper

pronunciation, and the grammar was altogether right. The second one just followed the first one. The first one said, “Come to my home,” and the second one could just say, “My home.” You have to realize that regardless of how much you endeavor, if your growth is like the first one, you will speak a complete sentence: “Come to my home and play with me.” If you do not have much growth, you may simply say, “Home, play.” How you respond to these Perfecting Messages will be according to your growth in life. In the church life we do not have classes or grades. We have only one general grade, which includes everyone. When we give a message, some needs will surely be met. Some needs will not be met today, but after six months you will remember what you heard, and you will receive the help.

OUT OF THE TRAPS

When you turn to the Lord and begin to seek after Him for certain things, right away you become very active. You would stay active for quite a long time. You would be doing things and would be so diligent and so active. You would consider that other people cannot pray so much but that you can. Other people cannot read the Bible so much, but you can. You can finish the schedule; you can do so many things. Yes, you can. It is not bad. Do not stop doing it. Do it. But gradually you will see that all your doings are traps. Then you may ask me why I would not encourage you to stop the doings? If you stop the doings, you are in a deeper, bigger trap. If you do the things, you may get yourself into small traps, but if you do not do the things, you will remain in a bigger trap, so comparatively speaking, it is better to do it. Compared to the big traps, these are much better, but compared to the proper and wonderful situation of living Christ, these are frustrations. All the traps are frustrations. I am not condemning prayer, and I am not condemning Bible study. These are steps to get you out. But the problem is that many Christians never get out of the steps. They are always in the steps, and eventually they give up and jump into a big trap. Many of you did have this kind of experience in the past.

CONVERSING WITH THE LORD

What shall you do? You need to keep seeking after the Lord. Keep loving Him, keep contacting Him, but learn all the time not to give Him too many commands. When you rise up in the morning, tell the Lord: “Lord, I am here. I love You. I surely would like to live a life that is one with You. Lord, I would like to live You, but I am not giving You a command. And I would not do it. I

like it, but I would not do it. Lord, I love You." Try to pray in this way. Then you will see what will come out.

Many times the way to contact the Lord is not with a kind of prayer but just a kind of conversation. You need to converse with the Lord. You may say that any kind of conversation to the Lord is a kind of prayer. That is right, but prayer is somewhat different. Learn to converse with Him. See which way would give you more infusion. You may discover that this conversing way would give you a better infusion and more infusion. Learn to tell the Lord, "Lord, I am not ambitious in anything except loving You. I only want You, Lord; I only love You. Whatever You want, I want. But, Lord, I must tell You that regardless of how much I want it, I will not do it. I just will not do it, because I can never make it. I love You, Lord." This will be a big field where you can go every day. You will find that a spontaneous living will come out of you, not by your determination and not by your kind of definite mind or strong will.

THE SONG OF SONGS

When you are in this kind of situation, you will already be saved very much from yourself. You have to realize that your strong seeking after the Lord hides your self. Your self is subtly hidden in that kind of seeking. I hope that many of you would read the book *Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs* and then reread it. In that book you can see that step after step the seeker of the Lord was gradually delivered from her own energy in seeking after the Lord. She was very strong and energetic in loving the Lord. When she first came to the Lord, He likened her to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots (S. S. 1:9). She was not seeking after Pharaoh, nor was she riding back to Egypt. She was seeking after the Lord, and she was riding to the Lord, and she reached the Lord. But when the Lord appraised her, He appraised her as a mare. Horses at the time of the writing of that book mainly came from Egypt. So the horse in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, signifies the natural strength that belongs to the world. Yes, you are seeking. Even now you are seeking to live Christ. But in your seeking to live Christ, you are like a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

The second picture of the seeking one in the Song of Songs is a dove (2:14). But even the dove is not so satisfactory. After the dove, comes a lily (v. 16). A lily shows that you are living but that you do not have that much personality. A horse has an energetic and stubborn personality. A dove is much better, but

still a dove has a character and a living personality. A lily, though, is living but with no personality. Eventually, the seeker became a pillar (3:6). This means that the seeker became nearly nothing. But do not imitate. If you are a horse, and you imitate a dove, that is ugly. If you are a dove, and you imitate a lily, that is not so good either. If you are a lily, but you pretend to be a pillar in the air, that does not look nice. In the Song of Songs there is a clear picture showing us that the more we grow, the more we lose our character. To lose our character means that we do not give Him commands. In the first two chapters of the Song of Songs, the seeking one always gave the Lord commands. In other words, her seeking after the Lord was under her command and her direction. At first, the Lord gave in a little bit, but after chapter 2 the Lord stopped giving in, so she could not find the Lord. The Lord trained her and disciplined her to give up her commands and her direction and to pick up the Lord's direction.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

REDUCED TO LIVE CHRIST

This Perfecting Training is not a church meeting for any kind of edification, nor is it a ministry meeting for some kind of teaching. This is just an open fellowship with the seeking and experiencing saints. Originally I had no intention to publish our talk here, because I was concerned that these talks might be misused. I do not want our talk to be used in a wrong way, in an immature way. I do not believe that many Christians can comprehend what we are talking about here. I am even concerned that some of you are not up to the maturity that these words are really for you. The word given in the last meeting was so simple, yet unless a Christian has been seeking the Lord and experiencing the Lord for quite a definite period of time, that word may not help him. For that word to help you, you must have a certain experience, a certain seeking after the Lord, and you must have experienced a lot of failures, a lot of defeats, a lot of disappointments, and a lot of endeavor yet without result. If you have experienced something, not just in your mentality but in the real sphere of the spirit, then that word should have been precious to you.

THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE IN LIFE

This training does not serve all Christians in a general way. It has a definite purpose with a definite goal. I do not like to have so many in this Perfecting Training, but it is hard for us to draw the line as to who is up to the maturity and who is not. So I trust in the Lord very much for His decision. This does not mean that you would not get the benefit. You would. But it depends upon the measure of the stature that you have in life. Nothing can replace the measure of the stature. Even in physical life, if you are two years of age, you are just two years of age. If you are twelve years of age, you are twelve. Even if you try your best to imitate one who is seventy-five, you cannot do it. If you are twenty-five now, you have to wait for another fifty years. There is the matter of the measure of the stature in life. But if such a word could be sown into you and kept within you, it may be very helpful to you after a few years.

When you are young, you may pick up certain words in your vocabulary, but you do not understand what they mean. You pick them up, but they are not in your life because you do not have that measure of stature. Since we

arrived at the matter of peculiarity in this training, I have had the deep sense that I should bear the burden to give messages again and again and again until you would be brought to zero, to nothing. I believe that in the past few months some of you have begun to realize that in your spiritual life and in your spiritual seeking you need to be nothing. But even today I am not sure whether you understand my word exactly.

STRONG AND AGGRESSIVE

Let me say it in this way: when we were far off from God in sin, in worldliness, or in a kind of indifference, we did not care for God. We would not talk about God, and we just had no interest in God. But one day when we received the mercy of the Lord, we repented, we believed in the Lord, we called on Him, and we received Him. From that moment we became very active. Some saints who were born with an aggressive disposition and character are very active. Whatever this kind of people do, they do aggressively. Once they turn to the Lord, this kind of character and disposition and practice becomes very precious to them. They would even boast and tell other people what kind of person they are. They are quick to tell people that formerly they were very strong not to love the Lord, but now they are very strong to love the Lord to the uttermost. I believe that Saul of Tarsus was such a person. If you are not this kind of person, you could never be spiritual. A jellyfish kind of person can never be spiritual. You must be a strong and aggressive person to be spiritual. When you cry, you must really cry. When you weep, you must really weep. If your teardrops are half-drops, you can never be spiritual. You need to be active; you need to be aggressive. You need to be very energetic.

But when you become aggressive and active, you are like the mare in Song of Songs. In *Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs* we pointed out how the Lord appraised His seeker. The Lord called His seeker a mare among Pharaoh's chariots (1:9). Then the Lord said what He would do. Song of Songs 1:11 says, "We will make you plaits of gold / With studs of silver." The indication here is that the horse needs some dealing. It is not to deal with the mistakes or the wrongdoings. It does not mean that a bridle is put on the horse to regulate it because it is too wild. Gold and silver here indicate strongly that the Lord is going to limit and reduce the horse. Right away the next figure after the horse is a dove (2:14). Which is more aggressive and active—a horse or a dove? When a horse becomes a dove, it really means that

the horse has been very much reduced. If today you are a big horse and tomorrow morning you become a dove, surely this means that you have been limited and reduced. When some came into the church life at Elden hall, they were strong horses. Whenever they testified, that was a horse testimony. But although some may have been a strong horse at that time, today it is difficult for them to be a horse. This means that over the years they have been touched by the Lord, they have been reduced by the Lord, and they have been stopped by the Lord repeatedly. The horse wants to go a certain direction, but the Lord stops it. The horse wants to jump, but the Lord stops it.

Everybody likes to be on fire. Even I like to see a meeting that is on fire. But the strange thing is that, although we would like to be on fire, there is no fire. You surely long to go back to the time of Elden hall. But there is no fire. Why? Probably you all have passed through the horse stage. It is hard for you to go back.

A NARROW PATHWAY

Then you would ask, Is that good or bad? I would say it is wonderful to be on fire; it is excellent; it is very good, but it may not be for you. You have to realize that in seeking the Lord there is a narrow pathway, and once you pass through a certain stage of this narrow pathway, you have no way to get back. The most you can do is just stand there. You may stand still, but it is hard for you to go back. You may consider that you are backslidden because ten years ago at Elden hall you were having certain experiences, but you can never go back to that.

BEING REDUCED

In the spiritual growth it is right to say that on the one hand you are growing, but on the other hand, while you are growing, you are being reduced all the time. From the day we came to the matter of peculiarity, I was burdened to speak messages to reduce, to reduce, to reduce. I hate that our human language is really short. Language is a kind of product of culture. If you do not have a certain kind of culture, you will not have a certain kind of language. In our culture we do not have what we are talking about here, so we are short of language. It is hard for me to utter something because of the lack in language.

You have to know that God has no intention for you to do something for Him. You must drop this. God's intention surely is to entirely and thoroughly work Himself into you that He may really be your life. This is not a mere doctrine. This is what God wants to do. But we became fallen; we got away from Him. We did not have a heart toward Him, and we were very indifferent concerning Him. So He had to come to call us and to stir us up. But the problem is, after we got stirred up, we became so active. This is not wrong, but the more you are active and the more you are growing, the more you become a trouble to yourself. The more you are growing, the more you will pray, the more you will read the Bible, the more you will have the church life, the more you will have fellowship, the more you will have many spiritual things.

Eventually, every one of these things will become a trap to possess you, to occupy you, and to fill you up. Then in your capacity as a human being, there is no more vacancy for the Lord. The really experienced Christians after many years have learned one lesson: the Lord only wants you to have a heart. The Lord only wants you to have a desire. You need a heart to love Him, a desire to gain Him. That is good enough. Even to pray too much is a frustration. Believe me. The Lord just wants you to love Him and desire Him. The more you say, "Lord, I love You; Lord, I want You; Lord, I need You," the more you need to stop your doing. But to stop your doing can never be effective by your stopping. The more you stop doing, the more you do. This depends upon the measure of stature in life. The more you grow in the Lord, the more your doing will be reduced. Gradually your doing will be reduced until one day you know that what the Lord wants of you is absolutely not your doing. He only wants you to love Him, to want Him, and to tell Him that you need Him. That is all—do not do anything. Even to live Christ becomes your doing. Sooner or later if you keep seeking, you will reach a point where you realize that you do not need to do anything.

Actually, the Lord is within you, the Lord is one with you, and He really is everything for you. What you need to do is just say, "Lord, thank You. You are one with me. I love You. I desire to have You. I just want You, and I need You." That is good enough. Spontaneously, the Lord will act in you, He will live in you, He will do everything for you, and He will do everything with you. He lives, and you live by His living. Again, our human language is short. I just do not have the language to utter what I see. Not only am I short in the English language, but even in my mother tongue, Chinese, I could not utter what I see.

But I do know that I have experienced this thing. You will eventually hit the point or the stage that the Lord lives in you and that you do not need to do anything. What you need to do is just to keep yourself open, telling the Lord that you want Him and that you need Him. You need to realize that your doing does not avail. Only the Lord avails. In a sense, not even just His presence or His anointing avails; only the Lord Himself avails.

INACTIVE BUT NOT PASSIVE

By way of illustration, the Bible says that we need to love one another. You surely would like to love others, so you begin to love. You have to realize that it is you who love. Whether you can actually love or not makes no difference; it is you who are loving. Most of us have experienced the failures again and again. It will take you a long time to reach the point where you realize that you do not need to love, because the Lord lives in you. When you love by yourself, your loving frustrates His living in you. When your loving is stopped, you have no doing. You are calm, silent, and inactive, but not passive. Inactive does not mean that you are passive. The worldly people surely could not understand this. How could someone be inactive and yet not passive? To the worldly people, to be inactive is to be passive. But in our experience, inactive is altogether not passive. We are in a kind of inactive condition—very calm, very silent—yet we are very positive. Yet, we are not positive in ourselves or by ourselves. We are silent, we are calm, but He gets every inch of our inner room. He has every opportunity, every chance, to do everything. He lives. When we are calmed down, He has the opportunity to live.

This does not mean to be calmed down by way of an accident. Sometimes a very active person receives some chastisement from the Lord, and he becomes very calm. That kind of calm does not mean too much. You do not need to have some big blow from the Lord, like losing your job or losing your wife or having your house burn or having sickness, to calm you down. I have seen this a lot in the past, but I do not trust in this. I saw some persons stopped by the Lord in this way, but after a short time, that “horse” became even bigger. This kind of calm does not mean much. The kind of calm I mean is in the measure of your stature. In life you reach a stage where you become a calm person. You are not calm in the outward doings; in fact, you may be very active in outward doings. But your inward situation regarding your contact with the Lord is in a very calm situation. You do not try to love others; you do not even try to pray. You are very calm.

As a further illustration, I believe that when many brothers were married, they prayed that they would be a good husband, a nice man. They prayed that they would never have a long face toward their wives but that they would always be smiling and never lose their temper. I prayed this way. But eventually all the brothers have the experience to testify that on the whole earth there is not such a husband. Gradually, we struggled and prayed and fasted and read many books to find the way to be such a husband. Eventually, nothing worked. But while you are growing in the Lord, you will reach a point where you are calm. Do not be a bad husband or a good husband. Do not be anything. Do not be somebody, and even do not be nobody. Forget about the being or the not being. If you are really reaching this point, from deep within you will realize that the Lord is living in you. It is not a matter of whether you lose your temper or do not lose your temper. It is a matter of the Lord living in you. Then you could understand that it is no more I but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20). I do not believe that any Christian could experience Galatians 2:20 in full in his early Christian life.

For over fifty years I have given messages on Galatians 2:20, but up to now I still feel I do not have that much thorough experience of no longer I but Christ living in me. How much Christ lives in us all depends upon how much our being is calmed down. It has to be calmed down not only in loving the world but even calmed down in prayer. Our being has to be calmed down from loving others. If you keep on this track, some day you will reach a point by the Lord's growing within you that your being, your person, will be calmed down. Then the Lord will live in you but not in your sense. He just will live in you. When you reach this point, you will even realize that you do not need to pray that much. You need more prayer, but you do not need to pray that much. Right now you have little prayer, but you pray too much. Prayer means just to contact the Lord and to keep yourself in a very close and intimate contact with Him. Could you spend twenty minutes with the Lord without praying anything? Could you spend that much time just saying, "Lord, I love You. Lord, I need You. Lord, I like to be here with You; I like to look at You. I like to remain here in a precious, dear, and intimate contact with You"? Could you pray in this way? This is what I mean that you have a lot of prayer but you do not pray much. Many of you do not have this kind of prayer, yet you pray a lot. You spend a lot of time to pray concerning your need to be more spiritual, concerning your need to live Christ, concerning your need to practice the one spirit with the Lord, concerning your need for impact, concerning your need

for the inner life. You pray for your wife, for your children, for so many things. This is what I mean that you have little prayer but you pray too much. You need to have a spacious prayer yet with nearly no praying. As you grow in life, you will reach a point that you may be in prayer for twenty minutes with the Lord but have nearly no prayer. Every experienced person would say the same thing. We are altogether too much in our doing. You pray very much, but that kind of praying is your doing.

We need to continue to speak in this way until we all are reduced. The Lord must reduce all your spiritual doings, your good doings, even your doings for the seeking after the Lord. The Lord will reduce all your doings to make you realize that He is living in you right now. You do not need to overcome sin or temper, and you do not need to strive to love others. You just need to say, "Lord, I am here. I love You. I would like to stay with You." Spontaneously, He will be your life in a very actual way. It is not that you take Him as your life but that He is your life. He is just your life. At that time you will realize that you are really one with Him, and He is really one with you. He lives in you. You do not need to live Him; He lives in you. When you reach that point, you will fully realize what I am telling you now. At that time some probably will not love the Lord so much as you do, yet they are very active and aggressive. You are inactive but not passive. Actually, you will love the Lord more than they. It may seem at the time that you are not on fire, but actually you do have a thorough mingling of the Lord with you. You would not just feel or sense but fully realize that the Lord really lives in you. It is altogether not your doing. You are so inactive; you are so calm. You are not cold, yet you are very calm. You do not hate, you do not love, even you do not pray, and neither do you not pray. You enter into a stage that the Lord lives in you.

THE GOAL OF THIS TRAINING

This stage is the goal of this training. Praise the Lord! Someday you will grow up. You cannot remain young. I do believe that at least the majority of us are seeking and are growing. We may be foolish, and we may waste a lot of time, but the Lord is not foolish, and He has never wasted our time. One day we will thank Him for His preservation and His recovery. The Lord's recovery is not just to recover the one church in one city. The Lord's recovery eventually is to recover Himself as our real experience. Then you may ask about our ups and downs. We have to leave these until later. For right now, we have to realize that, on the one hand, the Lord is growing within us, and on

the other hand, He is reducing us. He is not killing us; He is reducing us. You must realize that you do not need to pray that much, you do not need to love people that much, and you do not need to endeavor that much. The Lord is adding Himself into you, and He is also reducing you. You had better come to Him and stay with Him; this is what we call the proper prayer. You do not need to endeavor to pray that much. You need reducing. But you cannot reduce yourself. This needs time. What you need right now is simply to tell Him all the time, "Lord, I love You. I want You. I need You. I like You. I want to get with You." This is very active. Yet you do not do anything; this is passive. This is what I call active-passive. This is, "Be saved" (Acts 2:40).

BE EMPOWERED

In 2 Timothy 2:1 Paul says, "Be empowered." The King James Version renders this verse in a very self-endeavoring, active way: "Be strong." *Be strong* is very active, but Paul says, "Be empowered." You do not need to be strong, and you cannot be strong. Even if you are strong, it means nothing, because John 15:5 says that apart from Him we can do nothing. We still can do a lot of things, but whatever we do does not count, so it means nothing. Apart from Him we can do nothing. But we need to be empowered. How could we be empowered? We have to be calmed down, and He has to replace us. Once we are calmed down and He comes in to replace us, we are empowered.

BE SANCTIFIED

Likewise, the Bible does not tell us that we can sanctify ourselves. In the Old Testament we are told to be holy (Lev. 19:2). But you have to realize that according to the New Testament sense, it is not a matter of being holy but of being sanctified (John 17:19; Heb. 2:11). In principle, to be holy is just like to be strong, and to be sanctified is just like to be empowered. We cannot be holy, but we need to be sanctified. Someone is within us sanctifying all the time. We cannot be holy, but He can sanctify us. In the New Testament many points like this have either been translated in the wrong way or understood in the wrong way. Actually, in the New Testament we are told not to be something or to do something but to be saved (Acts 2:40), to be empowered (2 Tim. 2:1), that we may be sanctified. This means that on our side we are reduced, and we are calm. Then on the Lord's side, He is active, He is living within us, He is living for us, and He is living with us. This is what He wants, and this is what will work.

NOT IMITATING

We have to pray. We have to enter into the prayer, and then gradually we will be reduced, and He will be added in to replace us. But there is the need of some measure of life to bring us into this stage. At this point we will spontaneously realize something. This is to live Christ. To live Christ is not that we live Him, but it is actually to let Christ Himself live from within us. So we need the reducing. As long as you can pray so much, you had better pray that much. But one day you simply will not be able to pray that much. You cannot imitate me, nor can I imitate you. In the spiritual life you may have some pattern that gives you a principle. But if you imitate the pattern apart from the principle, it does not work. It does not mean that now you need to stop praying for your friends and for your relatives. If you can stop, you do not need to stop; you just do not pray. If you cannot stop, you just pray.

A MATTER OF LIFE

This is a matter of life. It is the same in the physical life with your children. Little ones can do certain things when they are two years of age. When they become five years of age, they can do something more. So there is the need of the measure of the stature in life. Do not imitate. If you are able to pray that much, just do it. But if you are not able to do it, spontaneously there is no need for me to say do not do it. You simply cannot do it. To portray the real experience of Christ in our life is somewhat strange. The only thing that can help us to realize it is to get into that stage. When I get into a certain stage, I will spontaneously understand the life matters in that stage. When I get to another stage, I will understand the matters of life in that stage. When we began this Perfecting Training, we realized that many of you have been in the experience of Christ for years. We surely realized that many of you are bothered because your old way of experiencing Christ in the past no longer works. Why? It is because you have reached another stage. I do not mean that all of us have reached another stage. It is like a big family. There are folks of all ages. You do not need to imitate others. You are in one stage of life, and others are in different stages of life. In the church life we cannot have separate grades to form classes as in a school.

THE REAL BODY LIFE

Gradually, I believe the Lord will speak to us more and more. Then perhaps we will go on to another matter. It may be that the Lord will lead us to the matter of the Body. Actually, not many even among us know what is the real

Body life. Why? Because the life is not that much here. But the real Body life is much closer than it was years ago. So it may be that we will turn eventually from the experience of Christ to the real Body life. We look to the Lord that He would surely lead us on. I believe many of you realize that in these few months what we have covered is higher, not in knowledge or doctrine but in our practical experience of Christ in life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

VESSELS OPEN TO THE LORD

According to my experience, nothing pleases the Lord so much as for us to realize that He does not want us to do anything. He only wants us to love Him, to open ourselves up to Him, and to let Him live from within us. This may sound quite familiar to you, but if you look into such a sentence, you will realize that it is not so common. It is not so familiar to you. From the very beginning when God created man, God had no intention to ask man to do anything for Him. God's intention was to create a vessel to contain Him and to express Him, so God only wants an opening of the vessel. If the vessel is open, God can fulfill His purpose, but if the vessel is closed, God's purpose is frustrated.

What is the real significance of man's fall and the real nature of man's fall? It is that first, man wants to know, and second, man wants to do. It is to know something and to do something. These two aspects are the genuine significance of man's fall. The enemy's temptation was that man must be something. For man to be something, man needs to know something and to do something. This is the real meaning of man's fall. Once man became fallen, the evil nature of knowing and doing entered into man. This is the most abominable thing in the eyes of God. We would think according to our natural religious concepts that the worship of idols or witchcraft, these demonic things, are abominable. But the most subtle and the most abominable thing is man's attempt to know things and to do things. This is the very evil thing that entered into man's nature by the enemy's temptation.

We all have to realize that in our fallen nature there is a substance so evil that likes to know and likes to do. I am sorry to say that religion mostly cares for these two things. Religion helps people to know, and religion helps people to do. Even today Christianity has become such an active religion of knowing and doing. Seminaries just educate people to know and to do. They train people and stir them up to know and to do. This is altogether a kind of education against God's eternal purpose. It is no wonder that among thousands of Christians you can hardly find one who knows that God does not want us either to know or to do; God wants us only to love Him and to keep ourselves open to Him. "Lord, I love You. I fully realize that I am just an

empty vessel, yet You treasure this earthen vessel because this earthen vessel was created by You according to Your eternal plan to fulfill Your heart's desire. Lord, I just love You. I like to contain You. I like to be filled up with You. I like to be saturated and permeated with You. Have mercy upon me that I may keep myself open to You all the time."

We all have to confess that many times in our prayer we are not open to Him. Even in our prayer we still keep ourselves closed. Basically speaking, we all have the same kind of experience. Since the day we were saved, we never opened ourselves in an absolute way. We always opened ourselves with some amount of reservation. Even you yourself probably do not realize that the reservation is there. It is hidden. You think that you are open to the Lord. Actually, you are not entirely open. You are open but only partially. You are open superficially and in a shallow way. In the depths of your being you are not open, so the Lord cannot do anything.

Even when you were stirred up by a so-called revival, you became active to do things and to know things. Then your doing and your knowing became a problem to you. Either we are not open to Him, we are indifferent to Him, or we are too hot in our knowing and in our doing. We are too hot in our activity. Before we were stirred up, we were indifferent. We just came to the church meetings mostly on Sunday mornings. But one day we got revived. We loved the church more than ever. If you do not love the church, the church will not have that many problems. But once you become hot to love the church, the church will be troubled because you know too much. Once you love the church, the first thing you pick up is the knowledge, and then your eyes are opened just like Eve's eyes were opened after eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When many lovers and seekers of the Lord became hot, their eyes were opened. Formerly, they did not see so many things of the church life, but now they are so clear, questioning the elders and other things of the church life. Once their eyes are "open," they would consider, and they would not let things go on in the church life in a certain way. Thus the church gets the trouble due to their knowing. Then following their knowing, surely they would do something.

I do not mean that we all need to be foolish, but we all have to realize that God does not want us to do anything; He wants us only to be a living vessel. If you were an inanimate vessel, a vessel without life like a jar, you would be easy for the Master to use because you would not have a will or a mind or an

emotion. As an inanimate jar, the Master could keep you open and could fill you up. But God created a living thing. God created something so bothering to Him. He created a living jar full of emotions, with a strong will, and with a mind. After the fall this living jar became a problem to God. This problem has been among the Christians all these centuries. Either the Christians are indifferent, or they are too hot in knowing and in doing. On either side the Lord could not get the vessel.

This point is clear in the New Testament, especially in the Epistles of the apostle Paul. Paul's fourteen Epistles may be divided into two groups of seven each. The first set of seven is from Romans to Colossians. The second set is from Thessalonians through Hebrews. If you look into these two groups, you may say that the summary of these fourteen Epistles may be expressed in just two words: *open vessel*. God wants an open vessel. In Romans 9:23 Paul tells us that God created us as vessels of mercy unto glory. Then in 2 Corinthians 4:7 he says that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." These two verses may be considered as a basic secret to our experience of Christ and the church. You may hear a lot of messages on Christ and the church, yet if you do not realize that you have to be an open vessel, Christ and the church still have no way. What is the meaning of an open vessel? An open vessel is doing nothing but keeping itself open to the filling up. The processed God—the Triune God, the all-inclusive Spirit, the compound Spirit—is here waiting for an opening to get into you. How much He would enter into you depends upon how much opening you would give Him.

You may say that you have consecrated everything to the Lord. You have consecrated your wife, your children, your eyes, your ears, and your hands. I, too, have made this kind of detailed consecration many times. I even consecrated every single hair and every cell in my body to the Lord. Yet, have you realized that even after such a thorough and detailed consecration you still are not open to the Lord? Seemingly you have consecrated yourself to God, but actually you have consecrated to yourself. Your consecration did not keep yourself open to Him. Your consecration still kept you under your knowing and under your doing. This is the real problem. This is also the real burden of this Perfecting Training. The real burden is to pin your situation down, pointing out to you what your real trouble is. You love the Lord, you love the church, and you can declare strongly that you have seen the vision. Even you may say that you are open. But you are not open to the Lord. You are open to your knowing; you are open to your doing. It is really hard to have

a person on the one hand absolutely open to the Lord and on the other hand doing nothing. If you can love the Lord and yet do nothing, that would be a miracle. When you love someone, surely you want to do something for him. Today's Christian philosophy and logic tell you to do something for people to show them that you love them. But the Bible logic says to love the Lord but do not do anything for Him by yourself. Love the Lord to the uttermost; do not do anything for Him by yourself. It is not so easy. Sometimes even those who do not love the Lord want to do something for Him. This is to be religious. Our problem is that we are too active. Then you would consider to stop, to go back home and sleep because Brother Lee says that you do not need to do anything. This, too, is wrong. What shall you do? We have to go back to this word—*active-passive*. You have to be active-passive. Hardly any Christians understand what it means to be active-passive. To love the Lord to the uttermost is to be active. To not do anything is to be passive. You need to be saved, to be empowered, to be sanctified. For this you need to love the Lord and yet do nothing. You need to let the Lord do everything. What is in our fallen nature is just to know and to do. What the Lord wants is that we love Him, that we keep ourselves open. Do not do anything. Let Him in. Yet you always like to do something and keep yourself closed, causing the Lord to have no way to enter into you.

Read once again the seven epistles in the book of Revelation. In the first, to Ephesus, the Lord said that they did so many things for Him, and yet they had lost their first love. They had a lot of activities. The activities were right; nothing was evil, yet the Lord did not treasure all those activities. They lost the one thing the Lord treasured—their first love. In the fourth letter, to Thyatira, the Lord also indicated that He knew their works and love and faith and service and endurance. They had too much doing. You have to realize that when you have too much doing, the idols may be there. Among all the seven churches, Thyatira had the most idols because she had the most doing. This is today's Catholic Church. No religion and no church group is so active as today's Catholic Church. They are full of energy and activities. Among all the activities are the idols. In the last epistle, to Laodicea, the Lord said that they were lukewarm. The New Testament shows us that God wants a vessel loving Him and keeping itself open to Him. Here is our rescue, and here is the secret.

You have to realize that if you love the church but do not open yourself up absolutely, you will still love to do something for the Lord. This is of the fallen

nature. This is the natural life with the fallen nature. The proper situation is that I do not need to do anything, yet I need to love the Lord to the uttermost, keeping myself wide open all the time to Him. This is what is fully revealed in the New Testament, especially in the fourteen Epistles written by the apostle Paul. If you take this as a key and read once again the Epistles written by Paul, you will see that this is the genuine substance in his Epistles.

God wants His redeemed people loving Him to the uttermost yet not trying to do anything for the Lord. This temptation is with us every day. You do not know how much we are under the temptation. Too many times we have this temptation right after our prayer. You thought that through the prayer you got the energy and the motivation to do something. It seems that you were motivated by God through the prayer. Even you may give people the impression that you need to go and pray so that after prayer you will know what God wants you to do. So many people use prayer as a kind of motivation. Actually, this motivation is absolutely of the self. I know that many Christians might rise up against this kind of word, thinking that this is a heretical teaching. They would ask how so many thousands of missionaries could go to the foreign field without this kind of motivating prayer. They would ask what is wrong with such a motivating prayer. I do not like to argue, but I do know what I am talking about. You have to realize that the deeper prayer, the more genuine prayer, always calms you down and kills every bit of your activity. The most prevailing nailing of people to the cross is the genuine deeper prayer. The genuine and deeper prayer always crucifies you. Have you ever experienced such a thing? I can testify many times that when I got into the deeper and genuine prayer, not only did my whole being get nailed down, but even this kind of doing and that kind of doing all got crucified. The genuine prayer is a real crossing out.

This kind of message might bother the leading ones. While they are promoting the service and encouraging all the saints to come to the service, they might be afraid that after this message all the promoting would be fully killed. This would not be terrible; this would be wonderful! If some could motivate you to serve, and I could tell you to get into the deeper and genuine prayer that will kill every activity by nailing it to the cross, that would be wonderful. If these two things could happen, the Lord would have a way. The problem among today's Christians is that either there is no motivation, or there is a lot of motivation with no nailing to the cross. The proper way is to have a lot of motivation but with every motivation nailed on the cross.

Do not worry that your work may be nailed to the cross. When you enter into the experience of my fellowship, you will kneel down and worship the Lord. You would say, “Lord, now I know. I must love You. I must serve You to the uttermost. I must have an open heart with an open being to You. O Lord, by Your mercy and Your speaking, You do not want me to do anything. Lord, I am here.” This would be wonderful. This is what the Lord wants today. The Lord’s testimony is just here at this point. A vessel can only contain something, and the lampstand can only keep itself open for the refilling of the oil. When the opening is shut, there is no more refilling. That means there will be no continuation of the oil. The lampstand does not do anything. It just opens itself to receive the oil and to shine. It receives the filling oil, and then it expresses something; it shines. Actually, a lampstand is a real vessel containing oil.

Now you can understand the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. That is just the vessel with an extra portion of oil. There the vessel contains the oil for shining and burning. This is a virgin. A virgin in the eyes of the Lord is not one who is so busy and so active in doing but one who keeps himself open to receive the oil. Then the oil may burn from within to shine out. You surely have to see this basic thing. Let us come back to the matter of prayer. Too many times it was not the Lord who answered your prayer. Actually, you prayed yourself up. Your prayer motivated you. It was not the Lord answering your prayer to stir you up. Your prayer motivated you.

The most genuine prayer is the most killing one. The more you pray, the more you would get killed. The more you pray, the more your boiling self would be cooled down. Many prayers do not cool anything down; rather, they boil everything. Many Christian ministers know this kind of psychology. They use prayer as a means to motivate people. If they want someone to go to South Africa, they would ask him to pray for seven days to see whether he has the burden to consecrate himself to the mission field. Surely after seven days of prayer, he would be burdened to do this. Many Christian workers travel through certain churches to stir people up either to go to the mission field or to open their pocketbook. They always encourage people to go and pray concerning going to the mission field and pray concerning opening their pocketbook. Actually, it is not the Lord who opens his pocketbook; it is his prayer. So the ministers know the psychology to use the prayer as a key. Do you believe that everyone who has gone to the mission field was led by the Lord? I do not believe so. Many times you say that you were led by the Lord,

and you received the leading of the Lord. No. You were not led by the Lord. You were motivated by your prayer. You had a kind of superstitious prayer that did not nail you on the cross. If you get into a genuine prayer, you will be fully nailed on the cross. Not only are people superstitious concerning the Bible but also concerning prayer.

We must come back to the Lord to enter into the genuine fellowship with Him and to have some genuine prayer. This genuine prayer will kill your natural love. It will kill your natural activities for the Lord in His name. It may even kill your church service. Anything that can be killed should be killed. Anything that can be killed must be natural. Whatever can be killed by genuine prayer should be killed. That thing should not remain. Every Christian activity has to pass such a test, such a killing. We always encourage you to function in the meetings. But if your function is natural and not really out of the resurrection life, your genuine prayer will kill your function.

Many seeking saints through the centuries were first very active and eventually became very calm through their genuine prayers. Their genuine prayers calmed them down and killed so many activities in the Christian field. Then they began to experience the Lord Himself doing things directly from within them. This is what the Lord wants to do today. We should not expect that among us too many would be like this, but we must expect that a number of the seeking ones in the Lord's recovery would be brought into this kind of experience.

From these meetings I believe many of you fully realize now that the Lord wants you to be active-passive. This means that He wants you to love Him and keep yourself all the time open to Him but to stop doing. Then you would see that you are saved, you are empowered, you are sanctified. You will become one who really enjoys the Lord's doing. When you pray, you will all the time be full of thanks: "Lord, how I thank You! I do not have much to pray for. I do not have much to ask for, because my whole being is filled with thanks. I am so grateful to You because all the time You do everything within me and for me." You do not need to pray that the Lord will help you to win the victory and to overcome sin and to be patient. When you pray in this way, asking the Lord to help you, eventually it is not the Lord who helps you. You simply help yourself. Eventually, you are not so grateful, because you realize that you did everything. You just need to love Him and to keep yourself open to Him, giving Him every opportunity to do everything He wants to do. You become

the enjoyer, enjoying Him and enjoying His doing. So whenever you would pray, thanks would come out of your mouth because you are so grateful to the Lord. You would experience that the Lord is your victory, your sanctification, everything to you. You will be the enjoyer of what the Lord is and of what the Lord does.

This is the active-passive voice. Actually, the Christian life must be in this voice. It does not mean that you are lazy or indifferent or dumb or sleepy. No. You are on the alert, and you are so sober. You love the Lord, and you keep yourself open to Him all the time. Yet you would not do anything, but He would do everything. Not only is this possible, but this is also required by the Lord. The Lord requires you to stop your doing. But He does not want you to be sleepy or indifferent; He wants you to be very alert. Love Him and keep yourself open to Him. Tell Him every day, "Lord, I love You. Lord, I am here open to You. Lord, have mercy upon me, and by Your grace I do not like to have any part of my being closed to You. I like to keep myself entirely and thoroughly open to You." If you try this, you will see what will happen. You will not need to worry about your victory; you will not need to care for the losing of your temper.

Do not read the Bible in a superficial way like many of today's Christians. If you really get into the Bible to see what is revealed as an underlying line, it is this: you are a vessel created by God. As a vessel full of life, you need to exercise your emotion to love Him. Love the Lord your God with all your heart (Matt. 22:37). As a vessel, you do not need to do anything, but you need to keep yourself open. We all know the principle of the free will. If you do not love Him, the Lord would not force you to love Him. If you do not keep yourself open, the Lord would never force you to keep yourself open. So you must exercise your free will to love the Lord and to keep yourself open. But stay away from doing. Forget about your bad temper. Forget about your besetting sins. Forget about your weak points. Love the Lord and keep yourself open and stop doing.

What is the way to get rid of your peculiarity? We have already concluded that everybody is a peculiarity. You yourself are just a peculiarity. Without the Lord filling you as a vessel to work out something from within you, your whole being is a peculiarity. The only solution to our problems is the filling up of the Lord within us. And this depends upon our loving Him and keeping ourselves open to Him all the time. The proper prayer, the deeper prayer, the

genuine prayer, is just to keep yourself loving Him and open to Him. This may sound quite simple. In word it is simple, but in practice it is not so easy. It is not so simple to stop your doing. But by His mercy through the genuine prayer your doing will be stopped. The genuine prayer is always the killing prayer. It kills your every doing. The more you pray yourself into this genuine prayer, the more you are killed. Actually, it is not you who are killed but your activity. It is not you in yourself but you in your activity that will be killed. Your genuine prayer will one by one kill all your activities, and it will calm you down. Sometimes it will even kill your burden. Then you will be a clean, empty, and open vessel. You will be a living vessel absolutely calmed down so that your Master has the absolute free course to fill you up. When He fills you up, He does everything for you. Then you simply enjoy His doing. This is the proper, genuine Christian life. A genuine Christian life is one that loves the Lord and keeps itself open to the Lord and stops its doing. Then the Lord comes in and the Lord does everything and this vessel just contains the Lord and enjoys the Lord's filling up and enjoys the Lord's doing. This is the proper and genuine Christian life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE TOP REVELATION OF THE BIBLE— THE BODY OF CHRIST

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your move among us and even for Your move within us. Lord, we believe this recovery is Your testimony at the end of this age. Lord, we thank You for the environment. Oh, we thank You for arranging everything that we could come together. O Lord Jesus, in this dark age You have captured us, and You have put us together to come together all the time for Your Word. Lord, we believe that tonight You are one with us. Lord, You know that we do have a desire to be really one spirit with You. We do have a standing to believe that You are really one with us, even one with us in this matter of training. Lord, we do consecrate this Perfecting Training to You, and we offer ourselves to You anew. Lord, thank You for such a new start. Thank You that You have gained so many saints in this area who are seeking after You. Lord, we thank You that You have opened up Your Word so much more than ever before. Lord, we trust You for this year's Perfecting Training. Do grant us to have a good start, a glorious new beginning. Lord, come again to visit everyone tonight and reach everyone and touch everyone and grant everyone Your grace. Lord, this is all that we need. Anoint everyone. Anoint every part of the Training Meeting. Rescue this meeting out of any forms, any rituals. We like to get out of any forms, any rituals, and just to be in the spirit. Oh, do cover us. We again realize that this is a fighting for Your recovery and for Your testimony, so hide us and fight the war for us. We trust in You. Thank You, Lord, in Your precious name, Amen.

THE BODY

To begin this meeting I would like to ask a question: What is the top revelation in the holy Word? We know that the Bible has sixty-six books and that they were written over a period of at least sixteen hundred years. These sixty-six books cover a lot of things from eternity past to eternity future. They cover creation, salvation, and many other things. Bible students and Bible teachers have picked up a lot of subjects from the Bible, but we all have to see that the Body is *the* top point. Among all the thousands of words in the Bible, the *Body* should stand out to us. The biggest word in the Bible is the *Body*.

You have to realize that the most missed and neglected and lost point in the Bible is that the church is the Body of Christ. Many of you came from the background of Christianity. I do not have the confidence that you ever heard an adequate teaching concerning the Body while you were there. I was with the Brethren for seven and a half years. They were very famous fifty years ago for knowing the Bible. Every week I went to five of their meetings. I never heard one message concerning the Body, but I heard many messages concerning ten horns and four beasts. I never heard one message teaching me that Christ has a mystical Body—that besides His personal body, He has a mystical Body.

After the war, at the end of the 1950s I came to this country. I heard a lot of talk about the Body. I heard terms such as *Body life* and *Body ministry*. I went to visit all those who were talking in this way. I discovered that nearly no one knew what they were talking about. At least there was no Body. Today the most missed item of the revelation in the Bible is this one thing—the Body.

In the last two years we have stressed very strongly that Paul's ministry is the completing ministry to complete the divine revelation. Suppose you remove not all the writings of Paul but only Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians from the Bible. Then the Bible would have a big gap. If you took away some other books, you might not feel that there was such a big gap, but Paul's writings are the completion of the divine revelation. You have to realize that this completing ministry is altogether focused on the Body. Even in these four books, if you take away Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 1 and 4, and Colossians 1 and 2, you take away the chapters concerning the Body of Christ from Paul's writings. From these chapters you can see the top point, the ultimate point, of God's divine revelation, the Body.

Have you ever considered what is the top item produced by God in this universe? The heavens were produced, the earth was produced, man was produced, and even thousands of items were produced. God worked in creation, and God has been working through all the generations. God is still working, and we do not know how long His working will last, but eventually what will be the ultimate item that comes out of God's working? We have to see that it is the Body. You have to be deeply impressed that what will ultimately come out of God's working through all the centuries and all the generations will be a Body. Who is the Head of this Body? Christ is the Head. What will come out is just the Body. The Body is the ultimate item of God's

continual working, so the Body is the top point of God's entire revelation. You have to realize that not only has this matter been missed in Christianity, but even among us in the Lord's recovery we could not see too much actuality of the Body. If you go to the Christian bookstores and pick up different expositions on Romans, you will see that one may stress justification, and another may go on to say something about sanctification, but it is hard for you to get one exposition on Romans that stresses the Body adequately. Some expositions may have taught something concerning the government in chapter 13, but they have not said much concerning the Body in chapter 12.

What about 1 Corinthians? When I was young, I learned that some Christians appreciated a book written by one of the Brethren teachers on 1 Corinthians. That book mainly says that 1 Corinthians solves ten problems among the believers. Although this book talks a lot about these ten problems, it does not talk about a particular positive thing, that is, the Body in chapter 12. By reading chapter 12 carefully, you could see that two-thirds of that chapter is occupied with the Body. Today many teachers and expositors of the Bible talk a lot about other points, but they do not talk about the Body. Why? Because it is surely easy to see divisions or fornication or lawsuits or marriage and so forth, but it is hard for people to apprehend the Body. Of course, a lot of books were put out concerning the physical body of the Lord Jesus, which is signified by the bread in the bread-breaking meeting. Many of these were written especially against the heretical teachings of the Catholic Church, which say that that piece of bread becomes the actual physical body of Christ. But not many of the good writers talk about the other aspect of the Lord's body. One aspect of His body is His physical body; the other is the mystical Body. Very few have paid adequate attention to the mystical Body of Christ. When I was young, I saw all the so-called holy communions in Christianity. I would say that of the people who partook of the "holy communion," not one out of one hundred realized that the loaf also signifies the mystical Body of Christ. Rather, they simply realized that the loaf signified the physical body of Christ broken on the cross for us.

It is so good that we can see what is the top thing in the Bible, the Body. But the question is: How could we sinners become the Body of Christ? It is not that difficult. We may use the example of a denture. Even the very best denture is not a real part of the body; rather, it is an artificial part and may be considered as foreign matter put into your body. How then can all the parts of your body be your body? Anything that is in your body must be organic.

Recently, one young sister received a kidney transplant. Her brother's kidney was removed from him and transplanted into her body. That was not the fitting of a denture. Transplanting the kidney into the sister's body was something altogether organic.

ORGANIC MEMBERS

First of all we have to realize that we redeemed sinners have all been made part of Christ's Body. Also we have to realize that all the parts of Christ's Body are organic. They are not only organic but also properly organic. The sister who received a kidney transplant passed through a lot of things. In other words, she passed through a lot of adjustment because the kidney was not properly organic. The surgeons had to do a lot of adjustment to make that kidney properly organic. To be properly organic in the Body does not mean that you simply get baptized and that you get into a so-called church, and then you become a member of the Body of Christ; rather, it means that you must be organically united with Christ. You must be a part properly planted into Christ's Body organically. Then you will have a proper organic union with the Body of Christ. Then you will become a part of the Body. Every British subject is a member of the Church of England, but we would say strongly that that is not the church, because it is not something organic.

Many Christians today teach about regeneration, but they never tell people that regeneration brings you into an organic union with Christ, making you a part of Christ. What verses or what portions of the Bible tell us that such an organic matter makes us members of His Body? Only four books in the entire Bible have verses that mention the Body of Christ. In the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels, there is no mention of the Body of Christ. Even in the book of Acts, which is very much related to the establishment of the church, there is no mention of the Body. Even in 2 Corinthians, which is deeper than 1 Corinthians, there is no mention of the Body. In no other Epistles does Paul mention the Body besides these four books. Furthermore, only the apostle Paul reveals the Body to us. Peter, John, James, and Jude do not mention the matter of the Body. Only the minister who completed the revelation, the apostle Paul, talks about the Body. And even among his fourteen books, only four mention the Body.

We need to ask a further question: among these four books—Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians—which touches the matter of the organic union? Even as the four Gospels show us one person from four

different angles, so these four books view the Body from four different directions. Each of these four books has its own angle of viewing the Body. Two words from Romans 12:5 indicate the organic union—*in Christ*. "In Christ" is a matter of the organic union. "We who are many are one Body in Christ." Just this one little phrase tells us from which angle Romans 12 speaks of the Body. It speaks from the angle of the life union, from the angle of the organic union. How then could we get into Christ? We were not born in Christ; we were born in Adam, but by being reborn we have been transplanted into Christ. We were dead in Adam, and God took us out of Adam and transplanted us into Christ by rebirth. This little phrase *in Christ* has been used many times in the New Testament. Whenever you read *in Christ*, you must remember that this indicates the organic union with Christ. *In Christ* always implies the thought or the fact that you are organically one with Christ.

Why does Romans 12 talk about the function of the Body? Because it talks about the Body based upon the organic union we have in Christ. In this union with Christ there is life. Dentures may be put into my mouth, but there is no organic union. The denture will not function in an organic way because there is no organic union. We have to see that Romans 12 talks about the Body of Christ from the angle of the organic union, from the uniting life, from a life that unites us together not only with Christ but also with all the other members of Christ. Today the Christians know the Bible too superficially. Many teachers talk about Romans 12, but hardly one would tell you that Romans 12 talks about the Body from the angle of the organic union.

If we could not see the organic union that we have with Christ, we could never understand what the Body is. The Body does not mean simply that you love me and I love you. That is a society. In 1963 I was invited to visit many places throughout the U.S.A. Many small groups were "hot" at that time; they all liked to hug one another. Although that did not scare me to death, that bothered me with a kind of stinking odor. That was just a kind of hugging society.

When I was with the Bible-teaching assembly, I heard a lot of messages out of Ephesians 4 mostly concerning humility, the bond of love, meekness, and so forth. But for some reason there was hardly a message on the Body. Although they even talked about the oneness, they did not speak concerning the Body. Even if we are meek and humble and all really love one another, is

that the Body? Even Confucius taught some of these things: you must be meek; you must be humble. Confucius taught meekness, humility, and kindness, but he never touched the organic union with Christ that we all may become the Body.

We all have to realize that the Body of Christ is altogether a matter of life that keeps us in an organic union with Christ. When we remain in this organic union, we are in the Body. When we do not remain in this organic union, we are out of the Body. You need to check yourself for one day to see how much time you remain in this organic union. You will have to admit that you do not remain very much in this organic union. Occasionally we get there, but quite often we get out of there, so we are not in the Body. The actuality of the Body is the remaining in the organic union with Christ. If we are going to be actually living in the Body life, we must remain in the organic union with Christ. In other words, we must be remaining in Christ. So John 15 charges us to abide in Him. To abide in Him simply means to remain in this organic union. When we remain in this organic union, we are actually living in the Body. If we do not remain in this organic union with Christ, we have left the Body. As long as you say something by yourself, you have left the Body. This means that your gossip, your free talk, your loose conversation, is a strong sign that you have left the Body.

The Body is not an organization or a society. The Body is not just a bunch of Christians coming together. The Body is something that is held together by the organic union with Christ. When we remain in the organic union with Christ, we are just living in the Body. Otherwise, we leave the Body. If we talk by ourselves, it is a strong sign that we have left the Body. So the Body is altogether a matter in the organic union with Christ. We are many yet one Body in Christ (Rom. 12:5). *In Christ* implies an organic union.

If you read Ephesians and Colossians carefully, you could see that Ephesians tells us that the church is the fullness of Christ, the new man, the household of God, the commonwealth, that is, the citizenship of God, and the habitation of God. The church is also the bride and the warrior. But you have to realize that the basic item is the Body, and all the other items are subsidiary. Actually, Ephesians does not talk about the new man; it talks about the Body as the new man. It does not talk about the fullness of Christ; it talks about the Body as the fullness of Christ. All the other terms are subsidiary. The basic term is only one—*the Body*. The Body is the house of God. The Body is the

commonwealth of God. The Body is the bride. The Body is the warrior. It is not so good to turn it around and say that the warrior is the Body or that the house is the Body or that the new man is the Body. The Body is the main point, and all these other terms are subsidiary.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE FOCAL POINT OF ROMANS—THE BODY OF CHRIST

Prayer: Lord, how we are grateful to You for Your mercy and grace! Lord, we do worship You. By Your mercy and grace You have shown us Your heart's desire. Lord, thank You for the enlightening. Lord, tonight we look unto You. Lord, do come again to visit us and to bless us. Lord, we believe that You are with us. You are really one with us. Lord, we are here waiting on You. We do not like to do anything apart from You. Lord, do touch every heart. Oh, do sober every mind and do open up every spirit. Lord, we believe that we are one in You. We are one in You in one goal with one direction. Lord, here You do have the best oracle on this earth. Thank You, Lord, You have so many saints as an oracle for You to speak. Oh, Lord, speak to us Your heart, and bring us all into Your heart. Lord, we need such a heavenly vision. Lord, we do not like to stay here on this earth; we like to be with You in the heavenlies. Oh, bring us all into the heavenlies, into Your heart, even, Lord, into Your desire. Oh, show us the way and grace us. How much we need Your grace! Lord, we pray again that You would cover us with Your prevailing blood against any attacks of the enemy. And hide us in You, Lord. Lord, You know this is a battle. We trust in You, we look unto You, and we believe that You are coming down to visit everyone. Lord, thank You. No meeting is in vain, and no word spoken is in vain. Do strengthen us. Strengthen our fellowship; strengthen our conversation; strengthen our understanding. In Your precious name, Amen.

The Bible is too all-inclusive, too deep, and too profound. Romans is the first book among all the Epistles. We know that there are only five books out of twenty-seven in the New Testament that are not Epistles. All the twenty-two books from Romans through Revelation are Epistles. Even Revelation is an Epistle. Romans is the first of all these Epistles. Once again I would like to give you a little sketch of the New Testament. Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, five are at the beginning. Actually, these five are just a kind of biography of one person. Even the book of Acts is a part of this biography. Matthew is a part, Mark is a part, and both Luke and John are parts of the biography of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And Acts is a

continuation of this biography. This biography is not finished at the end of the Gospel of John, because that section of the four Gospels only gives us the first section of this universal man's biography—the section on this earth. But this man now is not on this earth; He is in the heavens. Yet this heavenly man is still continuing to work on this earth through a channel. Later, we will see what this channel is. For now, you need to pick up the word *channel.*

This heavenly man was walking, living, and working on the earth for thirty-three and a half years as a little man, a Nazarene. Then He ascended to the heavens. Then from the heavens He began to move on this earth continually in a channel. What is the channel on the earth? The first five books are a complete biography of the all-inclusive man, Jesus Christ. The channel, which is His Body, through which He continues His ministry from the heavens on the earth, needs twenty-two books to define it. All the twenty-two Epistles are definitions of this channel.

THE FOCUS OF ROMANS

Most Christian teachers teach that the book of Romans is a sketch of the Christian life. Yes, it is. But I am sorry to say, perhaps not one of so many teachers has ever said what the ultimate focus of the book of Romans is. Most of the Bible students and teachers would consider that the main subject of the book of Romans is justification by faith. Martin Luther stressed this book to the uttermost. Martin Luther was very strong on justification by faith. But at least there is one book with one verse which says that justification is not only by faith but also by works (James 2:24). This offended Martin Luther because he was so strong for justification by faith. So he said that the book of James should be burned. I do not blame him, because he was so burdened at that time. He concentrated his entire being on this one thing—justification by faith, not by works.

While he was quite strong concerning justification by faith, I would say that he did not stress much concerning the Body. The Body is more clearly revealed in the book of Romans than in many other books. Whether Martin Luther saw the Body in Romans or not I do not know, but I do know that he did not stress it. All the Christians know that Martin Luther was a strong teacher and minister of justification by faith. He may have seen something concerning the Body, but that was not his stress. Now, however, we all have to see that justification by faith is just the first station of this book of Romans.

FOUR STATIONS

The book of Romans has four stations. The first is the station of justification, then sanctification, then the Body, and then the churches. The journey begins from the first station of justification, and it passes through sanctification to reach the Body. Finally, there are the churches to express the Body. From this sketch there is no argument that the real focus of this book is the Body. It is not even the churches but the Body. The churches are simply the expressions of the Body. It is altogether right to say that Romans is a sketch of the Christian life, but most of the teachers of the Bible did not see the focus of the Christian life. The focus of the Christian life is not justification or sanctification but the Body. If you miss the Body, you do not have the center of the Christian life; you do not have the goal; you do not have the aim; you do not have any direction. For what are you sanctified? You are sanctified so that you can practically be a member of the Body. The Body is the focus, the center, of the Christian life. By His mercy the Lord has shown us this vision. It is in the Bible; it is in Romans, but Christians have not seen it. When I was young, I read some expositions on the book of Romans. Most of them said that from chapter 12 to the end of the book Paul tells us how to walk as a believer. This is not wrong. But the strange thing is that none of these teachers pointed out that the way to walk as a believer must be first to live in the Body.

You cannot imagine how many Christian sermons have been given on Romans 12:1. Whoever would speak on consecration would surely use this verse. But few of these messages would tell us the purpose of consecration. What is the goal of consecration? If you read Romans 12:1-5 carefully, you can see that the purpose of consecration is so that you can realize the Body. Consecration is for the Body.

The Body life is the first item of the believer's walk. If you would know how to walk as a believer in Christ, the first item is to live the Body life. Romans talks about the Body life in a way to show us that the Body is the focus of the Christian life. From this point in the Perfecting Training, we will begin to spend more time in the book of Romans.

IN CHRIST

In the last meeting I gave you that little phrase *in Christ*. This little phrase indicates the organic union that we have with Christ. As we are in Christ,

surely there is a kind of union. When the Bible was being translated into the Chinese language, this term, *in Christ,* bothered the translators to the uttermost. Nearly all of them said that there was no way to translate the Bible into Chinese. In the Chinese language there is not such an expression to say that you are in someone. Humanly speaking we would not say that one person is in another person. But the Bible has this expression, that we are in Christ. Even this kind of expression was first used by the Lord Jesus in John 15 where He said that He is the vine, we are the branches, and we should abide in Him (v. 5). Due to our background, we Christians take this kind of expression for granted. We never bothered to check it out. Even before I was saved, I heard messages concerning abiding in Him. Sometimes I did not pay attention to what they were talking about, but at other times I did pay attention and I asked, How could you abide in Jesus? No doubt this expression strongly indicates that there is a kind of organic union, which spontaneously implies mingling. When you put tea into water, could you say that the tea abides in the water just in a kind of union without mingling? Likewise, how could we just be in union with Christ without mingling?

In Christ is a short phrase, but do not consider that this is a small expression. This is a great expression because it reveals such a great thing—that between you and Christ there is an organic union. If you do not have such an organic union, I would not call you a brother. A brother or a sister must be one in this organic union. Do not take this phrase, *in Christ,* for granted.

SUPPORTS OF THE FOCAL POINT

The Bible has a principle: every book in the Bible has a focal point, which is supported by many verses. These supports may be considered like the four legs supporting a table. Even a small table has four legs supporting it. To find out the supports of a focal point in a certain book, you have to take care of the context of the entire book. In Romans the expression *in Christ* does have adequate support. What are the verses that are the supports of this organic union "in Christ" found in Romans?

In chapters 1 through 4 it is hard to find any support of the organic union. But in chapter 5 there are several supports. Verse 10 says that we are saved in His life. We were justified, reconciled, through the death of Christ, but we will be saved much more in His life. Then verse 17 says, "If, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the

abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." Martin Luther stressed the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness very much, but I doubt whether he stressed that the abundant grace and the gift of righteousness are for reigning in life. To reign in life is much higher than being saved in life. Then verse 18 uses the term *unto justification of life*. This means that justification is for life or unto life. Verse 21 goes on to say that grace might reign unto eternal life. *Unto* means "with a view to" or "resulting in." Grace reigns with a view to or resulting in life. In chapter 5 *life* is mentioned at least four times: first, we need to be saved in life; second, we need to reign in life; third, we are justified for life; and fourth, grace reigns, resulting in life. So according to chapter 5, life, not justification, is the focus.

Now let us go on to chapter 6. Verse 3 says, "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death." Many teachers have stressed that we are baptized into His death, but they have not stressed adequately that we have been baptized into Christ. That we have been baptized into Christ Jesus is the strongest support of the phrase *in Christ*. How did you get into Christ? You have been baptized into Christ. Although I do not like to speak concerning others' shortage, I must point out that many Christians today stress the tail more than the head. They pick up the tail and forget about the head. Many teachers have stressed that we have been baptized into His death. I have never heard a message at a baptism telling people that they have been baptized into Christ. They always said that we are baptized into the death of Christ. But this verse concerning being baptized into Christ is the strongest support of the thought of the organic union in Christ.

Verse 4 goes on to say that we "might walk in newness of life," and verse 5 says that "if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection." This indicates a process of growth where we are growing into His death and through His death into His resurrection. This is an organic union in which growth takes place so that one partakes of the life and characteristics of another. In 6:5 there is an organic union. This growing together with Christ is a kind of organic union. In this organic union the life grows. Growth takes place. One part partakes of the life and characteristics of the other part. That means we partake of the life and characteristics of Christ. This is the organic union.

Verse 8 goes on to say that "we will also live with Him." If we are not one with Him, how could we live with Him? It does not mean that we simply stay together with Him; it means that we live together with Him. Verse 11 says that we are "living to God in Christ Jesus." Verse 13 says that we need to present ourselves to God as alive from the dead. This also indicates our union with Christ. The last verse in this chapter also is a support for the organic union: "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 23).

Today the Pentecostal people often ask, Have you received the "gift"? My answer would be, What kind of gift do you mean? This would open their eyes. When they speak of receiving the "gift," they are referring mainly to speaking in tongues. But I have received a bigger gift than a tongue. I have received the eternal life. This is a much bigger gift. This shows the superficiality of today's Christians. We have received the gift of eternal life. This means that the organic union is a free gift.

Chapter 8 also has some strong supports for this matter of being in Christ as an organic union. Verse 2 mentions the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Here is life, here is the Spirit of life, and here is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is a strong support. Verse 6 says that "the mind set on the spirit is life and peace," and verse 10 says that "the spirit is life because of righteousness." In the *Life-study of Romans* we pointed out that these verses in chapter 8 reveal four layers of the matter of life. First, God's Spirit is life. Second, our human spirit is life. Third, the mind is life, and finally, our body is life. This life first is the life of the Spirit. Then this life comes into our being, into our spirit. Then it saturates our soul and, eventually, saturates our body. This is the organic union.

Chapter 11, revealing the grafting, also is a strong support of the organic union. All of us were wild branches, yet thank the Lord, His grace has grafted us into Christ! Again, it is ridiculous to say that mingling is a heresy. The branches grafted into the tree are not only united but mingled. To say that they are only united and not mingled is terrible. They are not like two iron bars. Two iron bars may be united, but they are not mingled. But if a branch is grafted into a tree, no doubt the two are mingled. The two bars of iron can only have a kind of connecting. They do not have the organic union. An organic union is a matter of mingling.

From chapter 11 we go to chapter 12. Chapter 12 indicates that we need to consecrate our bodies so that our minds may be transformed to see and discern the will of God, which is just to have a Body for Christ produced out of the organic union. Verse 5 says, "We who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another." This verse means that we who are many are just one Body in Christ, in this organic union. Have you seen all these supports of this one focal point—in Christ? Chapter 12 continues by saying that as a believer, based upon the organic union in Christ, you need to realize the Body life by having all three parts of your being exercised. Our body is mentioned in verse 1 where we are told to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. So our body needs to be offered. Then in verse 2 we need to have our mind renewed. Our mind represents our soul. It is the main part of our soul. So this refers to the transformation of the soul for the Body life. The body needs to be presented, and the soul needs to be transformed. Then in verse 11 we have to be burning in spirit. This refers to the exercise of the human spirit, the mingled spirit, for the Body life. For the Body of Christ we have to offer our body. Then our soul needs to be transformed, and our spirit needs to be on fire. Thus, all three parts of our human being are exercised. In order to realize this focus of the Christian life, that is, the Body of Christ, we need to fully experience the organic union in Christ with a thorough realization that we are organically one with Christ in life.

To practice this Body life, you must first have your body offered to God. After having your body offered to God, you must have your soul transformed. You must be transformed in your soul by the renewing of your mind. Rarely can you hear teaching concerning this point among today's Christians. You can hardly hear a message on transformation or on the renewing of the mind. In the past twenty years we have put out many messages on transformation. This is absolutely and thoroughly needed. Our body must be offered and consecrated, and our soul must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Then our spirit has to be burning, to be on fire. If this is your case, I have the full confidence that you are now practically in the Body life. If you do not realize the organic union in Christ and you do not have your body offered, your soul transformed by the renewing of the mind, or your spirit burning, you are just outside the Body and apart from the Body, practically speaking.

AN ENTRANCE INTO THE PRACTICAL BODY LIFE

From now on we will spend much of this Perfecting Training on Romans. If you have some leisure time, think about Romans, and pray about the Body of Christ. Restrict your consideration, your feeling, and your sensation about the Body of Christ to Romans. If time and occasion allow, I also hope you would fellowship with some others. It is best to fellowship with only two or three or at the most four. We, the married people, do have a privilege in that we always have at least two. Fellowship about this, and pray. This is not a small thing. We need a strong revelation, and we need a stronger vision to see this matter. It is too mysterious. The mystical Body of Christ is too mysterious for us human beings to grasp. Yet we do have the life of this Body, and we also have the Spirit of this Body. Thank the Lord for this. So pray and exercise your inner being to think over this book concerning the Body. Also remind yourself of what we have covered in the past two Perfecting Training meetings. Do not consider that these are simply doctrines. You must consider that these are precious light from the very heart of God. They are altogether worthy of our thinking, considering, praying, and fellowshipping. This Perfecting Training has no intention to pass on to you mere doctrine. We have the heavy burden to help all of us enter into the practical Body life. We all need an entrance into the practical Body life. If we could have this kind of life, this kind of vision, of the Body, we will be able to enter into the practical Body life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

SONSHIP FOR THE BODY LIFE

In this chapter we need to touch another crucial point in Romans, which is basically related to the Body of Christ. I do not know how much you have really entered into this book. Many Christians do have some understanding of the book of Romans. Even we ourselves had the life-study training on Romans, and over the years we have put out sixty-five messages on this book. In this Perfecting Training I consider that all of you have read through those sixty-five messages. Based upon this understanding, I want to ask a question: Besides the organic union, which is very much implied in this book concerning the Body of Christ, what is another vital item in Romans that has so much to do not only with the Body of Christ but also with the organic union? Actually, the organic union, strictly speaking, does not bring us into the Body of Christ so directly. The organic union first brings us into something prior to the Body of Christ. Romans does not tell us in such a direct way that we are the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not mentioned or touched or revealed before chapter 12. In the preceding eleven chapters there are many basic items. No doubt the first basic item is justification by faith, including reconciliation with God. Then after justification by faith there is the matter of the organic union, because there is such a phrase as *unto justification of life* (5:18). The organic union is a kind of issue from justification. Justification is not for justification itself; justification is unto life, for life. This is in chapter 5.

SONSHIP

In chapter 8 there is a big and vital item that has been neglected by nearly all the Christians. This is the matter of sonship. In at least one of the messages on Romans, we pointed out strongly that the focal point of this book is not justification by faith or sanctification but to make sinners into the sons of God. The focal point of Romans is to produce sonship for the Body. In reading the Bible you may first touch the surface, but then you need to dive into that part and get to the bottom. In every chapter of the Bible there are these two aspects: the aspect of the surface and the aspect of the depth. Many Christians have touched the surface of Romans 8, but they have not seen something that is deeper.

FROM THE SPIRIT TO SONSHIP

Every Christian realizes that they need the Spirit. So, when they come to the Bible and read any chapter that has this term, *the Spirit,* it is easy for them to see. This is because the matter of the Spirit is already in their Christian realization. But one thing is very strange and very foreign to the Christian realization. In a sense it is absent. This is the matter of sonship. For many years I read the book of Romans, and I especially paid much attention to 8:23 concerning the redemption of our body. That term I picked up easily. But I never picked up the thought of sonship. Let us read verse 23: "Not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body." In this verse the redemption of our body is in apposition to the matter of sonship. Although I had picked up the matter of the redemption of the body, I never saw the matter of sonship. Some translations of the Bible even use the word *adoption* rather than *sonship*. The word *adoption* confuses the concept. Actually, *sonship* means to be a son of God. Yes, chapter 8 is a chapter on the Spirit, but there is some progress. It goes from the Spirit to sonship. Verse 2 first speaks of the Spirit of life. According to verse 10, the Spirit of life is first in our spirit. Then verse 6 points out that the life of the Spirit spreads into our mind, and in verse 11 it even saturates our mortal body. From verses 14, 15, and 16 we can see that the Spirit of life is the spirit of sonship because our regenerated human spirit has been mingled with the Spirit. The spirit of sonship makes us sons of God. The Spirit of life produces sons of God. So the Spirit of life is eventually the spirit of sonship making us sons of God.

OUR REACTION TO THE SPIRIT

Romans 8 also reveals to us what kind of reaction we should have toward such a spirit. First, we should walk according to the spirit. We should walk according to the Spirit of life in our spirit, which is the spirit of sonship. Second, we should be led by Him. To walk according to the spirit is from our side. For Him to lead us is from His side. On our side we walk after Him and walk according to Him. On His side He is leading us. There is quite a difference between these two aspects. To walk according to the spirit is much easier than to be led by the Spirit. For me to walk according to you is somewhat easy, but for me to be led by you is not so easy. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (v. 14). Verse 16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." The Spirit within us witnesses with our spirit not that we are sons of God but that we are

children of God. In verse 16 we are children; in verse 14 we are sons; in verse 17 we become heirs. There are these three words: *children*, *sons*, and *heirs*. No doubt children are very young and childish. Sons are ones who have grown up. Heirs are ones who have matured. First, we are children, then we are sons, and eventually we are heirs. The Spirit witnesses within us that we are born of God, that we are children of God. But when we are being led by the Spirit, we are sons of God. This means that we are stronger. We are growing up; we are sons of God. Eventually, we will mature to be heirs.

Our reaction to the Spirit must be that we first walk according to the spirit. Then we must be led by Him all the time. Although we are practicing to walk according to the spirit, we may not be led by the Spirit. If you check with your own experience, you will see that there is a little discrepancy here. You are walking according to spirit, yet you discover while you are walking according to the spirit that you would not be led by Him. For example, for the whole day you have been walking according to the spirit, and even you come to the meeting still acting according to the spirit. Yet in the meeting, when the Spirit leads you to function, you would not function. And all the while that you would not be led by the Spirit to function in the meeting, you still think that you are walking according to the spirit. If I could take away this veil from you, you could see that many times while you are walking according to the spirit, you would not be led by Him.

The Spirit is the most gentle and meek person. The Spirit who dwells in us is not like us. We are easily offended, but the indwelling Spirit is not. Although we have offended Him many times, He is still here. For example, while we were walking according to Him, He led us to talk to a certain person, but we would not. While we were walking according to Him, He led us to call upon the name of the Lord, but we would not call. While we were walking according to the spirit, He led us to function in the meeting, but we would not. Once the meeting was over, we repented and regretted because we offended Him. Even though we offended Him so many times, He is still here.

Do you really walk according to the spirit? Are you led by Him all the time? Too many times while we are walking according to Him, we would not be led by Him. We walk according to Him, but we just would not take His leading. To walk according to the spirit is easier than to be led by Him, to take His leading. You may consider that if you do not take His leading, then you are not walking according to Him. Doctrinally you may say this, but experientially

you may walk according to Him and still not take His leading. Do not consider that this is a matter of "splitting hairs." If you do not have such a splitting, I do not believe that you can enter into the realization of the Body of Christ. You could never get through the matter of sonship. The Body of Christ comes after the sonship. If you only walk according to the spirit, yet you would not take the leading of the Spirit and be led by Him, you are short of the proper reaction to Him.

For example, a baby first learns how to crawl. To walk according to the spirit may be likened to crawling. But to take the leading of the Spirit, to be led by Him, is to stand up and walk. Many of us can crawl, but we cannot stand up and take some steps. If you are still only able to walk according to the spirit, you are still a child; you are not growing up into a son. Those who are led by the Spirit are not children but sons of God. To walk according to the spirit is just spiritual crawling. But to take the leading of the Spirit and to be led by Him is a kind of spiritual walking. If He leads you to pray, regardless of the situation you would stop your doing and pray. Too many times every day while we are walking according to the spirit, He asks us to pray, but we would not. He leads us to pray just for two minutes, but we would not. Yet all the while we are trying to walk according to Him. We must learn to react to the Spirit in these aspects: to walk according to Him and to be led by Him.

AN EAGER EXPECTATION

After this, Paul goes on in the same chapter to show us that in our reaction to the spirit of sonship, there must be a kind of eager expectation. We must be eagerly expecting sonship. This means that while you are walking according to the spirit and you are taking His leading to be led by Him, you realize that in your being you do not live like a son of God. So, deep within you there is a kind of eager expectation, eagerly expecting the sonship. Within you there is a longing that you could live a life absolutely like the Son of God. According to the context of this verse, it is mainly due to this kind of eagerness that God comes in to arrange your circumstances. He uses all things working together for you to transform you and to change you from a son of Adam to a son of God. He would change you from a son of man to a son of God. This is not only a work of transformation; in fact, this chapter does not use the word *transformation,* but there is the word *conformed.* Verses 28 and 29 read, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He

foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." This is not only transformation but also conformation to make you exactly in the same image of His Son. This is to make you a son in full.

MEMBERS BY SONSHIP

By this you can see that on the surface chapter 8 is on the Spirit. But under the surface, in the depth, it is a chapter on sonship, which is being carried out by the Spirit of life. Eventually, this Spirit in our spirit is the spirit of sonship. We have to see that sonship is vital and basic to the Body of Christ. I would say that the matter of the organic union is just the initiation. The organic union is the start, whereas the sonship is something that is built upon the organic union. We cannot be members of Christ if we are not sons of God. Our membership in the Body of Christ depends upon our sonship. In the house of God sonship is crucial and vital to our membership. I am sorry to say, this word *membership* has been altogether dirtied, defiled, spoiled, and corrupted, not only by the secular use but also by its use in Christianity. Some simply get enrolled and sprinkled with a few drops of water, and they become members. That is too cheap! We all are members of the Body of Christ; this membership depends upon the sonship.

In Matthew 16 the Lord asked Peter who He was, and Peter answered that the Lord was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ as the Son of the living God is for the building up of Christ. The Son of God builds up Christ, and everyone who is built into Christ must be a son of God. The Head of this Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and all the members of the Body of Christ are the many sons of God. Christ, individually and corporately, is just a collection, a composition, of sons of God. The Head of this corporate Christ is the firstborn Son of God, and the Body of this corporate Christ is the composition of so many sons of God. The sons of God are a matter of life, and the members of Christ are a matter of function. Many Christians today do not pay much attention to the Body of Christ. Even those who talk about the Body of Christ do not see that the Body of Christ comes out of the sonship.

Several years ago in Elden hall I stressed in some messages that Romans 12 is a direct continuation of Romans 8. We may consider chapters 9 through 11 as parenthetical. This means that if you have not passed through chapter 8, you can never be in chapter 12. Nearly all the Christians have stopped in chapter 4. They have not stepped into chapter 5 yet. A small number are in

chapter 7 struggling. Very few are in Romans 8. Fewer still have passed from chapter 8 into chapter 12. For their entire life they may linger in chapter 8. Very few have entered into chapter 12.

REGENERATED AND RECONSTITUTED

You have to realize that to be a son of God you first need to be regenerated. We were not born sons of God; we were born sons of man, descendants of Adam. We were born sons of man; we were constituted sons of man; we were educated sons of man. Then suddenly we were reborn to be sons of God. As sons of God, we had a new start, our regeneration. Following regeneration we need reconstitution. We need both regeneration and reconstitution. You may have been regenerated, but have you been reconstituted? To be transformed and conformed is to be reconstituted. You were a son of man, and you have been regenerated to be a son of God. But today you do not live like a son of God. You still live like a son of man. You have been reborn, yet you have not been reconstituted. This reconstitution will continue to take place even to the time of the redemption of our body. Although some have not experienced the redemption of their body, they have been reconstituted to a certain extent. Because they have been reconstituted, they can control and subdue the unredeemed body. Even now we are very much under the influence of our body. Our body exercises a big role in our daily life, our family life, and, unfortunately, even in our church life. But when we have been reconstituted to a certain extent, our body will be fully under the control of the reconstitution. This means that the body will not play that much of a role in our daily life, and our fleshly body will not exercise too much influence over our Christian walk. This is why the opening words of Romans 12 indicate that we need to offer our body. In chapter 12 we can see consecration on the surface. That is somewhat superficial. It is not just a matter of consecration; it is a matter of the full control and the full subduing of your body. Most Christians misinterpret the offering of the body in chapter 12. In certain meetings people may be encouraged to offer their body to be a missionary. But Romans 12 says that we offer our body not to be a missionary but to be a sacrifice. Everyone may like to be a missionary; nobody likes to be a sacrifice. To offer your body as a missionary does not need any subduing, any control, of the body. Your body, because it is still not yet redeemed, is rebellious. Unless your entire being has been reconstituted, you cannot control your rebellious body.

Now we are going deeper and deeper to touch some part of the depths of Romans. Why could we not enter into the practical Body life? Because our body is still so rebellious. Our unredeemed body is still not under any kind of bridle; we cannot manage it. Why? Because we are still short of reconstitution. We have been regenerated, and now we are being reconstituted. Our reconstitution has not reached that standard where we are able to control this unredeemed body.

We all have to see that to enter into chapter 12 of Romans, we must pass through chapter 8. If we are going to enter into the Body life, we must pass through the sonship. The sonship is just the building up of the organic union. We have been regenerated. We secured the organic union in our regeneration. But after securing the organic union we need to build it up. The building up is the sonship. When we are living practically as the sons of God, we are the members of Christ. The Head of this Body is the firstborn Son of God, and all the members of this Body are the many sons of God. They are the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God.

You have to see what the Body of Christ is. It is just a composition of the sons of God. The Body of Christ is totally just a composition of the divine life. The sons of God are just the expression of the divine life. The Son of God is the expression of the Father, the divine life, and we are the many sons; so we also are the expression of the divine life.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

PRESENTING TO GOD AN UNEMPLOYED BODY FOR THE BODY LIFE

In this chapter we will still be in the book of Romans for the Body of Christ. So far, from the book of Romans we have picked up two main points: the organic union and the sonship for the Body of Christ. In this chapter we need to pick up another point after the organic union and the sonship. Chapter 12 begins with these words: *Present your bodies.* But do you think that your body is okay for you to present to the Lord? In other words, what kind of body do you have? When you talk about presenting your body in chapter 12, you have to go back to see what kind of body you have. By considering the entire book of Romans, you can realize what kind of body you have. Our body is first mentioned in 6:6. Before this verse the book of Romans considers the body as flesh. But in 6:6 the body is called definitely the body. But here it is not a good one but rather the body of sin. Let us read Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." This verse indicates that when we are crucified with Christ, the body of sin is annulled, unemployed; it loses its job. It has nothing to do. Why is the body unemployed? Because it is a body of sin, and God would never employ a body of sin. When you present your body to God, are you going to present a body of sin? What kind of body shall you present?

Today in Christianity there are a lot of revival meetings. In many revival meetings an altar call may be given based upon Romans 12, exhorting people to present their body. But I am afraid that they do not consider what kind of body they have. Do they have a body good for presenting to God? What kind of body do you have? Is it a body without sin or a body of sin? Because it is a body of sin, how could you present such a thing to God? It means a lot for Romans 12:1 to tell us to present our body to God. But you have to realize that Romans 12:1 does not come until eleven chapters have been passed through. After eleven chapters have been concluded, the body that can be presented to God can be a living sacrifice. Of course, the body of sin can never be a living sacrifice to God.

Romans 7 also mentions our body. Let us read verse 24: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” This verse mentions the body of death. Which is better: the body of sin or the body of death? Of course, neither of these is good, but which is worse?

SIN AND DEATH

You have to see that sin is initial; death is ultimate. At the initiation, it is sin; at the consummation, it is death. Death comes out of sin. Sin brings forth death. No doubt, the consummation is worse than the initiation. Sin is a kind of sickness, and death is a kind of dying. So the consummation is worse. You cannot say that one is better. Rather, you would have to say that one is bad, and the other is worse. Sin in your body makes you very active. Sin energizes a sinner’s body to sin. It makes your body very active, like a wild horse, so that you can hardly bridle it. Many fallen people cannot bridle their body. Because sin energizes their body to such an extent, they cannot control it.

Death, on the other hand, does not energize; it weakens. Death weakens your body in keeping God’s word and in keeping God’s commandments. God’s commandment says that you should not be covetous, but when you try not to be covetous, something is within you weakening you. That something is death.

Our body was and still is a real problem. It has two things within it—sin and death. Sin causes the trouble, energizing you to do bad things, and death weakens you to the uttermost. Let me illustrate it in this way: After coming home from work, you tell your wife that you are very tired. Even at the dining table you are so tired that you cannot give a word of grace. So you ask your wife to speak a word of grace. You are too tired. But later when a telephone call comes, you are able to talk for a lengthy time. Once the phone call comes, something within you rises up to energize your tired body to talk on the phone for a long time. Yet when you needed to pray before the meal, something within you weakened you almost to the point of death. Sometimes the saints have felt so tired that they could not come to the meeting. They felt that they should stay home to rest. But they could testify that even when they stayed home, they did not rest. Rather, they did many things.

We have to see that these two things, sin and death, are all the time working within us. One energizes us to do the negative things, while the other weakens us in doing the positive things. Sometimes you may have told your wife that

you did not have the time or you did not have the energy to talk with her, but if you became angry with her, you had sufficient energy to talk to her. This means that you have death weakening you, and you have sin energizing you. Both of these two are in our body. So the body is a body of sin and a body of death.

With such a body, what can you do to please God? Whatever this body does cannot please God; it can only please itself. A body of sin and death can do nothing to please God. After Romans 6, which mentions the body of sin, and after Romans 7, which mentions the body of death, you come to chapter 8. Chapter 8 also mentions the body, saying, "If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live" (v. 13). This indicates that all the practices of the body should be killed. Whether sin is energizing your body or whether death is weakening your body, the practices of your body have to be put to death. You have to kill the practices of your body by the indwelling Spirit. This verse mentions both the flesh and the body. It says that if you live according to flesh, you must die, but then it says that you need to put to death the practices of the body. What are the practices of the body? That is the flesh. These two matters, the flesh and the practices of the body, are synonyms. They are used interchangeably. The flesh equals the practices of the body, and the practices of the body equals the flesh. Of course, to put to death means to mortify, to kill. So we have three verses with three different terms: *the body of sin* in 6:6, *the body of this death* in 7:24, and *the practices of the body* in 8:13. These three verses are very crucial, describing your body in such a manner. It is of sin, it is of death, and it is of practices that cannot please God and must be put to death.

Chapter 8 also has another good verse concerning the body: "We ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body" (v. 23). Once you realize that your body is a body of sin and death, you would groan, and you would earnestly expect for your body to be redeemed. Once you realize that you have a body that can do nothing to please God, you would groan, and you would expect to be redeemed. You can do nothing to help your body; your body needs redemption.

NOT ASCETICISM

Some, realizing that their body needed to be dealt with, have practiced asceticism. Asceticism is mainly to deal with this body of sin, of death, and of

bad practices in a severe way. But in Romans Paul is not speaking concerning asceticism. God's salvation does not need asceticism. Actually, Paul does not say that our body needs to be put to death but that the practices of our body need to be put to death. He makes a distinction between the body and the practices of the body. Our body needs to be redeemed, but the practices of our body need to be put to death. To try to put your body to death is asceticism, a kind of suicide. According to human history, asceticism has been taught in many places. It was taught not only among the Greeks but also by the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Hindus. In many places asceticism has been taught. This means to deal severely with your sinful body.

But the Bible never tells us to deal with our body; it says to put to death the practices of our body. This is the way to understand the Bible. Even some Christians have tried to deal with their body in a way of asceticism. For example, a gambler who became a Christian eventually cut off one of his hands, trying to stop his gambling. But even after cutting off his hand, he could still use his arm to gamble. So, to cut off the hand is a kind of asceticism. The Bible does not encourage us to do this. The Bible says to put to death the practices of your body. Do not deal with your body. You have to wait for your body to be redeemed. But you have to deal with the practices of the body. But how can you deal with the practices of your body?

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

The Bible says, "By the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body." The confirmation is in the next verse, which speaks of being led by the Spirit. We should not commit a kind of spiritual suicide to practice asceticism over our body. But we have to realize that a kind of salvation has been infused and transfused into our being, that is, the indwelling Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is our salvation. Whenever your body wants to practice something, you have to turn to your spirit and let the indwelling Spirit do something. The work of the indwelling Spirit will surely put that practice of your body to death. This is to be led by the Spirit.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

In the last chapter we mentioned that there is a difference between walking according to the spirit and being led by the Spirit. The difference is this: to walk according to the spirit is somewhat general, but to be led by the Spirit is very specific. We have two things dwelling within us: one is sin, and one is the

Holy Spirit. Our body energized by the indwelling sin is very diligent. It is altogether not lazy or idle or dormant. Our body is always active. However, the Bible does not ask us to deal with our body but rather with every activity of the body, every practice of the body, by the Spirit's leading. When we deal with every practice of the body, every activity of the body, that is actually to be led by the Spirit. The Spirit leads us all the time to deal with our body's practices. From morning to evening the indwelling Spirit always leads us to put to death the practices of our body.

KILLING THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

You may say that you are walking according to the spirit, but then a time comes when you are desirous to exchange an unpleasant word with your wife. That is the time for you to be led by the Spirit. This means to let the Spirit kill your exchanging tongue, your word-exchanging activity. Sometimes even if you try to be quiet, your wife would somewhat be used to stir up the practices of your body to speak something. Yet you have to be led by the Spirit to put to death the practices of your body. Regardless of how much you walk according to the spirit, you have to kill every practice of the body by being led by the indwelling Spirit. Every time you kill a practice of the body by the Spirit, that is actually being led by the Spirit.

This would mean that you are no more simply a child of God but a son of God. If you do not kill the practice of exchanging unpleasant words with your wife, this means that you remain in your childhood. But if, by the Spirit, you kill one practice of the body after another, it is a sign that you are no more a child but a growing son. This is the way to grow. To grow is to kill every practice of your body by the Spirit. To grow is to be led by the Spirit. This corresponds with Romans 6:6. If you kill every practice of the body by the Spirit, your body is eventually unemployed. It is spontaneously fired. It has nothing to do. It is only a fired body that is good for you to present to God. You must present an unemployed body to God. If your body is still so much employed by many things, you cannot present that body to God. If you present to God a body that is fully occupied by many items, there is no room for God to come in to use you. Your body is already fully employed by your daily practices.

PRESENTING AN UNEMPLOYED BODY

Suppose a missionary goes to a mission field, yet he exchanges unpleasant words with his wife every day. Do you think he is really employed by God? Yet he is there working on the mission field for God. He may present such a busy body to go to the mission field to do some mission work for God, but actually that is not a real service to God. You can never enter into the Body life by presenting such a busy body to God. The proper presenting of your body is a matter of presenting a body that is unemployed, that has been fired, that has lost every employment. When you offer such a body to God, this offering or this presentation may usher you into the Body life. You can enter into the Body life only by presenting an unemployed body to the Lord. If you present a busy, employed body, you have no way to enter into the practicality of the Body of Christ.

As you can see, this is more practical than the organic union, and this is more practical than the sonship. This is a matter of having an unemployed body to present to the Lord. Do you really have a body that is unemployed? By what is your body employed? I do not think your body is that much employed by sin, but probably it is employed by many other things. In so many other things you are not led by the Spirit. When you read the newspaper, that may be a practice by the body not led by the Spirit. If you pick up a newspaper and read it not under the leading of the Spirit, that is a practice of the body. We have to be led by the Spirit daily to such an extent that we have no practice of the body apart from being led by the Spirit. In other words, if the Spirit does not lead us, we would do nothing. This is a matter of God's economy. If the Spirit does not lead you, whatever you do is a practice of the body. By this you can see that although you say you walk according to the spirit, actually you do not. The real walking according to the spirit is to be led by the Spirit.

LED BY ETHICS

Many Christians do not walk according to the spirit. A few may walk according to the spirit, but they are not led by the Spirit. They walk according to the spirit, but they are led by ethics or other things. Whatever is ethical, they have the boldness to do. Whatever is not ethical, they would not do. This means that they are not led by the indwelling Spirit; they are led by ethics. Most Christians today are led not by the Spirit but by morality. Before speaking a word, they would consider whether or not that word is true or false. This means that they are led by ethics, by morality. The crucial point is this: Is it the Spirit leading you to say a certain thing? Even if you are going to speak

the truth but it is not the Spirit leading you to speak, you should not speak. We have to be led not by ethics, not by morality, but by the Spirit. Although we may say that we walk according to the spirit, actually in the practical practices of our body we are led by good standards, by ethics, by what is right, by morality, and not by the Spirit.

Do you realize who are the most troublesome members in the Body of Christ? The most troublesome members in the Body life are the most ethical ones. If you are so ethical, you will just kill yourself in the Body life. You will have no share in the Body life. A self-righteous person is simply a person who is led in everything by ethics. An ethical person can hardly know anything of the Spirit's leading. Many believers are very good, moral, righteous, ethical, and right in many things. But within they are condemning others. They condemn the elders, and they condemn other brothers and sisters. Only they are the righteous ones. Such persons have no way to be actually and practically in the Body life. All their right practices are the practices of the body. This means that they are walking not according to the spirit but according to the flesh. You may say that they are walking according to the good flesh. Those who are not right, not ethical, and not moral are living according to the bad flesh. But both good flesh and bad flesh are of the same source. One fruit may be rotten and the other perfect, but both are sour fruit. One may be so ethical, so right, so righteous, so moral, so good, but altogether according to the flesh. Another may be bad to the uttermost according to the flesh. You have to see that the source is the same. In Romans 8:13 Paul does not say that you should kill the sinful deeds of the body. He says that by the Spirit you should kill all the practices, whether good or bad. As long as it is a practice of the body, you have to kill it.

THE PRACTICAL BODY LIFE

You have to see that if you are not a person all the day long killing every activity of your body by the indwelling Spirit, you cannot have a practical share in the Body of Christ. You may think that you are in the Body, but actually you are not. You are still by yourself. I admit that this is a kind of hard word, but I would not cheat you. For nearly nineteen hundred years the Lord has been unable to have the practical and actual Body life in an adequate way. Even today where is the practical Body? It is only when you and I are willing by the indwelling Spirit to put every practice of our body to death that we are actually and practically in the Body of Christ. At that time we can

present an unemployed body, a fired body, a released body, to God. Then we will be a person fully edified and fully qualified to have the Body life.

So far we have covered the matter of the organic union, the sonship, and now the unemployed body, a body that is good for us to present to God. Whatever sacrifice you are going to offer to God must be unemployed. If your body is so much occupied and employed and yet you offer it to God, that will be a kind of cheating.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

PUTTING TO DEATH THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY FOR THE BODY LIFE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:7-14, 23

Prayer: We need You desperately. Oh, do cleanse us with Your precious blood. Lord, we trust in Your anointing. Lord, again open up Your Word to us. We like to get into the depths of Your Word. Lord, anoint every section of this meeting. Especially, Lord, anoint all the testimonies. Thank You. Amen.

Romans 8:7 says, "Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be." We realize, of course, that this portion of the Word is not an ordinary, common, human talk. This is not a mere human word; no human mentality could speak or write such a word. Not many translations have rendered this verse in such a way. This kind of speaking or utterance is altogether strange to the human mentality. We may understand what the mind is, but what does it mean to set the mind on the flesh? We have to find out what is the flesh. The flesh must be something solid, because you can set something upon it. You can put your mind upon it. It is not just the air, and it is not something vain or empty. It can bear something.

THE FLESH

Verse 7 says, "The mind set on the flesh is enmity against God." We know a little about enmity because we were born in it. The verse goes on to say, "For it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be." This means that it does not have the intention or the desire or the will to be subject to the law of God. Even if it did have, it could not. The hard point in this verse to understand is the flesh. We need to see that the flesh in verse 7 is the same as the practices of the body in verse 13. When your body practices, when it moves and acts, that practicing body is the flesh. This can be proved by verse 13, which shows that the flesh is a synonym to the practicing body.

When our body acts and moves without the Spirit of God, that is flesh. The entire human race today, whether gentlemen or bank robbers, whether moral or immoral, as long as they practice and act, behave and move, they are flesh. The entire human race is flesh because they act without the Spirit. They move without the Spirit. Sometimes they practice the best things, and sometimes they practice the worst things, but as long as they practice by their body, that practicing body is the flesh.

Even if I serve you a cup of tea in my home, and I serve it by myself and without the Spirit, this is flesh. Some versions of the Bible render *practices of the body* as "evil doings of the body." Many Christians understand Romans 8:13 in this way. They think that the practices of the body are the sinful deeds and the sinful doings of the body. Because gambling and drinking and stealing and striking others are sinful things, you should put them to death. But to love others, to serve others with a cup of tea, is not a sinful doing. This would be considered wonderful because this is loving others. But Paul does not use the term *sinful deeds*. Rather, he uses the term *practices*.

The following verse says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (v. 14). It is not a matter of being sinful or not sinful, nor is it a matter of being moral or immoral. God cares for one thing: Are you behaving as His son? When you serve tea to people, are you serving people as a son of God? Whether your practicing body is the flesh or not does not depend upon whether the things you practice are evil or moral. It depends upon whether you are acting by the Spirit of God as a son of God or you are just acting by yourself as an ordinary fallen human being. Whenever your body acts without the Spirit or apart from the Spirit, that is flesh. When your body dies and is put into a coffin, that surely is not flesh. That is a dead body. The flesh is just the acting body. The body that acts is the flesh. You have to realize that the light at this point is very intensive. If you do not breathe by the Spirit, even your breathing body is the flesh. What is it to set your mind on the flesh? It is to set your thinking on your acting body. When your body is active, and you set your mind on this acting body, that is, you put your thinking, you concentrate your thinking, upon this acting body, that is to put your mind on the flesh. And that is enmity against God.

In the last chapter we saw that our body must be for His Body. We can only present to the Lord a body that is free from all the practices. Once the practices of our body have been put to death, our body is free for us to present

it to the Lord. We can only present such a freed body, an unemployed body, to the Lord. Then we will realize His Body. Our body is for the Lord's Body. But first our body must be freed from all practices. It can be freed only by the Spirit. The Spirit has to kill every practice of our body. If your body with all its practices has not been killed, the practices make your body the flesh. But when the practices of the body have been killed, the body remains as the body. Then it is good to present to God for the Body of Christ. But if your body practices something apart from the Spirit, it makes your body the flesh. Practically speaking, the flesh is such a practicing body. Some have said that the flesh is something carnal, that it is related to carnality. Even the King James Version translates 8:6 as, "To be carnally minded is death." This kind of translation and understanding brings you into a thick forest. Hardly anyone can tell you what it means to be carnally minded. I think most of us just took for granted the meaning of the word *flesh*. We never investigated; we never checked; we never questioned.

Now we need to read verse 8: "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Now we know how to interpret this verse. To be in the flesh is to remain in the active body. If we remain in our acting body, that is to be in the flesh, and that causes us to be unable to please God.

Let us also read verse 9: "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." This is a very difficult verse to understand. There are four points that have to be made clear; otherwise, you cannot understand this verse. First, you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. If you do not realize that you have a human spirit, this is the greatest weakness. This is a shortcoming of most Christians. Not many Christians realize that they have a spirit. So first of all you have to understand that you have a human spirit. *You are not in the flesh* means that you are not remaining in the practicing, acting body. Rather, you are remaining in your spirit. This is not only a deep word but also a heavy word. When you serve people a cup of tea, are you in your spirit? If not, you are in the flesh. This is serious. We may have read such words in the Bible and taken them for granted. We did not check into them. This word means that you have to remain in your spirit all the time. If not, right away you are in the flesh. Even if you serve a cup of tea, you must do it in your spirit. You must be a person who is in the spirit. This verse does not mean that when you become a believer, you are no more in the flesh but in the spirit. No. Many real believers are fully in the flesh; they are not one bit in the spirit. Even they do

not know that they have a spirit. Not only while they are exchanging words in their married life but even when they are talking about things in the Bible, they are not in the spirit. Rather, they are in the flesh—in their acting body.

Second, the next part of the verse says, "If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." The word *dwells* is different from the word *abides* or *remains. To abide,* or *to remain,* is a very light expression; it is not so heavy. The word *dwell* has as its root the word *house.* You may say that this is the verbal form of the noun. It may be translated as "to house in you." In Ephesians 3:17 the same root word is translated into "make His home." Housing yourself means to make a home for yourself. To dwell is not just to abide. If I stay in your home as a guest, I may abide there and remain there, but I am not dwelling there. I am not making my home there, because it is not my home. This is a strong word. The words *if indeed* indicate that you may have the Spirit of God in you, but He is not dwelling in you. You have Him in you, but He is not making His home in you. Many times, although we have the Spirit within us, the Spirit does not reside in us and does not have His home in us. We make our body our home, and we make the Spirit within us a guest. There is a big difference between staying in a house and residing in a house. When you indeed have the Spirit of God residing in you, making His home in you, it is then that you are in the spirit and not in the flesh.

The last part of Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." To be of Christ is one thing, and to have the Spirit residing in you is another thing.

THREE KINDS OF PERSONS

Finally, there is a hidden point in this verse. This verse shows us three kinds of persons. The first kind of person is an unsaved person. This is implied in the last sentence: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." This *he* refers to an unbeliever, to one who is not saved. Then in the first sentence there are two kinds of persons. One kind is saved but only has the Spirit of God in him; he does not have the Spirit of God residing in him. He is a saved person, but he is not in the spirit. Then there is the third kind of person, that is, a saved one who is also in the spirit, having the Spirit of God residing in him. If Christ is not in you, you are the first kind of person, an unbeliever, an unsaved one. Verse 10 refers to the second kind of person, because although his spirit is alive, his body is still dead. He has the divine life only in his spirit, not in his body. The third kind of person is also enlivened in

his body. Verse 11 says, “And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” This means that the third kind of person also has life given to his mortal body. Some have used this verse when talking about divine healing. However, I have seen some very spiritual persons who were the third kind of person, yet they were sick in their physical body. At the same time the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead was giving them life. In a physical sense they were sick, but in a spiritual sense their body was very living.

You have been saved, and you have Christ in your spirit making your spirit life, but your body remains dead. Why? Because the divine life has not saturated your body. The divine life remains in your spirit and has not spread to saturate your body. But then verse 11 indicates that the very God of the Spirit of resurrection will give life to your mortal body through the Spirit of resurrection. A brother may be sick and yet have the Spirit of God in him, even residing in his entire body and in his entire being. When you contact him, you could realize that the divine life is saturating even his mortal body. At that time his body is not the flesh, because all the practices of his body have been put to death.

I do not mean that to apply Romans 8:11 to divine healing is wrong, but to apply it to divine healing first is wrong. It must be second. When you would let the Spirit of God make His home in your entire being, the divine life will saturate your body, making your body spiritual and making your body no more the flesh. If this is the case, this situation will heal you. Suppose you are sick and ask the Lord to heal you. The Lord might say that He cannot heal you, because your body still is too active. Your body is sick, but your body is too active apart from the Spirit. His Spirit in you has no chance to saturate your sick body. You must put the practices of your sick body to death. If you kill all the practices of your sick body, then He will saturate your body with His divine life. That will heal you, but that must first make you spiritual. Then it will heal you. If you mean business with the Lord for Him to heal you, you must kill all the practices of your body. Although your body may be sick, at the same time it is a strong flesh. Your body is so active in your sickness.

TWO STAGES

The divine life in your spirit is one thing; the divine life spreading into your body is another thing. These are two stages. The divine life remaining in you

makes you a saved person, a believer. But it is not until this divine life in your spirit spreads into your body, saturating your body with the divine life, that you become not only a saved believer but also one saturated with God. It is such a person with a released, unemployed body who can present his body to God for the Body of Christ.

Verse 12 says, “So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.” We are not debtors to the acting body to live according to the acting body. If you live according to the flesh, that is, according to the acting body, you are about to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (v. 14). These verses show us what it means to be led by the Spirit. It is to set your mind on the spirit and kill the practices of the acting body by the Spirit. Then you are practically the sons of God. Strictly speaking, verse 14 does not refer to the leading of the Spirit to go to a department store or to fly to New York or to go to the mission field or to know whom you should marry. It means that every minute in the day you set your mind on the spirit and you kill, putting to death, every activity and every practice of your body by the Spirit of God. If you set your mind on the spirit to kill every practice of your body, that is to be led by the Spirit. And that is to live the life of a son of God. How could you prove to people that you are a son of God? By setting your mind on the spirit and by putting to death all the activities of your body. Even if you serve a cup of tea to someone, you would not do it apart from the Spirit. You do it through the Spirit.

My burden is to point out to you that until you live in this way—setting your mind on the spirit and putting to death all the activities of your body—you are not adequate for the Body of Christ. It is at that point that you become a really spiritual person. You are not only spiritual in your spirit and not only spiritual in your mind but also spiritual in your body. You become a person entirely spiritual. At that point you are adequate to realize the Body life of Christ.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

CHRIST IN YOU

MAKING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT

Romans 8 deals with the matter of life. In fact, Romans 8 speaks of life more than any other chapter in the Bible. In this it is unique. The first time life is mentioned in chapter 8 is in verse 2: "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." In verse 2 life is a life that the Spirit of God belongs to. This is not an ordinary life, a common life, nor is it a strange kind of life. It is the life to which the Spirit of God belongs.

The next verse that mentions the word *life* is Romans 8:6: "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." This verse indicates that the mind set on our human spirit, which is mingled with the Spirit of life, is life. Now the life to which the Spirit of God belongs has become somewhat complicated. In verse 2 it was so simple, with no complication. But in verse 6 it has surely become complicated because it is involved with our mind and also with our spirit. When we set our mind on our spirit, life is there. Is this another life different from the life in verse 2? Surely not. All these verses refer to the same one life. But in verse 2 it is the life to which God's Spirit belongs. Then in verse 6 the life is involved with our mind and our spirit.

The third verse concerning life in Romans 8 is verse 10: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." In this verse another complication is added, that is, Christ. Christ is involved here. It says that if Christ is in you, this Christ in you makes a clear distinction of your being. This verse says that your body is dead, but your spirit is life. Some time ago I considered that perhaps the translator had made a mistake, because it seems that it should say that the spirit is living. It seems that it should say, "The body is dead, and the spirit is living." Or it might say, "The body is death, and the spirit is life." Apparently, this verse is not composed well. If we get into the depths of this verse, however, we will see why Paul composed it in this way.

In this verse life is involved with Christ and the distinction between our body and our spirit. We have to realize that before Christ comes into us, our body is living, and our spirit is dead. To unsaved persons, it seems that there is not such a thing as the human spirit. But their body is active. Even with Christians sometimes the situation still remains the same as before Christ came into them. Their body is very active, but their spirit is dead. This means that life has another involvement with two things: with Christ and with the distinction He has made within us. In a saved person who is remaining in a normal and proper condition, there is such a clear distinction that his body is dead and his spirit is life. Something in his spirit makes his spirit not only living but also life. At the same time it is so clear that his body is dead.

The fourth time the word *life* is used in Romans 8 is in verse 11: "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." In order to understand this verse, we must consider, who gives life to whom, and through whom? And to what part of the first whom? Actually, the One who gives life in this verse is not the Spirit but the very God who raised Jesus from the dead. Here God gives life to someone through the Spirit. This Spirit is the indwelling Spirit. The Giver is the One who raised Jesus from the dead, and the instrument is the Spirit who indwells us. Who then is the receiver of the life? Whose mortal body receives this life? In order to understand whose mortal body receives life in verse 11, we must consider the modifiers in verses 9 and 10. Do you think that the "you" in verse 11 who receives life to his mortal body could refer to a Christian living in sin or never reading the Bible or never praying? Could such a person be this "you"? This "you" surely needs some Christian qualifications. What are the qualifications of such a one? One qualification according to verse 9 is that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Of course, this also means that you are a person in the spirit. To be in the spirit and to have the Spirit of God dwelling in you are actually two aspects of one thing. This is indicated by Paul's use of the subjunctive *if indeed*. If indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are in the spirit. When the Spirit dwells in you, you are in the spirit. In other words, when you are in the spirit, the Spirit of God dwells in you. This refers to one thing with two aspects. This is one qualification.

There is another qualification in verse 10. The first word of verse 10 is the conjunction *but*. This conjunction indicates that something has gone before and that something is coming after. Therefore, we must conjoin these two

things. *But* indicates that in verse 9 there is one thing and that in verse 10 there is another thing. In verse 9 there is the first qualification, and in verse 10 there is the second qualification. The second qualification is to have Christ in you. Do not think that this qualification is exactly the same as the one mentioned in verse 9. These are two aspects. Verse 9 says that the Spirit of God dwells in you, and then the following verse says that Christ is in you. Furthermore, in verse 9 the Spirit of God is the subject, and in verse 10 Christ is the subject. Then in verse 11 the subject is shifted to God. This is a big matter. You must be qualified with the Spirit indwelling you, and you must be qualified with Christ in you in order for the Spirit to give life to your mortal body. In the last chapter we stressed the point of the Spirit dwelling in you, but in this chapter we would stress Christ being in you. When Christ is in you, a distinction is brought into you. A distinction is made between the body and the spirit. A distinction is made between the dead thing and life. The dead thing, of course, is the body, and life is the spirit.

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT

In the last chapter I told you that if you are going to be in the spirit, you must have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, making His home in you, housing Himself in you. But now I would tell you that you may have the Spirit housing Himself in you and yet still not have the distinction between your dead body and your spirit being life. Eventually, there will be a distinction within you where you realize that your spirit is not only living, but it is life; yet your body is dead. I do not believe that many among us have this distinction. When you have this distinction, by experience you can know so clearly that your body is just a dead thing and that your spirit is life. Many of you have not yet entered into this experience, and although you can understand my speaking, I do not think that you can apprehend the taste of this distinction. But someday you will have such a distinction. You will be so clear that something within you—your spirit—is life. And at the same time something remains in you—your body—a dead thing. There will be a clear distinction. Until you enter into this distinction, your Christian life is somewhat obscure because there is no distinction between your body and your spirit. Do not consider that you have experienced the distinction between your body and your spirit. Your body is still quite active; it is not dead. In fact it is dead, but in your experience it is not dead; rather, it is active. At the same time that your spirit is active, your body is also active. You may consider, then, that this is the body enlivened by the divine life. No, that is different. The body mentioned in verse

10 is a dead body, a body that is active in a natural way. But the body mentioned in verse 11 is a body so living and in resurrection. For example, when a person has a beautiful singing voice, we have to ask whether or not this is a natural talent or something in resurrection. When a person who has a talent in singing enters into the distinction between the dead body and the spirit being life, she would not sing. It is not until one day, when all her body's practices have been put to death, that she would begin to sing. Then it would be in resurrection.

Logically speaking, this point should be clear to you now. But if you do not have the experience, you could only understand logically. When you enter into the experience, you will realize that the very "you" in verse 11 is not so common. In a sense, the "you" should be common, but due to today's degradation among Christians, such a "you" is not common. In other words, not too many Christians are such a "you."

Some teachers of the Bible have used Romans 8:11 to refer to divine healing. But you must realize that in the book of Romans, and in such an excellent chapter as chapter 8, Paul has no thought to touch the matter of divine healing. Divine healing is far, far from his thought. His thought here is altogether a matter in the spirit. Strictly speaking, it does not mean that God gives life to our sick body, to our dead body. It means that God gives His life to deal with our body to make it alive to carry out His will. As we illustrated in the last chapter, a person, after a certain time of sickness, may enter into the distinction between the dead body and the spirit as life. At that time some amount of the divine life would be imparted into his dead body. This is not to heal him but to make his dead body so useful for fulfilling God's purpose. Yet he is still sick. You could understand this only when you enter into this kind of experience.

Once again I would say that the very "you" in verse 11 who is the receiver of the divine life is a believer who is qualified with the Spirit indwelling him and with the distinction between the dead body and the spirit as life by Christ's presence. This distinction is by Christ's presence. When Christ is in you, there is such a distinction. You may know in fact that Christ is in you, but in experience is He in you? You may answer, "Sometimes," but I would question even the "sometimes."

In Romans 8 life is mentioned four times and is related to four different matters. The first time, this life is the life to which the Spirit of God belongs. The second time, this life is involved with our mind and with our spirit. The third time, this life is involved with Christ and with the distinction that Christ has brought in. The fourth time, this life is involved with our mortal body. This is the fourfold life. The first is related to the Spirit of God, and the last three are related to our three parts. God is altogether life, and we in our three parts were altogether not life. But first our spirit becomes life, then our soul becomes life, and finally our body becomes life. This is the foundation for us to see how the Spirit of life works within the saved ones, ultimately to saturate their body.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Now we come to another point: What are the functions of this Spirit of life in His indwelling? This indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of life, and He indwells us to do things. His indwelling is not His doing. But His indwelling is for Him to do things within us. First, He gives life to our mortal body. Second, He puts to death the practices of our body. Third, He leads us as the sons of God. In the first occasion God gives life through Him (v. 11). The second time He is an instrument to us, because we put to death the practices of the body by Him (v. 13).

Verse 23 gives us another item of His doings: "Not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body." The firstfruits of the Spirit are the enjoyment of the Spirit in this age. *The firstfruits of the Spirit* is an expression implying that the very indwelling Spirit who does three things—who gives life, who puts to death, and who leads—satisfies us. To understand this word *firstfruits* we need to study the entire Bible. According to the biblical usage, *firstfruits* means to satisfy someone with the proper produce. In the Old Testament all the firstfruits from the land had to go to God, not to work anything for God but just to satisfy God. Then, in the last book of the Bible, those one hundred forty-four thousand overcomers are the firstfruits to God to satisfy God. You have to realize that the top firstborn Son is Jesus Christ Himself. He is not only the firstborn Son to His flesh mother, but He is also the firstborn Son in resurrection to God to satisfy God (Acts 13:33). *The firstfruits of the Spirit* signifies the Spirit's satisfaction, or the Spirit satisfying us. So the Spirit

is the Spirit of life, which is involved with God, with our spirit, with our soul, and with our body. And this Spirit indwells us. In His indwelling, He does three things plus one thing. He gives life, He puts to death, He leads, that He may satisfy us. What then is the result, or the issue, of the fourfold doings of the Spirit? It is a kind of groaning, with a kind of eager expectation that our body could be redeemed and have the full sonship. We need to fellowship about all these points.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE PERSON AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8

THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8 first reveals the person of the Spirit; then it reveals the work of the Spirit. It tells us who the Spirit is, and then it tells us what the Spirit is doing within us. As to His person, He is revealed first as the Spirit of something, and then He is revealed as being the Spirit of two persons. Verse 2 says that He is the Spirit of something—the Spirit of life. Then in verse 9 the Spirit is revealed as being the Spirit of God and of Christ. Logically speaking, it seems that the Spirit of life should be last instead of first. It would seem that the Spirit of God or of Christ should come first. But in Romans 8 the Spirit of life is mentioned first because in this chapter the emphasis is on life. At the front door of this chapter is the sign "The Spirit of life." At the back door there are two signs, one on the left and one on the right. One sign says, "The Spirit of God," and the other sign says, "The Spirit of Christ." The sign at the front door of this chapter is the Spirit of life because this chapter emphasizes life. Many Christians, when they read this chapter, consider that it is on the Spirit. Actually, this chapter stresses life too. So the first title given to the Spirit in Romans 8 is not *of God* or *of Christ,* but *of life.*

In the last chapter we saw that Romans 8 uses the word *life* referring to the divine life four times. Romans 8:2 mentions the Spirit of life. This relates to the Spirit's life, and this also indicates that this life is involved with God; actually, it is God's life. The second time life is mentioned, it is involved with our mind (v. 6). The third time life is mentioned, it is involved with our spirit (v. 10). And the fourth time it is mentioned, it is involved with our body (v. 11). We are a tripartite man, and every one of our three parts is involved with this life. First of all, this life is in God; then this life comes to us. The first step is for this life to get into our spirit. The second step is for it to spread into our mind, and the third step is for this life to get into our body. Such a life is altogether conveyed by the Spirit. So the Spirit is called the Spirit of life.

Chapter 8 tells us that this Spirit of life is God the Spirit, or the Spirit of God (v. 9). The chapter goes on to tell us that this Spirit of life who is the

Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ. Why does Paul mention the Spirit of life, then the Spirit of God, and then the Spirit of Christ?

In the Bible the Spirit of God is first mentioned in Genesis 1. At the time of that mentioning, there was no incarnation, no human living by God on the earth, no crucifixion, no redemption, no resurrection, no ascension, and no enthronement. But by the time the book of Romans was written, all these things had been accomplished. Because the Spirit of God whom Paul mentions in Romans could be understood as the Spirit in Genesis 1, Paul adds another term—*the Spirit of Christ.* Today the Spirit is not merely the Spirit of God as in Genesis 1 for creation. Now as the Spirit of God, He is also the Spirit of Christ. Such a Spirit is not for creation. The Spirit accomplishing the old creation in Genesis 1 was not the Spirit of life but the Spirit of power. But for God's new creation, it is not a matter of power but a matter of life. Actually, God's new creation is not created but regenerated by rebirth. The new creation is not something produced by power; it is something generated by and through life.

We need to realize that the Spirit of God is basic, and the Spirit of Christ is even more basic, that is, basic in what He has gone through. From creation He has gone through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. Now the Spirit of God is the Spirit of such a One. You might consider then that Paul did not need to mention the Spirit of God; he only needed to mention the Spirit of life and then the Spirit of Christ. But if Paul had not mentioned the Spirit of God here, we might think that the Spirit of Christ is another Spirit, a Spirit different from the Spirit of God. Paul's writing is very fine and very careful; he left no loophole to us. The Spirit of life is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ.

Both in the Far East and also in the U.S.A. I have heard some who say, "Praise God!" Do you know what persons should say, "Praise God!"? The Jews. The God whom the Jews worship has never passed through incarnation or crucifixion or resurrection. If you are still living in an age of "praising God," you have to realize that that is the Old Testament age, the Jewish age. Also, the Pentecostal people like to say, "Praise Jesus!" You have to realize that this term *Jesus* refers to the three and a half years of the ministry of Jesus. Those three and a half years were the age of Jesus. But Romans 8 does not say "the Spirit of Jesus"; it says "the Spirit of Christ." When we say, "Praise the Lord!" this includes God and Christ. It comprises God and Jesus and Christ. Our

Lord today is not merely the God who created the universe. He is not merely Jesus who lived as a man on this earth. He is also Christ. He is God and Jesus and Christ. After He was resurrected and ascended to the heavens, He was made Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). You have to realize that when Paul says "the Spirit of Christ," he implies also the Spirit who was there in God's creation and was also there with Jesus for three and a half years. And today the same Spirit is with us. When He comes today in the new age to be with us, He is no longer merely the Spirit of God but the Spirit of Christ. *The Spirit of Christ* actually indicates the all-inclusive Spirit. This is the stress of *the Spirit* in chapter 8 of Romans. He is the all-inclusive Spirit. When He houses Himself in you, God is in you, Jesus is in you, and the resurrected Christ is in you. Incarnation is here; crucifixion is here; resurrection is here. He is all-inclusive. The person of the Spirit in this chapter is all-inclusive, yet the focus of this all-inclusive Spirit is the Spirit of life. Life is the focus. We must see this. Many of those in the Pentecostal movement only know a kind of "power"; they do not know life at all. They know "power" in the way of speaking in tongues, healing, and miracles, but they do not know anything of life. But in Romans 8 there is no power, no miracles, no healings, and no speaking in tongues. There is just one silent and mysterious thing—that is life. This is the person of the Spirit.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Now we come to the second point, that is, the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is the instrument through which God imparts life into our mortal body, even into our whole being. The Spirit is the instrument through which we put to death the practices of our body, and the Spirit is the One who directly leads us as sons of God.

Now we have to ask, What is the way that the Spirit works out these three points? God is now imparting His zoe life into our dead body through the Spirit, and we have to slay the practices of our body by the Spirit, and this Spirit, through whom God imparts life to our dead body and by whom we slay the deeds of our body, is leading us. But by what way and where? There is a big word in this chapter, which indicates how or by what way the Spirit could accomplish this work. What is this word?

Working by Indwelling

This chapter mentions several times that the Spirit dwells in you. Of course, to dwell does not mean to do something. But the dwelling is for doing something. His dwelling has a purpose, and surely that purpose is to do something. His indwelling in itself is not His working, but it is the way for Him to do His work. His work is done by an indwelling way.

Many Christians have been influenced to think that they need to pray and fast for three days and nights, waiting for something to come suddenly from the heavens upon them. Many Pentecostal believers are waiting for something to fall upon them from the heavens, and many fundamental believers are waiting for a kind of inspiration. But actually in the New Testament it is a matter of the indwelling. Again and again this word *indwelling* is used in the New Testament. The Spirit today works not in a way of falling upon us or by the way of inspiration but by the way of indwelling.

While He is indwelling you, He is very active. You can never be more active than He is. You may think that you are more active because you do not realize that a more active One is in you. You have been influenced by Pentecostalism and fundamentalism. You consider that if nothing is falling upon you, then He is not active. You think that if you do not feel some inspiration, that means He is silent. Actually, He is not silent; He is moving in you. You need to say to the Lord, "Lord, how I thank You that You are more active than I am. I can be silent, but You would never be silent. I can sleep, but You would never sleep. I can be dormant, but You would never be dormant. With me there is a winter time, but with You there is no winter time. You are more active than I am." This is the indwelling Spirit.

Do you really believe that the Spirit, not only of God but of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and enthroned Christ, dwells in you? Is this a doctrine or a fact to you? I am sorry to say that to most Christians this is just a kind of doctrine, a kind of terminology. Do you really realize that you have a divine person in you? This is not a simple person but a person who has passed through creation and entered into incarnation. He has passed through the human life and through the cross and through the tomb. He has even passed through Hades and entered into resurrection. Such a One now lives in you. Do you really believe this? Is this a doctrine or a fact to you? This makes a big difference. It is not a small thing to realize the fact that you have another One dwelling in you. Such a One now dwells in us. His dwelling in us is not His doing, but it is the way for Him to do things. His way of working is not a

matter of His coming upon us or a matter of inspiration but a silent, mysterious, yet excellent indwelling. You cannot deny that He indwells us and that He is living, He is acting, He is working, He is very active. It is by the way of indwelling that He works for us; He is very busy.

Three Categories of Work

The work of the indwelling Spirit is of three categories: to impart life to our mortal body, to slay the practices of our body, and to lead us. You have to realize, though, that of these three times, the Spirit is the instrument for the work twice. Twice He is not the worker but the instrument or the means. In the last category, that of His leading, He is the worker. Yet it is strange that even in this third category Paul does not use the active voice. Paul does not say that the Spirit leads you. Rather, he says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God" (v. 14). He leads you, yet it depends upon whether you are willing to be led. In the first category of work the Spirit is not the worker. The worker is the resurrecting God, the very God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This resurrecting God works in you to impart life into your body. In the second category the worker is we ourselves. We slay, we put to death, the practices of our body. So in the first two kinds of work, the Spirit is not the worker but the instrument. One of the two workers is God, and the other is we ourselves. The Spirit is indwelling you, yet God works in you through Him. Second, you also do something by Him. This is very meaningful. Paul does not say that the indwelling Spirit imparts life to our mortal bodies. Rather, he says, "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you" (v. 11). Nor does he say that the Spirit kills the practices of our dead body. Rather, he says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live" (v. 13). Why does Paul write in this way? Based upon doctrine alone, you have no way to explain. You must come to the matter of experience. Some condemn us because we stress experience so much, but if you are going to understand spiritual things, you surely need the experiences.

Coordinating with the Indwelling Spirit

Let me explain it in this way: Yes, it is the indwelling Spirit working in you, but suppose you do not contact God. Suppose you do not have any fellowship with God. Suppose you just forget about God. Suppose you consider that since the indwelling Spirit is within you working, He bears every responsibility and takes care of everything. If you take this way, the Spirit does not work. But

when you come to God through the Lord Jesus, whenever you have some fellowship with God, whenever you spend just a little time with God through Jesus Christ, the Spirit works. By this the Spirit works. The Spirit is the Spirit of life, but do not forget that this life-working Spirit is the Spirit of God. You can never separate Him from God. Without God, you do not have the life-working Spirit, and of course, without the life-working Spirit, you do not have God. When God works in you, that is the Spirit working in you. But you have to realize that the Spirit in these instances is the instrument, and God Himself is the very worker. If you are going to enjoy the work of the Spirit, you must have something to do with God. If you are not having anything to do with God, there will be no work of the indwelling Spirit at all.

Furthermore, not only does God impart life through the Spirit, but you also must do something through the Spirit: you must slay the practices of your body. This is to coordinate with God. God may be imparting life to you while you are fellowshipping with Him, yet if you would not slay the practices of your body, nothing will happen. This requires teamwork. God is working within you, and you have to work with God. Both you and God must work through the Spirit as a team. Many times God is working within us, but we are not slaying. We must be willing to be led. Whether God is really imparting life into you or not and whether you are really slaying the practices of your body or not depend upon whether you are willing to be led by the Spirit. Now He is the Leader, taking the lead. Are you willing to be led? Very few are willing to be led, and even these few are willing only to be led seldomly. We are just not willing to be led. It is easy to say, “Praise the Lord! God is working within me, imparting life to every part of my being, and I am willing to slay the practices of my body.” But when the actual action is needed, you are not willing to be led by Him. These three things must be mingled into one: God’s imparting, your killing, and the Spirit’s leading. Actually, it is your willingness to be led. If you have these three things, then you will have the real experience of the indwelling Spirit. I feel burdened to spend so much time on these details because we talk a lot about the Spirit, but we do not have much experience. We talk a lot about life being imparted into our dead body, we talk about killing the practices of our body, and we talk about being led by the Spirit, but we do not have much experience. We are still under our own direction. Actually, we do not even have the willingness to be led by this indwelling One.

The Issue—the Firstfruits

What is the issue of the indwelling Spirit working in us in these three categories? The issue is the firstfruits in verse 23. There we have the firstfruits of the Spirit. I mentioned previously that, according to the Bible, the firstfruits refer to the satisfaction, to the enjoyment, to the taste. Not until you experience the indwelling Christ imparting life to your deadened body, putting the practices of your body to death, and leading you, will you enjoy the real experience of the firstfruits of the Spirit. Actually, the firstfruits of the Spirit are just the Spirit Himself for our enjoyment. We all have the Spirit indwelling us, but not many have the practical and actual enjoyment of the firstfruits of the Spirit. This is because we are lacking these three kinds of work of the Spirit. Only when God is actually imparting His divine life into your deadened body by His indwelling Spirit, and when you cooperate with God in putting to death the practices of your dead body by this indwelling Spirit, and when you are willing to be led by this indwelling Spirit, will you have the experience of the firstfruits of the Spirit. At that point you will realize that you still have such a body, dragging you away, pulling you off, distracting and bothering you. Then you would groan within for that part of your being to be changed. This is the anxious watching for the full sonship, the redemption of our body. Then we are ready to be presented in Romans 12 as a living sacrifice to God for the Body life. Now you can understand why there has not been much Body life of Christ through the centuries. To reach Romans 12 is not so easy. It is not a long way, but it is a narrow and a zigzagging way in Romans 8. It is not so easy to get through this way to reach the destination—the Body life of Christ. In this Perfecting Training, we are spending a lot of time simply to take care of this zigzagging way.

Finally, you have to realize that in Romans 6, 7, 8, and also 12 the main part of our being that is dealt with is our body. Chapter 6 says that our body is a body of sin, which needs to be unemployed. Chapter 7 says that our body is a body of death. Of course, in chapter 8 many verses stress our body. Today our problem is our fallen, deadened body of death. Now you understand why Romans 12 opens with the presenting of our body. Of course, it also deals with our mind but not that much. The focal dealing is on our body. Our body needs the imparting of the divine life. Our body needs some killing. Our body needs our willingness to be led by the Spirit. Eventually, our body needs to be redeemed, to have a thorough metabolic change. This is all through the Spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTY

TWO SPIRITS AND THREE FACTS IN ROMANS 8

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for Your cleansing blood. Lord, You know how much we need You for this Perfecting Training. Even tonight we need You. We need You to show us all the problems we have found in Romans 8. Lord, we need You to show us the way. We need You to show us the secrets. Do cleanse everyone among us. Lord, do subdue our will and sober our mind, and, Lord, give us a clear spirit, so open to You and to one another. Lord, come to visit and touch and reveal the secrets to each one of us. Again, Lord, we need You. We like to tell You again and again, we need You. We have a lot of problems here in Romans 8. We just do not know how to get through. Oh, cover us again. Amen.

In previous chapters we have seen in such a definite way that if we could not enter into the experiences according to Romans 8, there is no way for us to go on from Romans 8 to the Body in Romans 12. This year the Perfecting Training intends to get through this matter of the Body of Christ. From the very beginning I was clear about the burden for this year's Perfecting Training, that is, that we would have a clear view of the Body and enter into the Body of Christ. But now the problem is, as we spend more time to dig out some of the points of Romans 8, we eventually discover more problems. After the past two or three weeks, I now have more problems from Romans 8 to consider. Before the summer training, we will probably be all the time on Romans 8. I doubt whether we could get through even by that time. Let me present the problems that I cannot avoid.

GOD'S SPIRIT OR OUR SPIRIT

In Romans 8 the word *spirit* is used again and again. Nearly all the translators hold different kinds of opinions concerning this word *spirit*. They have different interpretations of whether this word, *pneuma*, denotes God's Spirit or whether it denotes our spirit. With a few verses—unless the apostle Paul were with us—no one could answer in a definite way whether it should be God's Spirit or our spirit.

Verse 4 says, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." The

King James Version, J. N. Darby's New Translation, and some other translations render this *spirit* with a capital *S*. This means that they understand and they interpret that *the spirit* here denotes the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God. But according to our understanding, it must denote our spirit.

Then verse 5 says, "Those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit." We understand that the first spirit in this verse is our spirit, and, of course, the second must be the Spirit of God. But when I say this, I even put a little question mark there. How do you dare to say that the second spirit is not the human spirit? The King James Version, Darby's New Translation, the American Standard Version, and the Amplified translation all render both as "the Spirit of God." On the contrary, the Concordant Version renders both *spirit*s with a small letter *s*. Why do we dare to say that in the same verse the first *spirit* denotes our spirit, and the second *spirit* denotes God the Spirit? If you were to ask me, I do not have much boldness to say, but I just understand that it should be like this.

Verse 6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." In this verse *spirit* is not capitalized. Who can say which is right? No one can tell. Then verse 9 says, "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." With the first *spirit* in this verse, most of the translations use a capital letter *S*. But we understand that the *spirit* here must be with a small letter *s*. Who dares to have the assurance that we are right? As a rule, in the New Testament the contrast is between the flesh and the Spirit of God. It is not often that the contrast is between the flesh and our spirit. Why then did we render the first *spirit* in lowercase? This is based not only upon the spiritual experiences but also upon the grammatical composition. If the verse read, "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit of God, if indeed He dwells in you," it would clearly denote the Spirit of God. The composition gives you the inclination that there are two spirits. Otherwise, the pronoun *He* should be used. It would read, "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed He dwells in you." This would be clear. Why then does Paul render the verse in this way? Because Paul's intention is to show us two spirits. You are not in the flesh but in your spirit if indeed the other Spirit, the Spirit of God, dwells in you. In this verse I have

the boldness to say that we are right because the grammar stands with us. Grammatically speaking, it must be two spirits.

Now verse 10: “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Many versions have rendered *spirit* here with a capital *S*. I oppose this very much because in the New Testament you do have a contrast between the flesh and the Holy Spirit, but you cannot have a contrast between our body and the Holy Spirit. The contrast must be between our body and our human spirit, not our flesh and our human spirit. It seems that Paul could have composed this sentence in a more brief and clear way. This is one problem. Another problem: Where does the Spirit of God who dwells in us dwell? In what part of us does He dwell? Of course, all of you would answer that He dwells in our spirit. But how can you prove that from chapter 8?

Then we come to verse 13: “If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” Here most of the versions capitalize the word *Spirit*, but even this is a kind of opinion.

Then verse 14: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” This verse is so clear! Why did Paul not make all the verses as clear as this verse? Here *Spirit* clearly refers to the Spirit of God.

Verse 15 also has the word *spirit*: “You have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father!” The King James Version renders the first *spirit* with a small *s* and the second *spirit* with a capital *S*. Darby renders both the words with a small letter *s*. The 1901 American Standard Version also renders it in this way. Again, different opinions.

Then verse 16 says, “The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.” This is a very clear writing. Two spirits are here, and the first one must be the Spirit of God, and the second one is our spirit. This is clear. But why would Paul make such a crucial point so ambiguous in this chapter? This matter of the spirit is too crucial in chapter 8, yet it seems that he made it so obscure, so vague, so altogether debatable. Why did Paul write in this way?

We have seen for some time that this chapter speaks about the mingled spirit, but we need to go through it once again to make it very clear. First of all, in verse 16 we are fully assured that there are two spirits. That verse says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. So this chapter is talking about these two spirits—God's Spirit and our regenerated and renewed spirit. In a few verses the Spirit of God is designated clearly (vv. 9, 11). Also the first spirit in verse 9 and the spirit in verse 10 are clearly our human spirit. But in a number of verses, *spirit* is very ambiguous. Verses 4, 5, and 6 are very ambiguous. Even *spirit* in verse 15 is somewhat ambiguous. I somewhat agree that the first time the spirit is mentioned in verse 15, it must be our spirit. And it would seem in the last part of the verse that the spirit of sonship should be the Spirit of God. If the spirit of sonship is only our spirit, that would mean the sonship is not related to God's Son. The sonship is not the sonship of the Son of God but the sonship of the son of man because the spirit of sonship here is the human spirit. How could the human spirit alone give you the sonship of God? But, on the other hand, although it is the sonship of God, you are still a man. The parallel verse, Galatians 4:6, says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." This Spirit of His Son is surely the Spirit of sonship, so according to Galatians 4, the spirit of sonship must be the Spirit of the Son of God. How then could we say that it may be our spirit as the spirit of sonship? The reason is here: if your spirit has never been regenerated, you cannot be a son of God. Since you have been regenerated in your spirit, your spirit becomes the spirit of sonship. This is more subjective. In other words, we do not have only the Spirit of the Son of God, but we have even our spirit, which has been sonized. So not only is the Spirit of God the spirit of sonship, but even our spirit has become the spirit of sonship. So in our translation we have the boldness to make the decision that *spirit* in Romans 8:15 denotes our mingled human spirit, because in our human spirit we have the sonship. Our spirit becomes the sonship. From God's side the spirit of sonship is God's Spirit. From our side the spirit of sonship is our spirit. Both are the spirit of sonship. Eventually, both are one. This must be a mingled spirit.

Let me use a very shallow, simple illustration. It is just like the tea-water. You put tea into the water, and the two are mingled into one drink. You may say it is tea, or you may also say it is water. The best way is to say that it is tea-water. Of course, according to language, that is too awkward. So we just call it tea. But if you say it is tea, I would argue that tea is something dry, and

what you are drinking is a cup of water. You have to say it is water, but it has tea mingled in it. It does possess the tea element, even the tea flavor, but actually it is not tea; it is a cup of water. If you say that you are simply drinking water, I would argue that you are not merely drinking water; you are also drinking tea. When you put dry coffee into water, you call it coffee. Actually, it is water.

Let us read verse 4 again: "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." You may say this is to walk according to the Spirit of God, but I might say this is to walk according to our spirit. It is because the spirit here is the "tea-water." It is the mingled spirit. The spirit in verses 4, 5, and 6 is the mingled spirit.

If we can be clear about this, it will help us to solve a big problem. In verse 14 you have the word *led*: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Although you may have been a Christian for years, do you really understand what the Lord's leading is? According to your Christian realization, what is the Lord's leading? In my early ministry if a young brother or sister came to me concerning marriage, I gave them at least four points to check whether it was the Lord's leading for them to marry a certain one. Is this the Lord's leading? What is the Lord's leading? How does the Lord lead us? The Pentecostals wait for something to fall upon them. The fundamentalists wait for inspiration. Some have not gotten married because they have not received any inspiration. Some sit quietly in the meetings because they have received no inspiration. In this meeting, if the eleven hundred people were waiting for an inspiration, the whole meeting would be thoroughly silent until time for dismissal.

This illustrates how far off we Christians have been. How then could we enter into Romans 12? It is impossible! This is why after twenty centuries of Christian history on this earth and even including our present situation, we have never seen the Body in an actual and practical way on the earth. There are millions of Christians, but where is the Body? There are a lot of disembodied members—scattered bones—like what is mentioned in Ezekiel 37. But where is the Body? Not only have very few gone through Romans 8 to Romans 12, but I am afraid very few have even entered into Romans 8. Too many Christians have remained in chapter 4, being justified by faith. They

have not even entered into chapter 5. Even now we could not go on into chapter 12. We must get through the problems in chapter 8.

In this chapter we have seen clearly that there are two spirits. One is the Spirit of God indwelling our spirit. The other, of course, is our spirit. These are two spirits, and one is in the other. God's Spirit dwells in our spirit. Based upon these two spirits, we surely can dig out some other things. First, we are regenerated. If we were not regenerated, how could we have God the Spirit in our spirit? It would be impossible! As long as God's Spirit indwells our spirit, our spirit is surely regenerated. Second, no doubt the Spirit of God today is right in our spirit. These are two facts. Do you really realize that you are regenerated and that the Spirit of God indwells your spirit? Have you noticed that the apostle in this chapter specifically uses the word *dwell* to describe what God's Spirit is doing in us? He is indwelling us. This brings us to the third fact, that the Spirit of God is dwelling, making His home, housing Himself, in our spirit. Do you really believe this?

Have you realized that as long as God the Spirit indwells you, you do not need any leading? You do not need to pray for something to come upon you, and you do not have to pray to receive some inspiration. God the Spirit is indwelling you. Do you recognize this fact? So many Christians are praying for some leading or for some kind of inspiration but neglect the fact that the Spirit is dwelling in them. His indwelling means everything. Do you want leading? His indwelling is leading. Do you want power? His indwelling is power. What do you want? His indwelling means everything to us. Very few Christians understand this point clearly. We all have been led away and even led astray from this indwelling. We have been led away to something else, something funny. I tried many ways, and eventually I learned that every way is a wrong way. The unique way is the indwelling. This is why whenever you set your mind on the spirit, you have life. You do not need to seek any leading. You just walk according to the spirit. For over fifty-five years I have to be honest to tell you that I have never received any kind of "leading," but for all those years the indwelling has been here. Whenever I just walk according to the indwelling, I am clear. Many Christians, when they need to buy a house or rent an apartment, pray that the Lord would lead them to the right place, to the best neighborhood, and so forth. They tell the Lord to cut it off if they should not get it. Most Christians pray in this way. They never do it according to the indwelling. If you need to get a house or rent an apartment, just go according to the indwelling. You do not need anything else. You are so clear.

The leading is there. Because in our daily walk we have never entered into such a stage that we act and behave and move according to the indwelling, there is no possibility for us to have the Body life. It is altogether not a small thing to get into this stage. This means that when you get into this stage of acting and moving and behaving according to the spirit, according to the indwelling, you are out of your self, out of your flesh, and out of your natural life. Actually, right away you are in the Body life.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

When Paul is speaking about the Spirit in Romans 8, why does he suddenly mention the Spirit of Christ? This indicates strongly that the very Spirit he is talking about is Christ. It is nothing less than Christ. And Christ is not so simple as what is in your understanding. This Christ is God incarnated to be a man. He brought God into man. This was incarnation. Then in such a kind of life, God mingled with man. In such a life, He lived on this earth and went through the human living. Then in such a life, He was crucified on the cross, and He was buried. Then He went through the grave, through Hades, through death. He came out of that and was resurrected. He was not only resurrected with His divine nature but also with His human nature. His entire being—the divine part and the human part—was resurrected and entered into glory. He was crowned, glorified, even enthroned. This is Christ. The Spirit of Christ is such a Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ is simply the real person of Christ. This person, this Spirit of Christ, has first regenerated you, putting His life and His nature and His element into your spirit, making your spirit one with Him. Individually speaking you have Christians, and corporately speaking you have a Body-Christ. The Body-Christ is comprised of the Head and the Body with so many members. This is Christ. Who can deny that this is Christ? What is Christ? The mingled spirit.

LIVING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Now you can see that we have a lot of problems in Romans 8 that have not been solved. How then could we expect to be in the Body life? We have not gone through Romans 8. How could we be in Romans 12? It is impossible. It does not mean that because you are humble, meek, patient, nice, loving, or forbearing that you are in the Body. It means that when you are behaving, acting, moving, and living according to *the* spirit, to the mingled spirit, to the indwelling of the Spirit, then you are actually moving, living, behaving in the Body of Christ. What, actually speaking, is the Body of Christ? What is the

Body of Christ practically speaking? It is the mingled spirit. Oh, may the Lord open our eyes! May He show us such a fact, such a practicality! If we would see this, we would say, "Lord, have mercy upon me. I am too far off. I have never entered into such a stage of the mingled spirit. I have never entered into a stage of the Body life. I still pray for this and for that, and I still wait for this and for that. I have never realized that the reality of the Body is right within me. The regenerated spirit and the indwelling Spirit are now one, mingled together right within me. I do not need to pray; I do not need to wait; I do not need to expect anything. Everything is within me. I just walk according to this mingled spirit. I just set my mind on the spirit. Life is here, and peace is here."

We have something within us—our spirit—mingled with God's Spirit. We can also say that God's Spirit is mingled with our spirit. But today God's Spirit is no longer merely the Spirit of God but the Spirit of Christ. If He is merely the Spirit of God, this Spirit does not comprise that much. But today He is the Spirit of Christ, so He comprises divinity, humanity, human life, crucifixion, the wonderful death of Christ, resurrection, glorification, and enthronement. Such a Spirit who is all-inclusive, comprising all these things, is mingling Himself with my spirit making me and Him one and making Him and me one. I just need to behave and act and live according to this mingled spirit. If I do, I am living in the Body. I simply need to set my mind on the spirit. Then I have life and peace. Then I am under the leading of the Spirit. Step by step I am being led by the Spirit.

This is the picture in Romans 8. I hope we all could see something here. It does not mean that I am simply cooperative and not individualistic, that I am not a hard person, so I am in the Body. It does not mean that I am flexible, so I am in the Body. You are so flexible, but you are in the body of flexibility, not in the Body of Christ. You have to be so Christ, not so flexible. Where is Christ? And what is Christ? And who is Christ? He is the Spirit mingled with our spirit. It is here that we live Christ, and it is here that we live the Body of Christ. When we have entered into this stage, we are right away in chapter 12. We are in the Body. This is altogether not a superficial teaching. Superficiality can never make it. We must see. We have two spirits, and we have three facts. We have been regenerated, the Spirit is indwelling our spirit, and these two are now just one. These three facts have been fully accomplished. Now we just need to act and walk according to this mingled spirit. In other words we need

to set our mind on this mingled spirit. Do not care for circumstances or situations. Only care for the inner mingled spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

OUR COOPERATION AND GOD'S OPERATION IN ROMANS 8

Have you ever spent some time in Romans 8 to find out how many activities there are on God's side and how many activities there are on our side? Actually, this chapter does not stress how much God does, but rather it stresses how much we do.

We need to consider some of the problems in Romans 8, but first we must spend some time to lay a foundation so that we may be enabled, or qualified, not to solve the problem but at least to understand the problem. Understanding the problem sometimes is harder than solving the problem. The best students are those who know how to question and how to find out the problems. The foundation we need to lay in order to understand further problems is to see what are the doings on our side and what are the doings on God's side in Romans 8.

OUR COOPERATION WITH GOD'S OPERATION

Some might say first of all that the law of the Spirit of life has freed me. Whose doing is this? Verse 2 does not say that God does this. Then you may say that it is the Spirit's doing. But neither does verse 2 say that the Spirit has freed us. Rather, it is a kind of law—the law of life. The law here means a kind of law of nature, not the law of the Ten Commandments. For example, gravity is a law by nature. No doubt, such a law by nature was first set up by God, and God still operates it. It is the natural law of gravity. Once a law is set, there is the need of the one who set the law to operate it. Gravity is a law. Who is operating it? No doubt, it is God Himself. Do you believe that whenever the law of gravity operates, it needs God to operate it again and again and again? No. The law is there. But whether this law operates or not does not depend upon God's side. It depends upon our side. Whenever we would fulfill the requirement of that law, that law works.

Electricity is another example. It has been installed into this building. If you need heating, you do not need to telephone the power plant asking them to operate the electricity. You just need to fulfill the requirement. When you

fulfill the requirement, the power operates. Is this your doing or the power plant's doing? If this room is dark and we need light, do I need to kneel down and pray that God would send the light? Even if I prayed for my whole life, the light would never come. But if I just fulfill the little requirement of turning on the switch, light comes. Whose doing is this? Surely this is our doing. But do not say that this is altogether your doing. Before your doing, some work had been done already. Some installation had been made already. Some operating was taking place far away in the power plant. If there had never been an installation and there was no power in the power plant, an operator in the power plant could turn on the switch a thousand times, but nothing would happen. On the one hand, this is my doing because I switched on the light. But on the other hand, this is my doing plus the installation with the operation. I could not do the installation, nor could I do the operation of the power plant. This is a kind of cooperation. My switching on the switch is a kind of cooperation with the installation and the operation in the power plant.

In traditional theology there are two schools: the Calvinist school and the Arminian school. The Calvinist school would say that everything is done by God. You can do nothing. The Arminian school would say that you have to do everything. If you do not do anything, nothing will happen.

SWITCHING ON

Paul, though, says, "Work out your own salvation" (Phil. 2:12). Apparently, this is altogether against Martin Luther's teaching. Salvation should be by faith, not by works. Yet Paul says to work out your own salvation. What is this? This is just switching on. To work out your salvation is to switch on. God has installed something, and God is still operating something, but you need to switch on. Romans 8:2 says, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." But who is this "me"? It is the switching "me." It does not mean that the law of the Spirit of life frees every believer with no qualification. At least the one in Romans 7 was not freed; he was still struggling there. Until Paul reached chapter 8, the law had no way to work out something. The law had been set up, and the law was still under God's operation, yet it needed Paul's switching on. Over fifty years ago I heard messages and I read books on this verse concerning the matter of the law of the Spirit of life. But no one ever told me that this law does not work without certain activities on the believers' side. Actually, Romans 8 is a definition of how the law of the Spirit of life is working. The subject of Romans 8 is the

freeing of the law of the Spirit of life. But just by verse 2, you do not know how the law of the Spirit of life works. So from verse 3 onward, nearly the entire chapter is a definition of how the law of the Spirit of life operates. The law of the Spirit of life does not free everyone. Many Christians today have not been freed. The law of the Spirit of life only frees the believers who fulfill all the doings in this chapter.

THE DOINGS ON OUR SIDE

The first point is that we have to walk according to the spirit. This walking according to the spirit is on our side; actually, this is our switching on. When we walk according to the spirit, we switch on, and the law works. The law of the Spirit of life never works until we walk according to the spirit. The second point must be in verse 5, which says that we need to mind the things of the Spirit. The third item of our doing in this chapter is to put to death the practices of our mortal body (v. 13). The fourth item is to be led by the Spirit of God (v. 14). According to our natural concept, we always consider that this is a verse concerning the spiritual leading. Actually, this is not a verse concerning the spiritual leading; it is a verse concerning our being led. It does not say, "As many as the Spirit leads." This verse does not talk about the Spirit's leading; it talks about our being led. There is a big difference. It is not the Spirit leading you; it is you being led by Him.

In verse 15 is the fifth item; that is, you have to cry. That is your doing. You have to learn to cry. We have the spirit of sonship in which we cry, "Abba, Father!" To cry is to switch on. Whenever you cry, "O Father! Abba, Father!" that is to switch on. Learn to cry. This is not a bad cry; this is a good cry. This is a benign cry. We Christians have to have a kind of benign cry. Learn to cry, "O Lord Jesus! O Father! O Abba, Father!" Today's Christians are dead because they are too silent. Learn to cry. Suppose I visited your home; could I hear a crying in your home? We all have to learn to cry. Have you ever considered that to cry is to switch on? Are you in darkness? Cry! Are you weak? Are you short of power? Cry! Sisters, would you keep your face, or would you lose your face to cry? I have seen many sisters who would just keep their face in order to be nice. They would not cry; they prefer to be weak. Simply to think about the situation never helps you; you need to cry.

Verse 16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit." With this portion we have a little problem. According to this sentence, who witnesses first: the Spirit or our spirit? How could the Spirit witness with our spirit if He

witnesses first? When it says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, it indicates that our spirit is witnessing already. When our spirit is witnessing, the Spirit witnesses with our spirit. In other words, if your spirit does not witness, neither does the Spirit witness. Why does verse 16 not say that our spirit witnesses with the Spirit? It is because the main stress here is that our spirit has to work. Our spirit has to take the initiative.

Verse 23 gives the next item. Have you ever realized that to groan is to switch on? Do you practice this? We all have to learn to groan. These are the seven items of the doings that could be found from Romans 8. We have to walk according to the spirit, to mind the things of the Spirit, to put to death the practices of the mortal body, to be led, to cry, to witness, and finally, to groan. You have to do these seven things. Try to practice these every day. If you are afraid of offending someone, you had better close your doors and windows and then do the crying and the groaning. You will see what a switching on you will experience.

THE DOINGS ON GOD'S SIDE

What are the doings on God's side or on the Spirit's side? There are not so many from His side. First, verse 11 says that He will give life to our mortal body. Second, as we are being led, the Spirit leads us. Third, the Spirit witnesses. When we witness, He witnesses. Fourth, when we groan, He intercedes. Actually, our groaning is His interceding. When you are groaning to the Lord, that is the Spirit in you interceding. He is not interceding with a clear word but just with a kind of groaning. That is the interceding of the Spirit. So God gives life, the Spirit leads, the Spirit witnesses, and the Spirit intercedes.

Do you realize that the four doings on God's side depend upon the doing from our side? God's doing depends upon our doing. If we do not do something, He would not do anything. He would never give life to our mortal body unless we put to death the practices of our body. His giving life depends upon our putting to death. We have to take the initiative. It is the same in principle with His leading. If you would not be led by Him, He would not lead. You have to see this. If you would not witness, neither would He. His witnessing depends upon your spirit's witnessing. It is even the more with the Spirit's intercession. His interceding is altogether dependent upon our groaning.

This means that the doings on God's side actually are His operation, and the doings on our side are our switching on. When we switch on, His operation works. I believe this is more than clear. In the last chapter I pointed out that Romans 8 has two spirits and three facts. First, we have been regenerated; second, the Spirit is indwelling us; third, the two spirits are mingled as one. These are the three facts. And of course the two spirits are the divine Spirit and our human spirit. You have to realize that these two spirits with the three facts, altogether five matters, take care of the installation and the operation. On the other hand, our doings, the seven doings that we have covered in this chapter, are switchings. By them we switch on. Whenever we would walk according to the spirit, the operation goes on. Whenever we would set our mind on the spirit, the operation goes on. Whenever we would put to death the practices of our body, whenever we would be led, whenever we would cry, whenever we would witness, and whenever we would groan, the operation goes on. We must see that it is not our doing that is waiting for His operation. His operation is waiting for our doing. It is not our switching on that is waiting for the installation. Neither is it our switching on that is waiting for the operation of the power plant. Actually, the installation and the operation are both waiting for our switching on. Are we waiting for God, or is God waiting for us? It is God who is waiting for us. He has regenerated us, He is now indwelling us, and He has mingled His Spirit with ours. Everything has been installed, and the operation is going on. What is short is our doings, our switching on.

We have the regeneration, and we have the indwelling. We also have the mingling. All these are matters of the installation. Excellent! Wonderful! What an installation! What an operation! The operation is still going on. The indwelling is here. The indwelling never ceases, and the indwelling never has a "selah." You may say that you are waiting for God, but God is right here and has been waiting for two thousand years already. The installation has been done, and the operation is in progress. They are all here waiting for you to switch on by walking according to the spirit, by setting the mind on the spirit, by killing the practices of the body, by being led by Him, by crying, by witnessing, by groaning.

In this building, many systems, at least seven, have been installed. Now they simply need our switching on. When we need the heat, we switch on, and the heat comes. When we need the air, we switch on, and the air comes. When we need the light, we switch on, and the light comes. All these things work by

our switching on and by its operation. Light is here; power is here; sound is here; video is here. They just need a little switching on. This illustrates the law of the Spirit of life. When you have these seven switching ons, the indwelling will work. That is the law of the Spirit of life. There is a spiritual law by nature. When we fulfill the requirement, this law works. What are the requirements? Walk according to the spirit; set your mind on the spiritual things; put to death all the practices of the body; be led and cry; witness and groan. When we would do all these things, the indwelling works. And that is the working of the law of the Spirit of life. Now you can see that when the verse says, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus," it is not an ordinary "me" but a "me" under the switching. The law is just the working element of this operation.

WALKING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Now we need to spend a little time to see these seven doings. I am so thankful to Paul for putting these seven things in a very good sequence. First, he mentions walking. Walking is all-inclusive. It means to live, to have your being, to move, to act, to walk. This is your daily life. This is your living every hour. Walk according to the spirit. When I look at the situation of Christians today, my heart is broken. They know very little about all these matters in Romans 8. Most Christians simply use the Bible as a kind of religious book. They pick up some verses to give certain religious teachings and religious sermons to make people religious. God's economy has no intention to make us religious persons. God's intention is to make all His chosen people His sons. He makes them His sons so they can be members of the Body of Christ. What a difference between these two!

It is easy for Christians to pick up verses that speak of wives submitting to their husbands, of husbands loving their wives, of being patient, of being kind, of being humble. But hardly any Christians pick up the points that we are covering in Romans 8. In Romans 8, in a sense there is no humility; there is no kindness; there are no husbands loving their wives; there are no wives submitting themselves to their husbands; there is no human behavior; there are no ethics; there is no good conduct. What is there? The law of the Spirit of life. There are two spirits working, based upon three facts. We have to thank the Lord that at this end time He has recovered these things from Romans 8 among us. What a blessing that we could hear such things! What a blessing to hear that we need to walk, to have our daily life, to live, to move, to act, to

have our being, according to the spirit! What a great thing! What a privilege! What a blessing that we can walk according to the spirit!

If you talked to most Christians today about walking according to the spirit, they would think that you mean to behave yourself by the inspiration of the "Holy Ghost." If you then told them that we do not need an inspiration, that we have the indwelling, they would probably consider that you are heretical. But Hallelujah, I do not need any inspiration! The indwelling is within me. He is waiting for me. If I just walk according to the spirit, the indwelling works. It is hard for us to tell what this spirit is. Of course, we have to see that it is the mingled spirit. It is your spirit mingled by and with the Spirit of God. We have a wonderful spirit. The Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is now in our spirit. We have such a wonderful spirit. We can walk according to such a spirit.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT

As we walk according to the spirit, surely we would spontaneously set our mind on the spirit. We would think about Him. We would meditate, we would muse, upon the spiritual things. We have the best help to set our mind on the spirit, that is, the Bible. And the best means is to pray-read. Whenever we pray-read the Bible, our mind is set on the spirit.

PUTTING TO DEATH THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

It will then be so spontaneous for you to put to death every practice of your body. When you walk according to the spirit and you set your mind on the spirit, minding the spiritual things, every time the practice of the body comes up, you will spontaneously kill it. When you kill it, life comes in. When you kill it, life is imparted.

BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

Spontaneously, you would be led by the Spirit. When you walk according to the spirit, set your mind on the spirit, and put to death the practices of the body, you are led. You are under the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit's indwelling works.

CRYING AND WITNESSING

Then all the time you would cry either, "Lord Jesus!" or "Abba, Father!" It would be a kind of spontaneous thing. Then you would witness. Whenever

you would open your mouth to say something about the Spirit, the Spirit would witness with you. Whenever you witness, He cooperates with you and confirms your witnessing.

GROANING

After experiencing all these six items, we would realize what a poor situation there is among today's Christians. Then we would come to the seventh item, groaning. We would not praise but groan. In a sense, the praising time is not today. We are expecting that day. Today is the groaning time. We do not know what to say, but we have a certain kind of sensation within us concerning God's interest on the earth today. Oh, the kingdom of God! Oh, God's interest! God's testimony! The Lord's recovery! You do not know what to say concerning these matters. So you groan. Your groaning then is exactly the indwelling Spirit's interceding. It is not by a human word or a clear utterance. It is just a kind of unutterable groaning. Yet this unutterable groaning is the excellent interceding of the Spirit. This is the best intercession. This is the best prayer to carry out God's economy on the earth today. If we are such persons experiencing all these seven items, surely the law of the Spirit of life is setting us free. If we practice all these seven items, the law of the Spirit of life truly works in us.

A SPIRIT OF SONSHIP

Now we need to consider Romans 8:15. There is a big problem here. "You have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father!" Now let us read the parallel verse in Galatians 4:6: "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" In Galatians 4:6 no doubt it is the Spirit who cries. This is a big problem. How could the Spirit of God cry to God, "Abba, Father!"? Most of the expositors consider that these two verses are parallel verses. But one of these verses says that we cry, Abba, Father! and the other says that the Spirit, meaning the Holy Spirit, cries, Abba, Father! Who cries? We or He? Because of the matter of mingling, we have to say both. These two verses strongly indicate that when we cry, the Holy Spirit cries. When the Holy Spirit cries, we have begun to cry already. The Spirit of the Son of God cries in our crying. Actually, these two cries are just one. Some Christians do not believe in the matter of mingling. But there is no other way to answer this question but by the matter of mingling.

You can never systematize such a spiritual reality. Some say that the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Spirit is the Spirit. Yet Galatians 4:6 tells us that the Spirit of God, the third of the Godhead, becomes the Spirit of the second of the Godhead. Furthermore, this third of the Godhead cries to the first of the Godhead, "Abba, Father!" This testifies two things: first, that the Spirit of God today is one spirit with our spirit. Otherwise, how could it be that when we cry, He cries? It also testifies that the three of the Godhead can never be systematized into three distinct units.

EXPERIENTIAL REVELATION

The problem today with traditional theology is that they do not care for the experience. Their theological teachings are altogether doctrinal. But the Bible does not care for mere doctrinal teachings; the Bible cares for the experiential revelation. The Bible reveals to us the experience. All the good writers, whenever they come to the matter of Christian experience, say the same thing: in Christian experience, Christ is identical with the Spirit. You can never divide these two in your experience.

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

Not only can you not divide Christ from the Spirit, but you also should not separate the Holy Spirit from your spirit. Romans 8:4 says that we need to walk according to the spirit. According to what spirit shall we walk? It is not just according to the Holy Spirit or just according to the human spirit, but it is according to the mingled spirit. In like manner Romans 8:6 says that we need to set our mind on the spirit. What spirit is this? Again it must be the mingled spirit.

Even in the matter of being led by the Spirit as mentioned in verse 14, it is a matter of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would never lead you apart from your spirit. He leads you when He is mingled with your spirit. He can never lead you unless your spirit is mingled by Him and with Him. What a subjective thing this is! By this you can see that few Christians today actually understand the Spirit's leading because they do not know that they have a spirit. Even the more, they do not know that the Holy Spirit today is one with their spirit. How then could they know the Spirit's leading? The leading Spirit today is not only in our spirit but also mingled with our spirit. It is such a mingled spirit who is leading us. Sometimes when people have problems, they think they need to go to a certain place and think about their

problems for several days in order to solve them. Our experience tells us that the more we think concerning the problems, the more we get into the forest. We get into the thick woods because the leading is not there. Why? Because the Leader is not there. The Leader is in our spirit. Actually, this Leader makes our spirit a partnership of His leading. Forget about going to the mountain to think about something; turn to your spirit! Many of us could testify that regardless of the situation, when we would turn to our spirit, the sky is clear. This is to be led by the Spirit in and through and with our spirit. It is wonderful!

Then we would cry, “I am a son of God! He is my Father, and I am His son! He and I are one life! We are one nature! Wonderful! O Father!” Then we would witness and we would groan and He would intercede within us. When we are in such a groaning, in such an interceding, we are really one spirit with Him. We do not care for anything on this earth. We have no interest other than His. When we are in this kind of situation, the law of the Spirit of life works, setting us free. At that time no doubt we are actually sons of God, and we are members of Christ. Right away we are in the Body life. Now you see that the Lord could not have the Body life for centuries because there were no Christians who were in such a kind of situation—walking according to the spirit, setting the mind on the spirit, putting to death every practice of the body, being led all the time, crying, witnessing, and groaning. We must be such a person in such a living. Right away we will be in the Body of Christ in an actual way.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE DEFINITION OF THE LAW OF LIFE AND HOW IT WORKS

In this chapter we are once again on Romans 8. After being on this chapter for so long, I would ask a few questions. First, what is the actual, main topic that this chapter talks about? Most Christian teachers say that this chapter is on the Spirit. Yes, it is somewhat on the Spirit, but I do not believe that the main topic of this chapter is the Spirit. We have mentioned quite a number of times that this chapter also talks about sonship. Yes, it talks about sonship, but I still could not believe that sonship is the main subject of this chapter.

In verse 2 there is the phrase *the law of the Spirit of life*. Three things are used to compose this phrase: law and Spirit and life. Which of the three is most important?

If you answer that life is the most important one, why did Paul not say, "The life of the Spirit of the law"? For example, if I use a phrase *the gold of the mountains of California,* am I talking about California or the mountains or the gold? Surely I am talking about the gold. If I am talking about California, I should say, "California of the mountains of gold." Because the phrase uses the word *gold* first, it indicates strongly that I am talking about gold. In like manner, for Romans 8 to speak of the law of the Spirit of life indicates that this chapter is on the law. This chapter speaks about the law. You may not see this because you are distracted by other things. You have some concept concerning life, and you also have some idea concerning the Spirit, so it is easy for you to pick up these matters. But you do not have any concept, any idea, concerning the law. Not many Christian readers of Romans 8 would pick up the word *law*. Most of them have already picked up *the Spirit*. Fewer have picked up *life*.

THREE LAWS

In the past we picked up the word *life,* but we did not spend too much time to emphasize the word *law*. This chapter actually talks about the law. Do not forget that Romans 8 is a continuation of Romans 7. Romans 7 talks about the law. Actually, it talks about at least three laws: First, there is God's law given

through Moses. Second, there is a kind of law trying to do good in our mind. Then there is another law, an evil, bad law in our members. So Romans 7 shows our problem. We have the law of God given outwardly, and surely as a human being created by God, we would like to keep the law of God. We have such a law in our created nature of trying, even endeavoring, to keep the law of God. But between these two laws—the law given by God and the law created in us in our natural life—there is another evil law, which is also called the evil (v. 21). When we try to do good, to keep the law of God, we find that the evil is present. This causes the trouble. There is no way for a fallen person with such an evil law inside him to keep the law of God. This is clearly described in Romans 7.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Then Romans 8 says that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because there is another law, the law of the Spirit of life. It is not the law of good, nor the law of evil. It is not even the law of God. It is another law. The law of the Spirit of life has freed me from that evil law of sin and of death. By this, you can see that the topic of chapter 8 is the law of the Spirit of life. Although it has more than thirty verses, you have to realize that all the verses in chapter 8 are just a full definition of this fourth law, the law of the Spirit of life. This fourth law is absolutely different from the other three laws—from God's law, from the law of good, and from the law of sin. In the book *The Knowledge of Life* there is a chapter on three lives and four laws. That chapter defines clearly these four laws, but it does not stress what the subject of Romans 8 is. In this chapter I must stress this one thing; that is, Romans 8 talks about a law. It is not the law of God, nor the law of good, nor the law of evil, but the law of the Spirit of life.

Now we need to ask some further and harder questions. First, what is this law? Second, how does this law work? Third, what is the issue of this law? These three questions are not so easy for anyone to answer. You must not take these three questions in such an easy or a light way.

THE LAW OF GOD

What is the law of God? Through the Life-studies on Exodus and other messages, I believe you realize that the law of God is a testimony, or a picture. The law of God is not God Himself. It is just a picture. The law of God given on Mount Sinai was just a picture, a portrait, of God.

THE LAW OF OUR MIND

What then is the law of our mind that tries all the time to do good? Have you ever thought about it? I would encourage all of you to learn to think about the Bible in this way. Think about Romans 6. Think about Romans 7. Think about Romans 8. I do not mean that you have to meditate; I mean that you need to think about it. What is the law of doing good? I must tell you that that is the created man. Any living being created by God is a law. A dog is a law. A cat is a law. You are a law. An apple tree is a law. A peach tree is a law. Although you may rebuke an apple tree for not bringing forth bananas, that will not cause the apple tree to bring forth bananas. Its law is to bring forth apples. Why do you not bark like a dog? Why do you not catch mice like a cat? Why do you not fly like a bird? With these creatures there is a kind of law. You do not need to teach a living creature to do something; he will do it according to his law. No farmer would be so foolish as to try to teach a plant to bring forth something, yet many Christians are foolish in this way. Many Christians are trying to teach apple trees to produce bananas. Many sermons are telling the apple trees that they have to improve themselves. They should not bring forth apples anymore but rather should bring forth bananas. This is foolish, and this is religion. The law of good in man is simply the man created by God.

THE LAW OF SIN

What then is the law of evil? It is also called sin. This is Satan. The law of God is not God Himself but a picture of God. The law of good is you, the created being. And the law of evil is Satan, who is one with you now. With these points in mind, we can come to chapter 8, and we can know what the law of the Spirit of life is.

THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD

The law of the Spirit of life in chapter 8 is nothing less than our God. But God is not so simple. The God in Genesis 1 was in one stage under a certain kind of condition. And the God in Matthew 1 entered into another stage. The God who is the law of the Spirit of life is not merely the God in Genesis 1, nor merely the God in Matthew 1. The God in Romans 8 is the processed Triune God. In Genesis 1 God was not processed. But in Matthew 1 God entered into one process, incarnation.

Incarnation

Have you noticed that the incarnation is also included in Romans 8? Verse 3 says, "That which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." In this one verse the incarnation is described in a very wonderful way. This one verse covers a number of points concerning the incarnation. First, it indicates that the first law, the law of God, did not work. It was too weak; it was just in letters. What can a picture, a photo, do? It can only give you an idea of that person; that is all. It has no life. It has no power. The law of God was just a picture. It was surely weak through the fallen created human being. It was weak because of the flesh. The flesh is the created human being that became fallen. The verse goes on to tell us that God sent His Son. This indicates that the Son of God came to do what the law of God cannot do. The Son of God came to replace the law of God. In other words, because the photo did not work so well, the person came by way of incarnation. You have to realize that the Word became flesh (John 1:14). The Son of God came in the form of the flesh of sin. This is incarnation.

In Genesis 1 you have God merely as God; there was no process. But in Matthew 1 you have God in the first step of His process, incarnation. Incarnation indicates clearly that the law of God as a photo did not work, that man was fallen and became flesh, and that the Son of God came to replace that weak law of God and to become in the form of the flesh of sin. Then at the end of this verse there is another point; that is, He condemned sin in the flesh. This last portion of the verse is very difficult to translate and also hard to understand. What does it mean to condemn sin? What does it mean that He came concerning sin? You have to realize that sin in this verse refers to the evil in chapter 7, which is the satanic law, the law of sin (v. 25). And that sin, that law of sin, is just Satan himself. All these points are included in this one matter of incarnation. In His flesh, through the death on the cross, He condemned sin. He destroyed the power of death. He destroyed the devil. All these matters are involved in the incarnation.

Resurrection

One of the biggest steps of the divine process is resurrection. Romans 8 stresses resurrection very much. Let us read verse 11: "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." Here it mentions the Spirit of the Resurrector, not the Spirit of the

Creator. In Genesis 1 the Spirit was the Spirit of the Creator, but in Romans 8 the Spirit is the Spirit of the Resurrector. He resurrected Jesus, the One who became flesh and who died on the cross. He was resurrected from the dead by the very God who is now the Resurrector. He is not merely the creating One but the resurrecting One. And His Spirit, the Spirit of this resurrecting One, dwells in you. If He dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal body through His Spirit who indwells you. This verse stresses the resurrecting God, not the creating God. So resurrection is here, and no doubt between incarnation and resurrection, crucifixion is also included. Since Jesus was resurrected from the dead, it means that crucifixion was there. The Lord Jesus entered into crucifixion, yet He came out of that not by Himself but by the resurrecting God. God raised Him from the dead. So there is incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Ascension

If you go on to the end of chapter 8, you have the ascension. This resurrected One today is at the right hand of God in the heavens (v. 34). Why did Paul write chapter 8 in this way? It is because he liked to bring in all these aspects to let us know that in Romans 8 God is not so simple. He is no longer merely God without being processed. No, He is now rather the very God processed through incarnation, through crucifixion, through resurrection, and now into ascension.

THE DIFFERENT PERSONS IN THE PROCESS

Not only can you see the steps of this process; you can also see the different persons in this process. First, the chapter says, “the Spirit of God”; then it says, “the Spirit of Christ”; then it says, “Christ in you.” Finally, it also says that the Spirit who is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ and Christ Himself now indwells you. You have to see all these complications. Romans 8 is altogether not a simple chapter. It is a compound chapter. It is not easy to read this chapter with a proper understanding because you need more spiritual vocabulary, and you need more spiritual experiences. If you do not have the experiences, you do not have the new words. You do not have the vocabulary. So when you read, you cannot get into this chapter. This is why this chapter has remained somewhat closed for centuries. Christians could touch it only a little bit because they had a limited vocabulary. They could understand it only to a certain extent.

But by the Lord's mercy, in these meetings many things have been dug out of Romans. We see that the law of the Spirit of life is just God Himself and not merely God without a process but God who has gone through a complicated process. Now He is not merely God, and neither is He merely the Spirit. He is no more merely the Son of God. Today He is the Spirit of God, He is the Spirit of Christ, and He is Christ. Furthermore, He is the indwelling Christ. You need to see this. Such a God, a processed God, a processed Triune God being God Himself, being the Spirit, being Christ, being the One indwelling you, is the law. He Himself is the law. Such a One in Romans 8 is no more a photo, a picture. He is a living person. He is not just the living God in Genesis 1 but the living God in Romans 8 after being processed. All the Trinity is here. Such a One is this law. The first law is a picture of God, but the fourth law is not a picture but His very being. It is not His original being but His processed being. What is the difference between the original God in Genesis and the processed God in Romans 8? The difference is too big! In the original God there was no human nature, no crucifixion, no victory, no condemnation on the devil. But in this processed God a lot of things are included that were not in the original God. Now all the ingredients are in the processed God, and such a God is the very law within us.

The law is such a God. Such a God has entered us and has become not only our life but our law. An apple tree has a life, and the life is the law of the apple tree. We have this processed God in us as our life, and this life is the law. The law of the Spirit of life is the Spirit and is life. It does not mean that the law is one thing and that the Spirit is another thing and that the life is still another thing. Many times we have illustrated with the current of electricity. The current of electricity is just electricity itself. You cannot have something as the current and another thing as the electricity. No. These two are one thing. In like manner, the law is the Spirit, and the law is life. And the law is God, the processed God. Have you ever considered who the Spirit who indwells you is? The Spirit who indwells you is just the processed Triune God. Some have opposed our saying that Christ is the Spirit, saying that this messes up the glorified person of the Lord Jesus who is the Son of God. But I would say, even in a stronger way, that Christ is not only the Spirit, but He is the Spirit as the Triune God. This Spirit is indwelling you. He is God. He is man. He is the Father. He is the Son. He is the Spirit. He has within Him the human nature and crucifixion and resurrection and ascension and the defeat of Satan and the condemnation of sin. Such a One is now indwelling you. This is the law

that is right in you. But today the poor Christians do not apply this law. They have this law within them, but they do not realize it, and they do not apply it. They do not use it. Instead, they are praying for other things. This is foolish. Now you can see why, in Romans 8, Paul's writing is altogether not simple. It is compound and complicated. In a sense Paul covered nearly all the crucial matters in the whole Bible in this one chapter. This is wonderful! How then can this chapter be simple? It is impossible. I believe now you can see that the law in Romans 8 is just God Himself, and this God is no longer merely the creating God. He is now the all-inclusive processed God.

HOW THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE WORKS

The next question is this: How does this law work? This is a harder question. You must realize that it is altogether inexhaustible. We cannot tell to the uttermost how this law works. We can only say that according to our experiences we realize how this law works. It works through divinity, the divine nature. It works through humanity, the human nature. It works through incarnation. Incarnation must be repeated again and again daily in your experience. And it works through crucifixion, through the wonderful all-inclusive death. It works through the defeat of Satan and the destruction of the devil. It works through resurrection. It works through ascension. It works through all these ingredients of today's processed God who is the indwelling Spirit. When the indwelling Spirit works in us, He works through all these things. When this law works in you, it spontaneously brings you the divine nature and the human nature. It spontaneously functions to do the killing, the defeating, and the destroying. In the next chapter we have to find out the scientific knowledge of the way that this law works in us. It is somewhat like modern medicine, like an antibiotic. It works through many different ways to heal you. Romans 8 gives us an all-inclusive scientific dose. It works within us in a scientific way.

Christians today are far off although they teach many things. Few have touched the very focus of the Bible. This is why Romans 8 remains nearly untouched. But today I believe that the Lord would unveil and uncover this chapter to show us the depths of His economy in very much detail. We have to spend the time to consider how the law works through divinity and through humanity and through the crucifixion and through the defeating of Satan. Due to the ignorance and blindness of the Christians throughout the centuries, this chapter has remained closed. For this reason there has been very little

Body life. We all have to admit that through the centuries there has been very little Body life. Even up to this day there is little Body life because the secret of how to have the Body life has not been unveiled. It has been under the cover here in Romans 8. We must see how this law is just the processed all-inclusive God as the all-inclusive Spirit indwelling us. This is the law. We also must see how this law works scientifically through all the ingredients that are incorporated in this wonderful being. As long as this wonderful being exists in us, He Himself as a law works through all that He has and all that He is.

Many of us can testify that our prayer to overcome sin was seldom answered. Our prayer not to lose our temper was seldom answered. This is why among Christians there is little victory. Although the Christians who have received mercy of God try their best to love the Lord, actually not much really works within them in an effective way. Why? Because Romans 8 has still been shut up. It has not been opened up. I hope we can all see that there is a living person who is the law. And this law as a living person works through whatever He is and whatever He has.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE SCIENTIFIC WORKING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

In this chapter the burden is the function of the law of life, or the scientific working of the law of life. We have to see how the law of life works in a scientific way. Even in such an ancient time, two thousand years ago, this scientific word, *law*, was used by the apostle Paul. The goal of modern science is mostly just to find out the natural law of certain things. For example, the earth has the greatest attracting power, and eventually the law of gravity was discovered. Today even elementary students know about the law of gravity. All scientific studies are studies of natural laws. Is it not a wonder that two thousand years ago such a writer as Paul used the word *law* in this way? He did not use it in the way of the Ten Commandments but in the way of a scientific principle.

In Romans 8 *the law of the Spirit of life* refers to a scientific law. It is used in the same way in chapter 7, where Paul indicates that there is a law in his flesh that always tends to sin, that works to sin (v. 23). In the last chapter we saw that Romans 8 actually is on this scientific law. It is talking about the law. You should not pick up any word or any point other than the law as the subject of this chapter. Romans 8 is a chapter on the law of the Spirit of life. The term *the law of the Spirit of life* is mentioned only once, but then in the definition it is not mentioned. This indicates that whatever chapter 8 talks about is a description, or an explanation, of this law. This is somewhat like Genesis 1. The first verse mentions God's creating, and then the rest of the chapter is a definition, an explanation, a description, of God's creation. In like manner, the entire chapter of Romans 8 is a definition, description, explanation, and presentation of this law. Whatever is mentioned after verse 2 is something related to the law. It is a little part of the law. By this you can see that it is altogether right to say that the law of the Spirit of life is nothing less than the Triune God processed and dwelling in us. The Triune God is this law, and this Triune God is the One who has been processed and who is now indwelling us. *Processed* indicates that something happened; *indwelling* indicates that something is still going on. The Triune God who has been processed and who is now dwelling in us is Himself the law.

WORKING BY LAW, NOT BY ACTIVITY

Before God became incarnated, He could not come into us. He was nothing less than God—He was the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He was the Triune God. Even in Genesis 1 the pronoun used for God is not only in singular number but also in plural number—*Our* image. This indicates that the very God who created the universe was triune. Even before the creation began, there was a kind of counsel or consideration between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. "Let Us make man." God said this to Himself. But at that point He had no way to come into man. Furthermore, He could work only by activities; He could not work by law. To work by activity is one thing, and to work by law is another thing. Today so many automatic things work by law. For example, a water sprinkler works not by activity but by law. Many lamps also work not by activity but by law. Certain lamps automatically come on when it becomes dark. This is a working by law, not by activity.

Our stomach digests food not by activity but by law. There is no need for us to ask our stomach to digest food and to tell it to stop when it is finished. No, digestion in the stomach works by law. Why does it work by law? Because life is there. Why do the sprinklers and the lamps work by law? Because the power is there through a governing principle that has been set up.

Before God was incarnated, He did a lot of things among men by activity. When God came to Abraham, that was an activity. When God was sitting there with Abraham and eating with him, that was an activity (Gen. 18). But today God is no longer working in the way of activity, because He has installed Himself into us as the life and as the power. When I pray, I sometimes like to pray that the Lord would come to visit us and grant us a gracious visitation. Although this is a very good prayer, it is altogether according to the Old Testament. Many times after praying in this way, I was rebuked by the Lord. It seemed that He said to me, "I am here. Don't you know that I am here? I have been installed into you." Once electricity has been installed into a building, there is no need to consider and hope that the electricity will come again tomorrow to visit. No, it is permanently installed into the building. Once installed, it continues to operate according to law. In his Epistles Paul tells us clearly that since the time we believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him, He has come into us. Using a modern term, He has been installed into us. Even He has been born into us. From the time of that

birth, the Triune God no longer works on us, in us, and with us merely by activity; He also works by law.

Romans 8 uses this term *the law of the Spirit of life* to describe how the Triune God, after having been processed and having been installed into us, has become a law in us. He becomes something automatic. He becomes not only something organic but also something automatic. Whatever this processed and installed and indwelling God does in us, with us, and on us is the function of the law. Our God is no more an objective worker, working by activities outside of us and beyond us. Our God today has become a subjective law working all the time within us not by activities but by law. This working is altogether scientific. The law always works in a scientific way. If you work by duty, that is not scientific; if you work by law, that is scientific. How wonderful that our God today has become a law within us—an automatic principle!

The circulation of your blood is according to law. It is not an activity. While I am acting and moving, blood is circulating within me. The circulation of the blood is a law. The best medical doctor is one who is the best scientific student of all the principles and laws of the human body. The law of cancer has not yet been discovered. If you could find the law of cancer, you might get a Nobel Prize. Surely there must be a law related to cancer. I use these illustrations to help you realize that in the Bible at least one chapter talks about such a law. It speaks of such a law being the Triune God, the processed God, the installed God, and the indwelling God. Wonderful! Dear saints, you must see this. If you see this, it will save you to the uttermost. This is a kind of foundation to help us go on to see the scientific function of this automatic law.

Modern drugs such as antibiotics are a good illustration of the law of the Spirit of life. The pharmaceutical companies make the modern drugs in a scientific way. When you take a certain drug into you, it works in you scientifically. You have an illness because a certain kind of germ is in you, also working by a certain kind of law. Then you take an antibiotic with an element in it that works anti the law of the germ in you. The law of the Spirit of life is just the Triune God processed, installed, and now indwelling us. This dear One is the scientific drug with a lot of scientific elements that are anti the negative elements within us. These negative elements include the old nature, the flesh, sin, and Satan. After we were saved—forgiven by God of our sins and washed by His blood—we began to try our best to please God, but we

found out that there were a lot of negative things within us. Then we wanted to overcome. We were taught many ways to overcome, but eventually none of the ways worked.

The way of deliverance, of rescue, is the law in you. The law of the Spirit of life with all the elements working scientifically is the way of deliverance.

THE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Now we need to discover from Romans 8 the elements within the law of the Spirit of life. Verse 2 indicates that both the Spirit and life are components or elements or ingredients of this law. "In Christ Jesus" is another element. Paul was very specific in his writing here. He did not say "in Jesus" or "in Jesus Christ" or "in the Lord." He said "in Christ Jesus." Some might argue that the phrase *in Christ Jesus* is not an adjective phrase modifying *law* but an adverbial phrase modifying *freed*. In a sense this is correct, but in the Greek it is difficult for the translators to say definitely whether such a phrase modifies the noun, *law,* or whether it works as an adverb to modify the verb, *freed*. Actually, there is no need to argue, because eventually it is the same thing. Eventually, it is in Christ Jesus. If the law is not in Christ Jesus, how could the law free you in Christ Jesus? If the law can do something for you in Christ Jesus, that means the law itself is in Christ Jesus.

Verse 3 also includes some marvelous elements contained in the law of the Spirit of life. First, the law even includes the element of dealing with impossibility. Impossibility is dealt with by the law. This means the impossibility of the law of letters. The law was impossible because it was weak through the flesh. So here is another element, the weakness through the flesh. Then there is the element of God, which is the biggest element in this verse. Also there is the Son of God and the likeness of the flesh. This is not only the incarnation but a kind of form, or likeness, of the fallen flesh. Even the elements of sin and condemnation and sin condemned in the flesh are included here. Of course, some of these elements are positive, and some are negative. Some are dealing elements, and some are elements dealt with. Many elements are revealed in this chapter, but all of them are components of the law of the Spirit of life. Either on the positive side or on the negative side there are many items indicated and implied in this chapter. God is implied. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are implied. God's creation and man's fall are implied. Man's flesh and sin are implied. Incarnation, death, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are implied. Even the interceding Spirit and

interceding Christ are included. We have to realize these items and to know how this law works within us scientifically.

For example, as Christians, we have realized that our flesh is very sinful and very bad. So from the time we were saved, we have been seeking how to overcome this bothering and entangling matter within us. We may have read a number of books telling us to do this and to do that to overcome. I tried many of these ways, and eventually I found that none of them worked. Some have said that the way to deal with our flesh is by the cross. Since the flesh has been crucified, we need to reckon ourselves dead and to bear the cross. This means to remain on the cross. In *The Imitation of Christ,* the writer stresses bearing the cross. Madame Guyon also stressed the matter of the cross. She said that we need to kiss the cross. She said that God gives me the cross, and the cross gives me God. Forty to forty-five years ago I practiced all these things, but I discovered that they do not work. I found that to bear the cross as taught in the book *The Imitation of Christ* is just to commit a kind of suicide. Even to "kiss the cross" is somewhat in the same category.

REMAINING IN THE TOUCH WITH THE LORD

Then you may ask, What does work? The law in Romans 8 works. How does it work? It just works. When you let it work, it works. Then you would ask, How do you let it work? These kinds of questions are altogether from the fallen mentality. The light from this chapter has not been seen for hundreds of years. Paul not only saw the light, but he wrote such a chapter. Although some may have experienced these things through the years, mostly they experienced them by accident. For example, electricity already existed before Thomas Edison discovered some of the laws related to it. But it existed mainly in the form of lightning, and it occurred accidentally. But eventually, Thomas Edison and others discovered laws concerning electricity. If you keep those laws, it works. In like manner, some Christians in the past may have touched the law of the Spirit of life in a proper way, causing it to work. But this does not mean that they had this law in their understanding. It came by way of accident, and it also went by way of accident. Paul was different; he saw the light. The law worked within Paul not by accident but by law.

We all have to contact the Lord, to fellowship with Him, to touch Him. Sometimes in the past we may have touched Him in an accidental way. Still we touched Him, and something happened. Through the centuries Christians who have experienced these things have encouraged us to have a time with

God. But the problem is this: when we get in touch with God and with this law by spending some time with God, right away we make up our mind to do things, and then we are out of the touch with the Lord. In our prayer time we are in, but out of our prayer time we are out. The more you are in touch with the Lord without asking Him to do something for you, without deciding to do something for Him, without attempting to please Him, there will be a kind of automatic working within you to eliminate the sinful flesh. The negative things within you will be reduced and eliminated. It is not that you overcome something or that you kill something, but there is an automatic killing. While you remain in the touch with the Lord, the law of the Spirit of life works.

Sometimes certain "pious" Christians like James in the New Testament may say that we should not be hearers only but also doers. They would encourage us to pray that the Lord would help us to do what we have heard. I believe that most of us have prayed this kind of prayer. But do you realize that such doers are committing a kind of spiritual suicide? In the Lord's recovery you have been hearing a lot of things. Have you been doers? If you have been doing, mostly you have been committing a kind of suicide. You kill yourself, and you kill others. The more you like to be a doer, the more you become a killer. Forget about doing, but stay in touch with the Lord. There the law that has been installed into your being will automatically and scientifically work to kill all the germs and even to deal with that particular germ that you are bothered about. We all have experienced this kind of thing, but the problem is that we do not remain in this kind of touch with the Lord. The most spiritual person is the one who remains in the touch with the Lord the most.

GENUINE HELP

For almost fifty years I have been serving and teaching the saints, but I am afraid that some of the help that I rendered to them was not so genuine. The genuine help, the real help, is just to get the saints into the touch with the Lord that will let the automatic law work. As the law of the Spirit of life works in such a one, it will reduce his problem and solve his problem and kill some of his germs. This is the genuine help. Sometimes a medical doctor may not give you the genuine healing but just a kind of temporary soothing and comfort. Likewise, we sometimes feel that we have received some spiritual help, but several weeks later we are still sick. The real help is to get into this touch with the Lord that will cause the automatic law of the Spirit of life to operate within us. Actually, you cannot help others. Paul planted, but he could

not give life. Apollos watered, but Apollos could not give growth. Only God could give growth. I may, in certain difficult problems, help you temporarily. But only the automatic working law can kill the real source. Only the law of the Spirit of life can reduce your natural life and deal with the real germ. This is the genuine help.

Many times I have used a married couple as an example, saying that the wife helps the husband to grow, and the husband helps the wife to grow. But actually, I doubt whether any wife has ever helped a husband to grow. At most she may help him to learn some patience. Actually, inside there is not much change. The genuine help is to bring a wife or a husband into the touch with the Lord. Then the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8 automatically works scientifically. All the negative elements and the positive elements in the law will operate. Even though we may not know so many of the things within us, when this law works within us, it reduces and eliminates. It does away with the negative things. When your wife irritates you or provokes you, you will not need to gnash your teeth, because that ugly thing within you has been reduced and eliminated. Sometimes the reducing is not up to standard, and we need more time remaining in the touch with the Lord.

Through the years many so-called spiritual giants have encouraged people to contact the Lord, to fellowship with the Lord, to pray. But even they themselves did not get into the principle in a thorough way. They only enjoyed the result to some extent, so they encouraged people to practice certain things and to enjoy certain things. Today we do not need this kind of word. We just need to come into the touch with Him. We need to pray, “Lord, I just come to touch You. I have nothing to ask of You. I do not even like to ask You to do anything for me. I just like to remain in the touch with You. I do have some burden to pray for Your recovery, for Your interest, yet I do not like to do it. I just like to remain in this touch.” Your experience will confirm that if you practice this, you will experience a lot of killing, a lot of reducing, a lot of strengthening, a lot of resurrecting, a lot of rising up. What is this? This is the law working in you scientifically. This law includes the weakness of the law being killed already. The impossibility of the law is done away. There is no more impossibility. Rather, it is full of possibility. The righteous requirement of the law is spontaneously fulfilled in you. It is not that you are fulfilling the requirement but that the requirement is fulfilled in you. Furthermore, it is not just by accident and just according to mercy. It is a matter of the law. The electricity does not heat your room according to mercy but according to law.

Let us come back to this automatic law that works scientifically. Dear saints, just stay in the contact with Him. Something in you will spontaneously work in a scientific way to solve this problem for you and to deal with that thing for you. Although you may not know there was such a thing in you, that thing will have been dealt with. After you have stayed in this contact for a certain period of time, you will realize experientially that within you there has been a kind of clearing up, a kind of dealing, a kind of release, a kind of rising up, a kind of soaring in the air. This is the result of the scientific working of this automatic law. This is the very God who is now indwelling you and working, not as God but as a law. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE MAIN FUNCTION OF THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

In this chapter we have a "high mountain" to climb. In expression or in terminology, it may not sound that high. But in actuality, in biblical doctrine, very few points are so high, so deep, so difficult to explain, so difficult to get. The "high mountain" is this: What is the main function of the law of the Spirit of life? What is the main work, the major work, that the law of the Spirit of life does within us? The terminology is very simple, but it is very hard to tell and to explain. Let us read Romans 8:2: "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." If you come to this verse without so much knowledge, you can see the major function easily. The major function of the law of the Spirit of life is to free us from the law of sin and of death. Its major function is to free us from another law.

THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD AS THE LAW

You have to remember that Romans 8 is on the law of the Spirit of life, and its major work is to free us from another law. That law is the law of sin and of death. If we could be freed from that law, we would have no problems. We would be regulated; we would be conformed; we would be spiritual; we would be victorious; we would be holy. The main thing is that we need to be freed from another law, the law of sin and of death. Here we have two laws. One is the law of the Spirit of life. The law of the Spirit of life is nothing less than the Triune God processed to be the indwelling Spirit within us. This title means a lot. Do not think that this is merely my teaching. This is exactly what Paul is teaching in Romans 8. Paul does not say that just God dwells in us. He did not write in such a simple way. This is why very few Christians can understand Romans 8. Paul uses many terms: *God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, Christ Jesus,* and *the One who raised Christ from the dead.* Furthermore, you have God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Paul used so many complicating, or implicating, expressions. Why was Paul so troublesome, so complicating, in his writing? He had a strong purpose. Moreover, Paul said that God sent His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Three things are here: likeness, flesh, and sin. This was Paul's way of expression. Consummately speaking, He is the indwelling Spirit. And the

indwelling Spirit is not merely the Spirit of God as mentioned in Genesis 1, where the Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters. Romans 8 is not that simple. We have to realize that all the complicating, implicating expressions indicate that God is triune and that this Triune God has been processed. This Triune God after being processed is now ultimately the indwelling Spirit. This very God is the law. He is the law of the Spirit of life. We have to see this. What is the law of the Spirit of life? The law of the Spirit of life is such a triune, processed, indwelling God as the Spirit within us. Within us, He is the law. I do not believe that many Christians have ever considered God in this way. Mostly we were taught that God is powerful, merciful, and faithful. Whatever God says, He will do. He will help us. But we all can testify that He did not help us so much. We wanted to get rid of our temper, but God did not help us. It seems that the more I pray asking God to kill my temper, the more temper I have. As a husband, the more you endeavor to love your wife, praying that the Lord would help you to love her, the more you may be disgusted with her.

THE ENTIRE TRIUNE GOD IS THE SPIRIT

In school you have been educated, and in the church you have been edified. Many wives like to see their husbands coming to the so-called church to be edified, hoping that their husbands would love them more. Likewise, the husbands like to see their wives going to the so-called church so that they will be edified and not trouble them so much. This is the situation among so many Christians today. But who knows the law of the Spirit of life? Very few. Hardly any Christians know that this law is the very God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. He is the Creator, the One who was incarnated, the Redeemer, the Savior, the processed One, and consummately He is the Spirit indwelling us. Some would even oppose our saying that the Triune God is such a Spirit. They have forgotten that even the Lord Himself said that God is Spirit (John 4:24). Does this mean that only the Creator God is Spirit, that the Father is not the Spirit, and that the Son is not the Spirit? Does this indicate that only the Spirit is the Spirit? This is the traditional teaching of the Trinity. Is God in John 4:24 only God the Spirit? Is He not God the Son? Is He not God the Father? Of course, the Triune God is there—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If the Spirit is the Spirit, is not the Son the Spirit? Is not the Father the Spirit? The Lord Jesus said that God, meaning the Triune God, is the Spirit. Most Christians today know only the so-called traditional, theological terminology concerning the Triune God. They say that God the Father is one, God the Son

is one, and God the Spirit is one. They say that these are three separate and distinct persons, that you cannot say that the Father is the Spirit, and the Son is the Spirit. You can only say that the Spirit is the Spirit. We have to ask them about John 4:24, which says that God is Spirit. Christians today have never been told and never been taught properly what the law of the Spirit of life is.

THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

Now we come to the law of sin and of death. What is this law of sin and of death? I know what my commission is, and I fully admit that my teachings are different from traditional Christian teachings. I do not like to teach anything that is merely traditional. What is the law of sin and of death? The Bible is very logical. The law of sin and of death is the law that the law of the Spirit of life frees us from. We have seen that the first law, the law of the Spirit of life, is the processed Triune God becoming the indwelling Spirit. Surely the other law must be the enemy of God. It must be an opposite law but not opposite in a simple way. It is opposite in a very complicated way. How did Satan get into your flesh? Did he simply come in last night while you were dreaming? You have to realize that he came in not in such a simple way. How did Satan get into our flesh? The Bible does not tell us so clearly how Satan could become such an evil law. Concerning how the Triune God could become the law of the Spirit of life, the Bible is more than clear, especially in Romans 8. There we have a full definition of how the Triune God has become such a law, the law of the Spirit of life. But the Bible does not tell us much about how Satan has become such an evil law, the law of sin and of death. However, in the Bible there is a principle that with nearly everything God wanted to do, Satan did ahead of God. For example, in creating man, God had an intention to build a city. We know this because the ultimate consummation of the entire Bible is a city, New Jerusalem. But God did not build His city right away. Even in the Old Testament God desired a city, Jerusalem, among His people. That city was not built so quickly either. Hundreds of years before the people of Israel built Jerusalem in the good land, Babel was built as an expression of Satan. Eventually, Babylon was built, and later in the New Testament the great Babylon was built. This means that many times Satan's way is to do things ahead of God. God's intention is to enter into man and become man's life and nature. But before God could enter into man, Satan entered into man in Genesis 3. Before God could become man's nature, Satan became man's nature. He did something ahead of God.

Children of the Devil

How pitiful that many Christians today make God absolutely objective, and in the same way they also make Satan objective. For many years people have tried to argue with me and condemn me because I have taught that Satan is in our nature, that we fallen people are one with Satan, and that we are children of the devil. These opposing ones consider this to be a heresy. Even today the objective theologians do not believe that Satan is within them. They only believe that Satan is the evil spirit who sometimes comes to you to cause you to do something. Occasionally, this spirit may take over someone in a way of demon possession. They do not believe that Satan is in human nature. Why then does the Bible say that the Lord Jesus called Peter Satan (Matt. 16:23)? Furthermore, how could John in his first Epistle indicate that sinners are children of the devil (3:10)? If children do not have the nature of their father, what kind of children are they? They must be children picked up off the street. They must not be born of their father. If any children are born of you, they will surely have your nature. Fallen people were born of Satan; they are Satan's children. So they are one with Satan, with Satan's nature in them.

Some Christians today do not even believe that we have God's nature (2 Pet. 1:4). They do not believe that God is one with us and that we are one with God, that we are God's children. They say that this is to deify man, to make man God. They have made everything objective.

Satan's Incarnation

They do not realize that Satan also had his incarnation. In Genesis 3 he entered into humanity, into mankind. From that day he became a law in man to work out many evil things. When you lie, do you need Satan's inspiration? Or when you lie, do you need a demon to possess you? You do not need to go to school to learn to lie or to steal. As long as you live, you simply lie. In a sense you are just an embodiment of a lie. In other words, you are just Satan. Because Satan has incarnated himself into mankind, making himself one with mankind, he became this law. Once he became this law within man, he could rest. He did not need to come to inspire someone to lie or to kill or to steal something. He has simply become such a law within man to do these things. Even as gravity is a powerful law outside of you, so there is a powerful law within you, the law of sin and of death. You have to realize that this is just Satan, the incarnated Satan. In Romans 7 and 8 there is the hint that *sin* and *the law of sin and of death* are interchangeable terms, or

synonyms. Sometimes, especially in chapter 7, it seems that it should say "the law of sin and of death," but it only says "sin." Romans 7:20 says, "If what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me." Actually, it should say "the law of sin" because verse 23 speaks of "the law of sin which is in my members." This indicates that these terms, *sin* and *the law of sin*, are synonyms.

The Definition of Sin

Now we come to the top of the high mountain—what is sin? What is the definition of sin? Before we answer this, I must point out in a simple way that the major function of the law of the Spirit of life is to free us from sin. Romans 1:1 to 5:11 deals with sins such as stealing, hatred, fornication, and other sinful things. These are not sin; these are sins. Then from 5:12, Romans begins to deal with sin. Verse 12 says that "sin entered into the world." Sin came into the world in somewhat the same way that grace and truth came. According to John 1, the law was given, but grace came. Grace came through Jesus Christ. Then we may say that sin came through Satan. Of course, Romans does not say this in a direct way, but according to the entire teaching of the Bible, we may infer this. Sin came. Grace is just God for our enjoyment. In the same principle, sin is just Satan for our destruction. When grace came through the Lord Jesus, that was God coming to be our enjoyment, and the result was life. Satan came into us as sin for our destruction, that we might have death. Death means destruction. Satan became sin in us, not outside of us, for our destruction, that we may have death. Whatever fallen man does in the eyes of God is sin. Whether he gives a gift to someone, or whether he steals from someone, it is sin. Whatever the fallen human beings do is for sin and destruction. There is no life, just destruction. This is because Satan is in the fallen human nature. Satan in you is not merely a spirit. Satan in you is a law of sin and of death.

Even as death is versus life, so sin is versus the Spirit. God within us is the law of the Spirit of life, and Satan within us is the law of sin and of death. Sin is versus the Spirit, and death is versus life. Whatever you do as a fallen man, the result, the issue, is destruction and death.

Most Christians today have never received this kind of revelation. They think that sin is simply to lose their temper or to hate people or to be jealous. They would never consider that their loving people by themselves might be sin. To be freed from the law of sin and of death is not merely to be freed from

the so-called sinful things. It is to free you from the law and from a kind of life that works from within you not by activity but by law. There is also a positive life within us that works not by activity but by the natural spiritual principles. This law frees us from that other law that also works according to set-up principles. We need to see such a vision.

Because there is such a law, which is called the law of sin and of death, which is Satan himself incarnated to be the evil spirit dwelling within us, there is no possibility for the law of letters to be effectual. Let us read Romans 8:3: "For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Verse 1 says that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Verse 2 begins with the word *for* to tell us why there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. It is because the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from the law of sin and of death. Verse 3 then begins with another *for*. Verse 3 tells us why such a law came into us in verse 2. It is because something negative was there already. The law of the Spirit of life comes to us to free us because there is impossibility with the law. Verse 2 gives us the fact that there is a positive law working within us, and verse 3 explains to us why such a positive law has been given to us. It is because there is impossibility with the law. Does this mean that the law is bad? The law is not bad. According to chapter 7, the law is holy, and the law is spiritual. Even the law is given by God. But there is the impossibility with the law because it was weak through the flesh.

The grammatical construction of 8:3 is very important. For example, we have to find out what the phrase *in that* modifies. Otherwise, we could not understand this verse adequately. The main clause in this sentence is *God…condemned sin in the flesh*. The subordinate clause is *that which the law could not do*. We may consider the rest of the words and phrases as modifiers of these two clauses. These two clauses are then connected by the conjunction *for*. We need to spend more time to get into the proper grammatical understanding of this verse; otherwise, we cannot understand what this verse is talking about. Do not think this is a small thing. Through the centuries this verse has puzzled people. Even Martin Luther made a mistake to say that the phrase *concerning sin* modifies *God…condemned sin*. This means that God condemned sin concerning sin. But some of the later writers, such as Henry Alford, corrected this mistake. They pointed out that this phrase *concerning sin* does not go with the last clause but with the first

clause, *God…condemned*. In the next chapter we need to spend more time to get into this verse.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

HOW TO BE RELEASED FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

Romans 8:3 is a verse that is difficult to translate and also difficult to understand. Other translators also discovered the problem in the construction of verse 3. For example, the New American Standard Bible reads, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." In order to solve the problem in translation, they added the word *did*. That which the law could not do, God did. So this translation says, "God did." After the word *did* the translators added a colon, indicating how the matter could be worked out, that is, "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." The fact that they added the word *did* indicates that the translators realized the difficulty involved in this verse. Otherwise, they did not need to add *did*.

The Berkeley translation of Romans 8:3 reads: "For what the Law was unable to do, weakened as it was through the flesh, that God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and on account of sin; He thus condemned sin in human nature." This translation is nearly the same as the New American Standard Bible. "On account of sin," or concerning sin, is much better than "as an offering for sin." The use of the clause *that God did* indicates that these translators also discovered the problem with this verse.

Conybeare translates this verse as, "For God (which was impossible to the Law, because by the flesh it had no power), by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on behalf of sin, overcame sin in the flesh." He used the word *overcame* for *condemned*. *Condemned* here really means "to subdue or to deprive of its power" or "to overcome." He placed a parenthesis around the problem clause: *which was impossible to the Law, because by the flesh it had no power*. Still, grammatically speaking, this clause is difficult to understand.

Wuest translates the verse in this manner: “For that which is an impossibility for the law, because it was weak through the sinful nature, God having sent His Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and concerning sin, condemned sin in the sinful nature.” This version indicates that God sent His Son in the likeness of flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the sinful nature in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be brought to completion in us, or might be fulfilled in us. The two main clauses in a simplified way would read: “For that which is an impossibility for the law...God...condemned sin.” The Greek word *gar* is used here as a conjunction, joining the two clauses.

The Amplified Bible reads, “For God has done what the law could not do, [its power] being weakened by the flesh [that is, the entire nature of man without the Holy Spirit]. Sending His own Son in the guise of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh—subdued, overcame, deprived it of its power [over all who accept that sacrifice].” This version also indicates that God has done what the law could not do.

By comparing these different authorities in translation, we can realize that there is a problem. Also by comparing these translations, we can get the right meaning. The best translation of this verse should be as follows: “For that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” This translation is very close to the Greek text. This is grammatically correct, and this is very logical. The law of the Spirit of life has freed me from the law of sin and of death, for God has condemned sin in the flesh with a reason. And the reason is found in the clause *that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.*

The clause *God...condemned sin* may be considered in parallel with the clause *for the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death*. Actually, verse 2 is a definition of the fact that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from another law. Verse 3 then continues to tell us how or by what way the law of the Spirit of life has freed us. The reason there is such a law to free us is because God has condemned sin. God condemned sin by sending His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin because the law was weak because of the flesh. Because of this we can understand that this verse strongly gives us the definition, the reason, the explanation, of how the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and of death, and it also

refers us back to chapter 7 where there is the definition of the law of sin. Only in chapter 8 do we have the definition of the law of the Spirit of life.

THE TRIUNE GOD

Previously, I told you that all of chapter 8 after verse 2 is a full definition of the law of the Spirit of life. Actually, this definition is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Have you noticed that in chapter 8 these three terms of the Trinity are strongly mentioned? In verse 2 there is the Spirit; in verse 3 there is the Son; in verse 15 there is the Father. In this chapter there is also the strong indication that these three are one. Verses 9 through 11 speak of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, Christ, and the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. Because these terms are used interchangeably, it indicates strongly that the three are one. God is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is Christ. So here is the Trinity. Although the Trinity is mentioned clearly in John 14 and 16, actually, the most complete and perfect and clear mention and explanation of the Trinity is in Romans 8. In Romans 8 there are the three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—and there is the strong indication that these three are considered as interchangeable terms, indicating that They are not only three but also one. So They are three-one. No other chapter in the Bible has as many hints and indications concerning the Trinity.

THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD IN OUR SPIRIT

Furthermore, in this chapter, there is the clear indication that this Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—has passed through the process of incarnation, because the Son was sent in the form of the flesh (v. 3). This chapter also indicates, or implies, the crucifixion because it mentions Jesus being raised from the dead (v. 11). This chapter also indicates resurrection because it speaks of the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead (v. 11). Furthermore, this chapter includes ascension, because in verse 34 it mentions that the resurrected Christ is now at the right hand of God interceding for us. This chapter also indicates that all three eventually become the indwelling Spirit who dwells in our spirit. It also indicates the mingling of the indwelling Spirit who is the Triune God and who, after being processed, is with our spirit. He has mingled with our spirit. Verse 10 says that when Christ is in you, the spirit is life. This indicates that the very Christ is in your spirit. Then verse 16 says that the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit. This means that the two are mingled as one. How can we tell that these two spirits

are mingled? Verse 15 says, “You have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father!” The parallel verse, Galatians 4:6, says, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” Romans says that we cry, and Galatians says that the Spirit cries. Surely these are not two cryings but one. These two verses strongly indicate the mingling. It means that His crying is my crying, and my crying is His crying. When I cry in my spirit, He cries. He and my spirit are mingled as one.

The revelation of the Trinity in Romans 8 is very high. Such a Triune God, processed and becoming the indwelling Spirit, is the law of the Spirit of life. The law of the Spirit of life is just such a God. He is not merely the Jewish God nor the God of many Christians. The Jews have God, but they do not believe that their God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If they believed this, right away they would believe in Jesus Christ. The Jews believe that God is the Father in a very broad sense, as the source of everything. They do not believe that in the Godhead there is the Son. If they did believe this, right away they would become Christians. They say that Jesus was an illegal son, born before his mother was married. This is their mistaken belief. Of course, they do believe that God is the Creator who created the earth and the heavens, but the God in whom they believe is short of too many aspects.

NOT THREE GODS

Many Christians, on the other hand, believe in a God who is triune with three separate persons—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Actually, eventually, ultimately, and consummately, they believe in three Gods. This is tritheism. For more than forty years we have been fighting for the truth concerning the Trinity. We believe in the Trinity, whereas many of them believe something that actually is tritheism. We believe that the Son is the Father, and the Son is also the Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one because God is Spirit. The very God in John 4:24 not only indicates the Father but also indicates the Son and the Spirit. The entire God is Spirit: God the Father is Spirit, God the Son is Spirit, and God the Spirit is Spirit. All three are the Spirit. Because all three are Spirit, it is surely right to say that Jesus Christ is the Spirit. Some, because of their ignorance and blindness and darkness, have considered that this kind of teaching is heretical. But this is the pure Word of God.

Romans 8 reveals to us that God is triune. But the Father, Son, and Spirit are not three Gods but one. The God of many Christians today is triune in

three separate persons as three Gods. They have not seen that the Triune God has gone through a process. They only consider that God the Father so loved the world and sent His Son to save the world. The Son came to be born in a manger to be a man. This Son died on the cross for our sins, He was resurrected, and today He is in the heavens on the throne with the Father. And the Spirit has been sent down to work on us as the Son's representative. To their realization these are three Gods separate one from another. A well-known painting shows an old father sitting, a young son standing, and a spirit soaring in the air as a dove. This is the so-called Triune God of many Christians. In their consideration there are three separate and distinct persons. This kind of teaching is a kind of drug, and I am a little concerned that this drug may yet remain in your subconsciousness. I have the assurance that what we have been teaching concerning the Trinity is absolutely from the pure Word of God without a bit of the traditional leaven. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, according to the revelation of the Scriptures, are not separate as three Gods but one unique God. Such a clear and complete and perfect revelation of the Triune God includes the process of incarnation and of His becoming the life-giving Spirit and includes the indwelling. All this is in Romans 8. This is the God in whom we believe.

How marvelous that this complete and perfect God has been installed into us. He is now indwelling us in our spirit, and Romans 8 also indicates that He will spread into our mind, and eventually He will saturate our body.

FOUR LAYERS OF LIFE

As we have mentioned in previous chapters, there are four layers of life in chapter 8. First of all there is the Spirit of life (v. 2). This means that the divine Spirit of God is life. Then after Christ comes into our spirit, our spirit is life (v. 10). When we set our mind on the spirit, our mind is life (v. 6). When we coordinate or cooperate with the indwelling Spirit to put to death the practices of our body, our body also is life (v. 13).

THE TRIUNE GOD INSTALLED INTO OUR SPIRIT

The very God who is triune and who has been processed and who has become the indwelling Spirit is first installed into our spirit. Then from our spirit He spreads into our mind, and from our mind He eventually saturates our body. The very God installed into us is the law of the Spirit of life. Today this God does everything for us not by activity but always by law. Let me

illustrate once again what it means to do things by law. Suppose electricity had never been installed into this building. When we need power, we might cry to and beg the general manager and the power plant for power. Because we need heat and light, we beg for mercy that he would send these things to us. It might be that the general manager would hear our pitiful prayer and send some power and heat and light to us. This is by activities. Later, we would need to repeat the same thing. But once electricity has been installed into this building and all the systems have been put in, the power plant gives us heat, cooling, power, light, sound, and so forth not by activity but by law. Because it is by law, you do not need to pray or to fast or to cry. That would be foolish.

As a Christian, I am afraid that you have done this kind of foolish crying many times. For example, after you were saved, you wanted to be a nice husband. After I got saved, I wanted to be the best husband—meek, gentle, nice, slow, with no temper, always smiling. Not only did I make up my mind to do these things, but I also prayed concerning these things. It is so strange that if I did not make up my mind, I might be able to be gentle and meek and nice for several days. But once I made up my mind and prayed concerning these things, right away after praying I might lose my temper. It seems there was no answer to my crying and praying.

Once electricity is installed, if you need power, you should simply go to the switch. If you need light, you should simply turn on the switch. This is not a miracle. This is just an operation by law. Sometimes in our earnest and yet foolish prayer, we accidentally pushed the right button, and for several days we were such a nice husband. But it was not consistent because we did not know the secret. Many saints discovered through the Scriptures that praying is the secret, but they did not have such a clear light as we have seen today. Today we do not need to grope in the darkness. We do not need to cry. We just need to walk according to the spirit. That means we set our mind on the spirit. When we walk according to the spirit, many wonderful doings are going on within us by the law. That is God working within us.

Romans 8:2 says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from the law of sin and of death. Without chapter 7 of Romans it would be difficult for us to know about the law of sin and of death. Chapter 8 does not explain such a law. But we have to remember that chapter 8 is a continuation of chapter 7. In chapter 7 Paul had already explained the law of sin and of death. When he

wrote chapter 8, he simply referred back to the law of sin and of death explained in chapter 7.

THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH

Let us consider the verses concerning the law of sin and of death in Romans 7. Verse 21 reads, “I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me.” Paul found a law. This is not the law of God given through Moses. This is a law just like the law of gravity. When I throw something into the air, I do not need to pray that God would send it back. It comes back because of the law of gravity. Furthermore, if you drop a book, and it falls to the earth, you should not condemn Satan, saying that he took away your book. That is not fair. That means you do not know the law of gravity.

We also need to read verse 20: “If what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me.” Paul discovered that what he did not want to do, he did. Then he said it was no longer he that did it but something within him that did it. He said that it was sin dwelling in him that did it. He discovered that there was a law working within him. When he wanted to do good, a law came in to frustrate.

In verse 22 Paul says that he delighted in the law of God. This refers to the law given on Mount Sinai through Moses. This law was outside of Paul. Verse 23 goes on to say, “But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members.” The Mosaic law was outside of Paul, but another law was within him, warring against the law of God. This law was in his members, in his flesh. It goes on to say that this law is warring against the law of his mind. The law in the mind is another law. This is not the Mosaic law. This is a law in your mind, in your very nature created by God, always trying to do good, to keep the law of God. The mind represents the soul, and the soul is the being. This means that in the living part of your being is another law, which wants to keep the law of God and to do good. But the law in our members is always warring against this good law in our mind and making us captive to the law of sin, which is in our members. This one verse makes it very clear that the sin in our members is the law of sin in our members.

How can we prove that the law of sin in our members is sin? We must go back to read verse 18: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good

dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not." This proves that the law of sin in our members is sin. This is sin personified, and in verse 21 it is also called the evil. Paul says that the evil is present with him. We must realize that in the whole universe what is evil is Satan. And this evil is the very sin that is in our members, that is, in our flesh.

AN EVIL SYSTEM

Let us also read Romans 5:12: "Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned." *The world* here means mankind, human beings. Through Adam, sin entered. This means that something living entered into human beings, into mankind, into the world. This something living must be that evil one, Satan. In Genesis 3 the devil tempted Adam and Eve to take the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At that time Satan entered into man, and this entering in of Satan is nothing less than Satan himself becoming a system in us. That system within us, that set-up principle within us, is called the law of sin and of death.

AN EVIL INSTALLATION

This means that at the fall of man Satan entered into man. In other words, Satan has installed himself into man as an evil "electricity." Satan has installed himself into man as an evil system. That system, that set-up principle, is the law of sin. From that time onward, when man wanted to steal, to commit fornication, to kill people, he did not need to do it by activity but by law. No human being needs to be taught to steal or to commit fornication. That evil law in you simply works. No one needs to be taught to be selfish or to be covetous or to be greedy. It is not a matter of an activity. It is simply the law of the greedy lust.

TWO SET-UP PRINCIPLES

We can see that there are two set-up principles within us. One is the evil principle set up in the members of this fallen body, in our flesh. But the other is a wonderful, good principle, set up in our spirit. This means that both God and Satan have been installed into us. It is because of these two installments that we always have trouble. Why then, in Romans 7:25, does Paul say, "Thanks be to God"? First, he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Then he answers, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ." It is not that Jesus Christ delivers you directly,

but something delivers you through Him. What is this something that delivers you through Jesus Christ? This brings us to chapter 8, which tells us that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Why? Because of another law, the law of the Spirit of life. There were three laws mentioned already in chapter 7—the Mosaic law; the law in our members, which is the evil law, the law of sin; and the law of good in our mind. But now there is a fourth law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which can deliver us and free us from the law of sin and of death. The deliverance is through Jesus Christ by the law of the Spirit of life. How could this be? That which the law could not do, God did. He did it by sending His Son in the form of the flesh of sin. This means that by becoming a man, by incarnation, He sent His Son concerning sin. Because of the impossibility of the law, God had to become a man. Also, because the trouble was in man, God became a man. He became a man in the form of the flesh of sin. The troubling sin is in the flesh just like a tiger is in a cave. The trouble, the problem, is the tiger in the cave. If you are going to deal with the tiger, you have to be in the cave. Our flesh may be likened to the cave, and sin may be likened to the tiger. The Lord Jesus was so bold that He came into the cave, into the flesh, where the tiger was. He even came in the form, in the guise, in the mask, in the appearance, of the cave. Where is this troubling sin? It is in the cave, in the flesh. Who is this troubling sin? It is Satan. This means that the sin in your flesh is Satan.

SATAN TRAPPED IN THE FLESH

Satan thought he was being wise to get into man's flesh so that he might gain man and possess him. He did not know that actually he was foolish, that he was getting himself into a trap. The "tiger" got himself trapped in man. He was trapped in the flesh. Then God incarnated to become the flesh and to bring the flesh to the cross. This means that when the flesh was crucified on the cross, Satan and sin were condemned. This word *condemned* implies being subdued, overcome, deprived of power. This corresponds with Hebrews 2:14. The Lord took upon Himself the blood and the flesh so that He might destroy the devil who has the might of death. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:15 says that He abolished the ordinances in His flesh. This corresponds with Hebrews 10:20, which says that while He was on the cross, the veil which was His flesh was rent. Through the cross, the flesh and sin and Satan are all finished so that we could be released from the law of sin and of death.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

HAVING OUR BEING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

In the past few chapters we have entered into several vital points. The law of the Spirit of life has been installed into us. This law is just the Triune God, who, after being processed and becoming the life-giving Spirit, indwells our spirit. We have such a processed God and such an indwelling God who is now the law of the Spirit of life.

TWO LAWS AND TWO TREES

In a recent conference we had three messages telling us that God is the positive law within us, and Satan is the negative law within us. God is the law of the Spirit of life, and Satan is the law of sin and of death. Two laws have been installed into our being. The negative law came first. Satan as the law of sin and of death was installed into our being first. Then God, after passing through all the processes, became the life-giving Spirit and was installed into our being. In that conference we also pointed out that these two laws are very much related to the two trees in Genesis 2. The law of the Spirit of life is the operation of the tree of life. The law of sin and of death is the operation of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

THE PROCESSED GOD

The law of the Spirit of life has been installed into us, and this law is just God Himself. But this is not the "raw" God but the processed God. This is not the God in Genesis 1 but the God at the end of Matthew 28. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The God into whom we have been baptized is the very God who is now in us as the law of the Spirit of life.

WORKING WITHIN US BY LAW, NOT BY ACTIVITY

Another vital point that we have covered in the past chapters is this: since God as the processed God who became the indwelling Spirit has been installed into our being, He works within us not by activities but by law. You must realize that this is one of the biggest discoveries, even recoveries, in God's economy. Since God, the processed God, has been installed into our

being, He works within us not by any activity but by law. This makes a big difference. Through all the centuries few Christians have seen that God is working in His chosen and redeemed people not by activity but by law. Nearly all Christians pray that God would do something in them by activity. If they have a bad temper, they pray that the Lord would help them to overcome it.

Let me illustrate once again with the matter of electricity. One day electricity was installed into this building. Since that day, if we need any heating or cooling or power to operate certain kinds of appliances, all we need to do is flip the switch, thus fulfilling the law. To kneel down and pray, calling on the power plant or calling on the mighty God in the heavens, does not work. Regardless of how earnestly you may pray, you are praying in a foolish way. All you need to do is to fulfill the principle of the operation of electricity. The principle of the operation of electricity is a law. There is a law in the installed electricity. You simply need to go to the switch and fulfill the law. Once you fulfill the law, the electricity works. So electricity works not by activity but by law. The power plant serves you not by activity but by law.

By this illustration you can understand that since God has been installed into us, He works in us not by activity but by law. We can all testify that it seems God did not answer our prayers concerning our temper and other things. Rather, the more we prayed, the worse we became. Many Christians have prayed to overcome their besetting sins. But it seems that the more they pray to overcome their besetting sins, the more they get beset and entangled. There is little result in this kind of prayer because this kind of prayer is against the principle of the law.

THE POSITION OF ROMANS 8

Although we are spending much time on Romans 8, and some of you are very familiar with this chapter, do not think that we can exhaust it. It is too, too rich!

Do not forget that these items are in Romans 8, not in Romans 1. Romans 1 tells us that we were sinners—dirty, sinful, evil, condemned. There in chapter 1 you could never have the experiences revealed in Romans 8. Although you were once there, you are there no longer. Are you then in Romans 2? There it speaks of the hypocrites, the Jewish religionists. Romans 3 speaks of God's condemnation upon the whole world and also begins to define justification. Are you there? Are you in Romans 4, justified by faith? Are you following in

the steps of Abraham, walking in line with him? If you are merely in Romans 4, you still do not have Romans 8. For sure, Abraham never had Romans 8. But Paul had the experience of Romans 8.

What about Romans 5? You must realize that to enter into Romans 5 is not so easy. Romans 4 may be considered as the graduation chapter of the Christian high school. When you have finished Romans 4, you have graduated from high school and are at the threshold of college in Romans 5. Romans 5 may be considered as the threshold of Christian college. The first year of Christian college work is Romans 5. The second year is Romans 6. The third year of Christian college work is Romans 7. Romans 8 is the graduation chapter. This Perfecting Training is in the fourth year of our Christian college training.

A CHAPTER FOR DESPERATE SEEKERS

Romans 8 is not trying to stir people up. Nor is it trying to bring some backsliders back to the Lord. This chapter is for those who are desperate to be freed. We can see this by the last part of chapter 7. Paul cries, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul is desperate; he is seeking to the uttermost. He has nothing else in his heart, except such a freedom. He had tried this way and that way, but he could not get through. He found out that all the ways he tried did not work. To will to do good was present with him, but to do it was not. He was a desperate person. Romans 8 is for such a person. It is not for the one in chapter 1, nor for the one in chapter 2, but it is for the one at the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8. After such a desperate cry the answer came: "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." It then gives the reason why there is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus: "For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Why was there now no condemnation in Christ? Because the law of the Spirit of life had been installed into Paul.

Again I say, in chapter 8 of Romans there is no stirring up and no bringing back. All those who are qualified for this chapter must be the ones who are desperate. After being saved, after seeking the Lord, and after being defeated along the seeking way, they are desperate. Unless you are desperate, even this Perfecting Training from tonight and onward will not be a real help to you. You must be a desperate one. This chapter does not try to stir you up because you do not have a heart toward the Lord. It does not try to bring you back

because you have been backsliding from the Lord. No. This chapter gives you a clear view of what you have within you. Because you are so seeking, because you are so desperate, you need such a view. You do not need a "way"; you need a view. You need to see what has been done with you, what has been installed into you. You need to see what you have already. You do not need just a kind of instruction, but you need a view to see what you have.

After this chapter shows us a clear view of what we have already, spontaneously in this view you could see how to enjoy what you have. For example, you may at one time have been ignorant about the installment of electricity into this building. But one day you got a clear view about electricity being installed into the building. Spontaneously, there was no need to instruct you. After you have a clear view about the installed electricity in this building, spontaneously you know how to enjoy the installed electricity. If you want to enjoy the heating, you simply go to a certain switch. If you want to enjoy the cooling, you go to another switch. If you want to enjoy the light or something else, you go to the proper switch. This means that you cooperate with the operation of the electricity by law.

NOT INSTRUCTIONS BUT A DESCRIPTION

Have you noticed that Romans 8 does not seem to give us any definite instructions? There is no instruction but a kind of description. To say, "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" is not an instruction; this is a description. "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Neither is this an instruction; this is a description. Another description is in verse 4: "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." Verse 5 says, "Those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit." Verse 6 goes on to say, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Again these verses are not a kind of instruction but a kind of description. A description is just a view. You have to have a clear view. In Romans 8 there is a clear view of the processed God who, after being installed into us, becomes the law of the Spirit of life. This God now is the law that operates in us not by activities but by natural principles. You need to see such a view.

A CLEAR VIEW

Do not just try to learn the way. I have mentioned many times before that when I was young, I read a lot concerning the way to do certain things. Eventually, I discovered that none of those ways worked. We have a small booklet entitled *A Simple Way to Touch the Lord*. We need this way. We do not need another way. We need the way of contacting the Lord. But Romans 8 does not give you a way; it gives you a clear view. You must be desperate for a clear view. You must believe me that you do not yet have such a clear view. I too was like this for years, and even now sometimes I am still like this. Although I got the view some time ago, occasionally it seems as though suddenly the view is lost. When you are in the view, everything is fine. When you lose the view, you become another person. You need a view. You need a view to see that God has gone through all His processes.

Today we are not in the age of Abraham. At that time God had gone through nearly no process. By Abraham's time God was not incarnated; He simply was God. At David's time it was nearly the same. But today we are even much later than Paul. We have to realize that God has gone through all the processes. Not only has God done everything needed for our redemption, but He has also gone through all the processes. He has gone through incarnation, through human living, through crucifixion, through the tomb, through Hades, and through all the things related to death, and He has entered into resurrection. Today He is still in resurrection. He is now the very God whom we serve and in whom we believe and who is now dwelling in our being. We have such a God indwelling us as a law working by principles and not by activities. He is within us as the law of the Spirit of life. The law within us is not the law of letters or the law of commandments but the law of the Spirit of life. Life and Spirit are the elements, the constituents, of this law because this law is God Himself. Many things are included within this law: God's divinity, humanity, death, and resurrection.

We must have a clear view that such a God today is this law within us. Such a God as a law does not work in us and for us by activities. He does not work in that way. Today He is the processed God as a law to you. Have you ever had a specific prayer to thank Him that He is now the law to you? We need to have such a kind of prayer. I am afraid we still pray in the old way, asking the Lord for His help in our weakness. We still ask the Lord to help us not to lose our temper. This means that we still do not have the view. The "electricity" has been installed, so there is no need to kneel down and pray to the "power plant" to do something for us. We need a view. Of course, our habit is a big problem.

We are used to praying in that old way. Since we became Christians, we have been charged and taught and even disciplined to pray in everything. But it is so strange that although this chapter tells us that there are two Intercessors—the Spirit and Christ—it does not charge us to pray. But it shows us that we have two marvelous Intercessors praying for us. Because we have two such marvelous Intercessors within us, we surely do not need to pray so much in that old way. Do you really realize that you are in Christ? And do you really realize that God has been installed into you as the law of the Spirit of life? Do you have such a clear view? If we could see such a view, we would realize that we do not need to pray that much. He is working within us by a law, not by activity. What we need to do is to cooperate with Him.

COOPERATING WITH THE INSTALLED LAW

In verses 3 and 4 God has passed through the processes so that there can be an issue—that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk according to the spirit. To cooperate with this law is to walk according to the spirit, and to walk according to the spirit is the way to cooperate with this working law. The law has been installed, but the law's function and the law's operation need your cooperation. And your cooperation is just to walk according to the spirit.

HAVING OUR BEING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

Now we come to the burden of this chapter. There is a special word in verse 5. Verse 4 speaks of walking according to the flesh, but in verse 5 the word *walk* is changed to the word *are*—those who *are* according to the spirit. Have you ever noticed the change in these two words? You have to realize that you may walk according to the spirit and yet not be according to the spirit. Actually, in Greek the word *walk* really means to have your being, but in English *walk* may be different from being. In English you may walk one way and be another way. But in the Bible to walk is to be. Walking is your being. So verse 4 says that we walk according to the spirit, and verse 5 says that we are according to the spirit. This is not just some doings or some activities according to the spirit. It means that the entire being is according to the spirit. You do not need to pray that much. You need to see that the law is working within you, and this law is nothing less than the Triune God who, after being processed, is indwelling your being. You need to have a clear view about this law. Then you simply need to be a person who is according to the spirit. Why do we need to be according to the spirit? Because this law who is the Triune

God and who is the indwelling Spirit is a Spirit. Not only is He a Spirit, but He as the Spirit is in our spirit. These two spirits are together in us. So we must be people who are according to the spirit. In a sense you need to forget about praying concerning your besetting sins and your temper. You just need to be according to the spirit. You need to be a person who is according to the spirit. You need to be a person who not only walks according to the spirit but who is according to the spirit. Even if you are not doing anything as far as walking, you are still according to the spirit. This means that you are a person, a being, according to the spirit. When you are such a person according to the spirit, what do you need? Surely you need nothing. When you are according to the spirit, this law works spontaneously because you are according to the spirit.

Sometimes before doing something we would practice something that is not so perfect. We would check whether this is according to the spirit. Before writing a letter or before buying something, we might check: Is this according to the spirit? This kind of practice is not perfect. Rather, we should check whether or not we all the day are according to the spirit. You must realize that to be according to the spirit is much more than to walk according to the spirit. You may be able to say that your reading of a newspaper or your shopping or your writing of some letters is according to the spirit, but probably you cannot say that your being, your entire being, is according to the spirit.

Many times after doing things according to the spirit, we would take a vacation for a few hours. Later, when we start to do something, we are reminded that we should do everything according to the spirit, and then we come back to the spirit. A little while later we may take a second vacation. Every day we have too many vacations. We may do this thing according to the spirit, and we may do that thing according to the spirit, but we ourselves are not according to the spirit. Our doings may be according to the spirit, but our being is not.

We all must look unto the Lord: “Lord, have mercy upon me! Just have mercy upon me! Lord, through Your mercy I have been brought into such a desperate state. I am here, Lord, and I am desperate. Have mercy upon me that I may have the grace to practice this one thing—that my entire being would be according to the spirit. Lord, grace me that my being may be according to the spirit. I do not want just to do things according to the spirit. I want to have my being, my entire being, according to the spirit!”

To have our being according to the spirit is the genuine walking according to the spirit. Otherwise, our walking according to the spirit is not so genuine, not so perfect. We must have our being according to the spirit. When we are according to the spirit, the law, that is, God Himself, works within us spontaneously, freeing us from sin and death. It frees us from the law of sin and of death. I encourage you to bring this matter to the Lord and ask Him to show you the view of these few verses at the beginning of Romans 8.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

BEING ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT BY MINDING THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

In the last chapter we saw that the proper walk according to the spirit must be that we ourselves are according to the spirit. Our walking must be according to our being, and our being must be according to the spirit. Just to walk according to the spirit is a kind of occasional activity. For example, I am going to talk to my wife or to buy something or to speak to some of the saints, so I have to remind myself that I need to speak according to the spirit. These walkings, these doings, are activities. Surely this is not adequate. This is not so right, because the law of the Spirit of life works within us not by activities. Today the Triune God who has become the law of the Spirit of life works within us not by activity but by law. With the law there is an automatic function, and that automatic function is just the principle of the law. So today the Lord works within us not by activities but by the principle of Himself being the law within us. Since He does not work by activity, so we should not live by activity. We should live by our being, by what we are. Just to do things according to the spirit or to walk according to the spirit is not adequate. Even it is not right. We have to be a kind of person who is according to the spirit. We must be a people whose being is according to the spirit. Not only our activities and doings are according to the spirit, but our being is according to the spirit.

GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY

I would repeat again and again that we all have to see that God, the Triune God, the processed God, now works within us not by activities but by law. According to the traditional Christian concepts, when we pray to God for certain things, then God comes in to do something as an activity. But according to Romans 8, in God's New Testament economy He does not work that way. That was the Old Testament economy. In the Old Testament God had never gotten into man, nor had God ever gotten processed. He was a Spirit but not the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. So in the Old Testament what He did with man or for man was by activities. In the Old Testament sometimes He came in to do something for His people, and many times He answered His people's prayers. His acting and His doing for them was by

activities. But in the New Testament, especially in Paul's Epistles, it is difficult for us to find such a thing. Rather, in the Epistles written by the apostle Paul, we see the implication that today God as the Triune God has been processed to be the indwelling, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. And the Spirit today, according to Romans 8, is a law. This means that it is the spontaneous automatic principle of the processed Triune God working within us. In the New Testament economy, God works for His redeemed people not by activities but by the automatic principle. We all can testify to this by our experiences. Many times I prayed to God, but God did not do anything for me. Yet at other times, although I did not pray, something worked within me.

Once again I would illustrate with a husband and wife. All the husbands are sick with the same kind of disease. As husbands, we realize that we are fallen men. According to God's Word, we should be nice and loving all the time toward our wives. We want to be a wonderful husband. Even we have prayed many times concerning these matters. But we all have discovered that it is so easy for us to lose our temper. And it is so easy for us to exercise our headship. Actually, the headship exercised by us becomes a hardship to our wives. So eventually, we did not exercise headship but hardship. Although we may have prayed much concerning this matter, we rarely got an answer. Instead of answering our long prayers, God did a lot within us not by activity but by the law of the Spirit of life. Not only in our daily life but even in the ministry of the Word, all the brothers must learn not to ask the Lord to do something by activity. The Lord is always doing things with and for the ministers of His Word not by activity but by law. Some Christians, especially those who have been ministering the Word, may have prayed for inspiration, for revelation, and for light. But we who have been ministering the Word for years can testify that very few times would the Lord give us revelation, inspiration, and light by the way of activity. But many times, although we did not pray or we did not ask, while we were speaking or even while we were resting, something automatically, spontaneously came up within us. Light was there; revelation was there. Many times while we were speaking, we were not expecting light and revelation, but light and revelation rose up from within us. This is the Lord's doing by law, not by activities. If you only know the Lord by His activities and not by His law, you are just ignorant of the New Testament economy. What you know is the Old Testament economy.

Many Christians today do not know that the Lord is the indwelling, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. They think that the Spirit is in the air or in the

heavens. They think that they have to fast and to pray and to cry so that eventually something would come down from the heavens upon them in a sudden way. That is a big activity. They may consider that as a miracle. But the New Testament economy is not in that way. By reading 1 Corinthians 11, 12, 13, and 14, we can see that Paul is altogether not for this kind of activity. Rather, he is for the automatic, spontaneous, functioning, and working law within us. We do have such a law within us. We have such a law, and even this strengthens our belief that God is real. If God were not real, how could we have such a law within us? A spontaneous, automatic law is working in us by its principles and not by activities. Since God is not working according to activities but according to His principle, His law, what should we do? We also should not be according to the spirit by activities; we should be according to the spirit by our being. To walk according to the spirit is not just to have certain matters according to the spirit by activities. That is not adequate. We must have certain matters according to the spirit by our being. We must be according to the spirit. It is not that we only walk and act and do things according to the spirit by activities. Actually, if you are not a person whose being is according to the spirit, yet you try to act and to do things by walking according to the spirit, it is very hard. If you are not a person according to the spirit and you go shopping, it will be difficult for you to shop according to the spirit. You have gotten into the wrong boat already. Once you get into the wrong boat and want to take the right boat, it is too late. If you have already sailed on boat A, it is too late to get on boat B. Because you are not a person according to the spirit, it is difficult for you to do something according to the spirit.

Romans 8:4 begins with the word *that*. Of course, you understand that the word *that* means to continue. It means that there is an issue coming out. The issue is that "the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit."

Verse 5 begins with *for*, indicating that verse 5 is the definition of what it is to walk according to the spirit. "For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit." This gives us a strong definition, and according to Paul's usage, to walk according to the spirit is to be according to the spirit. To Paul there was no difference between to walk and to be. To be means to walk. Of course, even according to the Greek language, the word for *walk* also means to have our being. To walk according to the spirit means to be according to the spirit. But

in our reading and understanding of the Bible, we think that to walk is just to act and to do things.

I am afraid that the situation with most Christians is like this. Mostly, they are not according to the spirit. So when they go to buy something, they are reminded that they should walk according to the spirit, so they pray that the Lord would help them to buy something that is not according to the fashion of the world. But when they get to the store, the fashion becomes so strong that they forget what they prayed. They are seeking Christians, but still they buy something according to the modern fashion. This is because they are not persons according to the spirit. They simply prayed for a certain activity to be according to the spirit. A few times it may be that God would answer, but most of the time they did not get an answer. We must realize that to walk according to the spirit is just to be such a person. Our being must be according to the spirit.

MINDING THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Now we need to consider how we can be according to the spirit. Although I do not like the phrase *how to,* I have to use it. How can we be according to the spirit?

First of all, we have to realize that to be according to the spirit is to mind the things of the spirit. Remember that in chapter 7, which may be considered as the background for chapter 8, there is no spirit. There is no human spirit, no Spirit of God, no Spirit of life, no Spirit of Christ, no indwelling Spirit, no witnessing Spirit, no leading Spirit, and no firstfruits of the Spirit. There is no Spirit at all in chapter 7. What is in chapter 7? There is the will: "I do not do the good which I will; but the evil which I do not will, this I practice" (v. 19). There is also the mind: "With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin" (v. 25). This is the situation of an unsaved person. Although you are saved, you may still be remaining in the situation of an unsaved person. Many Chinese Christians still remain in the ethical realization of Confucius. In name they are Christians, but in actuality they are Confucius's disciples.

Christians are people with a mingled spirit. I must repeat again and again to impress you that as a Christian the spirit that you have is not so simple. First, you have the human spirit. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." We do have a human

spirit. Furthermore, our human spirit is not so primitive, because it has been regenerated and renewed and reborn. Our spirit has been trained and taught and today is under the leading of another Spirit. This other Spirit is all-inclusive. It is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of the leading, the Spirit of witnessing, the Spirit of interceding, the Spirit with the firstfruits. We have our human spirit as well as God's divine Spirit. We have two spirits, and these two spirits are now just one. The two are one—living together, working together, and being together. We have such a spirit. Because we have such a spirit, we should not care so much for our will. We should no longer be persons walking, living, and being according to our will or according to our mind. No. Now we must be persons living, walking, and being in our spirit and according to our spirit. This is the mingled spirit—the enriched spirit, the uplifted spirit, the strengthened spirit, the spirit that is a mingling of the divine Spirit with the human spirit. We must learn to pick up all these new vocabulary words for our dictionary. When most Christians today come to the word *Spirit*, they just consider the Spirit as the "Holy Ghost," as some kind of power of God, or as some kind of instrument. Among today's Christians there is also much ignorance, blindness, and darkness concerning the matter of the human spirit. Even many Christian teachers teach the dichotomy of man, not believing that we have a spirit. They say that our human spirit is just our soul. They consider *spirit* and *soul* to be synonyms, referring to the invisible being of our person. Because of such ignorance, it is no wonder that Christians have not entered into Romans 8. It is impossible, because in Romans 8 you have to set the mind on the spirit. The mind, of course, is the leading part of the soul. If our spirit is the same as our soul, how could we set our mind on our soul?

A NEW VOCABULARY

This is why many Christians today do not understand Paul's writings. They are short of vocabulary, they are short of knowledge, and they are altogether in traditional ignorance. I would advise you to learn and to pick up all the new vocabulary, such as the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the indwelling Spirit, the leading Spirit, the witnessing Spirit, the interceding Spirit, the firstfruits of the Spirit, and even the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. You need to pick up all these phrases, expressions, terms, utterances, and new words to learn the spiritual things. Then you will be able to get into the spiritual things. If you do not have the vocabulary, how could you understand the spiritual things? And if you do not understand the

spiritual things, how could you get into those things? It is impossible. We need to pick up all the terms in Romans 8 concerning the Spirit and concerning our spirit.

Before the recovery came to this country in 1962, few Christians talked about the human spirit. Wherever I went, I ministered concerning the human spirit, and people told me that they had never heard that they have a spirit. You have to pick up the new words, the new vocabulary; then you will get the knowledge. Then you will be able to enter into the reality of the knowledge.

THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

To be according to the spirit is to mind the things of the Spirit. First, we need to consider what are the things of the Spirit. Many items are included in the things of the Spirit: God, Christ, the Spirit, the Triune God, all the processes that the Triune God went through, the church, all the things the Triune God has accomplished, and all your Christian experiences. Eventually, you have to bring in the Bible with sixty-six books. You have to mind all these things. If you were to mind all these things minute after minute, when you go shopping, you surely would not buy clothes that are according to the fashion of this world. Your entire being would be renewed and inoculated with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, with the Triune God and all the processes He went through, with all the accomplishments He made, with the church, with your spiritual experiences, and with the entire Bible. If you are minding all these things of the Spirit, you become a person according to the spirit. You need to be fully occupied with minding all the things of the Spirit. Even you need to mind all the books and all the Life-study messages that have been put out. To mind the things of the Spirit must become a matter of a law within us. To mind the things of the Spirit is still a matter of activities to you. But to mind the things of the flesh is a law to you. After you wake up in the morning, you do not mind the things of the Spirit. Rather, you mind the things of a better car or new clothes or other things. It is no wonder that we cannot live Christ, because we are not people who mind the things of the Spirit. Thirty years ago in my early ministry I learned a lot by minding the things of the Scriptures. I learned a lot by minding the things of the Spirit, by minding all the attainments, all the achievements, all the accomplishments, done by Christ.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT

Chapter 8 of Romans is too profound. Every verse has some crucial point. Verse 5 has two points: those who are according to the spirit and minding the things of the Spirit. These are two crucial points. You must be a person according to the spirit, and to be such a person, you must mind the things of the Spirit. Verse 6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." To set your mind on the spirit is an even stronger expression than minding the things of the Spirit. It may seem that these two things are one, but the expression is a little stronger. It is not just a matter of minding the things of the Spirit but of setting your mind on the spirit. This means that your spirit is mingled with the divine Spirit, and now your mind is attached to your spirit; it is not detached. The law of the Spirit of life only works by its principle when your mind is attached to the spirit. The spirit to which your mind is attached is the mingled spirit. This means that you have your mind attached to the law of the Spirit of life. In such a situation, no wonder this law works within you! The attaching of your mind to this law is just your switching on. It is to get that part attached to the working "electricity." When you switch off, it detaches it from the working "electricity." Your mind is the switch. When you set your mind on the spirit, you switch on. Then the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life works within by His principle, not by activities. He only works as such a law when we have our mind attached to this law. This is to set our mind on the spirit.

I would like to impress you with this point: You must be a person minding the things of the Spirit. Do not take Confucius's way. Do not take any way of religion. Do not even take the way of many Christians to make up your mind to be victorious or to be nice or to love your wife. Do not make up your mind to do anything, but set your mind on the spirit. Forget about loving your wife. Forget about submitting to your husband. Forget about all these things and just mind the things of the Spirit. If you mind the things of the Spirit, spontaneously and automatically you will pray. You will fellowship with the Lord, and you will read the Bible.

ATTACHED TO THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

To read the Bible, to recite the verses of the Bible, to fellowship with the Lord, to pray, and to fellowship with the saints around the Bible or about the spiritual things help you to mind the things of the Spirit. Some may say that they do not like to attend the meetings because the meetings do not help them. I would answer that electricity is powerful, but electricity cannot help you if

you are a detached one. If you are detached, how can the meeting help you? If you are detached, how can the ministry help you? Those who keep themselves attached to the spirit receive help from every kind of meeting. Every time I come to the meeting, I am helped because I am attached to the law of the Spirit of life. When I come to the meeting, I am minding the things of the Spirit. While I am minding the things of the Spirit, the law of the Spirit of life works by its principle, not by any activity. When you are detached from the indwelling One, you get nothing from the meeting. You may get some material for your gossip or some vain knowledge. But when you are minding the things of the Spirit, when you have yourself attached to the law of the Spirit, you are helped by the meeting and by the ministry. Actually, it is not the meeting or the ministry that helps you but the very law of the Spirit of life working in you automatically by its principle. So we have to walk according to the spirit and even be according to the spirit by minding the things of the Spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

PRACTICING TO SET THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT

Prayer: Lord, how we worship You as the Triune God, the very processed God. We thank You that You have gone through so many processes, and You have achieved so much, making Yourself even a law within us—the law of the Spirit of life. Lord, we thank You for this wonderful oracle, an oracle comprised of all the seeking saints. O Lord Jesus! How we praise You for Your recovery, that You have opened up Your Word, even Romans 8, to us. Lord, we trust in You again. We have no trust in ourselves. Thank You for the cleansing blood, and thank You for the anointing ointment. Lord, we are here waiting on You. Lord, You know how much we look unto You. Lord, grant us new thought, the fresh up-to-date word. Lord, grant us the instant utterance of the rich expression, even, Lord, the instant understanding. Lord, we are unable to speak; neither can we listen. Lord, help us. We surely need Your help. Lord, we like to be helped by You. Thank You, Lord. We have the confidence that You are one spirit with us in the speaking and in the listening. Oh, Hallelujah! Victory is Yours! Oh, defeat must go to the enemy! Put him in the corner tonight! Shame him again! Thank You, Lord. Amen.

In this chapter we need to consider Romans 8:5-8. Doctrinally, it is difficult to understand these verses. If you merely study these four verses doctrinally, all you will get is a puzzle. Your study will lead you into a thick forest. After I was saved in 1925, I studied these four verses a lot. The more I studied, the more I could not understand. Now I would say that to understand these verses you need some experience. These verses could only be apprehended according to your experience. If you do not have the experience, you cannot understand them.

MINDING THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

The main point in verse 5 is the minding. It is not the thinking but the minding of the things of the Spirit. Verse 5 indicates that those who are according to “something” mind “something.” By reading it in this way you can see that minding is the major thing. What are you minding? Are you minding the things of the Spirit? This does not mean just thinking or reasoning but minding.

SETTING THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT

What then is the major point in verse 6? The major point is the setting of the mind. There is a difference between minding the things of the Spirit and setting the mind on the spirit. One is minding, and the other is setting the mind on something.

THE MIND SET ON THE FLESH

Verse 7 says, "The mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be." The major thing in verse 7 is a mind set on the flesh. This is a little more complicated. First, there was the minding of the things of the Spirit and also the setting of the mind on the spirit. This major point in verse 7 is more complicated because it brings in another element, that is, the flesh. Now the problem is not only your mind but also the flesh and the mind set on the flesh. So the major thing in this verse is the mind set on the flesh.

BEING IN THE FLESH

Verse 8 says, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The major item in verse 8 is the matter of being in the flesh. Thus, these four verses cover four major things: minding the things of the Spirit, setting the mind on the spirit, the mind set on the flesh, and being in the flesh.

Most Bible readers are distracted from the major things in these four verses. Rather, they pay their attention to other points, such as life and peace in verse 6. Others may pay attention to dark things, to black things, such as death. Some have written concerning enmity against God using verse 7. They also spoke of what it means to be subject to the law of God. Some also talk about the disability, or the impossibility, mentioned in verse 7. Then in verse 8 they pointed out that the flesh is unable to please God. These points, however, are not the major points. The major things are a mind set on the flesh or on the spirit and the matter of being in the flesh.

THE NEUTRAL MIND

Now we need to consider these matters in more detail. What does it mean to mind the things of the Spirit? And what does it mean to set the mind on certain things? In these verses there are the mind, the flesh, and the spirit. Of course, the flesh is something negative and very black. The spirit is very positive and very white. In between these two is the mind, which is neutral

and gray. The flesh could never be neutral. It is always black; it could never be gray. In like manner, the spirit is always white; it could never be gray or neutral. But the mind in between these two sometimes turns to black and sometimes turns to white. It is neutral. The mind is something turning all the day long.

What is the difference between minding and setting the mind? We may consider that both of these are green: one is light green, and the other is dark green. Minding the spirit is light green, while setting the mind on the spirit is dark green. This means that minding is not so strong as setting the mind. Setting the mind is much stronger.

In Romans 8 the mind is set either on the flesh or on the spirit. Where then is the neutral mind? The neutral mind is found in Romans 7:25. There Paul says, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." The mind in this verse is a kind of independent mind, subject neither to the flesh nor to the spirit. We may consider that independent mind as being in the color of gray. It is neutral. Many Christians have such a neutral mind. The neutral mind will just make you a wretched man. It will make you a miserable, pitiful man. The neutral mind in chapter 7 is not bad; it serves the law. But the mind in 8:7, which is set on the flesh, is against the law. In other words, in 7:25 there is a gray mind, but in 8:7 there is a black mind. Now the question is: How do you make your mind black? Or how do you make your mind white? It all depends what you set your mind on. If you set your mind on the flesh, you make your mind black. If you set your mind on the spirit, you make your mind white. Not many can have a gray or a neutral mind. It is not so easy to keep your mind independent. How can we practice setting the mind on the spirit so that we will have a white mind? We have to realize that the beginning of the setting is the minding. First, we mind the things of the Spirit, and then we set the mind on the spirit.

MAKING THE MIND ONE WITH THE SPIRIT

Let us also read another verse, Ephesians 4:23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Here the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind. No doubt, this means that the spirit becomes one with your mind. This tells us that our mind can be one with our spirit and that our spirit can be the spirit of our mind. Actually, such a mind with which the spirit is one is a mind set on the spirit. This means that to set the mind on the spirit is just to have or to make your mind one with your spirit. Ephesians 4 speaks of the spirit of the mind for

renewing, and Romans 8 speaks of the mind of the spirit for interceding. How can you make your mind one with the spirit? By constantly minding the spirit. In other words, how can you make the light green darker? By coloring it again and again and again. By adding more color, the light green becomes darker. By minding the spirit again and again, your mind is eventually set on the spirit. In other words, it makes your mind one with the spirit.

For many years I have been trying to practice being spiritual and to find a way or a secret to be spiritual. A number of books have been written by Christian teachers, telling people how to be spiritual. After many years of experience I would say that the way to be spiritual is to set your mind on the spirit, making your mind one with the spirit. This is to be spiritual. When your mind is one with the spirit, you are spiritual. When you set your mind on the spirit, making your mind one with the spirit, it is at that time that you are really in the spirit. This can be proved by two verses on the negative side. Verse 7 speaks of "the mind set on the flesh," and verse 8 speaks of "those who are in the flesh." This indicates that if you set your mind on the flesh, you make yourself to be in the flesh. If you mind the flesh or set your mind on the flesh, you are in the flesh.

PRACTICING TO BE IN THE SPIRIT

In the same principle, the way to be in the spirit is to set your mind on the spirit, making your mind one with the spirit. Then you are in the spirit. When you are in the spirit, you are spiritual. When you are in the flesh, you are fleshly, or even fleshy. How can the minding of the Spirit become the setting of the mind on the spirit? To use our illustration once more, how can the light green become dark green? When we call on the Lord's name, when we pray-read the Word, when we fellowship with the saints, when we attend the meetings, when we read the ministry, we get more "color" added to us. When we sing and praise, more "green" is added to us to make us "dark green." We have to do these things again and again and again. I have been very much impressed and helped by watching the young ones practicing the piano. It is very difficult for my fingers to touch all those keys. It is really an activity, a doing, to me. But after someone practices a number of years, it becomes not a matter of activity but a principle of law. It is the same in typing. In my English college I learned to type in 1925. In order to graduate from that typing lesson, we had to type sixty words per minute. But for many years I have not practiced typing. Occasionally, I type an envelope or a short note. Because of

the lack of practice, my fingers work mostly by activity. Sometimes, of course, they work by law. In my memory I cannot remember where the keys are, but when I put my fingers on the keys, my unknowledgeable fingers right away become knowledgeable because fifty-six years ago I practiced a lot. The point is this: you get used to a certain thing by practicing it. Then the activity becomes a principle.

You have to begin with minding and keep minding by these few practices of calling on the Lord's name, of pray-reading the Word, of fellowshipping with the saints, of attending the meetings, of singing the praises, and of reading the Life-study messages. These are good practices. These may be considered like the keyboard of a piano. You need to practice playing on these keyboards. You need to get used to playing on these keyboards until something is built up in your being. Then that practice of the minding will become the setting of the mind. That practice of minding makes your mind one with the spirit. If you consider the illustration of playing a piano or typing on a typewriter, you will realize that this is altogether possible. If you will practice, you will make it. When your mind is set on the spirit, making your mind one with the spirit, then the spirit becomes the spirit of your mind. There would be no distinction between the mind and the spirit; there would be no separation. The two would become one. Your mind would be the spirit, and your spirit would be the mind, because your mind would be on the spirit, and your spirit would be saturating your mind. When this is the case, the law of the Spirit of life functions not by activity but by principle.

THE INTERCEDING SPIRIT

We will leave the two major things found in verses 7 and 8 until another time, and instead we will read Romans 8:26-27 concerning the interceding Spirit: "In like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God." Here the mind is mentioned once again, but it is the mind of the Spirit. Ephesians 4:23 speaks of the spirit of the mind, but Romans 8 speaks of the mind of the Spirit. The spirit of the mind is for renewing, and the mind of the Spirit is for interceding. In Ephesians 4:23 the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind, and in Romans 8 the mind of the Spirit is for interceding. The mind becomes the mind of the Spirit.

THE GROANING OF THE SPIRIT

Now we have to ask: whose mind is this? It is difficult to say, because now the Spirit is mingled with your spirit, and the Spirit here is interceding within you. In our groaning, there is the groaning of the Spirit. The Spirit groans in our groaning. Even we can say that it is the Spirit's groaning groaned by us, uttered by us. So it is actually our groaning. In the same principle, it is the Spirit's mind, but now the Spirit's mind is one with our mind because our mind is set on the spirit. Doctrine cannot help you much to understand these matters. Only by experience can you understand these matters because they are too subjective. Anything related to life, even the physical life, is subjective.

Sometimes we have the burden to pray, yet we do not know what to say. At such a time we may groan, "O Lord, O Lord." This is our groaning because it is uttered by us, yet that groan begins with the mingled spirit. It begins in our spirit and comes out of the depth of our being. That was not merely a sound of groaning. Within the groaning there was a kind of mind because there was a kind of thought or kind of meaning in it. This means that the mind is involved, but what kind of mind or whose mind is that? It is the Spirit's mind, but it is not merely the Spirit's mind but the Spirit's mind mingled with our mind. Our mind is set on the spirit, making our mind itself one with the Spirit's mind. Only the Lord knows what kind of mind this is.

The Bible is really a book of puzzles. For example, verse 27 says that He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is. Whose heart is mentioned here? Surely this is not the heart of the Spirit; this must be our heart. God searches our heart, yet He knows what the mind of the Spirit is. This proves to us that the Spirit here is not the independent mind of the Spirit; it is the mind of the Spirit mingled with our mind and becoming a part of our heart. It is our heart and the Spirit's mind. God searching our heart knows the mind of the Spirit. This is wonderful! This tells us one thing: our mind is one with the Spirit. The Spirit's mind is one with our mind, and our mingled mind even has become a part of our heart. The Bible's revelation gives us a clear view of such a mingling. Our mind could be set on the spirit making our mind one with the Spirit. So the Spirit's mind is one with our mind, and this mingled heart, this mingled mind, becomes a part of our spirit. When we groan, our groaning is not a kind of religious prayer but an aspiration from the depths of our being where the mingling of divinity with humanity is.

If we are experiencing such an operation within us, how could the law of the Spirit of life not function? Surely the law of the Spirit of life would spontaneously function within us. This operation fulfills the requirement of the law of the Spirit of life to work by principle, freeing us from the law of sin and of death.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

KEEPING THE MIND REMAINING ON THE SPIRIT

Prayer: Lord, we do have a heart to seek after You and to seek after the living word. Lord, You know that tonight we come to a high mountain. Lord, help us to come up. Lord, we like to get over; we like to see something from You. Lord, do give us another revelation that we may have another clear view concerning Your economy of Your salvation. Lord, do cover us again with Your prevailing blood. And cleanse us. How we thank You for Your cleansing! Even now we may not have gross sins, but we are still so natural. We are still living in the old creation, walking on this earth. Even we are here in this dark age. We have been defiled in many ways, even unconsciously. Lord, we need Your cleansing. Cleanse us that we might be brought into Your presence, into Your anointing, even into Yourself. Lead us, Lord. Lord, You know that we do not have much idea what we have to say. We look unto You that You would infuse us with Your thought, with Your feeling, with Your up-to-date revelation, and with Your fresh utterances. Lord, grant us the liberty and wisdom. Thank You for Your victory. Amen.

In this chapter we need to consider Romans 8:6, 7, and 8. These verses read as follows: "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Because the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be. And those who are in the flesh cannot please God." For many years I have considered that the problem in these verses is the flesh. I have ministered and taught that the flesh is enmity against God, that the flesh is not subject to the law of God, that there is no possibility with the flesh to be subject to the law of God, and that the flesh cannot please God. I have always considered these negative things to be things of the flesh. But actually, this is not correct. In fact, the first three things are related not to the flesh but to the mind. The enmity against God, the lack of subjection to the law of God, and the lack of possibility to be subject are actually things of the mind. Eventually, verse 8 says that those who are "somewhere" cannot do "something." In other words, the emphasis is on "those," not on the flesh. Actually, these three verses do not talk so much about the flesh. Rather, they talk about the mind and "those."

THE MIND

In verse 6 there are six major things: the mind, the flesh, the spirit, death, life, and peace. In this chapter we want to consider only three of these major things: the mind, the flesh, and the spirit. The crucial word of these three is *mind*. If the mind is set on the spirit, there is a positive result; if the mind is set on the flesh, there is a negative result. It all depends upon where the mind is set. You have to realize also that your mind and you are the same. When your mind is down, you are down; when your mind is up, you are up. Sometimes we say that our spirit is either up or down, but this is not so accurate. If your mind were never down, your spirit would always be up. Your spirit seems to be down because your mind is down. Actually, it is not your spirit that is down; it is your mind that is down. From this we can see that the problem is always with our mind. But the salvation is also with our mind. When your mind is right, you are right. When your mind has a problem, you are in trouble. Your mind represents you. It is not your body or your spirit or the mingled spirit or even the flesh that represents you. It is your mind. Where you are depends upon where your mind is. If your mind is in New York, you are in New York. If your mind is in hell, you are in hell. You go with your mind, and your mind goes with you. The mind is the leading part, the main part, of the soul. The soul is our real person. Genesis 46:27 says that seventy souls of the house of Jacob, meaning seventy people, went down into Egypt. A person is a soul. The soul is our personality, our person. The leading part of our soul is the mind, so actually the mind represents the soul. In Romans 8 the mind is neutral, being between our regenerated spirit and our fallen body, the flesh. The problem is always a matter of where the mind goes and stays and is. If the mind goes to the spirit and stays with the spirit, everything is fine.

THE SPIRIT

The spirit today is not the original spirit. Our spirit is no more just a human spirit. Hallelujah! Our spirit is now the regenerated spirit. Regeneration means that God the Spirit indwells our spirit. The human spirit has no regeneration, but the mingled spirit has been regenerated because the divine Spirit has entered into our original spirit. When the divine Spirit enters into our human spirit, right away we are regenerated. You have to be assured, and you have to thank the Lord, that you do have something within you that has no problem. Your regenerated spirit has no problem. To say that our spirit is up or our spirit is down is not so accurate. Even to say that our spirit is weak is not so accurate, because our spirit has been regenerated. In our spirit there

is the divine Spirit. With the divine Spirit mingled with our human spirit, how could such a spirit be weak? It is not your spirit that is weak; it is you, your mind, that is weak. To say that our spirit is weak would seem to indicate that the divine Spirit could be gone. But the divine Spirit never leaves us, and He is never weak. He is always strong. Once He comes in, He remains for eternity.

The New Testament says clearly that God has not given us a weak or timid spirit. In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul said, "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of a sober mind." From this verse you can realize that whenever you feel weak, it means you are in the mind. Whenever you feel you are down, you are in the mind. On the contrary, you can know that you are in the spirit when you are strong and when you are up. The problem is this: we are used to speaking things and doing things by habitually using our mind. In a sense we don't exercise our mind, we simply use it. We spontaneously use our mind. Habitually we use our mind. If you would pray before doing something, you would discover whether or not that something is from your mind or from your spirit. If you pray and contact the Lord before doing something, and your feeling is still to do that something, it may be of the spirit. If something is simply from your mind, after you pray and contact the Lord, you will sense right away that you shouldn't do it. This means that your intention is not from the spirit, but from the mind.

Although we may say doctrinally that we need to turn to the spirit, according to experience it is a little different. Many things in the spiritual life are hard to explain by human utterance. In a sense it is okay to say we need to turn to our spirit; actually it is not so accurate. It is not merely a matter of turning to your spirit, but of checking out that you are in the mind. When you check out that you are in the mind, right away you are in the spirit. In a sense you don't need to turn. To turn to the spirit is a little too late. For example if you lose your temper, and you realize that you have lost your temper, and you turn to your spirit, that is too late. When you feel that you are weak you have to condemn that and tell Satan that God has never given you such a spirit. You have to tell Satan that God has given you a strong spirit of love and of power and of a sober mind. Oh, we do have a regenerated spirit! And our regenerated spirit is so strong! No unbeliever has a strong spirit. Their spirit is dead and dormant. But our spirit has been made alive; it has been regenerated. Even the divine Spirit is in our spirit. Even the Triune God is in our spirit! How can such a spirit be weak? This is against the fact.

STRENGTHENED INTO THE INNER MAN

Why then do you have some problems? It is because your mind goes to the wrong place. Your mind takes the wrong way. Instead of being set on the spirit, it is set on the flesh. Ephesians 3:16 says that we need to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man. Some translations say "in" the inner man, but the Greek word means "into" the inner man. Your inner man is always so strong, but your being is not strong. You need to be strengthened into the inner man. When you, your being, goes into the inner man, you are strengthened. When you are strengthened into your inner man, there is no problem. But when you get out of the inner man, you are weakened. For example, when you turn on the switch, the entire building enjoys the electricity. But when you turn off the switch, the entire building loses the enjoyment of the electricity. In like manner, when your mind goes to the spirit, you get into regeneration and the enjoyment of the divine Spirit. But when your mind comes to the flesh, you get into the fall, into hell. When your mind goes down to the flesh, you have to prepare yourself to get into hell.

Many philosophers and ethical scholars endeavor to be right and to do good. Sometimes the strong-willed ones may have some success. But most of the time they are defeated because their mind has no place to go for victory. Their mind has to gain the victory by itself. Most of the good philosophers are ethical, and their teachings mainly build up a kind of character; that is, they mainly build up the mind including the will. They endeavor to build up the mind to have a success. But the problem is that they do not have a regenerated spirit. At most they have a dead spirit with a dormant conscience. Even many of the teachings among Christians are simply sermons or speeches to edify the mind. According to many Christian concepts, Christian growth means to get more and more knowledge into the mind and to make the mind more knowledgeable of the spiritual things. They do not emphasize their regenerated spirit. When they talk about regeneration, they always consider that to be something of the "Holy Ghost" who is far, far from them. They do not realize that regeneration is something in their spirit. Even most of them do not know that they have a spirit. So they simply do their best to edify their mind. Actually, many Christian teachings today are very much the same as the philosophical, ethical teachings. They have no spirit for their mind to go to. But praise the Lord! We have a place we can go to. We have our regenerated mingled spirit. We have such a destination, and we have such a situation.

But the pitiful thing is that we do not go to our spirit. Either we stay in ourselves, in our mind, or we go down to the flesh. When you are quiet and calmed down and nice, you are in your mind, in the "central station." But after a while your husband or your wife may cause you to react and to stir up your mind to go down to the flesh. Then you lose your temper and have a failure.

Sometimes, though, you are really in Romans 7. You make up your mind that you will do good. You will yourself to do good. But as long as you do not will yourself to do good, sin in you is dormant. The lust in you is dormant. But when you will yourself to do good, you just wake up the dormant lust. Then there is a fighting, a warring. Whenever there is such a warring, your mind is always defeated by the flesh. This is the reason Paul puts chapter 7 of Romans before chapter 8. By reading these two chapters carefully, you could see that chapter 8 is a real continuation of chapter 7. In chapter 7 there is no way because there is no spirit. This means there is no better station that you can go to. But when you come to chapter 8, you have a better station. It is not the central station but the upper station, the spirit. You have a spirit, so from chapter 8 Paul talks about the spirit. Actually, all of chapter 8 is talking about the spirit. The spirit is our refuge, our rescue, our upper station. When we reach that, everything is okay. It is better even for us to stay there in our spirit. In 8:5 it seems that there is the matter of going to the spirit, and in verse 6 it seems that there is the matter of staying with the spirit. But we know the problem: our mind is not flat or square. It seems to be round with a lot of oil and water upon it. It is so easy for this round slippery ball to slip away from the spirit. The more you try to get your mind to remain on the spirit, the more it slips away. This is why we need the following verses in chapter 8. All the following verses give us many items to keep the mind set on the spirit and to make the mind stand with the spirit.

You have to realize that this kind of speaking is not a general speaking concerning God's salvation and so forth. Rather, the speaking in this Perfecting Training is very fine. This was also Paul's way of speaking in Romans 8. Romans 8 is a long chapter mainly on the law of the Spirit of life. Even this title indicates that it is not a rough teaching. It is a fine teaching, a kind of diagnosis of our sick person and an analysis of our being.

This means that there are five things related to our being: First, there is our spirit. Second, it is not a natural spirit but a regenerated spirit, mingled with the divine Spirit. Third, there is our body. Fourth, there is the fall related to

our body, causing it to become the flesh. According to Romans 8:23, one day we will experience the redemption of our body. But that is not today. Today our body is not the original body created by God; it is the fallen body, the flesh. The flesh indicates the fall, and the redemption of the body is still not yet. It will be in the future. That will be the full sonship. At that time we will be fully sonized. Today, because we have been regenerated, our spirit has been sonized. Our spirit has been made a part of the Son of God. But our body has not yet been made a part of the Son of God. Our body still remains flesh.

The fifth item related to our being may be considered as a neutral part, our mind. You have to realize that the Bible does not indicate that our mind has been saved. Nor does it say that our mind will be transformed at the coming of the Lord. The Bible shows us that the transformation of our mind is occurring right now. Our spirit has been regenerated, and our body will be redeemed. But our mind is neutral. In a sense, it is somewhat blank. We have to realize that we are a tripartite man. One part—our spirit—has been rescued, saved, regenerated. One part—our body—remains the same. But another part—our mind—is neutral. Today the problem is this: to what part should we go, or to what part should our mind go? To say what part we should go to means to say what part our mind should go to. We all must go to the spirit and even remain in the spirit. But our mind is a kind of round and slippery thing, always moving. So we need the grace that is revealed in the following verses of Romans 8. This will make our mind stable and stop our mind from turning and moving. Sometimes we say that we make up our mind to do something. We must realize, though, that God does not want us to make up our mind to do something. God wants us to use our regenerated spirit. Whenever we pray to contact the Lord, spontaneously our mind turns to the spirit through the praying. Whenever you mean business in calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, right away your mind is turned to the spirit. Before you called, your mind may have been rolling away, but now it is set on the spirit. At other times you may fellowship with the saints or sing to the Lord and find that something in your being is turned to the spirit. This means that the mind is turning to the spirit. At other times you may pray-read the Bible, or you may read some of the messages, and spontaneously you find that your mind is turned to your spirit. You get nourished and watered in your spirit. When you remain in your mind, you starve and dry up. But when you turn to your spirit, water and food are there. All these spiritual experiences are just the matter of the mind turning to the spirit. It is good for the mind to be

turned to the spirit, but it is not the best. Why does your mind need a turn? Because it is away from the spirit. It is best to keep your mind remaining in the spirit. Many times when you call on the Lord's name, sing, pray, fellowship, read the Bible, or read the messages, you have the feeling that they do not turn you. They just keep you there. They strengthen your abiding there. They strengthen your abiding in the spirit. We need to learn to do these things habitually and in a continuous way. Do not just do them occasionally but as a practice, a habit. Under any kind of circumstances and at any time you can pray. Sometimes you have wanted to pray, but you could not because your mind was rolling like a round ball. But eventually something happened within, and you were able to pray and to praise the Lord. This means that your mind was brought back to the spirit again.

When the mind goes down to the flesh, you are just an enemy to God. It is not just your flesh that is an enemy, but you yourself are an enemy. The mind set on the flesh is enmity against God. That is you. When our mind goes to the flesh, we become wild and rebellious. We could never be submissive.

Furthermore, when your mind goes to the flesh and remains there, you become "those" who are in the flesh. When your mind goes to the spirit and remains there, you are "those" who are in the spirit. When your mind goes down to the flesh and remains there, you are "those" who are in the flesh, and you cannot please God. We all have to see this. The mind is a problem. It is the mind that can make us either in the spirit or in the flesh. When the mind remains in the spirit, we are in the spirit. When the mind remains on the flesh, we are in the flesh; we become those who are in the flesh. What kind of person we will be depends upon where our mind goes and stays and remains. We all have to practice the matter of praying and calling on the Lord's name and fellowshipping and pray-reading the Word of God and reading the life materials and singing and attending the meetings in order to bring our mind to the spirit and keep it there. If you practice these things, they will either turn your mind to the spirit or keep your mind in the spirit. There is no other way. It will not work simply to make up your mind to be in the spirit. You have to practice these things. If it is hard for you to practice these things, you have to pray, "Lord, have mercy upon me. I am sick. Have mercy upon me." Furthermore, we have to pray for one another. I pray for all of you quite often. Although I may not remember all your names, when I pray for you, I have your faces before me. We have to pray for each other. There is a law in the spiritual world that God's works need our prayer as a kind of cooperation.

When we pray, God works. When we pray, He operates. When we stop praying, His operation also stops. So we have to pray. I believe we all could testify that many times spontaneously from within we wanted to pray, we wanted to call on the Lord's name, we wanted to come to the meeting, we wanted to read the Bible, and we wanted to sing, to praise, and to read the life material. We all can testify that we have been preserved by the Lord in such an aspiration. This kind of aspiration is a kind of preserving to us. Practicing these things will keep our mind remaining on the spirit.

CHAPTER FORTY

STAYING IN THE MINGLED SPIRIT

Prayer: Lord, we worship You for Your redemption. How we thank You that we are the redeemed people. We thank You, Lord, for Your cleansing and redeeming blood. We thank You for the Spirit. We thank You for the Spirit that dwells in us. Lord, we thank You for this time that we can all come together to touch Your Word and to get into Your Word. Lord, we believe that You are one spirit with us right now. Lord, we do claim this fact. We claim Your presence and Your anointing. We claim Your up-to-date speaking. Lord, grant us new light, new thought, and even new utterance and new expression. Make today's fellowship new. Do cover everyone and shame the enemy again. Jesus is the Lord! Jesus is the Victor! Lord, we praise You and worship You. Amen.

In this chapter we will cover just two verses in Romans 8—verses 8 and 9. In the reading of these two verses, we need to pay special attention to the little preposition *in*. In the New Testament and especially in Paul's writings, prepositions mean a lot. In fact, in the Greek language the prepositions are crucial words. The meaning of certain phrases or clauses or sentences depends upon the prepositions used in them. For example, as we pointed out in the *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, Paul was very careful in his choice of prepositions. In verse 2 of chapter 1 Paul writes "to the church of God which is in Corinth...with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place." Here Paul uses the preposition *with* rather than the conjunction *and*. If the conjunction *and* had been used, it would indicate that these phrases were equal. But because the preposition *with* was used, it indicates something subordinate. This means something different. This illustrates the importance of the prepositions.

In Romans 8:8-9 the crucial words are not big words. The first crucial word is the small preposition *in*. It is used four times in these two verses. "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him."

The Chinese translation of the Bible says that those who are of the flesh cannot please God. Of course, the English translation does not use the word *of*. It uses the word *in*. But although you read the word *in,* I am afraid that your understanding may be *of*. In verse 9 you would not, of course, say that the Spirit of God dwells of you, but you might say that the Spirit of God dwells with you. That would not be wrong. Even many Christians today like to use the word *with*. They say that the Lord is with you or that God be with you. Not many would say that the Lord is in you or that God is in you.

SOURCE AND POSITION

Why in verse 8 and at the beginning of verse 9 does Paul use the preposition *in*? The preposition *of* indicates the source and the position. When you say that you were born of the Spirit, it means that the Spirit is the very source of your regeneration. Likewise, when you say that you were born of the flesh, it means that the flesh was the source of your natural birth.

THE PRESENT CONDITION

The preposition *in,* however, indicates something different; it indicates the present condition. According to the source of the new birth, you are of the Spirit. But according to today's spiritual condition, you are in the spirit. *In* indicates the condition of your present living. If, in your spiritual condition, you are still only of the Spirit and not in the spirit, this indicates a shortage.

Because these two verses emphasize the preposition *in* and not the preposition *of,* it indicates that they are not talking about the position or the source; they are talking about the condition, the experience. *Those who are in the flesh* does not refer to source or position but to condition and experience. You may be a person of the Spirit, yet you are in the flesh. You were born of the Spirit, and the Spirit is your source and position, yet your condition is not in the spirit. Your condition is that you are in the flesh. So according to your condition and present-day experience, you are not in the spirit. You were born of the Spirit, and according to your position, you are still of the Spirit. You are a person of the Spirit. You are a person in the position and of the source of the Spirit. But you do not live in the spirit, and you do not walk in the spirit. So you are not in the spirit. For example, you may be of America and yet live in another country. A person may be of the Spirit and yet live in the flesh, but a person who is merely born of the flesh could never live in the spirit.

Verse 8 says that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Does this refer to believers or unbelievers? Although it may include both believers and unbelievers, I believe that Paul was referring to the believers. You have to realize that Romans 8 is not speaking about the initial salvation. This has already been covered in the previous chapters. In chapters 1 and 2 none were saved. In chapters 3 and 4 some were saved and justified. This means that by the time Paul reached chapter 8, he was not dealing with unbelievers but with believers. Check with your own experience. During the course of a day sometimes you are in the spirit, and sometimes you are in the flesh. When you come to the meetings, there is a good possibility that you are in the spirit. When you are at home, though, sometimes you may not be in the spirit; you may be in the flesh. So on the one hand, we really are of the Spirit, but on the other hand, sometimes we are not that much in the spirit. These three prepositions—*in, with,* and *of*—mainly touch the matter from our side. Now let us consider the matter from the side of the Spirit.

THE SIDE OF THE SPIRIT

In verse 9 Paul says that the Spirit of God dwells in you. He does not say that the Spirit of God is of you or for you or with you or even merely in you. He says that the Spirit of God dwells in you. In Greek, the root of the word *dwell* means "house." So actually it could be translated that the Spirit of God houses in you. It is not the word that is used for abiding or remaining. It is the word that is used for housing. The Spirit of God dwells in you. No husband can dwell in his wife. The most he can do is dwell with her. Sometimes he may dwell with her and yet not do anything for her. So perhaps it is better to say that he dwells for her. For you and me the best condition is to be "in." This means to be in the spirit. And for the Spirit, the best condition is to "dwell in." Concerning us, Paul uses a form of the verb *to be,* but concerning the Spirit, he uses a strong and proper verb, *dwell.*

Furthermore, in the last part of verse 9, Paul picks up another predicate, the verb *has.* "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." So, in these two verses Paul uses two kinds of prepositions and three kinds of verbs. We have already mentioned the significance of the prepositions *of* and *in*. What is the significance of the use of the different kinds of verbs? If I ask whether or not you have the Spirit of Christ, you would answer that you do. But if I ask whether you are in the Spirit of Christ, you would answer that sometimes you are. The preposition *in* indicates a situation

like the California weather. It has a lot of fluctuation. But the phrase *dwells in* is like Mount Rainier, standing there with no change. The Spirit dwells in you. This never changes. When you are of Him, He dwells in you. When you are in Him, He dwells in you. There is no change. Whether it is raining or not, Mount Rainier still stands. Whether the sky is clear or cloudy or stormy, Mount Rainier stands solid. But the California weather changes quite often. In verse 9 the verb *has* indicates stability. For example, the fact that you have a wife is settled forever. But whether she is with you in the meeting tonight or not is another matter. If you are going to know the indwelling Spirit, you must see these three prepositions—*in, with,* and *of*—and these three predicates—*are, dwells,* and *has.* Some of these indicate an unchangeable standing. Others indicate fluctuations. To say that we have the Spirit is altogether unchangeable, with no fluctuation. And to say that the Spirit dwells in us even the more indicates no change and no fluctuation. But even these two terms, which indicate no change and no fluctuation, have a slightly different meaning. To have something means to possess it, and to dwell means to occupy.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Thus far we have been speaking according to the words, according to grammar, according to position, to possession, to occupation, and to condition. Now we need to consider the matter of experience. According to the facts, we, the believers in Christ, all have the Spirit. Also this Spirit dwells in all of us. We have Him, and He dwells in us. These are the unchangeable facts. There is no fluctuation with these facts. We cannot lose Him, and He would never leave us. We have Him forever, and He dwells in us forever. With these two points there is no problem. But whether or not we are in Him is a matter of condition. How then can you care for the condition? This is a crucial point. If you say that you want to be in, right away you are out. But if you dare to say that you are in, right away you are in. You have to believe that you are in. Let me tell you why: you have Him, and He dwells in you. These are facts. In a sense you do not need to turn to the spirit. You are in already. Do not turn; just remain there. You are in. It is the same with the matter of abiding in Christ. If you see that you are in Christ, you do not need to abide. If you still need to abide, it means that you are still outside of Christ. If you have seen that you are in Christ, you are in already. You do not need to abide. You just need to remain there. Right now He is dwelling in you, and right now you still possess Him.

STAYING IN THE SPIRIT

You do not need to turn to the spirit. You just need to stay in the spirit. In the past we have had a slogan, "Turn to the spirit." We should drop this, and instead we should say, "Stay in your spirit." *Stay* means that you are already there in the spirit. You do not need such a long prayer to cause you to stay in your spirit. Even a short prayer will cause you to stay in your spirit. When you start to lose your temper, just an "O Lord" will keep you in your spirit. Although I am so busy all the day long, I say, "O Lord," a lot to remain in the spirit. When you say, "O Lord," you stay in the spirit. Our experience tells us that we do have the Spirit, and the Spirit does dwell in us. This is not a kind of superstition; this is a divine spiritual fact. We may use the example of breathing. We know that there is air because we can breathe it in. And we know that we have a breathing organ because we can breathe in the air. Today the Lord is the Spirit, the pneuma, the air. And we can breathe the Spirit. I like A. B. Simpson's hymn where he speaks of breathing, breathing, breathing. The point is this, dear saints: the Spirit really dwells in us, regardless of whether our "weather" is cold or hot or stormy or calm. None of these things bothers Him. Whether we are at home or we are in the wrong place, He still dwells in us. This is the fact. We have Him. We possess Him, and He occupies us. We only possess Him, but He not only possesses but also occupies us. This means that He is here all the time. So in a sense we do not need to turn to Him. We just need to stay in Him.

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

Now we are clear that we have to stay in this spirit. But what kind of spirit is the spirit? Is this the Holy Spirit? Or is this our human spirit? During the past twenty years, I have spoken a lot of messages on the mingled spirit. Some, who are short of knowledge, have condemned our teaching concerning the mingled spirit.

One verse that refers to the mingled spirit is 2 Corinthians 4:13: "Having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore we also speak." In translating this verse, many versions of the Bible use a small letter *s* for the spirit, indicating our spirit. One version, however, uses a capital letter *S,* indicating the Spirit. This is the Wuest translation. Furthermore M. R. Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament,* says concerning this verse: "Spirit of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty of

disposition, but blending both." We all know that *blending* is a synonym for *mingling*. So when we speak of staying in the spirit, we mean in the blended spirit, in the mingled spirit. Hallelujah! We have a spirit, and our spirit has been regenerated, and the Spirit of God dwells in our spirit and mingles Himself with our spirit, making the two one spirit. This is the spirit in which we have to remain. How can we remain in such a spirit? All the time we have to say, "O Lord! O Lord!" The best way to keep you in your spirit and to save you from losing your temper is to say, "O Lord."

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

SIX QUESTIONS CONCERNING ROMANS 8:10

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You that we have come again to Your Word. We come to Your Word even through Your precious blood. Lord, we come also to Your oracle, to Your today's speaking. Lord, we praise You for Your mercy, and we praise You even the more for Your grace. Lord, how much we need Your further mercy, Your fresh mercy, and the sufficient grace. Lord, we thank You that You are really one with us. Lord, we pray that we may enjoy Your oneness. Lord, be one with us in our listening, in our understanding. Lord, grant us the deeper understanding. Oh, grant us the proper apprehension. Lord, we need You. We need You in the hearing of Your word. Lord, especially in the speaking we need You. We do like to practice the one spirit with You in the speaking. Lord, do speak Your word in our speaking. Make our speaking Yours. Make Your speaking one with ours. Lord, do cover us with Your prevailing blood and defeat the enemy. Destroy the power of darkness and take away all the deceit of the evil spirit. Lord, do cover our mentality; cover our entire being. We thank You for Your cleansing blood, and we thank You for Your covering blood. Lord, we do enjoy Your anointing under this blood. Grant us the light, the enlightenment, even the revelation with Your vision, that we may see the secrets of the way of life. May we see the secret of how to enjoy You and how to experience all the deeper truths revealed in Romans 8. Lord, You know that we have come to these two verses: 9 and 10. They are deep, and they are profound. Lord, we need You to open up these two verses. Show us the depth of all these verses. Grant us Your thought, even Your way of thinking, that we may get into the depths. Grant us a clear understanding, not the natural understanding or the ethical religious understanding but the understanding in You and in Your Spirit. Again, we say that we need You. Thank You that You are so available. You are one with us all the way. In Your precious name, Amen.

In this chapter we need to consider Romans 8:9-10. In verse 9 the words *if indeed* can be translated "since." Let us read the two verses with that change. "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life

because of righteousness." Verse 9 begins with a conjunction *but,* indicating a contrast. Verse 8 says that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Verse 9 presents the contrast by saying, "But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." Then you have the word *since.* There is a big difference between the terms *if indeed* and *since. If indeed* mainly refers to a condition that has not been accomplished. But *since* refers to a condition that has already been accomplished. *If* is a kind of subjunctive, but *since* refers to a fact. The fact becomes a condition for something to be done to you. According to the Greek lexicons, the word used here primarily means "since" rather than "if indeed." *Since the Spirit of God dwells in you* indicates a fact, but this fact is a term, a condition. Since you have this fact, you are in the spirit. Since the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are in the spirit. Suppose the Spirit of God did not dwell in you. Then you would not be in the spirit. Two facts are here: the Spirit of God dwells in you, and you are in the spirit. The first fact becomes a condition to the second fact. As you have the first fact, then you have the second fact. In other messages I have pointed out that the Spirit of God dwelling in you is a term, or a condition, for you to be in the spirit. You have to realize that both of these facts are progressive. The Spirit of God dwells in us. This is a fact that is not accomplished once for all but is progressive. In like manner, our being in the spirit is not a fact once for all. It is a kind of fact accomplished and still going on progressively. On the one hand, it is accomplished, but on the other hand, it is progressive.

Then in verse 9 there is the matter of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. The Greek word used here has as its root the word *house.* It is altogether right to translate the word *dwells* as "houses." The same root word is found in Ephesians 3:17 where it says "that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." In Ephesians, however, there is a prefix *kata,* which strengthens the meaning of making home. This is a strong word. We all know that to get yourself settled in your home is not a once-for-all matter. You get settled, and from then on you get more settled. We should let the Spirit of God get more and more settled within us. On the one hand, fifty years ago the Spirit of God got settled within me. But on the other hand, today He is more settled in me, and I believe that if I could live on this earth longer, He would become more settled. So this is a fact, yet with progression. First, it is an accomplished fact as a term or condition for your being in the spirit. Then this fact will grow or progress, and your being in the spirit will also progress. We have mentioned previously the difference between the two

prepositions *of* and *in*. *Of* indicates position, and *in* indicates condition. We all are of Christ, but what about our condition? To be of Christ is our position. But according to our condition today, we may not be in Him. We may not be in the spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Now we need to pay our attention to something further, that is, the change of the expression concerning the Spirit in Romans 8:9. Within the same verse it says, "The Spirit of God," and then it interchangeably says, "The Spirit of Christ." Some may have thought that these are two Spirits—that the Spirit of God is one Spirit and that the Spirit of Christ is another Spirit. This is really heretical. Not only so, in verse 2, there is another interchangeable term concerning the Spirit, *the law of the Spirit of life*. Actually, *the Spirit of life* is the major term used by this chapter concerning the Spirit of God. In verse 9 Paul goes back to the very beginning, even to Genesis 1, to pick up the Spirit of God in creation, the Spirit of God brooding upon the surface of the waters. The first time that *the Spirit of God* is used in the entire Bible, it refers to God's Spirit. In Romans 8 the Spirit of life is just the Spirit of God, but Paul does not stop here. He goes on from *the Spirit of God* to *the Spirit of Christ*. Just by itself, *the Spirit of God* does not imply redemption or incarnation or crucifixion or resurrection. Surely it does indicate the creation. In the creation the Spirit was the Spirit of God. But now in Romans 8 this Spirit of God is no more merely the Spirit of God, but He is also now the Spirit of Christ. And *Christ* here indicates incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and even ascension. The title *Christ* indicates, or implies, a lot. It implies all the processes that the Triune God has gone through. This is the Spirit of Christ in resurrection.

CHRIST IN YOU

Verse 10 says, "But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." According to my experience and knowledge, perhaps no other verse in the whole Bible is so profound and so deep as verse 10. In this verse the Spirit is not mentioned at all; only Christ is mentioned. We have to ask why. Verse 10 begins with the Greek word *de*, which can be translated as the conjunction "but" or "and." Actually, it could also be translated "and furthermore," which would indicate strongly that verse 10 is a further addition to verse 9. Verse 9 has two or three facts, and then verse 10 goes on to imply, "not only so but also furthermore." In

verse 9 you have the fact that the Spirit of God dwells in you and the fact that you are in the spirit. It also implies another fact: that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ.

Verse 10 goes on to say, "But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." Why does Paul not use the word *living* to offset the word *dead*? He uses a noun to offset an adjective. It seems it should read either that the body is death and the spirit is life or that the body is dead and the spirit is living. Instead, he uses a noun to offset an adjective. This is quite meaningful. Your body is not death; your body is dead. And your spirit, since Christ has come into it, is not only living but life itself. So in verse 10 are two more facts: the body is dead, and the spirit is life.

SIX QUESTIONS

In verse 10 there are six questions that you have to answer; otherwise, you could not understand this verse. The first question is, Why does Paul change from *the Spirit* to *Christ*? In verse 9 he speaks about the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ—one Spirit with two titles. But when he comes to verse 10, he drops the expression concerning the Spirit and only says, "If Christ is in you." The second question is, What does it mean to say that the body is dead? It does not say that the body was dead, in the past tense, nor does it say that the body will be dead, in the future tense. But it says that the body is dead, in the present tense. The third question is, What is meant by the phrase *because of sin*? The fourth question is, What does it mean to say that the spirit is life? No doubt, the spirit here should be our human spirit because it is in contrast with our body. It should not be the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. The fifth question is, Why does Paul say that the body is dead, yet he does not say that the spirit is living? In other words why does he change the offsetting word from *living* to *life*? The sixth question is, What is meant by the phrase *because of righteousness*? Unless you answer these six questions, you can never get into this verse adequately.

CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT

Let us come back to the first question: Why is the Spirit not mentioned, but Christ is mentioned? In this verse Paul is emphasizing that today Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ in you is exactly the same as Christ in you. In resurrection Christ is the Spirit. In the past we have given a number of

messages saying that these three titles—*the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ,* and *Christ*—are used interchangeably. Paul's writing in verses 9 and 10 is to show us that these are not three but one. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is just Christ Himself. We are not the only ones who have seen the light concerning this matter. In Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament,* he strongly stresses in his notes on 2 Corinthians 3:17 that Christ is the Spirit. Other writers, such as Henry Alford and Williston Walker, have pointed out that in our Christian experience Christ is identical to the Spirit.

Fact and Experience

Let me add another word according to our experience. Verse 9 refers to our experience, and verse 10 refers to the fact. The Spirit of God dwells in us. This is altogether a matter of experience. Then the Spirit of Christ is also a matter of experience. We do experience that the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. But verse 10 does not refer to experience that much; it refers to the fact. However, you have to realize that the experience and the fact are actually the same thing in two aspects. In verse 9 there is the aspect of experience, and in verse 10 there is the aspect of fact. On the one hand, for the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ to dwell in us is an experience, but on the other hand, it is a fact. Verse 9 talks about the experience, and verse 10 talks about the fact. According to experience, it is the Spirit who dwells in you, but according to fact, Christ dwells in you. How can you know this? You can know this kind of thing only by experience. Although it is the Spirit who dwells in you, when you come to worship or to pray, you would rarely say, "O Spirit." Spontaneously, you would say, "O Lord! O Lord!" When you pray, you pray based upon the experience, but you refer to the fact. You have to be careful to follow my word. To be based upon experience is one thing, but to refer to the fact is another thing. In experience He is the Spirit, but as a fact for us to refer to, He is Christ. Although it is not wrong to pray, "O Spirit, how I thank You," it is not fitting with the fact. So you pray, "O Lord. Thank You, Lord Jesus." This kind of praying does not refer to what you experience but to the fact that today the One who dwells in you is Christ as the Spirit.

It is altogether foolish to oppose the teaching that Christ is the Spirit. It indicates a lack of knowledge and a lack of experience. If we have adequate experience, we would fully realize that in our experience He is the Spirit, but when we refer to this as a fact, He is our Lord; He is Christ. And these are just

one. The Lord Jesus today is both the Spirit and Christ. For us to experience Him, He is the Spirit; for us to worship Him, to call on Him, to mention Him, His title is *Christ*. Do not consider that this is a thorough answer to the first question. Later on we have to see something further of the difference between these two titles: *the Spirit of Christ* and *Christ*.

THE BODY, WHICH IS DEAD

You have to realize that you are not a simple person. On the one hand, you are dead. At the same time, on the other hand, you are life. You have a body, and you have a spirit. And you yourself are a soul. The soul is understood here and implied in the plural pronouns. In the clause *if Christ is in you, you* implies the soul. You are a soul; outside you have a body; inside you have a spirit. Your body is dead, and your spirit is life. An unbeliever's situation is just the opposite: his spirit is dead, and his body is really alive. But for bona fide, typical, genuine believers in Christ, part of our being—our outward part—is dead. The other part—the inward part—is life. For an unbeliever, the inward part is dead, and the outward part is living. How can you know that as a believer your body is dead? By Christ being in you. Without Christ in you, you could not realize that your body is dead. Christ in you exposes the dead situation of your body. *Dead* really means disabled. Our body is not only disabled but even altogether stinking. The more I have Christ within me, the more I realize that my body is altogether disabled and stinking. The unbelievers do not realize that their body is disabled. Rather, they realize and experience that their body is able. It is able in doing many things—stealing, lying, killing. But with us believers, our experience is that our body is dead. Many times I pray that the Lord would strengthen all the dear saints into the inner man. Although your body is dead, your spirit is not only living; it is life.

The problem is this: To what part should we listen? Should we listen to the outward part, which is dead, or to the inward part, which is life? When, according to our dead body, we would sometimes forget about the meeting, something rises up within us to go to the meeting. That is our spirit, which is life.

SIN IN OUR MEMBERS

According to Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8, sin is nothing less than God's enemy, Satan. If Satan were outside of us, he would have little to do with us, but we all know that since man's fall Satan entered into man. When Satan entered

into man, right away Satan became sin, or the law of sin. Romans 7:23 says clearly that sin is in our members. This means that sin is in our body. We become tired because sin is within us. Our body is disabled because sin is in our body. We are dying because sin is in our body. Do you realize that all the human beings are dying persons? Apparently everyone is living; actually everyone is dying because sin is in their body. Even to say that we are dying is not so accurate, because it is our body that is dying. Our soul is not dying, nor is our spirit. Our body is dying because sin is in the body. Romans 7:18 and 23 make it very clear that this sin, which is God's enemy, is in our body. Because of this sin, your body is dead. Your body is dead because Satan is in your body.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

What then is the righteousness spoken of in 8:10? Righteousness is just God Himself getting into our being. When Satan gets into man's being, sin is within man. When God gets into our being, we have righteousness in us. In John 16:8-11 the Lord said that when the Spirit comes, He would convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment. He would convict concerning sin because they would not believe in the Lord Jesus; He would convict concerning righteousness because the Lord Jesus was going to the Father; He would convict concerning judgment because the ruler of this world would be judged. From these verses we can see that the very righteousness that counts in God's eyes is just God Himself. When God Himself in His Son as the Spirit gets into our being, that is righteousness. Romans 5:18 and 21 say that through one righteous act there is justification of life and that we may reign through righteousness unto eternal life. This means that righteousness results in life. Why is our spirit life? It is because the Triune God as righteousness is right within our spirit. So the Triune God is righteousness in our spirit, and the enemy of God, Satan, is in our body, making our body dead. We have God in us, in our spirit, as our righteousness, making us life. And we have Satan, God's enemy, as sin in our flesh, making our body dead, disabled, and stinking. It is not a small thing to see that in this universe the two persons in the spiritual world are both within us; one is evil, and the other is good. The evil person in our body becomes sin, and the good person in our spirit becomes righteousness. The sin in our body makes our body dead, and the righteousness in our spirit makes our spirit life. Here we enjoy the Triune God. We enjoy God, we enjoy Christ, and we enjoy the Spirit. We enjoy the Triune God as our righteousness resulting in life.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

THE DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF OUR BODY BEING DEAD AND OUR SPIRIT BEING LIFE

Prayer: Lord, we thank You again for this gathering. How we worship You for Your speaking! Lord, we thank You that You are the speaking God. And even, Lord, we thank You that You are the very Word, the Word You have given to us. Now we do have Your Word within us, and we thank You for Your present-day speaking. How we thank You for all the churches with so many seeking saints coming together often to be Your oracle for Your speaking. Lord, we do worship You for this speaking. Lord, do speak to us tonight. Lord, we believe that we are one spirit with You. Lord, in our speaking, just be one spirit with us. We have no trust in our understanding, in our utterance. Lord, we like to have You to be our understanding and to be our utterance. Lord, we need You. We need You in Your Word. We need Yourself, Lord, to fill up the definition of Your Word. Lord, thank You, even though the age is dark, yet Your Word is shining among us. What a miracle! What a mercy! Lord, week after week we can come here to be Your oracle. Thank You, Lord, that today on this earth You have such an oracle for Your speaking. Lord, what a privilege that we can listen to Your speaking! Thank You, Lord; Your speaking is Your real, gracious visitation. And Lord, our listening is a real mercy and a grace. We trust in You in this verse, Romans 8:10. Lord, You know that this is deep, and this is profound; this is mysterious, and this is rich. Lord, we need Your vision; we need Your enlightenment. Lord, do utter Yourself out of this verse and into every one of us. Lord, thank You that we all are trainees. Lord, we believe that You will touch everyone. You will speak a special word to everyone. We bring all the dear seekers to You. Do meet every need tonight. Lord, we thank You that You have accomplished everything, and now You are in us. You are in us! We thank You, Lord, that You are the indwelling Christ, so subjective to us. Lord, do sustain us; be our speaking, and cover everyone and anoint everyone. Anoint every understanding and even every corner of this meeting. Bind Your enemy, Lord! Even we bind him. We bind the strong man in Your mighty name, under Your precious blood! So prevailing! We praise You, and we thank You!

In this chapter we will spend our entire time on one verse, Romans 8:10. It says, “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.” I believe we all can see that in this verse three facts are covered: number one, Christ is in us; number two, the body is dead because of sin; number three, the spirit is life because of righteousness. These are the three facts, and this verse shows that these three facts transpire within us at the same time. The word *if* also means “since” or “when.” So the verse could read, “Since Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness,” or “When Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.” These three facts transpire in us at the same time. But the problem is that among so many Christians, their experiences have not been like this.

TWO LAYERS OF EXPERIENCE

Later on, we will see that the Christian experiences are many times of two layers. Of course, we know that nearly everything is of two layers. It seems that nothing can exist by one layer. This is why we often speak of something being on the surface and something else being on the bottom. Or we may say that the surface looks a certain way, but the bottom is not like that. We may consider the surface as the first layer and the bottom as the layer that is beneath the surface. Even with your skin there is the outside layer, and there is the inside layer. In the same principle, the Christian experience has two layers. One layer is more superficial, and the other layer is deeper and more genuine. According to the superficial experience of Christians, Romans 8:10 has not yet been fulfilled. But actually, this verse has been fulfilled with every genuine Christian. On the surface this verse seems not to have been fulfilled in nearly all the Christians. But according to the genuine experience, the experience at the bottom of your Christian experience, this verse actually has been fulfilled quite often. It is not a matter of fulfillment once for all; it is a continual daily fulfillment.

Let me explain. When we were saved, we probably at that time had no knowledge that Christ came into us. I must declare that my conversion was very thorough. I was converted and began and even continued to seek after the Lord and to love the study of His Word. But for some time I did not have the knowledge that Christ was in me. I read the Bible, but the impression that Christ was in me did not enter into me because this kind of understanding is altogether absent from our natural understanding. In our natural

understanding, we pick up the thought that we need to honor our parents and love our neighbors. We all have this kind of understanding. So when we come to the Bible, these are the things that we pick up. We see the word that says we should honor the parents and love the neighbors and submit to the husbands and so forth. It is easy for these things to get into our understanding. But the matter of Christ being in us is altogether foreign to our natural understanding. As a young Christian, I was taught many things from the Bible, but I was not taught concerning Christ being in me. So I did not have the knowledge of this matter.

But even though we did not have such a knowledge, right after we were saved, we began to discover that within us there was a conflict. As a young Christian, I was taught that this conflict is a war between our two natures. I was taught that after we are saved, we have a new nature, and this new nature is altogether different from the old nature. The old nature is altogether against the new nature. So there is a war, a conflict, within us. Although this is right, to say this is somewhat superficial. You have to realize that this conflict is not only a war. Right after you got saved, you began to discover that in your being there is a part that is not so good. You began to discover that something within you was all the time against your desire. You desired to do this and to do that for the glory of God, but something within you would not allow you to do it. You did not know what that was. You have to remember that before you were saved, your sensation was at least somewhat different. Before you were saved, your sensation probably was that you were good and that you could do whatever you wanted to do. You might even have boasted in what you could do. But after you were saved, that boasting began to shake or to be weak. Although sometimes you might still boast outwardly, yet within, you felt that you did not have the assurance concerning your boasting. I believe that we all have had this kind of discovery. Even after we were saved, we discovered that it was easy to fall back into our old condition. After you were saved, you probably made up your mind not to do certain sinful things. But we know that that kind of making up of the mind cannot last very long. Then you found yourself going back to those sinful things. But while you were falling back to your old condition again, you made another discovery: something within that was so vigorous, so strong, and so protesting was standing against you. Did you not have this kind of discovery? After you were saved, did you not discover that in your being some part was not so good and at the same time

also that something within you was vigorous, something was unquenchable, something was so strong, standing unshakable?

The tragedy is that we were born spiritually of some who never educated us concerning these things, so we did not know what was happening. I do know a number of saved saints who went back to gambling or to some other sin. They all testified that while they were there sinning, something within them was still loving the Lord Jesus. They felt that they had no peace; they felt that they had no standing to talk about the Lord, yet deep within them they still had the sensation that they loved the Lord Jesus. Even while they were involved in something sinful, they would testify that deep within them they still loved the Lord Jesus. Because of this kind of experience, some of them would begin to doubt whether or not they were really saved. A number of times I strengthened them by telling them that even though they were fallen, the fact that they still loved the Lord Jesus and even had doubts of whether or not they had been saved was strong proof that they had been saved.

Such a situation would cause you to discover two aspects. One is negative, and the other is positive. What is the negative side? That the body is dead. What is the positive side? That the spirit is life. After you were saved and when you slid back into your sin, you experienced two things: your body is dead, and your spirit is life.

We may use the example of a husband and wife. Sooner or later, every married couple would argue. Have you not argued? And while you are arguing and doing these kinds of defeated things, do you not have a kind of sensation within you that it is a shame for you to say that you love the Lord? It seems that you do not love the Lord, but if this were really the fact, why do you have the feeling that it is a shame for you to say that you love the Lord? This means that you have a desire, an aspiration, within you to love the Lord. But you feel that you are not qualified to love the Lord. While you were fighting with your wife or your husband, you were still aspiring to love the Lord. While you were being so bad, you were still aspiring to love the Lord. But at the same time you discovered that you were unable to do so. Dear saints, this is a real fulfillment of Romans 8:10. When Christ is in you, your body is dead. Probably you have never realized that your body is a corpse. Before you were saved, you probably considered that your body was wonderful, not a corpse. You may even have admired yourself in the mirror. But then you got saved. In a sense to get saved means to get into trouble. You began to realize that something in some part of

your being was not that good. In the beginning you could not designate it, but later on you realized that it was your body. Eventually, you would begin to hate your body. Nearly all the Christian troubles come from our dead body. Soon after you were saved, you discovered two things: your body is dead, and your spirit is life. The longer you are a Christian, the more you will discover that your body is a corpse, a dead thing. Death is the topmost weakness. When you become weak to the uttermost, you die. The longer you are a Christian, the more you find out that you are weak and ugly and even stinking. And the more you discover that you are such a carcass, the more you want to love the Lord. And the more you want to love the Lord, the more you cannot make it. In other words the more you like to love the Lord, the more you become a carcass.

Then you would become disappointed and say that you cannot make it. I must tell you the truth that I cannot make it either. Recently, I had a talk with a dear saint who said he was discouraged and disappointed. I told him that he needed the discouragement and disappointment. Actually, on the negative side the Christian life is always a discouraging life. Before you were saved, you may not have been in so much discouragement. But eventually you were saved, and you came into the church life. Let me tell you that the church life is just a discouraging life. Yet the more you become discouraged, the more you want the church life. But the more you have the church life, the more you get discouraged. The church-life honeymoon could never last very long. But the strange thing is that the more the church-life honeymoon tries to stop, the more you endeavor to keep it. You want to keep your church-life honeymoon for eternity. All these experiences are related to the one discovery that when Christ is in you, your body is dead, and your spirit is life. Underneath the surface, in the depth of our Christian experience, our Christian life and our church life are really according to what is described in Romans 8:10.

When Christ is in you, your body is dead, and your spirit is life. I use *and* instead of *yet* because these three facts are transpiring at the same time. Whenever we love the Lord, we discover that our body is dead and that our spirit is life. We Christians all have Christ in us, but sometimes according to our feeling and according to our defeated experience, Christ is not in us. When, experientially speaking, Christ is not in you, you do not feel that your body is dead. You feel that your body is very smart and very strong. And you do not feel that you have a spirit that is life within you. These also are three facts: Christ not being in you, your body not being dead, and your spirit not

being life. Perhaps this was your experience yesterday. But today in your experience Christ comes back. When Christ comes back, the other two things also come back. When Christ comes back, the fact that the body is dead and the fact that the spirit is life also come back. These three always go together as companions. Now I believe that you can see that Romans 8:10 has been fulfilled in you.

SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Let us study something further. Two of these three facts have factors. The body being dead has a factor, and the spirit being life also has a factor. There is a reason that the body is dead, and there is a reason that the spirit is life. The body is dead because of sin, and the spirit is life because of righteousness. There are two things here: sin and righteousness. Sin is the factor of our body being dead, and righteousness is the factor of our spirit being life. One verse in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 5:21, covers sin and righteousness clearly, definitely, correctly, and accurately. It says, "Him who did not know sin He made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Christ was made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness. This means that God made Christ sin on our behalf, that we might become God's righteousness in Him, that is, in Christ. This verse covers two crucial things—sin and righteousness—and if we would experience Romans 8:10, we must get into this verse. Our body is dead because of sin, and our spirit is life because of righteousness. And Christ was made by God to be the sin which is the factor of our body being dead. And we become the righteousness which is the factor of our spirit being life. This is not easy to apprehend.

What is sin? And what is righteousness? Although we cannot cover these two matters thoroughly at this time, still I would tell you that sin is Satan, and righteousness is God. We have to realize that sin is the embodiment of Satan. When sin is personified, it is Satan, because sin is the very embodiment of Satan, the totality of Satan. In the same principle, righteousness is just the totality of God. When righteousness is personified, it is God. Jeremiah 23:6 speaks of "Jehovah our righteousness." This means that Jehovah Himself, not just some kind of virtue in His divine nature, is our righteousness. In the New Testament, especially in 1 Corinthians 1:30, we are told that Christ today is our righteousness. Righteousness is a person, a unique person—God Himself.

It is not an angel that is righteousness, and it is not a man who is righteousness. Righteousness is a person; so sin must also be a person.

We are captives either of God or of Satan. You have to realize that when Satan seduced man and entered into man, he became sin. What is sin? Sin is the very rebel of God who seduced man and entered into man. This is sin. Now we need to read Romans 7:17 and 18: "Now then it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not." By reading these two verses in Romans 7, we can see that sin must be a person because it can deceive me, it can kill me, and it dwells in me. No doubt, this sin, this person, is Satan. Of course, we have already pointed out that righteousness is the very divine person of God. God Himself is our righteousness. When man got fallen, sin, or Satan, entered into him, into his body. This is why Romans 7:23 speaks of the sin in the members of our body. Because sin is in our body, sin corrupts our body, making our body no more a pure body but flesh. God never created a flesh. God created a body. But sin has made our God-created body a fallen flesh.

But now we have gotten saved, and God has entered into us. When God entered into us, God became our righteousness. Into what part did God enter? Into our spirit. Sin entered into our body, and sin brought in death, or issued in death. According to Romans 5:12, sin entered into the world, and death followed. Sin brought in death. In the same principle, when righteousness entered into our spirit, righteousness brought in life. So both Romans 5:17 and 21 speak of righteousness issuing in life. This righteousness is just God Himself. We all have to realize that we have one person in our body, who is termed sin, and we have another person in our spirit, who is called righteousness. Sin in our body makes our body dead. Righteousness in our spirit makes our spirit life. It is not only living but even the source of being living, that is, life.

According to your Christian discovery, have you not realized that in your body there is nothing good, that in your flesh there is nothing good? All the things there are bad. Also in your Christian discovery, have you not seen that in your spirit there is life? Not only are many good things there, but life is there. Even while you were doing something sinful, within there was a part that was vigorous. Nothing can quench it, and nothing can put it down. Even if you try to put it down, it still jumps up. Something vital and something

vigorous is in your being, and that is your spirit being life through righteousness. And this righteousness is just God.

RIGHT WITH GOD

Still you may ask concerning the definition of sin and concerning the definition of righteousness. It is not so easy to give a satisfactory definition of these two things. According to my experience, righteousness means to be right with God. Why is telling a lie sin? And why is telling the truth righteousness? It is because telling the truth is right with God, and telling a lie is rebellion against God. What is righteousness? It is to be right with God. What is sin? It is to rebel against God. Even if you give a gift to a person, if that is against God, it is sin. You may tell the truth to someone, yet if that telling of the truth is against God, it is sin. Sin is rebellion against God. Righteousness is to be right with God. In the whole universe the standard is not any kind of regulation or law; the standard is God Himself. When you are right with Him, that is righteousness. When you are against Him, that is sin. Do you realize that even a good thing such as the preaching of the gospel could be sin? Your preaching of the gospel might be something not according to God's will. It might be according to your preference and your choice. This would mean that it is not right with God. Instead of being righteousness, it would be rebellion against God.

We have to realize that in our flesh, in our body, there is nothing but just the totality of rebellion against God. Not only when your body does bad things, but even when your body does good things, it is still in rebellion against God. It is not right with God. What is right with God is in your spirit. What is in your spirit is always right with God; even that is God Himself, because God Himself is in your spirit. As long as you have God, as long as you live God, and as long as you go along with God, you are right with God. So you have the righteousness of God, and this righteousness is the factor causing your spirit to be life.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

THE HISTORY OF THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8:10

In this chapter we come to Romans 8:10 once again: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." According to what we covered in the last chapter, this verse has three facts: Christ is in us, our body is dead, and our spirit is life. You have to realize that these three facts are too great, too profound, too all-inclusive. Regardless of what the scientists and scholars have found out scientifically concerning man, they are much inferior to Paul because they do not know the things of man as Paul did. This phrase *the things of man* comes from 1 Corinthians 2:11, where Paul points out that no one among men can know the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him. Paul knew the things of man because he exercised his spirit.

Recently, I pointed out to some that in the Far East Confucius was and still is considered a very wise man. His writings became a kind of controlling factor or influence over all the Far East people. His writings in the Far East are like the Bible in the Western world. The Western world has been kept ethically and morally mainly because of the influence of the Bible. Although he was wise humanly speaking, according to Paul's words, Confucius did not know the things of man. For example, in his writings Confucius indicates that if you offend God, you have no way to be forgiven. But Paul not only tells you how you can be forgiven but how you can be justified and sanctified and even how your body can be redeemed in the future. Paul points out so many of the things of man in the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians, and then he says that you have to exercise your spirit to know these things (2:11). Confucius says that if you offend the heavens, you have no way to be forgiven; this indicates that he did not really know the real things of man. He did not know man's position, man's source, and man's destiny. The real things of man are not the daily necessities, such as a wife or a husband or children or parents or a house or a car. The real things of man are your source, where you came from, and your position, your standing before God. Furthermore, the real things of man are your destiny and your destination, the meaning of your life.

THE EXERCISE OF THE SPIRIT

If you are going to know the things of man, you have to come to the Bible. But although many Christians do have the Bible, many of them do not know the things of man because they do not exercise their spirit. They only exercise their mentality. After they were born, they were taught by their parents and by their teachers to exercise their mentality. Actually, they were not taught the things of man. Only the Bible teaches the real things of man, telling your source, your condition, your position, your standing, your future, your destiny, your destination, and the meaning of your life. The Bible tells us these things, but when many Christians come to the Bible, they do not pick up these things. Rather, they bring a lot of things into the Bible. They rewrite the Bible according to their concept. What is really in the Bible, they do not have the eyes to see because they do not use their spirit.

The Corinthians were too philosophical. They knew many things, but Paul says that they did not know the things of man. Paul indicates that only by the spirit of man can we know the things of man. What Paul wrote to them did not need their Greek mentality and their philosophical mind with their philosophizing wisdom; it needed their spirit. They needed to exercise their spirit. Only the spirit of man knows the things of man. What a pity that today even among some Christian teachers there is a kind of school called the school of dichotomy, which says that man is of two parts. They say that the human spirit is just the human soul. So they simply exercise their mind, neglecting their spirit. This is a big mistake made by many Christians today. They consider that the human spirit is the human soul, that the human soul is the human heart, that the human heart is the human mind. So as long as they exercise their mind, they feel that they are right. That was exactly what the Corinthians practiced. They exercised their mind. This is why in 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul was trying to attune them to the same opinion, to the same mind. Then in chapter 2 he encourages them to take care of their spirit by asking them, “Who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?” In 4:21 Paul asks whether they wanted him to come to them with a rod or in love and a spirit of meekness. Paul was one really living in the human spirit.

Furthermore, in chapter 5 Paul even attended their meeting by his spirit. Verse 3 says, “I, on my part, though being absent in the body but present in the spirit, have already judged, as if being present, him who has thus done

this." In chapter 6 Paul points out that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. He does not say "one mind" but "one spirit." Finally, in 16:18 Paul says that some brothers refreshed his spirit and others'. He says that you have to acknowledge, that is, to regard and respect, such a one. From these verses you can see that the wonderful book of 1 Corinthians is a book very much on the spirit of man.

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

In order for you to know the things of man mentioned in Romans 8:10, I would encourage you to exercise your spirit and even to trust in the Spirit of God. This one verse nearly covers all the things of man and all the things of God. I would not say that it covers entirely the things of man and the things of God, but I would say that it nearly covers all the things of man and all the things of God. Two things are here: flesh and spirit. The flesh is death, and the spirit is life. Of course, these two matters are the things of man. Few people today really know what is the flesh and what is the spirit. They do not know because they do not use their spirit. Quite often in the past we have pointed out that to know certain things you have to use certain organs. It does not work to exercise your nose to hear a voice. Nor does it work to exercise your ears to smell garlic. In like manner to know the real things of man, the organ we must exercise is our spirit. Even the fact that man was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God is a thing of man. Based upon the real knowledge, man is according to God's kind. Genesis 1 speaks of every creature being according to its kind. The donkeys and horses are according to their kind; an apple is according to its kind. But man is not according to his kind but according to God's kind. Man was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God. You need to learn to know these things concerning man by exercising your spirit.

TWO HISTORIES

In Romans 8:10 there are two things: man's flesh and man's spirit. Do you realize that there is a big history related to the human flesh and a big history related to the human spirit? You have two histories: the history of your flesh and the history of your spirit. The first historical fact related to our flesh is that of creation. Your personal history begins with Genesis 1:26, where you were created by God. But you have to realize that God at that time did not create a flesh but a body. It was only in Genesis 3 after the fall that man's body became a flesh. So the first historical fact of our flesh's history is the fall.

The fall means that Satan came into man's body. When man ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that fruit did not enter into man's mind or soul or into man's spirit but into his body. And you have to realize that that tree denotes Satan because God warned Adam that if he ate of that tree, he would die. Death is the issue of touching that tree. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that Satan is the one who has the might of death. So that tree must denote Satan, just as the tree of life signifies God Himself.

Man's Body Corrupted by Satan

Satan, at the fall of man, got into man's body. Romans 7 proves this. Romans 7:23 says that in man's members, that is, in the parts of man's body, is the law of sin. The first historical fact of your flesh is man's fall. Through man's fall, Satan got into man's body, causing man's body to become an evil thing. The body was corrupted and ruined, becoming the flesh. So the God-created body, after being ruined and corrupted, became a Satan-occupied flesh. Thus, the story of the flesh here in Romans 8:10 is not that simple. In man's flesh there is God's adversary whose name is Satan. His name also is sin. *Satan,* of course, means a kind of enemy and adversary. But it is difficult to give a definition of sin. According to the Hebrew language, *Satan* means an enemy who is not an outside opponent but an inside one. But what is sin? Although you may read many definitions, most of these have never touched the real meaning of sin. You have to realize that sin is just Satan. As God's adversary, the devil is Satan, but as the one ruining and corrupting man, Satan is sin. On the one hand, Satan is opposing and attacking God, and on the other hand, sin is ruining and corrupting man. This sin is Satan himself. The first historical fact of our flesh is that Satan entered into our flesh, and the second main point of the history of our flesh is that sin is in our flesh. The sin that opposes God and attacks God and that ruins and corrupts man is in the flesh. This is why Paul, in Romans 7:18, says he knew that in him, that is, in his flesh, nothing good was dwelling. In his flesh was just something attacking God and ruining man. And the issue is death. This is the third main point of the history of our flesh. Satan entered into the flesh, sin is in the flesh, and death is the issue of sin in the flesh. So there is Satan and sin and death.

Man's Spirit Preserved by God

Now we come to the history of our spirit. Of course, man's spirit was also first created by God, yet after man's fall, his spirit became deadened and lost

its spiritual function toward God. One crucial hint in the Bible concerning the human spirit has been missed by nearly all the Christians. If you read the Bible carefully with your experience of the spiritual life, you could realize that even after the fall of man, God preserved man's spirit. Man's spirit was not only created by God, but also it has been preserved by God. It was influenced by man's fall so that it became deadened and lost its function, but it was not invaded by God's enemy. It seems that God drew a line of separation around man's spirit. This is based upon the teaching of Job. Job was attacked by Satan, but his life was preserved by God. Job speaks about the human spirit in a strong way. Job 32:8 says, "There is a spirit in man, / And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding."

You have to realize that human life actually is the human spirit. We may say that human life is in the human body because there we have a kind of physical life. Temporarily you can say that. The Greek word *bios* is the root for what medical doctors refer to as biological life. But it is difficult even for the medical doctors to tell you what is life in the human body. Actually, when man's spirit goes away from his body, the life is gone. And that life is not the physical bios. That is the real life of man, and according to God's creation in Genesis 2:7, man's spirit came from the breath of God. That breath is man's spirit. We know this from Proverbs 20:27, which says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, / Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being."

That breath is also man's life, because Genesis 2:7 indicates that when the breath of God came into the nostrils of man, man became a living soul. You cannot divide or separate the human life from the human spirit. Actually, the human spirit is the life of man. This is hard to understand because life is altogether a mystery. But anyhow you do have this hint in the Bible that the human spirit is the human life. When God preserved Job's life, it means that God preserved Job's spirit. Satan touched Job's body, and he touched Job's mind, but he never touched Job's life, his spirit. His spirit was preserved by God.

Even a fallen sinner, an unbeliever, has a spirit that has been preserved by God. When you were doing sinful things before you got saved, deep within you, a part was different. You would say that that was your conscience. This is right. The conscience is the leading part of your spirit. With even the most fallen person, the spirit is preserved. If a fallen person would take care of his conscience, he would never rob a bank; he would not steal; he would not go to

sinful places. All the sinful things are against the conscience, and the conscience is the leading part of the spirit. You have to realize that your conscience has never sinned, even before you were saved. This means that even before you were saved, your spirit was preserved. Do you know what the genuine and real gospel preaching is? It is to touch the human conscience. This is because the human spirit is preserved by God.

Our Spirit Regenerated by God

The history of our spirit is that it was first created by God and then preserved by God. Third, our spirit was regenerated by God. Satan never came into our spirit, and sin has never been in our spirit. Only vacancy was in our spirit. Before we were regenerated, our spirit was vacant. One day the very Creator, the source of life who is even life, came into our spirit. Right away we were regenerated. The Redeemer, the Savior, came into our spirit. When we believed on Him and called on His name, receiving Him as our Savior, He came into our spirit.

Our Redeemer and Indweller

The strange thing is this: we receive Him as our Savior, but He comes in as the Spirit. We can see this from Romans 8:10-11: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." Verse 10 says that Christ is in you, and verse 11 says that the Spirit dwells in you. *Christ*, of course, refers to the Savior, the Redeemer. *The Spirit* refers to the Indweller. When the Indweller was there redeeming you, His title was *Christ*. When the Redeemer entered into you, His title was *the Spirit*. How foolish to oppose the matter of Christ being the Spirit! If Christ is not the Spirit, how can these two verses be reconciled? Christ is in you, and the Spirit dwells in you. These are not two Dwellers but one Dweller in two senses. In the sense of redemption, our Dweller is Christ, and in the sense of indwelling, our Dweller is the Spirit. Christ is the Spirit.

The Restituting Work of Righteousness

Now we come to another point of the history of the spirit. When Christ as the Spirit enters into your spirit, He comes in as righteousness. When He comes in, righteousness comes in. Righteousness means to be right with God. It is just the opposite of sin. Sin is opposing God, and righteousness is to be

right with God. Sin ruins man, and righteousness reconstitutes man. There is a restitution. When Satan entered your flesh, he became sin, and the sin in your flesh day after day just corrupts you. But when Christ as the Spirit enters into your spirit, righteousness is within you all the time making you so right with God and all the time restituting you. This righteousness is not ruining you; it is remodeling and rearranging you. He is reconstituting you. This is a real restitution. I believe you all can testify that since you received the Lord Jesus, you have experienced a lot of restitution. Before I got saved, as a young man I was under the worsening of Satan. The sin that was dwelling in me was causing me to be worse and ruining me all the day. But one day I received Christ in a kind of gospel-preaching meeting, and afterward, while I was walking on the street, I gave myself to God. From that moment restitution began, and even today this restitution work is still going on. This is righteousness, making you right with God. When you are right with God, you will be right with everyone. You will have no problem with anyone. This is righteousness.

The Issue of Righteousness

What then is the issue of righteousness? The issue of sin is death, and the issue of righteousness is life. So in our spirit we have three things: Christ the Spirit, righteousness, and life. In our flesh are also three things: Satan, sin, and death. You have to realize that this is your history. These are the real things of man. This is your genealogy, but since you became a Christian, you probably have never paid attention to these matters. Rather, you considered other matters, such as knowing the Bible, improving yourself, or going to the mission field. You have to pay attention to your genealogy and your history. Chapter 1 of your history shows that Satan entered your flesh, and sin followed it and is still here. And death is still here. But the second chapter is that Christ came into your spirit, righteousness followed, and life was the result.

You need to forget about everything else and just take care of this kind of spiritual history. You have to know yourself. You have to know your flesh, and you have to know your spirit. Paul says that if Christ is in you, your flesh, or your body, is dead, and your spirit is life. If we would get into this verse, we must know our history. We must know the history of our flesh and the history of our spirit; then we would know ourselves. If you know these matters in an adequate way, not only are they a kind of revelation, but they are also a kind

of salvation. The knowing is the salvation. You would jump and dance and praise and shout and even mock Satan: “Satan, now I know where you are. You are in my flesh. Do you know that in my spirit is the One you hate? The One you hate so much is right next door to you. You are in my flesh, but He is deeper, in my spirit. Satan, let me tell you, this is bad news to you. I will never remain with you in the flesh. I will always stay with the One you hate, who is in my spirit.”

Believe me, if you would shout in such a way and tell Satan these things, it would be much better than your prayer to overcome your temper and your weakness. We all can testify that those kinds of prayers were rarely answered. But when we shout and praise and sing, we would enjoy our spiritual history and genealogy. Satan would be under our feet.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

LIVING CHRIST BY REMAINING IN THE SPIRIT

Prayer: Lord, You know how much we need You. We need You so that we can live You. Even tonight we need You so that we can understand You. We need You so that we can see You. Thank You, Lord, You are not only our life but also our person. Lord, we do have You as our person living in us and with us as one. Now we trust in You for the utterance, for the seeing, while we will be speaking. Lord, do show us Your vision through Your speaking, and cover each one of us. We thank You for Your precious blood, and we thank You for Your anointing. Your anointing is our trust. Lord, do anoint every one of us. Amen.

THE MORTAL BODY AND THE FLESH

In this chapter we will still be on Romans 8:10: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." In the last chapter we pointed out that in Romans 8:10 you could see two histories: the history of the flesh and the history of our spirit. Of course, the word *flesh* is not used in Romans 8:10; rather, it speaks of the body being dead because of sin. But every verse from verse 3 through verse 9 speaks of the flesh.

Two other verses, 2 Corinthians 4:10-11, also speak of the body and the flesh: "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." These two verses refer to the same thing: that the life of Jesus might be manifested. Verse 10 says that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our body, and verse 11 says that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh. Here you have to admit that *body* and *flesh* are synonyms referring to the same thing. But whenever you would consider these two as synonyms referring to the same thing, you must add a word: *death* or *dead* or *mortal*. For example, Romans 8:10 says that the body is dead. Second Corinthians 4:11 speaks of the mortal flesh. *Mortal* means "dying" or "death."

Then Romans 8:11 speaks of "mortal bodies." This means that without the designation of death, *the body* is not a synonym of *the flesh*. The body is the body created by God; flesh is something corrupted. God did not create a flesh; He only created a body. But Satan came into the members of this body. Romans 7:23 tells us clearly that the law of sin is in the members of our body. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that fruit entered into the members of his body. Whatever we eat enters into the members of our body. When it enters into the members of our body, it enters into our body, because our body is composed with the members. So the body is created by God, but sin as a personified matter, Satan himself, entered into man, into his body. Since then man's body created by God became corrupted and ruined. That corrupted and ruined body is the flesh. The body originally created by God is not dead, but the corrupted body is dead. The dead body, which is corrupted, is flesh.

Romans 8:3-9 is a full description of the flesh. If you would know what the flesh is, you have to know these seven verses. Many Christians who read these seven verses, however, have not seen the description of the flesh. They read the verses, but they do not see the real central figure. They do not see the personified person. In those seven verses the writer speaks of the flesh again and again, but when he comes to verse 10, he suddenly interchangeably uses another phrase for *flesh—the dead body* or *the mortal body*. It is not the created body. The created body is not dead; the created body is very good. But the mortal body is the corrupted one. This mortal and corrupted body has another term, which is its proper term. That is *the flesh*. *Flesh* is the proper term for the dead body, because the dead body is flesh. The mortal body is flesh. You have to realize that if our body had never been ruined and corrupted, our body would not be mortal, and our body could never be dead. It is not the good body created by God that is synonymous with the flesh, but it is the mortal body, the dead body, that is a synonym to the flesh.

THE HISTORY OF THE BODY

Why then in Romans 8:3-9 does Paul use the word *flesh*, but when he comes to verse 10, change the expression from *flesh* to *the body*? It is because in verse 10 Paul intends to imply the history of the body. Just to say that the flesh is dead does not imply a history, but to say that the body is dead implies a kind of history. In like manner, you would not say that the flesh is fallen, but you have to say that the body is fallen. To say that the body is fallen implies a

history of the fall of man. There was a story of the fall of man, and this fall of man mainly happened to his body. This is the body's history. So when Paul says that the body is dead, he implies a history. The fall of man is a history of a corrupted body.

THE HISTORY OF THE SPIRIT

Now we come to the matter of the spirit. The first thing that we have seen concerning the spirit is that it is our human spirit, not the Spirit of God. Some would say that our spirit and our soul are the same thing, that they are synonymous terms. Even some versions of the Bible, including the King James Version, capitalize the *S* in *spirit* in verse 10, indicating that it refers to the Holy Spirit. But we have to see that this is altogether not logical. How could the Holy Spirit be contrasted with our body? We have to be very careful in this matter. The Bible was not so easily written; neither would it be so easy for us to understand. If you were to change the word *body* to *flesh* and read the verse in this way: "If Christ is in you, though the flesh is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness," it might be okay. To have a contrast between the Holy Spirit and our flesh is okay. Such a contrast can be seen in Galatians 5. In that chapter there is a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, meaning the Holy Spirit. But in Romans 8:10, it is not a contrast between God the Spirit and our body.

Number two, you cannot say, "If Christ is in you, the Spirit of God is life." The Spirit of God is life under any kind of situation. Whether Christ is here or Christ is not here, the Spirit of God is life. But here "Christ in you" is a condition of whether or not the spirit is life. This must refer to your spirit.

Number three, how could righteousness be applied to the Holy Spirit? To say that the body is dead because of sin is okay. But you should not say that the Holy Spirit is life because of righteousness. It must be that our spirit is life because of righteousness. According to these points, you can see that the King James Version of the Bible is wrong in its translation of Romans 8:10. Of course, according to the letters, it is hard to decide whether the *Spirit* should be our spirit or the Spirit of God. The same Greek word, *pneuma*, may refer either to our spirit or to the Spirit of God. It all depends upon the context.

Even as the phrase *the body is dead* implies a history, so the phrase *the spirit is life* implies a history. You have to realize that before you got saved, your spirit was not life. Your spirit was dead or dormant or at least sleeping.

For sure your spirit by that time was not life. But then when you got saved, not only did it become living, but it also became life. It became life itself. When Christ comes in, our spirit becomes life. The coming in of Christ is a condition to our spirit being life. Without Christ in our spirit, our spirit is not life. But with Christ in our spirit, our spirit is life. It is conditional. Hallelujah! This condition has been fulfilled. Christ is here. Do you not have the assurance to say that Christ is in you? I cannot deny that Christ is in me. Many times I tested and examined and searched this matter out, but the more I researched, the more Christ was in me. Christ being in us is not just an emotional matter but a factual and scientific matter.

THREE FIGURES WITH THREE ROLES

What a history we have! We were created by God, we got fallen, we have been saved, and now we have Christ living in us. Christ is in us! And we also have an ugly, negative part, our corrupted body, which is called the flesh. Then we have another part, which is called the spirit. We can see clearly that in Romans 8:10 there is a kind of scene with three roles, or three figures. Christ is there playing a big role. The dead body is also playing a role. Our spirit is playing the third role. The matter of Christ being in you is somewhat simple, but your dead body is not that simple. This word implies a lot. And even the more that your spirit is life implies a lot. Do you realize how many stories are implied in this clause, *the spirit is life*? Of course, all three of these clauses include a lot of stories. Christ being in you is a story, your body being dead is a story, and your spirit being life is a story.

TWO PERSONS IN US

We do have these two parts of our being—our body and our spirit—and each part has a history. This is because in each part there is a person. In our fallen, corrupted, and dead body there is a person, Satan. Satan is in our corrupted body, and Satan is one with our flesh. This one who is one with our flesh has another name, sin. Romans 8:3 says that the flesh is the flesh of sin. In the Greek language such an expression as *the flesh of sin* is in apposition, just like *the light of God. Light* is in apposition with *God,* meaning that the light is God, and God is the light. *The life of Christ* is also a phrase in apposition because life is Christ, and Christ is life. In the same principle, *the flesh of sin* is in apposition. This is because flesh is sin, and sin is flesh. When Christ became flesh, He became sin. John 1:14 says that He became flesh, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that He was made sin. Then Romans 8:3 says that He

became the likeness of the flesh of sin. He became the flesh of sin. Here the flesh and sin are just one thing. Who is this one thing? It is Satan, the very person whose name is sin in our flesh. There is such a person in our flesh.

In the same principle, another person is in our spirit. We know that this person is Christ, the processed Triune God. Christ is in our spirit. This is why 2 Timothy 4:22 says, "The Lord be with your spirit." So we have two persons within us. We have pointed out in the past that this Christ who is within us in our spirit is not only life to us, but He has to be our person. We should take Him not only as life but also as our person.

Many unbelievers realize that in their flesh there is a person, but none of them would admit that that person is Satan. And I am sorry to say that so many real and genuine Christians also would not admit that Satan is in our flesh. Some teach very strongly that Satan is not in our flesh. In like manner, many Christians are absolutely ignorant of the fact that Christ is in their spirit.

Even some of them do not believe that their spirit is different from their soul. Even such a person as George Müller, who was called the king of faith, did not realize that he had a spirit. His realization was that his spirit was just his soul. In a booklet that is a part of his autobiography he speaks of nourishing his soul before praying. He speaks of reading a few verses from the Bible to nourish his soul so that he could pray. How could such a spiritual person consider that his soul and his spirit were the same? It is because the light to the church up to the end of the last century was not yet that high. It was not as high as what we experience today. We have to thank the Lord that we were born one century later. The later we are born, the better. John the Baptist was considered greater than the Old Testament saints because he came later (Matt. 11:11). Then the New Testament saints, such as John and Peter and Paul, were even higher than John the Baptist because they came later than he. In the same principle, we would have to say that we are better and higher than John and Peter and Paul because we have come later. Even apprentice electricians today know more about electricity than Thomas Edison. This is because they have come later, and they are upon the shoulders of all the electricians. Today we are upon the shoulders of all the Christians through the centuries. The tragedy is this: many Christians do not stand on any shoulders. They just stand on the flat ground upon their own two feet. But they are so low. Hallelujah! We are standing on a high ladder built up with so

many shoulders. The light is much, much brighter today. We would not say that we are nourishing our soul. We would say that we are denying our soul and nourishing our spirit before praying.

CHRIST IN US

Some today would oppose the fact that Christ is in us. They say that this is to make Christ too small. They ask how such a great and unlimited Christ could get into you. This is their systematizing, theological mentality. It is terrible! Do not read the Bible in this way. The Bible says that Christ is in you. Even the Lord Jesus charged us to abide in Him and let Him abide in us (John 15:4-5). In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus was even stronger: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." It is not a small thing for Christ to be in us making His abode. Paul speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). To say that Christ dwells in us is a strong expression. I have mentioned previously that the root of the word *dwell* is actually the Greek word for *house*. Actually, this word could be translated using the word *house* as a verb. He is housing Himself in us. It is not a light word. Christ is making His home in us. Christ lives in us. But some Christians today do not believe this. They reject and deny these two facts: that Satan is in their flesh and that Christ is in their spirit. Many Christian teachers today do not teach according to the principles of the Bible; they just teach ethical principles. They teach Christians to be on the alert and not to sin and not to hate others. They teach people to improve themselves and to behave themselves and to conduct themselves in the best way to glorify God. Do you realize that teachings of this kind are in the same principle as those of Confucius? These are ethical teachings. These are not the teachings according to the biblical revelation.

LIVING WITH CHRIST IN OUR SPIRIT

How then should we live? We must live in a way to avoid, or to escape, the first person—Satan in our flesh. Our daily living must be one that escapes this person. At the same time our living should always be with the second person—Christ in our spirit. We should live by the second person. We do not behave ourselves; we live Christ. Sisters, do you behave yourself and conduct yourself in a very nice way, or do you live by Christ in your spirit? Let me illustrate. When I was young, I learned Confucius's teachings, so I surely know what is morality and what is ethics. I know how to humble myself, how

to forbear others, how to have a broadened heart, how to honor the parents, how to obey the parents. I was taught these things, and when I was young, I practiced them a lot. But the more I practiced, the more I did many things against ethics.

Then I got saved, and I still remember that the first thing I did was to make up my mind strongly that I would never be the same. I would never lose my temper again. I would never again be mad with my mother. Because she loved me to the uttermost, it was easy for me to be mad with her. When someone loves you so much, it is easy to be mad with that person. Once I became a Christian, I made up my mind not to be mad with my mother. I attempted to exercise a strong will with a sober mind to behave myself. But eventually, I found out that there are two troubling persons within me. Gradually, I found out that to live the Christian life according to the ethical teachings is not in the Bible. That way of living is according to the principle of Confucius's teachings. But today, even in the Western world, many Christians simply teach ethical teachings. They do not really teach the biblical revelation.

Today surely you have had some history of both the flesh and the spirit. So have I. Do not consider that when you become old, you graduate from the flesh. No. The older you are, the easier it is to be in the flesh. The young infants are not so much in the flesh. But the more you grow and the older you become, the more you are in the flesh. When I was young, children never bothered me, but today it is easy for the young children to irritate me. Even today I had some story of being irritated. That was a history of the flesh. But because I fully realize that evil person, right away I escaped from him. In a sense I did not go to another person, but I just stayed with the other person, Christ in my spirit. Because He is here, I just stayed with Him. I did not try to behave myself or to improve myself; I just stayed with Him. This is the Christian life. The Christian life simply lives Christ. The Christian life is not that you improve yourself and adjust yourself and correct yourself. That is not a Christian life. That might be a Greek philosophical life or a Chinese ethical life. But the Christian's life is one that escapes the first person—Satan in his flesh—and lives the second person—Christ in his spirit. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20). This is the Christian life. You have to see that there is a big difference. We are not here simply debating concerning certain doctrines or fighting merely for certain truths. We are here living a testimony. We are here living Christ. We not only preach and teach Christ; we also live Christ. But I am

afraid that today your real daily life still is more in the ethical line than in the Christ line. We live more according to the ethical realization than according to Christ. But I believe that our history will be advancing. I have the full assurance that after not too long a time the day will come when all of you will live in the line of Christ.

You have to fully realize the two histories with the two persons in Romans 8:10. This is why we have to spend so much time on this one verse. This one verse is too great! It will stop your behaving. According to the dictionary, to behave is good. But according to the Christian life, to merely behave is a damage. The Christian life is not a matter of behaving yourself but of all the time putting yourself under the killing of Jesus that His life might be manifested in your mortal body.

The Christian life is just a life in your spirit. This is why Romans 8 first says to walk according to the spirit (v. 4). Then it says to mind, or consider, the things of the Spirit (v. 5). Verse 6 says that you have to set your mind on the spirit, and verse 9 says that you have to be a person in the spirit. This is the Christian life. The Christian life is to walk according to the spirit, to mind the things of the Spirit, to have your mind set on the spirit, and to be in the spirit. When you are in the spirit, you are okay. When you are in the spirit, you escape the first person, and you stay with the second person. Not only do you stay with Him, but you live Him, and you are one with Him.

We all need to see the history of our two parts, and we all have to see the two persons in these two parts. Also, we have to have a clear vision that God does not want any ethical life. He only wants a life that is in your spirit. He wants a life that walks not according to ethics or morality but according to the spirit. Forget about your temper; that is altogether in the kingdom of ethics. It is in the realm and empire of morality. God has rescued us out of that realm, and He has transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son. We are here living in another kingdom. It is not a matter of whether you are moral or immoral or ethical or unethical. It is a matter of whether or not you are in this kingdom or in that kingdom. As long as you are in the ethical kingdom, you are absolutely wrong. Although Confucius was a top ethical person, he was wrong because he keeps people away from the kingdom of Christ. His teachings retain people in the ethical kingdom.

As far as human society is concerned, Confucius's teachings have helped. What has kept the people in the Western world is the influence of the Bible teachings, but what has helped the people in the Eastern world is the influence of Confucius's teachings. We have to thank God for this. First, God uses these influences to keep people so that they may not behave themselves like wild beasts. For nearly three thousand years the Chinese people and others in the Far East have been kept from being like wild beasts. They have been cultivated and somewhat proper people. Then in the last century the Lord sent the gospel there. So in a sense the ethical teachings of Confucius were used by the Lord to preserve the people. Even today the Western world needs more influence of the Bible. Of course, people who practice the sinful things such as homosexuality are against the influence of the Bible and against the influence of the ethical teachings.

But you have to realize that at best and to the uttermost, all these influences of the ethical teachings are used by God only to preserve humanity. If you only have these ethical teachings, still there is no way for God to accomplish His eternal purpose. God's eternal purpose is not just to have a preserved humanity. God's eternal purpose is to have a Body for Christ. This is revealed in Romans 12. How can we get to Romans 12? We must pass through Romans 8 and experience the matters there. We still need an even longer time to see all the experiences in Romans 8 for the proper Body life. Only the Body life can fulfill God's eternal purpose. God has used the government, law, culture, and ethics to preserve humanity. Without these things human beings today would be wild beasts. Then the man created by God would be finished, and God would have no place to collect material for the formation of the Body of Christ to fulfill His eternal purpose.

So God exercised His divine sovereignty and authority to use the law, government, ethics, and culture to preserve humanity. To some extent, humanity has been preserved throughout all the centuries. Even Romans 13 tells us that the government represents God exercising His authority, so we have to subject ourselves to this authority, to the law, to the good order of society. Although this is right, many Christians have gone only that far. But the Bible reveals to us that God's heart's desire is to have a Body. This Body is an organism, a group of people, who have life in their spirit and who are living and walking according to the spirit. They are persons in the spirit, not improving themselves, not behaving themselves, but just living Christ. This is different. Of course, they will have the top ethics and the highest morality. But

we have to say again: the biblical revelation does not stress ethics; it emphasizes Christ as our life in our spirit. So the New Testament tells us again and again something practical and experiential concerning our spirit. Even in this one chapter of Romans, chapter 8, how many times it touches our spirit! We have to walk according to our spirit; we have to mind the things of the Spirit; we have to set our mind on the spirit; we have to be a person absolutely, entirely in the spirit.

In such a situation, no doubt, we live Christ. Here we are one with Christ. If you have ever seen this, you could see how far off many Christian teachings are today. Some Christians today just stress the teachings, and others just stress the outward experiences of the "Holy Ghost." But we have to see the inner life in our spirit. Christ is the very Spirit, and this inner Christ is the indwelling Spirit. And this indwelling Spirit is the ultimate expression of the Triune God. The processed Triune God in reality becomes the indwelling Spirit. He is so real, so silent, so quiet, yet so living in our spirit. Today we must be persons knowing our history, knowing all these stories, and knowing where we should be. We must be in our spirit. You do not need to improve yourself; you do not need to learn to behave yourself; you just need to escape the first person—Satan in your flesh—and stay with the second person—Christ in your spirit—and remain in the spirit. You need to enjoy Him as everything to you—as your life, as your person, as your everything. Then you will live Him, and you will be one with Him.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE RESIDING SPIRIT—
THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for this gathering again. Thank You that You have brought us back to Your Word. Lord, we trust in Your inspiration, in Your anointing, in Your infusion. We have no trust in ourselves. Do cleanse us with Your precious blood that we may enjoy the full anointing. Lord, do shine upon Your Word, and shine from within us. And give us understanding; give us wisdom; give us the expression; give us the utterance. We need You; we all need You. Lord, do grant us Your presence, Your anointing, Your self, that we might touch You once more and be touched by You. Cover us, Lord. Amen.

In this chapter we need to spend more time on Romans 8:9-14. Many crucial points are covered by these six verses. The Triune God is covered very clearly and very strongly in these few verses. Also, in these few verses the inward part of our being, our spirit, is covered. Our outward part, our body, is also covered. There is also our self, that is, our being. Our spirit is not our being, nor is our body our being. Our spirit is our inner organ, and our body is our outer organ. Every human being has these two organs. The inner organ, our spirit, is for us to contact God Himself. The body, our outer organ, is for us to contact the physical world.

Of course, the pronoun *you* in these verses indicates your being, your person. This person is just your self, your soul. Although the word *soul* is not mentioned in these verses, there is the word *you*. "You" is your being, your soul. So there is the very being, you, with the inner organ, the spirit, and the outer organ, the body. This is man's entire being. This is the tripartite man—spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The pronoun *you* in Romans 8:9-14 signifies the soul, especially referring to your will and to your mind and to your emotion. These are the components, the parts, of your soul. Have you ever noticed that in these verses both the spirit and the body are mentioned as organs? When verse 13 says that you put to death the practices of the body, it means that your mind and your will and your emotion all have to be exercised to put to death the practices of your body. All three parts of your being must be exercised in this way.

ACTIVE-PASSIVE

The problem with most of us concerning the spiritual life is this: either we are at the north pole, or we are at the south pole. When we say that we trust in the Lord, we feel we do not need to do anything. In the past I told you that we have to cease from our effort. That is right, but there is also another side. Many times we have mentioned that in the entire universe, nothing can exist without two sides. Even a very thin piece of paper has two sides. But when we come to the spiritual life, it is easy for us to take just one side and forget about the other side.

Then you might consider that you need to exercise your self. But to exercise your self is one thing; to have your mind, will, and emotion exercised is another thing. To say that you need to exercise your self is active. But to say that you need to have your mind, will, and emotion exercised is equal to being saved and to being empowered. This is active-passive.

WILLING TO BE SAVED

The problem always lies here and even hides here. You have to realize that in God's salvation, He saves, but you need to be saved. He is willing to save, yet if you are not willing to be saved, you cannot receive the salvation. It is not that God is going to save a piece of driftwood. That would be altogether up to Him, because the driftwood does not have a will, a mind, or emotions. But you and I have a will, a mind, and emotions. God is willing to save, but we are not willing to be saved. We have no appetite and no desire to be saved.

Good preaching is always to stir up the appetite to be saved. The good speaking many times is just to stir up your hunger, to stir up your thirst, to stir up your interest. Even among those in attendance at this Perfecting Training, the degree of the appetite differs. Some may have the highest appetite, and others may not have any appetite. If you have no appetite, this training cannot help you. Actually, it does not depend upon the training; it depends upon your appetite. If your appetite is higher, you will get more help. If you do not have any appetite, regardless of how many times you would attend the meetings, you will get little help. This is a matter having two sides: God is willing to save you. But are you willing to be saved? We must see these two sides.

THE ONE WHO RAISED JESUS

Have you noticed that verse 11 says that the resurrecting God gives life? Verse 11 says, "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." When a pronoun is used, it needs an antecedent. In this verse the pronoun *He* is used, but without an antecedent. Who is "He"? It seems that it should be the Father. If you use the word *Father,* it seems very clear. But Paul does not use the word *Father*. Nor does he use the word *Son*. He simply uses the pronoun *He*. He is the One who gives life to us.

THE MINGLING OF GOD

When you come to verse 13, however, the pronoun changes to *you*: "If you live according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." Verse 11 says that He gives life, and verse 13 says that you put to death. Do not consider that for Him to give life is one thing, and for you to put to death is another thing. These two things are just like the two sides of a piece of paper. The two sides refer to one thing. When He gives life, you put to death; when you put to death, He gives life.

The object of both of these sentences is your body. He gives life to your body, and you put your body to death. By reading just the letters, it may seem that these are two things. But in your experience these are not two things. These are just one thing. When you put your body to death, God gives life to it. When God gives life to it, you put it to death. What is this? This is the mingling of God with you. This indicates that you are one with God. According to doctrine, it may seem that these are two different things, but according to experience, these are one thing.

THE THREE-ONE WHO GIVES LIFE

Verse 11 speaks of "the One who raised Jesus from the dead." This verse refers us to the Trinity in a very practical way. The Spirit, the Father as the One who raised, and Christ Jesus Himself are all three mentioned. According to letters, you have the three: the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. But according to your experience, there is only one. If then the three are one, whom do you experience? The Spirit? Or Jesus? Or the One?

You have to realize that the spiritual experience is too fast for you to analyze in this way. Even as the circulation of the blood is very fast, so the

spiritual experience is also very fast. It does not wait for you to analyze it. It goes too fast. But you also have to realize that in the study, in the research, in your laboratory, it does have to be recorded in this way. Romans 8 may be considered as a record of Paul's research. In the record of Paul's research, you have a sentence that proceeds slowly: "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you," but the spiritual experience of this matter goes very fast. Who then gives life? It is the Three-one who gives life. To say that the Father who raised Jesus from the dead gives life to our body through the Spirit is a record of the research. You may read it slowly, but when you come to the experience, it happens very fast.

COOPERATING WITH THE LIFE-GIVING GOD

He gives life, and you put to death. When you put to death, it does not mean that you put to death by your will. It does not mean that it is simply your intention and your purpose and your desire. But you must be such a person with a strong will and with an emotion that is absolutely for this and with a mind that understands the matters concerning the Triune God and concerning you, the tripartite man. As such a one, you put to death. It would be difficult for a new believer to experience verse 13 in a full way. Whoever would experience verse 13 in a full way must have a strong will to cooperate with the life-giving God; he must have a very hot and burning emotion aspiring all the time to put his body to death, and he also must be one who knows the things concerning the Triune God and the things concerning the tripartite man.

After verse 13, verse 14 begins with the word *for*. Of course, verse 14 is related to the sonship. This indicates that the verses leading up to verse 14, which involve the Triune God and the tripartite man, are related to the sonship. Verses 9 through 13 are concerning the matter of producing matured sons, of bringing forth the sonship.

THE RESIDING SPIRIT

Now we need to spend more time to see some of the crucial points in verses 9 through 13. The first crucial matter in these verses is the indwelling, or the residing, Spirit. Verse 9 says, "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." We may also translate the word *dwells* as "resides." *Reside* is even stronger than *dwell*. This is a very great matter. You

are such a small being, yet in you there is another One residing. Even up until today, perhaps Paul was the only other Christian who ever paid adequate attention to this matter: that in you as a tripartite man, as a human being, another One is residing. We know this doctrinally, but we have not paid adequate attention to the fact that there is such a One residing in us.

Some Christians today teach that Jesus Christ is in the heavens, not in you. They say that He has a representative in us, the "Holy Ghost." And they argue with us because we are so strong in sounding the trumpet that Christ lives in us. We have to say that not only does Christ live in us, but He is also being formed in us, and He is making His home in us (Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:17). These are strong, clear words from the Bible.

I am afraid, though, that we may not realize adequately in a practical and living way that a wonderful One is now residing in us. Paul says, "If indeed the Spirit of God dwells [or resides] in you." The first thing these few verses stress is the residing Spirit. And today under God's enlightenment we have seen that this residing Spirit is just the ultimate expression of the Triune God, who, after being processed, has become our life and our everything. This is the residing Spirit. It is not just a "Ghost." It is the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God. Surely in verse 11, when Paul uses the phrase *the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead,* it does not indicate a ghost. It indicates the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God. Why does Paul use such a long and complicated composition? Because his intention is to show us that this Spirit is not so simple. This is the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. The Spirit is such a Spirit. Now the Spirit is the very expression, the ultimate expression, of the processed Triune God.

Jesus was raised up. Even this short sentence implies much. *Jesus* implies incarnation. Without incarnation how could Jesus have come into being? In the universe *Jesus* is a special name. In the entire human history Jesus is extraordinary. Even the calendar on this earth is the calendar of Jesus. This year, 1982, is the year of Jesus. Even Gog and Magog, or Russia, and even China—these atheistic nations—use the calendar of Jesus. If you use the calendar of Caesar, you become a Roman. If you use the calendar of a czar, you become a Russian. But if you use the calendar of Jesus, you become Jesus' people. The entire world today is under the calendar of Jesus. Jesus is wonderful! If there had been no incarnation, how could Jesus have come into being?

Furthermore, if there had not been such a human living of thirty-three and a half years, how could you have a complete Jesus? Today our Jesus is complete and even completed. He was incarnated, and He lived on this earth, not for three and a half hours but for thirty-three and a half years.

Then He was raised. *Jesus* implies incarnation and human living. *Raised* implies death and resurrection. If He were not put to death, how could He be raised? So the little word *raised* implies both death and resurrection. Who did all this? The One! There is One in the universe who did this. You have to realize that it is not just the Father but the One! Just to say the Father is not adequate. *The One* is very implicative. *The One* implies a lot. In the universe there is such a One! You have to realize that in the whole universe there is such a One who raised up, and this dear One is not merely in the heavens; this dear One today is within you as the residing One. He is not only the One who raised Jesus, but He is also the One who resides in you. The raising One is now the residing One.

THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

When Paul says, "The Spirit of the One who raised Jesus," he indicates that the One who raised and the Jesus who was raised both are one with the Spirit. The Spirit who resides in you does not reside in you just by Himself. He resides in you with the One who raised and with the One who was raised. When you have the residing One, you also have the Father and the Son. When you have the residing One, you have the ultimate expression of the Triune God who has been processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Today such a One is the Spirit who resides in you.

A FULL REALIZATION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Many believers still consider that the Holy Father is in the heavens, and the Son is there with Him, and His Holy Spirit is now working in us. If you still hold this kind of concept, whether intentionally or unintentionally, you have no way to get into the real experience mentioned in Romans 8. You could never get to chapter 12. You could never get into the realization of the Body life because you still are not matured in the sonship. You need a full realization of the Triune God within you. Such a full realization of the Triune God will mature you in the sonship.

Paul's repetition in 8:11 is to impress us that while the Spirit is residing in us, the Triune God is within us. The One who did the raising up is in you, and the One who was raised up is also in you. Both of them are now the residing Spirit. The residing Spirit is comprised of the raising One and the One raised up. This realization makes a big difference. This realization would make it easy for you to put the practices of your body to death. You would have a kind of habitual living of all the time putting the practices of your body to death. Then while the putting to death of the practices of the body is going on within you, the life giving would be there. The life would flow and even flood in.

The Spirit today is the life-giving Spirit. But you would have to admit that you do not have much experience of the life giving. You may have a doctrine concerning the life-giving Spirit, but you do not have much of the actuality of the life giving itself. Why? Because you are short of the putting to death. And you are short of the putting to death because you do not realize that the Spirit residing in you today is a composition of the raising One and of the One raised up. He is now the raising One, and He is now also the One raised up. He is both. Both are included in Him, and now He is residing in you. If you realize this, there would be a spontaneous putting to death all the time.

So first of all, these verses stress the residing Spirit of the Trinity. Second, these few verses stress the matter of the life giving. This One gives life not only to your spirit, not only to your mind, but also even to your body. The third thing that these verses stress is the matter of your putting to death. There are three parties with three things: there is the residing of the Spirit, there is the giving life by the One who raised Jesus from the dead, and there is the putting to death by you. You have to put these three things together. When you put these three things together, you have the leading of the Triune God. This leading will mature you into the sonship.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8

In chapter 8 of Romans several things are quite crucial to our experience. The first crucial thing as far as our experience is concerned is the matter of walking according to the spirit. This is in verse 4. Verses 1, 2, and 3 do not touch the matter of experience. The experience is mentioned first in verse 4. But you have to realize that walking is not the first point of the experience, although it is mentioned here first.

In Romans 8 the experience is not of some work that you do. Nor is it the experience of gifts such as healing. Rather, Paul's concentration is on the inner life. In the experience of life the first point covered in Romans 8 is concerning walking. Verse 4 says, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit." We have mentioned previously that *spirit* in this verse is not capitalized, indicating that it refers to the mingled spirit. It is not merely our human spirit nor merely the Holy Spirit but the two spirits mingled together as one.

The second point concerning the life experience is in verse 6: "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." Here is the matter of setting your mind on the spirit.

Which of these two matters, the walking according to the spirit or the setting of the mind on the spirit, comes first? Probably the setting of the mind on the spirit comes first; first the mind is set on the spirit, and then you walk according to the spirit.

The third point concerning the experience of life in Romans 8 is the residing of the Spirit. It is His residing, but He resides in you. This is not merely His experience but His experience in you. His experience involves you. The residing experience of the Spirit of God involves you because He resides in you. It is not a kind of objective experience of the Holy Spirit apart from you or beyond you. He resides in you.

While the Spirit is residing in you, the One who raised Jesus from the dead gives life to your dying body. He not only gives life to our spirit and to our mind, the leading part of our soul, but He also gives life to our mortal body. In our entire being there is a part that is dying. Even to this dying part, this mortal part, the One who raised Jesus from the dead gives life. But He does not give life directly; He gives life through the indwelling Spirit, through the Spirit who resides in you. The giving life is also a kind of experience, but it is not your experience. It is the experience of the One who did the raising up of Jesus from the dead.

The fifth crucial point is the matter of the putting to death in verse 13. Although the putting to death is your experience, you do it through the same agent, through the Spirit or by the Spirit. In the first thirteen verses of Romans 8 there are at least five points concerning experience. Of these five points three are your experiences. You set your mind on the spirit, you walk according to the spirit, and you put to death the practices of your body by the Spirit. Then there is the experience of the residing Spirit and the experience of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. By covering all these points in the first thirteen verses, we are able to come to verse 14.

LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Verse 14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Apparently, verse 14 is very simple. But at the beginning of this verse there is the small word *for*. This word *for* gives you a continuation with reasons, explanations, and definitions. This means that whatever is mentioned in verse 14 is a continuation and reason and explanation of what has been mentioned before. This indicates that whatever is mentioned in this verse is a result of all the foregoing, preceding experiences. It is a result of the walking according to the spirit, of the setting of the mind on the spirit, of the putting to death, of the residing of the Spirit, and of the giving life. Without these five points of experiences, there is no way to have the leading mentioned in verse 14.

The crucial point we need to pick up in verse 14 is the leading. For many years I did not pay much attention to this matter of the leading in verse 14. In the past years I have given very few messages on the leading of God. In the past I considered that the leading was somewhat common and somewhat general. But today we have to realize that the leading of the Spirit is crucial. It is important, first of all, because it is in Romans 8; whatever is in this chapter

must be crucial. Second, this leading of the Spirit is a strong evidence that you are a son of God, so surely this is not a small matter.

The leading of the Spirit is very crucial because it may be considered as the totality of the experiences mentioned in verses 10 through 13. The leading of the Spirit is the totality of the experience of the residing plus the life giving plus the putting to death. Of these three things, one belongs to God—life giving. One belongs to the Spirit—residing. And one belongs to us—putting to death. Both God's giving life and our putting to death are through the Spirit or by the Spirit.

RESIDING FOR LIVING

While the Spirit of God is residing in you, He is not dormant or sleepy or silent or passive. He is very active, not in exercising some gift or in doing a miracle but in living. He is active in living. *Residing* actually means "living." His residing in you actually means His living in you. The residing Spirit is not in us for doing a work or for speaking in tongues or for doing miracles. The residing Spirit is a Spirit for living. In chapter 8 there is no thought about tongue-speaking or miracle-working; there is no thought about doing a work. The thought is residing, and residing is for living.

This residing One is living in us. Within us He is very active in living. This is why God gives life. Life is mainly for living, not for working. Even humanly speaking, of the twenty-four hours in a day, only eight are used for working. The rest are for simply living. God gives life through this residing Spirit, while we do the killing. The Spirit does the residing and God gives life and we kill the practices of our body.

PUTTING TO DEATH THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

The more you put to death the practices of your body, the more life you will get. If you would like to have a long life, you must learn to kill the practices of your body. To put to death the practices of the body is not to commit suicide. You do not need to commit suicide all the day long. But according to the New Testament, especially Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 4, the putting to death is not something that is once for all. It lasts all the day long. If you would be healthy, you must learn to kill the practices of your body all the time. By the practices of the body many people are committing a slow suicide. By what

they eat and drink, they are committing a slow suicide. If you would practice killing the practices of your body, you would be much healthier.

Instead of talking so much, you need to pick up the habit of praising more, putting to death the practice of your body. To talk a lot is a practice of the body that needs to be put to death. Although you may say that you cannot put to death the practices of your body, still you must. You have to do it not by yourself but by the Spirit. Do not forget that the Spirit is the residing One. He resides in you, and He is involved with the Life-giver. While He is residing in you, One gives life, and you must do the putting to death.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

The matter of the leading of the Spirit is so important in this chapter because it is the addition of three things: the residing, the life giving, and the putting to death. In 1949 I gave sixty lessons on the basic truths of the Bible. Among those sixty lessons, one was concerning the leading of God. In that lesson I pointed out mainly three things. I said that if you want God's leading, you need to take care of the anointing and the inner sense. Second, you have to check with the Word, the Bible. Third, you have to take care of the circumstances. Today I would not say that was wrong, but I would say that the matter of the leading of the Spirit in Romans 8 is much deeper than this.

The matter of the leading in Romans 8 is so crucial because it is composed of the Spirit's residing, God's life giving, and our putting to death. As long as you experience these three things, you are being led by the Spirit of God. As long as you take care of these three matters, you are clear about everything, whether it is what kind of car you should buy, whom you should marry, or what kind of shoes you should buy. If you have the residing of the Spirit in you plus God's giving life plus your putting to death, you will be clear in everything. You will have the leading in everything. This is the meaning of being led by the Spirit of God.

To interpret the Bible, especially a chapter like Romans 8, is not so easy. It depends upon the extent of your spiritual experience. Your understanding can never exceed your experience. Rather, your experience always leads your understanding of the Word. Only through experience could we realize that the leading of the Spirit of God in verse 14 is the totality of the Spirit's residing within us, God's life giving through Him, and our putting to death through Him.

In the matter of putting to death the practices of the body, do not consider whether something is good or bad. As long as it is a practice of the body, you have to put that to death. Even if it is a good practice, you have to put it to death. Unbelievers cannot understand what we are talking about. If they put to death the practices of the body, they would really be dead. They do not have another life; they do not have another One residing in them. The more we put the practices of our body to death, the more we live because within you and me there is another person, Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit.

A STORY OF COINHERENCE

The Christian life is not a story of a single person. The Christian life is a story of two persons living together. This is marvelous! These two live not only by coexistence but by coinherence. The three of the Godhead coexist and coinhere. They exist simultaneously, and each is in the other. When the Lord Jesus said, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me?" (John 14:10), He indicated the coinherence of the Father and the Son. The preposition *in* indicates the coinherence.

Even with the believers and the Lord Jesus there is the coinherence. In John 15:4 the Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me and I in you." This is coinherence. The Christian life is a wonderful story. But this wonderful story has been neglected by today's Christians. Very few Christians apprehend this matter of the coinherence of God and man. Of course, some do not even believe in the coinherence of the three of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

We must see this matter of coinherence for the sake of the Lord's recovery today. We are in a time that is very crucial to the Lord, and the crucial point of this time is not related to outward activities, such as a big work or miracles. It is altogether related to the matter of life within us, and this has very much to do with our apprehension of this matter of the coinherence of the believers and the Lord Jesus. The story of a proper Christian life is just a story of coinherence. Once we are saved, we are not merely one person. We coinhere with the divine One. He lives in us, and we live in Him, and we two live together.

EVIDENCED AS SONS OF GOD

We must see that the leading of the Spirit of God is His residing and God's giving life and your putting to death of the practices of the body. When this is

your experience, it is at that time that you are evidenced as a son of God. Your life will evidence that you are a son of God. You will not need to designate yourself or wear a nametag. You will have a life of leading, which will evidence the fact that you are a son of God.

INITIATED BY THE SPIRIT

This kind of seeing, this kind of vision, will help you to set your mind on the spirit and to walk according to the spirit. When you have the leading of the Spirit, then you would set your mind on the spirit. When you have the leading of the Spirit, then you would walk according to the spirit. But the leading is not initiated by you. *Are led* is in the passive voice. The leading is initiated by the Spirit, yet the setting of your mind on the spirit and the walking according to the spirit are initiated by you. First, you put to death, and then you have the leading of the Spirit. Then you will set your mind on the spirit and walk according to the spirit. This sequence is according to our fine experience. Without the leading of the Spirit it might be very difficult for you to set your mind on the spirit and even more difficult for you to walk according to the spirit.

THE RESIDING AS A BASE FOR GOD'S GIVING LIFE

As a person who has been regenerated and saved, you have the Spirit of God residing in you. This is basic. If you do not have this residing Spirit, you have not been regenerated yet. But if you have believed in Him and called upon His name, your sins have been forgiven, and your spirit has been regenerated. You have the Spirit of God residing in you. This residing is the factor, the base, and the source of God giving life to your mortal body. Even the matter of giving life to your mortal body is an issue of the giving life into our spirit and the giving life into our mind. The giving life to our mortal body includes the giving life to our spirit and our mind. This means that God is giving life to our entire being, not only to the spirit and not only to our mind but also to our body. God is giving life; He is supplying you with the life essence into your entire being.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

What then is our responsibility? Our responsibility is just to cooperate by putting to death the practices of our body. To put to death the practices of the body means to put our natural living to death. A person who has been regenerated and who has the residing Spirit within him giving life should not

live any longer in a natural way. The way to put the practices of the body to death is simply not to live in a natural way. If naturally you like to talk, put that to death. If naturally you like to eat a lot of dessert, put that to death. If naturally you love sports, put that to death. To put to death all the natural living is to put to death the practices of the body.

LIFE SUPPLY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

When you have the residing of the Spirit, the life giving of God, and your putting to death, you will have the leading of the Spirit. At that time it will be so easy for you to set your mind on the spirit and to walk according to the spirit. Within, you will have a lot of life supply; without, you will have the righteousness of the law. When you walk according to the spirit, the righteousness of God will be fulfilled in you. You do not need to fulfill it; it will be fulfilled in you. Within, you have the life supply, and without, you have the life expression. The life supply within you is the Spirit, and the life expression without is righteousness. According to 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 9, this is the ministry that ministers the Spirit and righteousness to people, so it is the ministry of the Spirit as well as of righteousness. This is the new testament ministry. This is the new covenant ministry, ministering the Spirit within and righteousness without. Within, you will be filled with life supply, and without, you will have a full expression of righteousness.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

SONS OF GOD UNDER THE LEADING OF THE DIVINE LIFE

In past chapters we have covered the first thirteen verses of Romans 8, and now we come to verse 14. In this verse two things are covered: one is the matter of leading, and the other is the matter of sonship. It says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Of course, both God and the Spirit of God are also in this verse, but the crucial points are the leading and the sonship. The little word *for* gives us a clear view that this verse is a conclusion of the preceding verses.

Even up to now, most of us have probably never had a proper realization of the matter of leading. Our way of realizing the matter of leading makes it so shallow, so general, and not so meaningful to our Christian life. But since the verse that concludes the first thirteen verses of chapter 8 includes the matter of leading, it must be crucial. This is the crucial mentioning of a crucial matter to conclude all the thirteen preceding verses. Although we may not understand those thirteen verses adequately, we cannot deny that there are too many crucial points revealed there.

For example, there is the law of the Spirit of life, there is the walking according to the spirit, there is the setting of the mind on the spirit, there is the residing of the Spirit of God, there is God's life giving, and there is the putting to death the practices of our mortal body. All these items are crucial; they are not small things. Then after all these crucial and important things are revealed, there is a conclusion that uses the thought of leading. By this you can see that the matter of leading should not be a shallow and insignificant matter. It has to be a crucial matter.

SONSHIP

In this chapter we would not get on the matter of sonship. Once we get on the sonship, it will take many weeks to complete it. Actually, verse 14 to the end of the chapter is on the sonship. Verse 29 says, "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." *Firstborn among*

many brothers means Firstborn among many sons. Verse 14 says that these are sons of God. Verse 29 indicates that we have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This is not the only begotten Son but the firstborn Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. By comparing these two verses you can see that the last part of this chapter is altogether on sonship.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Now we need to consider why in verse 14 this thought of being led by the Spirit of God is brought in. We need to discover what particular point or points indicate that this portion of the Word will bring us to the matter of the leading of the Spirit of God. It is not so easy. It is not a light matter; it is not a small matter or a shallow matter. Many Christians say they have the leading of the Lord to move here or to go there or to marry a certain person. This kind of concept concerning the leading of the Lord is somewhat religious and shallow. Some Christians would consider that the circumstances or the happenings in our life are always confirmations to God's leading. In some cases it may be so, but a number of times it may not be.

LEADING ACCORDING TO LIFE

For example, Paul went to a number of places where he experienced opposition (Acts 13:45, 50; 14:5, 19; 16:19-24; 18:12; 19:29; 21:30). This means that outwardly speaking, the circumstances were opposite to the inner leading. To say that the outward circumstances are always confirmations to the Lord's leading is not so safe. We have to find the reason that the matter of leading is clearly revealed in Romans 8:14. It says that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." *Sons of God* is an expression that shows us the reason this matter of being led is brought in. Why do we need to be led by the Spirit of God, and why are we led by the Spirit of God? It is because we are sons of God.

Let me illustrate: A monkey behaves itself in a certain kind of way because it is under a kind of leading. It behaves like a monkey because it is born of a monkey. Both dogs and cats also have a certain kind of leading in their behavior. The leading of these animals is based upon the life that they have. Whatever life they have is expressed in the leading. Dogs are led this way or that way simply because they are born of dogs.

If you move somewhere simply because you are a son of God, this is right. If you move for some other reason, such as the weather, this is wrong. The matter of leading is brought up in this verse because Paul's intention is to show us the proper sonship. He shows us what it is to be a genuine son of God. If you consider the previous verses, you can realize that walking according to the spirit is very close to the matter of leading. Walking needs some leading. You cannot just walk without any direction or destination or way. You do not walk blindly without any sense. When I intend to come into the meeting hall, I walk under a lead. Walking surely needs the leading. The leading is a kind of guide to our walking. So in verse 4 there is a hint in the matter of walking concerning the matter of leading. To walk according to the spirit needs a lead.

Verse 13 says, "If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." By reading this verse carefully you can see that leading is implied. It could also be expressed in this way: you put to death according to the leading of the Spirit. *By the Spirit* actually means according to the Spirit, according to the leading of the Spirit. Of course, it also includes the power and the strength of the Spirit.

In verses 9 and 11 God resides within us as the Triune God not only to give us life but also to lead us. He leads us in how to follow His residing and how to follow His life giving. This means if you get into the depths of the first thirteen verses, you could see that something of the leading of the Spirit is there. If you get into the depths of God's residing in us and of God giving life to us and our putting to death, you could see that the leading of the Spirit is there. This is why I have said previously that the leading of the Spirit is just the totality of these three things: God's residing, God's life giving, plus our putting to death. The divine residing and the life giving by God and your putting to death the practices of the mortal body become the lead. Actually, the practices of the mortal body are just the flesh. It is another way to mention the flesh. This one expression, *the practices of the mortal body*, means the actual flesh. It is the flesh in your actual activity of your daily life. This is the practice of the flesh. Many times our talk concerning the flesh is too doctrinal; it is not practical.

The lead for you to make any kind of decision should not be based upon circumstances or some kind of reasoning. The lead must consist of these three things: the residing of the Spirit, the life giving of God, and the putting to death of your practical and actual flesh. When you are under this threefold

lead, you are led by the Spirit. You will know where you have to go and what you have to do. You will know whom you have to marry and at which school you have to study. Many Christian teachers tell people to pray much and to wait upon God to know His leading. I do not oppose this kind of teaching, because there is a certain amount of truth in it.

Let me illustrate. Suppose you are a Christian who is not much under the lead of the residing of Christ, nor under the lead of the life giving, nor under the lead of putting to death. But when you spend some time to pray to God, your prayer will bring you to some extent into the experience of the residing, of the life giving, and of the putting to death. I am not opposing the matter of waiting on God, but this is not stressed in the New Testament. Some have spent time with the Lord talking with Him, and by this their inner sky became so clear. While this may be good, it is somewhat abnormal. The normal way is that every day, every hour, every minute, even every second, your sky must be clear. You must be under the clear sky all the time by being under the lead of the residing, by being all the time under the lead of the life giving, and by being all the time under the lead of putting to death. All the time a clear sky is above you and within you. When something comes up, in a sense you do not need to pray. Right away you know the lead. You know how the threefold lead will lead you and guide you. You are clear.

SONS OF GOD HAVING GOD'S LIFE

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." The sons of God have God's life. When we speak of God's life, we understand it in a very general way. We do not realize that God's life given to us now becomes our life. And this life now implies God's residing. And it implies God's life giving. This life also implies a spontaneous putting to death. And these are not three things happening in three steps. These are three things happening at the same time. When God resides in you, He gives life. When He gives life, you put to death. When you put to death, God resides in you more. It is a spontaneous cycle. The experience of this cycle is the leading. We who are the sons of God must live, act, move, and behave ourselves under this lead. So we are led by the Spirit of God.

THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE PROCESSED GOD

Who is this Spirit of God? We have to remember that He is the ultimate expression of the processed Triune God. We are sons of God having God's life

in us, and this life is just the residing God. That we are sons of God implies His residing, His life giving, and even our putting to death. If we live in this way, spontaneously we are under the leading of such a wonderful thing. We are led by God Himself. This means that we are led by the processed God Himself. The leading of our Christian life is not just circumstances or happenings or persons. The lead under which we Christians live is just the processed God indwelling within us, giving life to us so that we put to death all the things of the old creation.

Human language is not adequate to utter these kinds of things. I just do not have the way to express what I realize concerning these matters. Because we do not have the adequate experience of these things, and because we are short of the language to express it, it is easy for us to misunderstand the matter of leading. We usually understand that God's leading is simply to tell us what to do. To know the Lord's real leading, you must live in Romans 8:11-13. You must experience the residing of the Triune God, you must experience the life giving of this processed Triune God, and you must have adequate experience of the putting to death. Then you are under the lead.

ONE WITH THE LORD FOR HIS LEADING

You do not need to depend upon the outward circumstances to confirm whether or not you are under the leading of the Lord. To depend upon the outward circumstances does not necessarily mean that you are so one with the Lord. Rather, it may mean that you are not so one with the Lord. If you are so one with the Lord, you are under the lead, and you will know the leading. You will not seek after it. You will simply have it. You will be in it. When you talk with people, every sentence should be under the leading. Sometimes you realize you are going to say something that is not under the leading and not under a clear sky. So you have to refrain from that kind of talk.

DESCRIPTION AND EXPERIENCE

When Paul describes all these things, he describes them in a clear way. But when you experience them, they are not so clearly separated. Rather, to set the mind on the spirit is simultaneously one with the walking according to the spirit. In description, you have to make these two items distinct. In description, to set the mind on the spirit is one thing, and to walk according to the spirit is another. But in experience these two things happen

simultaneously with God's residing, with God's life giving, and with your putting to death. When you have all these things, you have the leading.

To illustrate once more, dogs and cats and other animals behave and act under their lead. If someone is teasing a dog, and the dog is running, you may think that the teasing of that person is the lead. Actually, it is not. Actually, the dog's life is its lead. When a dog runs away from you, it is a little different from a cat running away. When a cat runs away from you, it is somewhat different from a chicken running away. And a chicken running away is somewhat different from a boy running away. All these living creatures run away in their own way because of the lead in their life. This illustrates that the outward circumstances are not the real leading. The real leading is within them according to their kind of life. A cat has a cat's life, and that life is actually its lead. If you have a human life, this life is your lead.

THE LEADING OF THE DIVINE LIFE

We have the divine life, God's life. The life mentioned in Romans 8 implies a lot. It implies residing; it implies life giving; it implies liberating. It also implies a kind of law with a spontaneous power and strength. It is really hard to define this divine life. Verse 14 indicates that the matter of leading is here just because we are sons of God living a life under such a lead. The matter of leading implies a lot. This has to be the leading that we experience. You have to follow such a leading concerning marriage, concerning school, concerning jobs, concerning where to go, where to stay, where to live, and so forth. If you are led by such a leading, you are living the life of a son of God. You are not living a dog life or a cat life or even an ordinary human life. You are living a super-resurrected human life.

If you check according to your experience, you will see that all these matters are present. The residing, the life giving, the putting to death, the setting of the mind on the spirit, and the walking according to the spirit were there even today in your experience. This is why in the morning you behaved yourself in a certain way, and this is why in the evening you talked to your folks in a certain way. You were under a kind of wonderful leading that even you could not understand. Yet you were under it. Perhaps even for the whole day you spontaneously lived a life that proves and testifies to the fact that you are a son of God. Even to read a chapter such as this eventually brings you, if not in full, at least to some extent under this leading. Your life would be changed. You had no intention to change your life, but it just changed. It is not just a

matter of changing your behavior. Rather, something comes out unconsciously and spontaneously.

I hope that this matter of leading has been made very clear. You do not need to spend that much time asking the Lord to show you His leading. Just go to praise Him, to worship Him, to offer your best thanksgiving to Him. If you practice seeking His leading, that means you are not under the lead. If you are under the lead, you do not need to seek His lead anymore. You are simply under His lead. When you wake up in the morning, you are under the leading. You just praise Him; you just thank Him; you just have a well speaking with Him and bless Him. You just stay with Him to enjoy His blessing. You stay there to enjoy His burden in you to pray for certain things—for His Body, for His interest, for the church. You do not need to ask for His leading. You are just under a leading.

This is actually to walk according to the spirit. This also is to put to death the old creation, the practical flesh, the practices of the mortal body. This spontaneously is the enjoyment of the life giving of the residing Triune God. This is just the life of the Triune God residing in us. This is what is revealed in Romans 8. You have to realize that Romans 8 is so experiential, so practical, so deep. You cannot understand Romans 8 simply in a doctrinal way. It speaks of the experience of the Triune God in an experiential way.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:14 says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." In this chapter we need to consider what are the constituents of the leading of the Spirit. In principle, everything is composed with some things. We have to find out what the leading of the Spirit of God is composed with. How is it constituted? How could we have such a thing that is called the leading of the Spirit of God? According to Romans 8:14, there is such a thing within us as the leading of the Spirit of God.

Through all the centuries most Christians have not been so clear about the matter of God's leading. Christians have mostly considered the matter of God's leading in somewhat an outward way. For example, they would seek the Lord's leading concerning a trip to New York. Although we were not taught properly concerning the matter of leading, we have a lot of concepts concerning the matter of leading. We are always concerned about what courses we should take in school, about how much money we should spend, or about the matter of marriage. Concerning these kinds of things we always like to have the leading of the Lord.

Actually, the leading does matter a lot in our daily life. If you are a Christian, and yet you do not care for the leading of God, you are not a proper Christian. If you are a proper Christian, you surely like to know what is the Lord's leading. You want to know whether you should rent or buy a house. You want to know what street you should live on. You want to know how you should get your hair cut. If you would do this, it would indicate to some extent that you might be a good Christian. I hope that when you go to buy a pair of shoes, you do consider what color and what style. If you do not consider these matters, you are just a careless Christian. You are not so careful, so sober, as you should be.

A DETAILED CHAPTER CONCERNING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

We consider the matter of leading mostly an outward thing. I also did until I began to pay so much attention to Romans 8. Then I began to realize that out of all the sixty-six books in the Bible, perhaps no other chapter unveils to us the spiritual experiences in as much detail as Romans 8. Of course, the longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. It tells a lot concerning the praising of the Lord and the contacting of the Lord by the Old Testament saints. There is some help to be found in that psalm, but it is somewhat old and in the old covenant. The longest and most detailed chapter concerning spiritual experience is Romans 8. In this it is unique. Since I began to realize this chapter with all the details, I began to see a lot of things that I had actually already experienced but without much knowledge of them. I had little knowledge concerning these matters because such teachings have not been stressed among the Christians.

We may illustrate this matter with vitamins. Hundreds of years ago our forefathers ate a lot of vitamins but without much knowledge. Without taking in the proper vitamins, a person cannot be healthy. Although vitamins had not been discovered many years ago, people had the experience of living by eating the vitamins.

In Romans 8 there is such a thing that is called the leading of the Spirit of God. You have to realize that it is not mentioned in verses 1 through 13. Rather, it is mentioned in the fourteenth verse. This means that certain verses have gone before. And of course, more verses follow verse 14. Verses 15 through 23 have a lot to do with the matter of leading in verse 14. So before verse 14 there are thirteen verses, and after verse 14 there are another fourteen verses, all of which are related to the matter of the leading of the Spirit. If you are going to understand adequately the leading of the Spirit, you must get into all these verses.

In principle, the leading of the Spirit must be composed with some thing or things. There must be some things as the constituents of the constitution of the leading of the Spirit. Basically, the leading of the Spirit of God is composed of three elements, all from verse 2: the law, the Spirit, and life.

THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD AS THE LAW

Verse 14 may be considered as a conclusion of the preceding thirteen verses. So verse 14 begins with the little word *for* to indicate that something has preceded it. Of the foregoing verses, the most crucial and the most basic is

verse 2. These three elements—the law, the Spirit, and the life—are the very constituents that constitute the leading of the Spirit. In those thirteen verses the first few verses talk about the law and the function of the law. In previous chapters concerning the law, we have pointed out that the law is a person, that is, the Triune God. The law is the Triune God, who after being processed, has become the indwelling Spirit as the law. The law of the Spirit of life is just the processed Triune God as the indwelling Spirit working in us. The law indicates the function, the working principle. This is the first item of the constitution, or the composition, of the leading of the Spirit.

LIFE DEFINED

From verse 6 through verse 11 life is defined. Verse 6 says that to set your mind on the spirit is life. Verse 10 says that when Christ is in you, the spirit is life. Then verse 11 says that the Spirit will give life to your mortal body. This means that life gets into your spirit, into your mind or soul, and into your body. So the second section of the foregoing verses defines the matter of life.

THE SPIRIT DEFINED

In the third section the definition is mainly concerning the Spirit. So there is the definition of the law, the definition of the life, the definition of the Spirit, and then verse 14 as a conclusion. This indicates that these three—the law, the Spirit, and the life—are the constituents, or the composition, of the leading of the Spirit.

THE REALIZATION OF THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

In the past few chapters I said that if you add the residing, the life giving, and the putting to death together, you have the leading. These three things added together equal the leading. This is right, but it does not mean that the leading of the Spirit is composed of these matters. It means that the leading is realized in this way. Actually, the residing, the life giving, and the putting to death are the realization of the leading. How do you realize the leading of the Spirit within you? It is by the residing of the indwelling God, by the life giving of such a God, and by your putting to death. In other words, the leading is carried out by God's residing, God's life giving, and our putting to death. But that does not touch the nature, the composition, of the leading of the Spirit.

What is the very essence, the very element, of the leading? Substantially speaking, essentially speaking, the leading is composed with these three elements: the law, the Spirit, and the life.

THE NATURE AND SUBSTANCE OF LIFE

Let us illustrate once again with a dog and a cat. A dog lives a dog's life, and a cat lives a cat's life. Both of them have a kind of leading within them composed of the dog life and the cat life. *Life* refers to some substance with a nature. The dog life has the dog substance with its nature, and the cat life has the cat substance with its nature. The human life has the human substance with a human nature. Even with a human life there is a difference; there is the male life, and there is the female life. The male life has its characteristics, and the female life has its characteristics. These characteristics are mainly the nature and the substance.

THE AUTOMATIC FUNCTION OF LIFE

What then is the law? The law is the automatic function of the life. It is the working principle of the life. A dog life just works that way. There is a law, an automatic regulation and direction. There is an automatic control working in a dog or in a cat or even in a human being. Every dog is led by its life and its law of life. Every cat is led by its life and its law of life. And every human being is led by the law of the human life. More particularly, every human female is led by the female human life with its law. Every human male is led by the male human life with its law. It is hard for a man to live like a lady. He has to perform. When I speak, I speak according to my leading, composed with my male life. When my wife sings or talks, she has her leading composed of her female life. These are natural leadings of natural living creatures including dogs, cats, and human beings.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

But we Christians are wonderful people. We have not only the divine life with its divine law but also a divine person within us. This divine person is the Spirit, and this Spirit bears, or carries, two things: the law and the life. So there is such a term: *the law of the Spirit of life*. The leading of the Spirit is composed with these three things. It is composed with the divine life and with the divine life's law and with the divine person, the Spirit. These three things began to be within us at the time when we believed in the Lord Jesus. Since that time these three things have subsisted in our being. They are here to be

the leading; they are here to be the lead of our life. They remain together in us. These three things are a composition, which we may term *the leading of the Spirit.*

Since the day I received the Lord Jesus, the leading of the Spirit began to remain in me, and it has been there all the days and all the time. If you are a genuine believer in the Lord, I have the full assurance that you also have experienced this. Even while you are sinning, such a thing is there leading. When you go to the department store to buy something, the leading is there. Because in the past we were taught wrongly and instructed superficially, we did not have the knowledge of the existence of such a thing within us, so we just put it down and neglected it and put it aside. We have prayed concerning what kind of tie we should buy or what kind of shoes we should buy. Actually, we do not need to pray, because we already have a leading within us. If you would not seek the outward leading but would take care of this inward leading, you would be clear.

With the sisters the hair style is sometimes a problem. The more you go on with the Lord, the more you may be bothered by your style of hair. But because you have not been taught in the proper way, you would forget about this inward leading. Instead, you would seek and pray concerning your hair style. Eventually, you pick up some kind of leading, and you label it the leading of the Lord. Actually, that is not the leading of the Lord. Actually, the real leading, the genuine leading, is already there. The leading concerning what you should say to people, where you should go, what kind of people you should contact, and how you should respect and honor your parents is already within you. In the past I wasted so much time in seeking after the Lord's leading. Eventually, I found out that those seekings were in vain because the leading was there already.

This is like a dog seeking whether or not it should bark or like a cat seeking whether or not it should catch a mouse. We are not dogs or cats, but we are the sons of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." In the Greek language the expression is very strong. It could read, "These sons are of God." They have the very God who is the Spirit within them. And they have this One's divine life and this One's divine law. These three things—the person, the life, and the law—are within them to be the leading. The leading of the Christian life is nothing less than these three: the person, the life, and the law. Because these three are within you, you do have the

leading. In Romans 8 Paul does not exhort us to seek after the leading. He only mentions the fact. You do not need to seek, and you do not need to receive the leading. The leading is just there.

We have seen that the constituents of the composition of the leading of the Spirit are three: the law, the Spirit, and the life. Now we need to further analyze these three elements. We have to admit that all three are to some extent difficult to analyze because the life is the divine life. It is not our human life. Its nature is different from our human life. Its tastes are different from our human life. Its intentions, its likes, and its dislikes are all different from our natural life. It is absolutely a different life. It is the life of God, the divine life. Every life has its substance, its nature, its tastes, its tendencies, its likes, and its dislikes. This is why to follow the leading of the Spirit is not so easy for us, because we were born of and with the human life. But now another life is within us to be an element of our daily living, and this life is absolutely different from our natural life in its substance, in its nature, in its taste, in its tendency, in its likes, and in its dislikes. So it is not so easy for us to follow this leading.

Among the three, the law is the easiest one for us to follow because it is a kind of automatic power. It really regulates. Sometimes it constrains you. Not only does it forbid you, but it also sometimes constrains you and restricts you. Sometimes it just would not let you go. All of us have experienced that when we were intending to do certain things, there was a strong automatic forbidding within us. There was a strong automatic restriction within us. Something within us restricted us from doing the thing we intended to do. So even though we were not willing to follow, we had no way, no alternative, but to follow, because there was a kind of constraining power within us. That is the law. Our desire and our preference may be so strong that temporarily they conquer the law of the Spirit of life. But eventually the law of the Spirit of life will overcome.

Now we come to the person. This is the hardest thing for us. Do you prefer to have a person living with you all the time? As human beings, we all like to get married, but we all can testify that in married life there is a big problem; that is, there is always another person, sometimes praising you but often interfering with you. Sometimes not only the complaints but also even the praises of the wife are not so pleasant. On the one hand, we like to have a spouse, but on the other hand, we do not like to have someone with us all the

time. There is always the bothering, telling us what to do or telling us how much to eat.

We are different from the dogs and cats and even the unbelievers because we have another person, Christ the Spirit, living in us. It is so bothersome because He, another person, takes the lead. I do not believe many Christians have realized what kind of bothering person the Holy Spirit is. He is really bothering because our intention, our preference, our desire, our aspiration, is always absolutely different from His. This may sometimes cause us to be tired of being a Christian, but we just cannot quit. Whenever we were tired or bored and wanted to quit, Someone said no. He is a real person contradicting us all the day long in the things that we do. Sometimes even in our reading of the Bible, He would not agree with the portion we want to read. He wants us to read another portion.

The leading of the Lord within us is composed with these three elements: a law, a life, and a person. This person is very strong, very unique, very absolute! The longer you go on in the spiritual life, the more you will realize that this is true. If you were saved in a proper and normal way, you probably experienced the leading of the Lord. At the beginning of the enjoyment of God's salvation, you may have been simple and to some extent thorough, so you may have experienced the Lord's leading in a good way. But not many can maintain that normal situation for a long period of time. After that initial period of time of the enjoyment of God's salvation, most drift back and the struggle between them and the inward leading begins. Actually, our Christian life after the initial period of salvation is a struggling life. It is not so simple. Between your desire, your intention, your preference, and your choice, there is such a thing that is termed the leading of the Spirit. The struggle of your Christian life is just your preference struggling with this matter of the leading of the Spirit.

Do not forget that the leading of the Spirit is a composition with three things: a life with a law and a person. Most of the time you have been so strong that even such a composition could not put you down or convince you or overcome you. Most of the time you conquered this composition. Of course, this composition never fights wildly as you may have done. We were not instructed or taught concerning such a leading within us, so we have not had the knowledge concerning the leading of the Spirit. But anyhow it was there all the time with a person.

THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE ALL-INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

It is a very unique thing that the Triune God today as the all-inclusive Spirit indwells you. This is not a small thing. Even to have a strong person stay in your home is something, to say nothing of a strong person who is indwelling your inner part. We have a strong One who is quite active and living and working and speaking and all the time repeating His word within us. He is here within you, and this is the leading. We know this by our experience and by Romans 8:9-11. This person within us is not so simple. He is not just the Spirit. He is the Spirit with the Father, and He is the Spirit with the Son. When He lives here, the other two also are with Him. Eventually, this one is three, and these three are one. Such a One lives in you with His life and with the law of His life to be your leading.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

KNOWING THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT BY PUTTING TO DEATH THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

Romans 8:14 says, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Have you noticed that Romans 8 does not charge us to seek after the leading of the Spirit? It only mentions the fact of our being led. Most of the verses in chapter 8 just speak the facts. Verse 1 says that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. There is no charge. Verse 2 says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death. Again, there is no charge. Verse 3 speaks of God sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemning sin in the flesh.

Verse 4 says that the righteous requirement of the law could be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit. Again, just a fact is mentioned. Verse 6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Again, this is just a kind of mentioning of a certain fact. Verse 7 says that the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, for neither can it be. There is no charge here. Verse 8 says that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Another fact is mentioned.

Verses 9 through 11 say that “you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” In these three verses there are facts mentioned but no charge.

Verse 13 says that “if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” Then verse 14 says that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

In all these verses there is the mentioning of facts, but there is no charge, no commandment, no exhortation.

CONFINED TO ROMANS 8

Through experiences plus much study I have learned one thing: If you are going to enter into Romans 8, you must stay with this chapter. You have to forget about other references. Every other reference is a kind of distraction to Romans 8. You have to confine yourself to Romans 8. Do not bring in the cross references, the inner feeling, or the outward circumstances. Just stick with the leading in Romans 8:14. Otherwise, you may be distracted. You may use verses in Romans 8 other than verse 14, but do not go to other chapters. Later on, you will see why this is absolutely necessary.

Most believers have misunderstood the leading in Romans 8. It is not so easy, once a habit has been built up, to get away from that built-up habit. Sometimes, for example, we say some words habitually. After saying those words, we realize that we said something according to our habit. When we talk about the leading of the Spirit, or the leading by the Spirit of God, we spontaneously understand it in a habitual way. The most damaging thing, and yet such a hidden thing, is our spiritual habit. Over fifty-five years ago I began to seek after the spiritual things, but I did not get the proper help.

Besides the improper help, we ourselves have brought in a lot of religious things from our background. Even before I got saved, I learned a lot of Christian things. But I was not saved until I was nineteen years of age. I was not saved, but I was in Christianity. I attended the Sunday school, and I studied at Christian schools. I heard the Bible stories, and I heard the name of God, and I knew that God was the unique Creator. Even I defended our family's religion, Christianity. I fought against the idols, yet I did not have God. I had God just in my mentality. I had picked up so many things from my Christian background before I was saved, and once I was saved, I put them into my Christian practices.

Also, I brought in a lot of cultural things. So I had the improper help plus the things from my Christian background plus even the best things from my culture. All these things were added into my Christian practices. I loved the Lord, and I was really seeking after Him. Yet I did not get the proper help, so all these three categories of things were added into my practice of the Christian life. When I studied the Bible, I studied with colored eyeglasses. I

had three pairs of "colored eyeglasses": I treasured those eyeglasses. Sometimes I took a lot of notes, and when I studied Romans 8, I would go back to those notes. So my reading of Romans 8 was with this first pair of colored glasses. Another pair of colored glasses was the things I picked up from my Christian background. The third pair of colored eyeglasses was my culture.

Finally, after about ten years I began to realize that these things were not so right, not so genuine. But all of them were good. Not one item was bad. All these things were good, but I began to realize that they were not so genuine. So I spontaneously became a real seeker, seeking after so many things. This was the reason I traveled through many kinds of Christianity: organized Christianity, fundamental Christianity, Pentecostal Christianity, and inner-life Christianity. But in all these regions there was not something to satisfy the inner longing. There was a kind of aspiration within that was not satisfied.

Christianity has been on this earth over nineteen centuries. It has gone through many generations and many regions. It has gone through Europe, through Asia, through America, through most parts of the earth. Whenever Christianity went through a certain section, it picked up something. This was true not only with the Catholic Church but also with the other groups. If you look at today's Christianity, you can see that a lot of things have been picked up since the apostle Paul was on this earth. Most believers think that the things they have picked up are helpful to their Christian life.

UNLOADED TO ENTER INTO ROMANS 8

But if you come to Romans 8 with anything you have picked up, you can never enter into it. You must be unloaded. If you want to enter into Romans 8 and touch its depths, you must be so pure, so clean, and so simple.

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT IN A PURE WAY

The components of the leading of the Spirit are the law, the Spirit, and life. We need to understand these components of the leading of the Spirit in a pure way with nothing added. It should not be the law plus some definition. And it should not be the Spirit with some means or channels or organs to touch the Spirit. It should be just life itself. Although you may consider that you are clear concerning the components of the leading of the Spirit, I would ask

whether you have walked and lived according to these three things. The leading of the Spirit is just the composition of these three things: the divine life plus the spontaneous function of this life plus the divine person who is this law and who is also this life.

These three things all are within us simultaneously. Whether you are a new believer or an aged, experienced believer, they are within you. Whether you feel that you have these three, or you do not feel that you have these three things, they are in you. The divine life is in you, and its function, the law, is in you, and the divine person is also in you. These three can never be separated. They remain all the time together, and they remain in you. These three things remaining in you are the leading. You do not need to seek after a leading, and you do not need to create or build up a leading. Such a leading is in you all the time.

PUTTING TO DEATH THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

If you are willing all the time to put to death the practices of your mortal body, not only is the leading in you, but also you are led. You do not need to seek after the leading, and you do not need to take the leading. As long as you put the practices of your mortal body to death, you are led. It is somewhat like the air. Wherever you go, the air is here. It is with you, and it is in you. You do not need to seek after the air. What many Christians call the leading of the Lord actually is not the genuine leading. It is a kind of leading built up by themselves.

THE GENUINE LEADING

The genuine leading is nothing less or nothing more than the divine life plus its function, the law, and the divine person, the Spirit. These three things, which remain in you all the time wherever you go and whatever you do, are the leading. You do not need to seek to be led. It is in you already. As long as you put to death all the practices, all the deeds, all the doings, of your mortal body, you are led. You are in the genuine leading.

LEADING ACCORDING TO OUR PREFERENCE

Let me say something very soberly and very carefully. If you consider a little concerning your past, you would realize that many of the so-called leadings were not so genuine; they were made up by you. The genuine leading was there, yet you would not take it. You left the genuine leading, and you were

seeking some other kind of leading. Sometimes you even came to the Word in your seeking the Lord's leading. If you needed some leading concerning your marriage, perhaps you read Ephesians 5. So that kind of leading was made up by your choosing of the verses you preferred.

After the leading you found in the verses, you added your prayer, also out of your preference. You read the verses and you prayed, and then it seemed that the Lord's leading was confirmed by your prayer. Surely you got some confirmation because your prayer built up the kind of leading you preferred to have. So the genuine leading was there, but you would not care for it. Sometimes you may have been careful because you heard that God would not do anything in haste. So after reading the verses and after praying, you felt that you should wait a few days. The waiting and waiting eventually strengthened and confirmed the leading you got.

THE INCREASE OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP

Your reading of the Bible, your prayer, and your waiting are all the different steps of your making up a kind of leading. Is this not a picture of your past Christian life? For such a long time you built up a lot of leadings, but the genuine leading was mostly ignored. This is why many have been seeking after the Lord for years yet without much growth. The divine sonship within us did not increase much over the years. In other words, we may have been seeking, studying the Bible, praying, and waiting on the Lord, yet for so many years we did not live a life as a son of God. We may have lived a life that was much regulated and that was much improved, but it was not so much a life that designated us the sons of God. We may have had a lot of improvement and a lot of adjustment, yet we did not have that much growth in life. Our divine sonship did not increase much.

THE LEADING OF THE LORD IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

The four Gospels portray a picture of how the disciples were under the Lord's leading. The leading to the disciples in those days was just the presence, or the stay, of the Lord. The Lord's leading to the disciples was His stay, His remaining, with them. As long as He was there, that was the leading. But if you read the Gospels again with this view, you could see that all the disciples, including Peter and Mary, did not realize the Lord's genuine leading.

For example in John 11, after Lazarus died, Martha and Mary sent the information to the Lord. Do you think that was under the Lord's leading? That was altogether not needed, so the Lord did not respond to that call. Instead, He remained in the place where He was for two more days. Surely the disciples wondered why the Lord Jesus would not do anything. Perhaps they discussed why the Lord would not go to Lazarus. Do you think their wondering and their discussing were under the Lord's leading? Surely that was their "brotherly love." Peter and John and James all had brotherly love, but it seemed that Jesus did not have brotherly love. But then to their great surprise, suddenly the Lord said, "Let us go into Judea again" (v. 7). Right away their response was that the Jews were seeking to stone Him. Again, was their response under the Lord's leading? By reading John 11 you can find very few of the apostles' or the disciples' doings that were under the Lord's leading. Mostly whatever they did and whatever they said were far away from the Lord's leading. They all were distracted. Even Martha got distracted by her religious knowledge. The Lord Jesus had told her that her brother would rise again, and she responded that she knew he would rise again in the resurrection in the last day (vv. 23-24). All these things eventually caused the Lord to weep. The Lord was there, and He was the leading. His presence, His stay, should have meant everything to them. They should not have said anything; they should not have acted in any way. They should have just put to death all the practices of their mortal body.

This must be our attitude also. When our lips want to speak, we have to put them to death. Whenever a part of your body wants to do anything, put that to death. Then you are spontaneously led by the Lord. This kind of description gives us a picture of how much we are out of the Lord's leading. Even in His presence we may do a lot of things contrary to the Lord's leading. Today the Lord is much closer to us than He was to the disciples in the four Gospels before His death and resurrection. At that time He was only among the disciples and outside of the disciples. Today He is much closer; He is within us. His abiding in us is the leading. But we are Martha's and Mary's and Peter's and John's. Do not think that you are better than they were.

Of all those disciples, not one was led by the Lord. Every one of them did something other than the Lord's leading. Even when the Lord was going to call Lazarus out of the tomb, Martha indicated that he was stinking. This means she had a leading according to the circumstances. She knew that four days had passed already. She knew too much. This is a picture of our situation

also. You cannot say that those disciples did not love the Lord. Perhaps they loved the Lord more than we do. They had dropped everything, and they were following the Lord every day. Yet they were ignoring the Lord all the day. Although the leading was there in His person, they were ignoring it. They did not need anything else. They just needed Himself. He Himself is all-inclusive.

STAYING WITH THE LORD

We have to practice putting to death the practices of our mortal body. Then we are led. If He is staying, we stay. If He is drinking, we drink. If He is eating, we eat. We do not ask, and we do not pray, and we do not read His Word to create a leading. It is so strange that the Lord did not answer Martha and Mary's prayer, and the Lord did not tell Peter and John and James what to do. When He wanted to go, He simply said, "Let us go" (v. 7). When He goes, we have to go also. This is to be led.

THE LORD'S SUBJECTIVE STAY WITHIN US

I have the burden to show you how much we have been deceived in the past. Do not put the blame altogether upon the enemy, Satan. We have been self-deceived. We have built up many leadings in the past just by our preferences. The leading is here within us. His stay in us today is very close and very subjective; it is very dear, very precious, very real, and very practical. Yet in our daily life it seems that He is not with us. We behave, we walk, we do things, we see things, we talk. We do not have the deep sensation that the Lord is with us. A person is with us who is more real and more practical than we are, yet we do not have such a sensation.

If my wife and I are together, mostly I do not have the sensation that another One was there already. My wife and I were not the first ones there. We were the second and the third. The first One is He. We do not have this sensation. So when we want to do certain things, we pray for the Lord's leading. Many of us could testify that the more we prayed in this way, the more we were distracted, the more we did not know what was the leading. The more we prayed for the leading, the more the leading was gone. So we all learned the skill of how to build up a leading by reading the Scriptures, by praying and waiting, by checking with the circumstances, and sometimes by asking the Lord for a sign.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE, INDWELLING,

LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT AS THE LEADING

This shows us where we have been and perhaps where we still are. It also describes the genuine leading, which is the processed Triune God to be the all-inclusive, indwelling, life-giving Spirit. With Him is the divine life. With the divine life is the law of the Spirit of life. These three things can never be divided. They remain simultaneously within you. They are the leading. All the time they are leading. You do not need to seek after the leading. As long as you, by His grace, put to death all the practices of your mortal body, you are led by the Spirit.

CHAPTER FIFTY

LED BY THE SPIRIT BY ENJOYING HIS ALL-INCLUSIVE INDWELLING

In this chapter we will consider once more Romans 8:14, which says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." We have come to a point that we can never avoid. If we would know the leading of the Spirit, we must get through the point that we are going to cover in this chapter. You may consider the point of this chapter as something quite common or quite ordinary. But actually it is not that common. You might consider it so common because our understanding of the leading of the Spirit has not been adequate.

The problem is this: most Christians through the centuries have considered that God's leading is just God's action, God's activity. Because you are a child of God, you like to please God. You do not like to do anything by your own way; you like to follow His way. So you pray, asking God the Father to give you a leading that you may follow. This kind of prayer indicates that you consider the leading of the Lord as His action, His activity.

But Romans 8:14 says that the leading is to be led by the Spirit. When you read such a word, you must be alert, and you must pay your full attention to understand it. It does not say that we need the leading of the Spirit. This is something different. To have the leading of the Spirit is one thing; to be led by the Spirit is another thing. Sometimes Christians say that they have a leading from the Lord, but eventually they discover that they went the wrong way. They prayed, they touched their inner feeling, they looked at their outward circumstances. It seems they were fully confirmed that a certain thing was fully from the Lord. But eventually they went the wrong way. This is because our realization of the matter of the leading of the Spirit has not been so accurate. We were taught in the wrong way, so our realization has not been adequate.

By our natural birth we have a tendency to receive this kind of teaching. Some have been taught to seek the leading of God according to three things: the inner feeling, the Word of God, and the outward circumstances. If these

three things line up, that indicates the will of God. Many Christians have heard this kind of teaching. It is easy to understand, and we all have the inclination toward this kind of teaching. We have the tendency to receive this kind of teaching.

A LEADING BY THE LORD

But I am going to fellowship with you concerning one point, which is contrary to your natural tendency. The leading in Romans 8:14 is not a leading *of* the Lord. Rather, it is a leading *by* the Lord. A leading of the Lord is one thing, and a leading by the Lord is another thing. When we had our life-study of Genesis, I stressed strongly that from the first time Abraham was called out, the Lord did not give him any leading. The Lord only told him that he had to leave. The Lord did not tell him how he should go on. In other words, the Lord did not give him any road maps. Abraham's leading was the Lord Himself, a person. This person was with him all the time doing the leading. Abraham was led by the Lord. Abraham did not receive a leading of the Lord. There is a big difference.

ANOTHER PERSON LIVING WITHIN US

In order to understand clearly the matter of being led by the Spirit, we have to realize it is absolutely a fact that we Christians who have believed in the Lord Jesus and have been really regenerated do have another person living within us. You may think that you know this already. But to know this is one thing, and to realize daily, hourly, and even momentarily that you have another One living within you is another thing.

LIVING WITHIN US TO REPLACE US

Now I would like to add a further word: This One who lives within us is not our roommate. This One is to replace us. He has come to live within us, not to be our roommate but to replace us. From now on, it is no longer I, but Christ (Gal. 2:20). Yet He wants to live Himself out of me and through me with my living coordination. So we two become one living person. We become one person with two different lives, one person with two different natures. Even we become one person with two classifications of characteristics. This is hard for us to see. This is not a small thing. When we heard that the Lord Jesus lives within us or that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, we may have considered that we would now have a roommate, a companion. We did not realize that this One is within us to replace us. From now on, it will be no

more I but He who lives within me. The Triune God is now living in us not to be our roommate but to be our life, our nature, our everything, even eventually to replace us. We have to realize the indwelling of the Triune God to such an extent.

LIVING BY THIS REALIZATION

Then we must live by this kind of realization. We must behave ourselves according to this kind of realization. We must live a life all the time taking this One as our living. The indwelling One is within us to be our life, our nature, our everything, and even to replace us. We just need to coordinate with Him.

Let me illustrate further. Suppose you are such a person: you have this One living within you to be your life, to be your nature, to be your everything, to replace you. Now you need to cooperate and to coordinate with this One. If a brother comes to fellowship with you asking for some help, what would you do? You should not say anything without looking to Him. If you say anything or do anything by yourself, without looking to Him, that is your self. That is not to be led by the Spirit. That is something by your self. When a brother comes and asks you to render some help to him, you must look to Him. You should not even say Praise the Lord to the brother without looking to Him. To look to Him means to take Him as your life. It means to take Him as your practical life, as your practical nature, as your everything. You have to build up such a spontaneous habit of asking, “Lord, what would You say?”

Sometimes we may speak spiritual words such as Praise the Lord, or Hallelujah, or Amen, but these are a natural speaking. They are not a speaking by being led by the Spirit. We have to build up a habit to speak every word by looking at Him. I believe by such an illustration we are all exposed. Even in saying Praise the Lord we may be living in ourselves. When we say this, we are not led by the Spirit. We are simply led by certain spiritual sayings. If this is the case, when you say Praise the Lord, spontaneously you leave the Lord aside. Right away you become your life, you become your nature, you become your everything. It is not just a matter of taking the Lord as your boss or your manager or your director. It is a matter of taking Him as the One who is your life, your nature, your everything. Then when you say Praise the Lord, surely that is His saying. You are led by Him.

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE INDWELLING ONE

In the past two chapters we have pointed out that the leading by the Spirit is composed with three things: the Spirit as the person, the divine life, and the law as the divine life's function. This indwelling One today is really everything to us. He is our redemption. He is our human living. He is our salvation. He is our objective justification. He is also our subjective justification. He is our sanctification. He is our everything. So He is our life. It does not mean that the three components of the spiritual leading are only three things. The person is the life, and the life is the law. So when you have this One, you have everything. When you have this person, you have everything. This person who indwells you is your life. He is the life, and He is also the law.

Strictly speaking, you do not need to take care of the life or the law as long as you take care of the person. If you take care of the person, you take care of everything. A person who is all-inclusive is now indwelling you. He is within you all-inclusively. If you have Him, you have life. If you have Him, you have the law of life. If you have Him, you have all the components of the spiritual leading. So what you need to do is just to take care of Him. It is not just to listen to one of His words but to take Himself as your living. When you look at Him, His life right away supplies you the energy. When you look at Him, the law of His life right away works within you and becomes a kind of automatic strength. It is wonderful!

THE GENUINE, TRUSTWORTHY, AND PROPER LEADING

The genuine and trustworthy and proper leading is this kind of leading. It is not a leading as an activity of God, as an action of God, but just God Himself. It is just the Triune God Himself in you to be your life, to be your nature, to be your everything. When you look at Him, He leads, and you are led. When you are led in this way, you know from within that you are living, that you are full of anointing, that you are refreshed, that you are watered, and that the light is within you. You have the comfort and encouragement.

But the other kind of leading—following the inner feeling plus the Word plus the outward circumstances—may leave you still dry, still discouraged, still full of death. It may leave you short of encouragement. All these are signs that that kind of leading was not the genuine leading, because there was no life with it. But the genuine leading that is full of life and freshness and watering and enlightening and comforting and strengthening is the leading that is described in Romans 8:14. You have to underline this short

word *by*. As many as are led by the Spirit, directly by the person, these are the sons of God. This is the leading that we should have. I hope that many of us could receive a clear vision concerning the leading and that we would all pass through the crisis of being led by the Spirit.

A HABIT OF LOOKING AT THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

As we have seen, the leading of the Spirit is just the Spirit Himself who is so practical and so present. So all the time before saying anything, before doing anything, before going to any place, even before thinking anything, we must first look at the indwelling Spirit. You may ask how you can have the turn to do this. The answer is simple: you have to build up a habit. Do not say anything before you look at the indwelling Spirit. Do not do anything before you look at the indwelling Spirit. Do not go to any place before you look at the indwelling Spirit. Even do not think anything before you look at the indwelling Spirit. Supposedly you have already passed through a crisis so that it is no more you who lives but He who lives. It is no more you to be your life, your nature, your everything. But the indwelling One now is your life, your nature, and your everything.

THE BEST LOVE TO THE LORD

We all love the Lord, but I would like to tell you that the best love we can render to the Lord is not doing anything before looking at Him. I do not say looking unto Him. *Unto Him* may indicate that He is far away from you, in the heavens. I mean looking at Him, realizing that He is not only with you but in you. You need such an intimate contact, even such an instant and constant contact, with Him. You must learn to build up such a habit. If we all could live this way, what a revolution it would make in our daily life! Please take this word in a simple way.

A MATTER OF OUR SPIRIT

Now we need to go a step further. In Romans 8 you have the leading by the Spirit. You have the setting of the mind on the spirit. You also have the walking according to the spirit. By experience we could realize that being led by the Spirit is the initial step and, strictly speaking, this is in our spirit. Being led by the Spirit is not something in our mind or in our outward being. It is absolutely a matter in our spirit because the indwelling One is within our spirit. It is in our spirit that the indwelling One leads us.

Following the leading, there is the second step, to set your mind on your spirit. This means do not let your mind go away somewhere else; do not let your mind be distracted; do not let your mind be carried away. It is not only to concentrate your mind but to set your mind on your spirit. Finally comes the third step, walking according to the spirit. This is the outward doing. The outward doing is to walk according to the spirit. First, you are led by the Spirit in your spirit; following this, you set your mind on the spirit; following this, you just walk according to the spirit. This is the Christian walk, and this is the Christian living. This is the living that is led by the Spirit. If this is your case, then you become one of those who, being led by the Spirit, are the sons of God.

Of course, in another chapter we mentioned another group of three things: the Spirit's residing, the Spirit's life giving, and our putting to death the practices of the mortal body. These three things are spontaneously included in these three steps. The residing of the Triune God is included in the indwelling of the One who leads us. The life giving is included in the setting of your mind on the spirit. And the putting to death of the practices of your mortal body is included in the walking according to the spirit. As long as you walk according to the spirit, that really means you put every bit of your natural activity to death. So there are not six steps of the spiritual leading; there are only three. The first step, the initial step, is in your spirit. The second step is in your soul, or in your mind. The third is in your body, where there is the outward doing. These three steps include God's residing in you, His supplying you with life, and your putting to death of your natural activities.

A CLEAR VISION AND PRACTICE

Then we are persons led by the Spirit. Then we are the sons of God. I hope that we all may see a clear vision so that we would pass a crisis. This is the way to take the leading by the Spirit, and this is to be led by Him.

Whether you feel that you can practice this or not, you have to. Before doing anything, before saying anything, before going to any place, even before thinking anything, you must look at Him. You do have another One living with you and in you. Look at Him. Whether you feel that you can look at Him or you feel that you cannot look at Him, just look at Him. Forget about your ability and forget about your disability. Do not consider whether you are able or disabled. Just practice it.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

HOW TO KNOW

THE GENUINE LEADING BY THE SPIRIT

In this chapter we need once more to look into the first fourteen verses of Romans 8. As we have pointed out in the past, verse 14 is a conclusion of this portion of the Word. It is the result of the preceding thirteen verses. We know that this concluding verse is mainly on one matter, that is, the leading by the Spirit of God. The matter of leading is the crucial point in this concluding verse.

Now we have to see all the points in these verses, both on the negative side and on the positive side. Every point is a component of the leading. The leading by the Spirit is composed with all these points. Some are negative, and some are positive. Whether they are negative or positive, all are components for the composition of the leading by the Spirit. Although a number of messages have been given on this verse, still we need to see all the components, all the composing items, of this matter of leading.

THE CONDITIONS FOR HAVING NO CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1 says that "there is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." This is the opening verse. In the concluding verse, verse 14, the crucial point is leading, and in the opening verse the crucial point is condemnation. If you have the leading, that means, practically speaking, you are out of condemnation. Although you may consider that verse 1 stands by itself, you cannot isolate it. You have to connect it to the following verses. Do not think that as long as you are in Christ, there is no condemnation. It is a conditional matter. It is not an unconditional fact that there is no condemnation. What are the conditions? The conditions are in the following verses. If the following verses are not fulfilled in you, the condemnation is still there. If verses 2 through 14 are not being fulfilled in you, you are not in Romans 8. You are in Romans 7.

Romans 7:24 says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Then Paul gives the answer in verse 25: "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the

law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." Are you going to get out of the condemnation? Then you must be in Christ. This kind of being in Christ is not the initial stage. The initial stage of being in Christ is for salvation. It is not for a kind of victorious deliverance such as what Paul needed in Romans 7.

THE CONTINUOUS STAGE OF BEING IN CHRIST

Romans 5:10 tells us that through His death we were reconciled to God, but after that, we are being saved in His life. So Romans 8 indicates a kind of being in Christ conditionally. This is not the first stage, the initial stage, of being in Christ. This is the continuous stage of being in Christ.

To be in Christ is a positional matter. Positionally speaking, every believer who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ and who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit is in Christ. This is a matter of position. But you still may be defeated and sinful, even as that sinful brother was in 1 Corinthians 5. He was a brother, and he was in Christ, but at that time he was in Christ only positionally. Experientially and actually he was out of Christ. Surely he was not living in Christ.

But Romans 8:1 does not refer to that kind of being in Christ. It does not refer to the initial stage of being in Christ. Romans 8:1 refers to the following stage of being in Christ, which is modified by verses 2 through 13. If you have all the following verses fulfilled, then you are in Romans 8:1. Spontaneously, you also are in Romans 8:14. As long as you are under the leading by the Spirit of God, there is no condemnation to you. But if you are not under the leading by the Spirit of God, you are still under condemnation. You have to cry that you are still a wretched man.

Verse 2 begins with the word *for* to tell us why there is no condemnation in Christ. It is because of the law of the Spirit of life. Here you have three components: the law, the Spirit, and life. These three words may be considered as the first three letters of the alphabet used to compose the word *leading*. Here we may consider that the law is A, that the Spirit is B, and that the life is C. The following verses contain the rest of the letters.

In the latter part of verse 2 there are three negative letters of the alphabet: the law, sin, and death. Now we have three positive letters and three negative letters. In verse 3 there is a fourth letter of the negative alphabet, the flesh.

The fourth positive letter of the alphabet is in verse 4: “That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.” In this verse we have to pick up the word *spirit* with a small letter *s*. This is our spirit with the Spirit added to it. This is the mingled spirit.

Verse 5 also begins with the word *for*: “For those who are according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the spirit, the things of the Spirit.” In this verse first we have to pick up *the things*. Here it mentions not only the flesh but the things of the flesh. This is the negative E in our alphabet. In this same verse we need to pick up also the positive E in our alphabet: the things of the Spirit.

In verse 6 is another component, another letter of the alphabet, the mind. Is this positive or negative? It depends upon where it is set. If the mind is set on the flesh, this is a negative mind. But if the mind is set on the spirit, this is a positive mind. So we can add the mind set on the flesh to our list of negative letters of the alphabet, and we can add the mind set on the spirit to our list of positive letters. Then there is the matter of life and peace. So we may add peace to our alphabet on the positive side.

Verse 7 speaks of the mind set on the flesh being enmity against God. Enmity becomes another letter of the negative alphabet. Enmity is something against God. In verse 9 there is another component, another letter, of the alphabet, the Spirit of God. Notice that the Spirit of life in verse 2 is a letter and that the Spirit of God in this verse is another letter. In other words, now you have God. In verse 2 you have life only, the Spirit of life. But now you have God. Of course, this is another positive letter. Verse 9 gives us another component, the Spirit of Christ. You have both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

In verse 10 is another negative letter of the alphabet: “The body is dead.” Here the body is negative because it is a dead body. Because of sin it is dead. In verse 11 is the One who raised Jesus from the dead. This is another positive component. It is not a small thing for Paul to speak of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. Even if Paul had simply said that the Spirit of God dwells in you, there would have been no fault. But he speaks in a more complicated way, a more significant way: “The Spirit of the One who raised

Jesus from the dead." *The One* is a positive component, and the word *dead* is another negative item. The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead.

Verse 12 says that we are debtors. Debtors are not neutral. Surely debtors are on the negative side. In verse 13 there are the practices of the body, another negative item. Finally, in verse 14 there are the sons of God. Of course, this is a positive item. If you mean business to know and to realize what the leading of the Spirit is, you must get into these twenty-two items. First, try to get into the negative items. In the Bible night comes first, and then the day follows. For example, in Genesis 1 there is evening first, and then there is morning (vv. 5, 8). That is one day. So first get into the evening, into the night, that is, the negative items. Then get into the day, that is, the positive items.

YOUR REAL SITUATION AND CONDITION

If you will get into these negative items and even pray-read these negative items, you will see who you were and perhaps still are. You will see in what condition and situation you were and still are. You will realize and you will see your real being. Of these eleven negative letters, two tell us who we were and perhaps who we still are: dead persons and debtors. Then the rest of the nine negative letters tell us something of our condition and our situation. As long as you are even a little bit involved with these nine items of your natural situation, you are not under the leading by the Spirit. The leading by the Spirit is altogether outside the sphere of these eleven negative items.

By this you can see how mistaken Christians have been in their talk about the leading of God. They have thought that they have the leading of God, yet they are still under sin, under the sinful law, even under a kind of spiritual death. They do not have peace with God; rather, they have a kind of enmity with God. Their mind is not on the spirit but rather on the flesh. They have a lot of practices of the mortal body. Yet they think that they are under the leading of God. No! Regardless of how much you think or feel that you are under the leading of God, you are actually outside of it. You are actually far beyond the leading of God, because the leading of the Spirit is altogether something far beyond these eleven items.

You say that you have the leading of God, but are you a living person or a dead person? You say that you have the Lord's leading to do this or to do that, but when you do that, are you a debtor, or are you a released person? Forty to fifty years ago I had many experiences of this kind of thing. At that time I

could even tell people boldly that I had the leading of the Lord, yet truthfully, I felt I was dead. On the one hand, I thought I was under the leading of God. But on the other hand, I had the sensation that I was dead, that I was a debtor, that I was not free. I did not have the peace with God; there was a kind of enmity within me.

We need to remember all these eleven items of negative letters in Romans 8. This will help us to realize whether or not the leading we have is by the Spirit. If the leading is by the Spirit, it surely does not have any of these eleven items. Too many times what we thought was the leading by the Spirit actually was not. Actually, it was composed with some other letters.

LETTERS ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

On the positive side there are eleven letters to spell out the leading of the Spirit. These are such positive components. There is the law of life, there is the Spirit of life, and there is the life of God. There is also the mingled spirit. This is our human spirit mingled with the life-giving Spirit. Then there are the things of such a mingled spirit. There is the mind set on such a spirit. Then follows the peace. Then comes God, the Spirit of God. This means that the Spirit and God, God and the Spirit, are just one. *The Spirit of God* means that God is the Spirit. In the same way *the Spirit of Christ* means that Christ is the Spirit. There is the One, the resurrecting One, who raised Jesus from the dead. So the Triune God is here. The Spirit of life is the Spirit Himself. The Spirit of God is God the Father as the Spirit. And the Spirit of Christ is God the Son as the Spirit. All three are here as the One who raised Jesus from the dead.

THREE ASPECTS CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION

Have you noticed that the New Testament tells us three aspects concerning Christ's resurrection? First, the New Testament tells us that God, that is, God the Father, raised Him up (Acts 2:24, 32). In this case Christ was not active; He was passive because He was raised up by God the Father. But other verses in the New Testament tell us that Christ Himself rose up (1 Thes. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:12). This is not the passive voice but the active voice. Third, the New Testament also tells us that God raised Jesus by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11). These three aspects show us that in the resurrection of Christ, the three of the Godhead were all involved.

SONS IN THE FULL SONSHIP

Finally, there is the matter of the sons of God. We were debtors; we were dead persons. But now we are sons of God. To be a son of God means that we are full of life, that we are in maturity, that we are full of liberty, with no bondage, no debt. We are sons, mature sons of God, sons in the full sonship.

CHECK POINTS FOR THE GENUINE LEADING

The leading by the Spirit is the vocabulary composed with these eleven letters. If you put all these eleven positive items together, you have the leading. Is the law of life in you? Is the Spirit of life in you? Is the divine life, the life of God of which the Spirit is, in you? Do you have a spirit mingled with the Spirit of God? In a sense you do not need to go further. You can just linger here with these four items: the law of life, the Spirit of life, the divine life, and your regenerated human spirit mingled with God the Spirit. As long as you have these four items, you have the leading by the Spirit. Spend some time to pray-read all these items, and they will become your check points.

Whenever you say that you have the leading of the Spirit, you have to check about the law of life, the Spirit of life, the divine life, and your spirit mingled with God's Spirit of life. Just check with these four points. If the leading is genuine, you would have these four points. If the leading is not genuine, you could not get through these four points.

Then you can go on to the things of the Spirit and the mind set on the mingled spirit. Then comes the peace. After these comes the Triune God: the Father as the Spirit, Christ the Son as the Spirit, and the Triune God as the resurrecting One. If you could really get through all these check points, you can be assured that you have the leading by the Spirit.

For years we considered that the way to know the leading of the Lord is by checking the inner sense, by checking the Word of God, and by checking with the circumstances. But now the Lord has shown us a better way. You just need to check with the law of life, with the Spirit of life, with the divine life, with your mingled spirit, with the things of your mingled spirit, with the mind set on this mingled spirit, with peace, with God the Father as the Spirit, with God the Son as the Spirit, with the Triune God as the resurrecting One. In a sense you do not need to check concerning the matter of the sons of God. If you can get through the first ten items, you are surely a son of God.

You must be able to get through all these eleven items. If you cannot, you are not under the leading by the Spirit. This is very clear, and it is accurate.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

A DAILY LIVING UNDER THE LEADING BY THE SPIRIT

The matter of the leading by the Spirit of God has been misunderstood by most Christians. Our understanding is still unconsciously under the influence of our background. We all came from that region where the understanding of the matter of the leading of the Spirit was mostly natural. Very little of that understanding was spiritual.

Recently, I admired some wonderful testimonies concerning the leading by the Spirit of God, but at the same time I had the deep sensation that they were wrong. They were very good, but they were wrong. Your understanding of the leading by the Spirit of God is still wrong. It is wrong in this aspect: you consider that the leading by the Spirit is a matter for activities, for actions, or for business.

What many call the leading of the Spirit is actually a kind of performance. In seeking the Lord's leading you are a kind of dramatic performer. You are not Peter, but you are performing as if you were Peter. You are not Mary, but you are performing as if you were Mary. The real Peter did not perform; he just lived. He simply lived that way. That was his being. Whatever he did was not merely his activities but his living.

THE LEADING BY THE SPIRIT FOR OUR DAILY LIVING

In Romans 8 the matter of the leading by the Spirit is a conclusion of so many points. It is not one among many items. Rather, it is the totality of those many items. It is the conclusion of all those previously mentioned items in verses 1 through 13. So it is a great thing! In Romans 8 there is no hint that the leading by the Spirit is related to activities or works or actions or business. It is altogether related to our daily living. An actor is one who lives one way but performs another way. He may be a young man in his living, but he is performing as if he is an old man. If you would apply this principle of acting or performing to your way of seeking the Lord's leading, you could see that in the past it was like this. You did not live that way, but when the occasion came

up and you needed to do something or to face a situation, you sought the Lord's leading. This kind of leading is not your daily living; it is your acting.

PHILIP'S LIVING

Some might argue that certain instances in Acts indicate that the early apostles received the Lord's leading for activities. For example, there is the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40). After baptizing the eunuch, the Holy Spirit caught Philip away. You might ask, Was that not the Lord's leading? Yes, that was the Lord's leading, but you have to realize that all the day long Philip was under the Spirit's leading. For him to be caught away by the Spirit was not an accident. That was his living. Philip was all the time under the leading of the Spirit, so he did not need to seek after the leading; he was living minute by minute in his daily walk in the leading by the Spirit. The leading by the Spirit was his living; he was taken to the eunuch by the Spirit, and he was also caught away by the Spirit.

PETER'S LIVING

Then you might ask about Peter's case in Acts 10. By the vision that he saw in his trance, he realized that he had to go to the Gentiles. You might ask, Was that not a leading for Peter's activity? I would say no. Rather, Peter all the day long was living and walking in the spirit, and he simply went to the housetop to pray. He lived that way. For him to go to the housetop at his prayer time proves that that way was his living. While he was living in that way, the vision came. So it was not a leading for his activity.

PAUL'S LIVING

In Acts 16 is an example of another person who was altogether living and even dreaming under the leading by the Spirit. While Paul was traveling, the Spirit within was forbidding and prohibiting. Paul was always living under the leading by the Spirit. Paul was a person living by the Spirit; he was not led by the Spirit to have some kind of activity.

The New Testament ministry according to 2 Corinthians 2 is not carried out by activities but by the ministers of the New Testament in their living. They are captives in the triumphal procession of Christ (v. 14). They live a captive life. Paul considered his ministry a life of a captive in the triumphal procession. So whatever he did was not a kind of activity. It was just a kind of

living. To Paul, his traveling about was not a kind of activity. To Paul, it was just the leading by the Spirit. It was the way Paul lived.

If you do not live day after day and hour after hour under the leading by the Spirit, when the time comes for you to make a decision, then you must perform. Not only must you perform; you must even try to force the Spirit to perform with you. Whatever comes out of that kind of situation will not be a part of your living. It will be just an activity because in your daily life you are not so one with the Spirit.

LIVING UNDER THE LEADING BY THE SPIRIT

The Lord's leading is not for outward business or activity; it is absolutely for our living. We must live this way. If you pick up this kind of understanding, it will revolutionize your entire life. I do not mean that we should not have any arrangement for our schooling or any kind of plan for our job or any kind of plan for our business. But the basic principle is this: all the time we should live under the leading by the Spirit. Our arrangements and our plans must be under the leading by the Spirit because we are persons who are altogether living under the leading by the Spirit. Our goal is not to be famous, and our goal is not to be wealthy. Our goal is just to live Christ for the church as God's eternal purpose. Because we need to live on this earth, we need to have a kind of living. We must have some kind of arrangement and plan for our education, for our children, for our job, and for our business. But we should not have this in a worldly way. We must have our plan and our arrangement and all the parts of our daily life under the leading by the Spirit.

LIVING BY FAITH

The New Testament teaches us that whether we have a job or a business or whether we receive the highest education or not, we live by faith. It does not mean that since you have the best education, you would have a successful business, and you would have the best future. Your future eventually is under the hand of the Lord.

I do encourage the young people to get the highest education. But just because you have the highest education does not mean that you will be a successful and prosperous person. A lot of things can happen. Who could have told us that in 1973 there would be an oil embargo that would affect the entire world economy? Who can be sure that he will always be healthy? Our

future is altogether in the hands of our Father. We should not forget that we are really different from the unbelievers. We have a heavenly Father who takes care of us. I can testify that for over fifty-six years my heavenly Father has been taking care of me. Whatever I planned eventually became a failure, but still He was taking care of me.

A BASIC DECISION

As the Lord's children, we just have to love Him and to be one with Him. We have to live the Lord Jesus. Also we have to set our heart on the Lord's interest. We have to tell the Lord, "Lord, on this entire earth I have no other interest. My unique interest and desire is You. I love You because You love me. I want to live You. I want to live under Your instant and momentary leading." This is basic. Dear saints, if you do not make such a basic decision, you can never have the Lord's leading. You must have such a basic decision. You must tell the Lord, "Lord, thank You, You have chosen me, You have predestinated me, You have called me, You have saved me, You have regenerated me, You have brought me to this day, and You have preserved me. Thank You, Lord, by Your mercy and grace I love You. Besides You I have no interests, no desire. I just want to live You, living under Your momentary leading." Dear saints, this is more than basic. If you have not made such a basic decision, you do not need to talk about the leading. You are not in the position to have the Lord's leading. You must make such a decision.

DOING YOUR DUTY

After making such a decision you must simply follow the Lord to do your duty. As a teenager, you need to follow the Lord to study under the care of your parents. Spontaneously, the Lord will arrange a school for you, and your parents will do something for you. You just live under the leading of the Lord. Stage after stage the Lord will lead you to get your education. Gradually, in the same way the Lord will lead you to have a marriage. The Lord will lead you to get a job. The Lord will lead you to pick up some experiences in a trade or in a business. All this is under the Lord's leading.

In your daily living, all these leadings should not be accidents; they should be part of your daily living. Yet you are not trusting in what you have learned or in what you can do for your living. You put all your trust in the Lord Jesus. Our trust is in our Father's hand. You do not need to be bothered and sidetracked by your living. Today the matter of making a living is a big

distraction that carries the Lord's children away from His leading. We must stick ourselves to the Lord's leading. We must take care of the Lord's leading first. Our trust is not in what we do for a living. Our trust is in the hand of our heavenly Father. Then the matter of leading would not be a bothering or a distraction to us. Then you would never choose a job that would give you better pay and yet take so much time away from your seeking after the Lord. You would not care first for the better pay. You would care first for seeking after the Lord. You would live under the Lord's leading every day.

In such a living you do your duty, yet you do not trust in your duty for your living. That is your duty, but that is not your trust. Your trust is in your heavenly Father. This is the right way. Schooling, job, business, or marriage would not be a distraction to you. You just seek after the Lord and live under His leading. And you just do your duty. Your living, your safety, and your future are altogether in His hand. This is the right way. If you live this way, you do not need to seek a certain leading at a certain time for a certain activity. Because you live under His momentary leading, you are clear how you should go all the time.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

BEING FOR LIVING, NOT FOR DOING

Prayer: Lord, how we thank You for Your sovereign mercy that we can still meet in this hall tonight! Lord, how we thank You for the good government that took care of the disaster. And we thank You for the effective work of all the fire stations. We thank You even for the kind care for all the suffering ones by the society. Lord, we do pray for all the suffering ones. Lord, take care of their needs. Comfort them. Even turn their heart to You that they may believe in You and trust in You. Lord, use this disaster to bless the entire city. Lord, help us to learn the lessons of the spiritual life. Lord, thank You for tonight. Thank You for such a time that we could be here in peace, enjoying the safety to seek after You and to get into Your leading. Lord, help us, and inspire every word into our being. In Your precious name, Amen.

POSITIVE ITEMS VERSUS NEGATIVE ITEMS

In this chapter we need to consider once again those items in Romans 8:1-14. We need to see how the items on the positive side are versus the items on the negative side. Of course, the law of the Spirit of life is versus the law of sin and of death. One is a negative law, and the other is a positive law. One is in darkness; the other is in light. One is full of death; the other is full of life. One is of sin; the other is of the Spirit. So these two are altogether contrary.

Next we have the Spirit versus sin. We have seen that sin is just Satan dwelling in our flesh. And, of course, the Spirit is a person dwelling in our spirit. The next items that are versus one another are life and death. The Spirit issues in life, and sin issues in death. Eventually, death will go to the lake of fire, and life will be embodied for eternity in the New Jerusalem.

The next items are the mingled spirit—our spirit mingled with the Spirit of God—and our flesh. Our spirit is quite wonderful because the processed Triune God indwells our spirit and mingles with our spirit. Our flesh, however, is very negative. Eventually, the Bible tells us that our whole fallen being is the flesh. No flesh can be justified before God. That means all fallen men. The flesh first denotes a part of our being. Eventually, it denotes our entire being.

Our entire fallen being is called the flesh. Our spirit is our regenerated human spirit mingled with the divine Spirit. This is not our fallen, deadened spirit but our regenerated spirit.

The things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit are also versus one another. Recently, I illustrated by showing that some things are of God: Christ, the church, the saints, our experiences of Christ, the Word, the Life-study messages, the meetings, and the gospel. Of course, these things are representative; they are illustrations. Actually, the things of the Spirit are many.

The mind set on the spirit is versus the mind set on the flesh. These are not two minds but one mind. But it may be on the flesh, or it may be on the spirit. When it is on the flesh, it is the mind on the flesh. When it is on the spirit, it is the mind on the spirit.

The matter of peace in verse 6 is versus the enmity in verse 7. Peace here is peace with God. In like manner, enmity here refers to enmity with God.

The indwelling Spirit in verse 11 is versus the body, which is dead because of sin. The issue of the Spirit of God indwelling us is life, and the issue of sin being in our body is death. So the Spirit of God is versus the body.

The Spirit of Christ is versus the dead. Verse 9 says that if we have the Spirit of Christ, we are of Him. Verse 11 speaks of the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwelling in us. This means that He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to us. By reading verses 9 and 10 carefully, we can see that there is an implication that the Spirit of Christ is versus the dead.

The Spirit of the One is versus the practices of the body. If you cooperate with the practices of the body, you are against the Spirit of the One. But if you are one with the Spirit of the One, surely you will put the practices of the body to death.

The last pair of items that are versus one another are the debtors and the sons of God. Both of these items are persons. If you are the sons of God, you are heirs to inherit all the riches. If you are debtors, you owe something to God and to man. If you live in the negative line, the result is that you will be a

debtor. If you live in the positive line, the result is that you will be a son of God, inheriting the riches of God.

THE LEADING BY THE SPIRIT BEING FOR LIVING

In the last chapter we pointed out that the matter of the leading by the Spirit is not mainly for certain matters, for business, for activities, or even for actions. It is altogether for a living of a life with God and for God and before God. We Christians should first pay our full attention to our living. This means to our being, to what we are. As believers who are in Christ, we must first pay our full attention to what we are. Our activities and actions are secondary. As long as your being is right, your activities will also be right. In other words, as long as your living is under the leading by the Spirit, then whatever you do as a kind of activity would spontaneously and simultaneously also be under the leading by the Spirit.

If you are a person living a life absolutely under the leading by the Spirit, where you go to school will also be under the leading by the Spirit. But if you are not a person living under the leading by the Spirit of life, it would be hard for you to decide where God wants you to study. It would be hard for you to get clear about God's leading. The leading you receive at that time may not be so accurate. You should not pay so much attention to your activities, to what school you should attend, to what job you should take, to what house you should rent or to buy. As long as you pay your full attention to your living and live a life daily, moment by moment, under the leading by the Spirit, you will be clear. This is basic.

If you are right with such a living under the leading by the Spirit, whatever you say is under the leading by the Spirit. Wherever you go, that is the leading by the Spirit. And whatever you do is under the leading by the Spirit because your entire living is under the leading by the Spirit. If you laugh, that is under the leading by the Spirit. If you weep, that is under the leading by the Spirit. Even when you are angry, it is under the leading by the Spirit. You might ask how we could be angry under the leading by the Spirit. But the Lord Jesus became angry at least two or three times (John 2:14-16; Matt. 23:13-36; Mark 3:1-5). And He was angry under the leading by the Spirit.

A LIVING AS A TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Again I say, the leading by the Spirit is not a matter, strictly speaking, for activities. It is a matter for our daily living. What God wants of us is not a certain kind of business done by us. It is not a certain kind of work accomplished by us. No! What God wants of us is a life, that is, a living as a testimony of Jesus. We have to live a life that is a testimony of Jesus. In other words, we live a life that expresses Christ. Such a life that lives Christ is surely under the leading by the Spirit. So the New Testament says to walk according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). To walk according to the spirit is just to live under the leading by the Spirit. In Greek the word *walk* means to live, to walk, even to have our being. We should walk and live and have our being according to the spirit. This is to be under the leading by the Spirit. As long as we walk this way, and we live such a life under the leading by the Spirit, whatever we do will be also under the leading. Whatever we say will be under the leading.

THE DAILY LIVING

All these twenty-two items do not refer to an activity or to a business. They refer to the daily living or to the daily life. The law of sin and of death is not related to a business or an activity. It is related to your being. It is related to your daily walk and your daily life. Sin also is a matter in life; it is not a matter in business. You may consider that many people sin in business, but you have to realize that they sin in business because they are sinful in their living. If they were not sinful in their living, they would never sin in business. To sin in business is not the root or the basic problem. The basic problem, the root, for sinning in business, is the daily life and the daily living. If you are just a sinful person, living in a sinful way, when you do business, you will surely sin.

Death also is a matter of living. You do not live a life full of life; you live a life full of death. Your daily living is a constitution of death. Death here in Romans 8 is not related to activity, business, school, and so forth. Strictly speaking, it is related to your daily living.

Flesh also refers to your being. You are just a fallen person. You are just a person abominable in the eyes of God. You are a person reprobate before God because you are so fleshly. You even become flesh. This is your living, your being. A person does business in the flesh because he lives in the flesh. If he lived in the spirit, could he do business in the flesh? It is impossible! Whether a professor teaches in the flesh or in the spirit depends upon where he lives. If he lives in the flesh, he will be a professor in the flesh. If he lives in the spirit, he will be a professor in the spirit. So the problem always is not with what you

do. It is always wrapped up with what you are, with your being, with your living.

THE THINGS OF THE FLESH

The things of the flesh also are related to our living. There are so many items related to the flesh because you are a person living in the flesh. When you are a person living in the flesh, your clothing is of the flesh; your eating is of the flesh; even your lodging is of the flesh. Whatever you do and whatever you have is of the flesh because you are just a person living in the flesh. The food for one who lives in the spirit becomes a thing of the spirit. But the same food may become the food of the flesh because you are a person living in the flesh. Because of your living, the things that are related to you are affected. If you are living in the flesh, everything that is related to you becomes flesh.

The mind of the flesh is not mainly for business but for living. The matter of enmity with God is a matter of living. You do not have peace with God; you have something just the opposite. You have a kind of enmity with God. This enmity is not mainly related to schooling, business, jobs, or renting or buying a house. It is mainly related to living, to your daily life before God.

SMALL PERSONS EXPRESSING GOD

Then there is the matter of our body. God intended to have our body as an organ to express what we are. God did not intend so much that our body be an organ to accomplish great things. Actually, according to the Bible, God does not want any giants. God wants a lot of small persons to express God. Whenever a person becomes great, there is a big possibility for him to be ruined. To remain in a situation and condition of being a small person is your protection. It is your safeguard. Many great persons on this earth have been ruined by their greatness. If they are strong in the will, they may make up their mind to preserve themselves but not for God's glory. It is just for their dignity, for their kind of glory.

Small persons like ourselves are protected from corruption and from being ruined. We are protected from being dignified and from being glorified. We are preserved in our condition of being small just to express God. God does not want people to be great, to be dignified, to be glorified. God wants human beings to be small persons who live Him and express Him. Do not try to be great. Do not desire to be great. We have to attract people to Him and give

glory to Him. This is the truth in the Bible. God does not care for our enterprise. God only cares for our humble living as a small person. While the Lord Jesus was on the earth, He was never made great. He never tried to be great. He always remained in His smallness.

The New Testament does not teach us to be successful in enterprises or in activities. Many consider that Paul was the greatest apostle. But if you read the New Testament, it seems that he did not succeed in his work. First, he was arrested and put into prison; then he was martyred. Even before he was martyred, he said that all who were in Asia had forsaken him (2 Tim. 1:15). This means that all the saints in the churches in Asia had rejected Paul.

I never saw Brother Watchman Nee trying to be great. We who had gotten much help from him always expected he could do a bigger work. But eventually, the Lord let him stay in prison for twenty years where he died. But there was a life, lived out by such a low and small man, that gave glory to God. That expressed the very God whom we serve.

In Romans 8 there is no hint that would help you know the leading of God concerning your big enterprise. If you are seeking for this kind of leading, you will be fully disappointed. How then could you know where you should go to school? How can you know what major you should take? It is by living in the spirit all the day. It is by living under the leading by the Spirit all the day. Then spontaneously you would know. This matter of the leading becomes a kind of habitual thing in your daily living. It could never be a kind of accident that happens all of a sudden. No! There is not such a leading by the Spirit. The leading by the Spirit is a matter of our daily living. This is something spoken from the negative side. Now let us look at the positive side.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE FOR LIVING

No doubt, the law of the Spirit of life is for living. And life is for living. Every item is for living. The regenerated spirit is for living. God regenerated our spirit for us to live a life, not for us to be someone great. The things of the Spirit and the mind set on the spirit are also items of our living.

PEACE BEING FOR LIVING

The matter of peace also is something of the living. If you do not have peace, that is a sign that you are not under the leading by the Spirit. If you do not have peace with God or with your wife or with your husband or with your

neighbor or with people on the street or with your own thinking or your own emotion or your own love, that is a sign that you are not under the leading by the Spirit. If you are under the leading by the Spirit, you have peace with God, with everyone, and with every matter.

You will have peace even with yourself, with your thinking, with your loving, with your hating. Your inner being will become so tranquil. There will not be even one wave within you. There will be no storm, just absolute peace within and without. If you do not have such an absolute peace, that is a red signal. That is not a green signal. The green signal on your spiritual way is peace. If you do not have such a signal, peace within you in everything, you have to realize at that very moment you are not under the leading by the Spirit. All this is a matter of living. The leading of the Spirit or by the Spirit is altogether for living.

THE TRIUNE GOD BEING FOR LIVING

Then the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the One comprising all three of the Trinity are also matters of living. Eventually, if you live such a life with all these conditions, you are a son of God having the life of God, having the nature of God, having peace with God, living Him out, living for Him, living with Him, and living before Him. So you inherit God's joy and God's peace. You inherit whatever God is and whatever God has. You also inherit whatever God is able to do. Eventually, you will inherit much more. You will progress from being a son to being an heir. Then you will not have any sense or consciousness that you owe anything or anybody. You are not a debtor but a son of God.

PRAYING YOURSELF INTO THESE ITEMS

All these points prove that the leading by the Spirit is a matter of daily living. I have received much help by considering all these items. I would encourage you to pray-read all these items into your being and to pray-read yourself into all these items: "Lord, infuse me with the law of the Spirit of life. Infuse me with the life. Infuse me with the regenerated spirit, with the mingled spirit." This kind of prayer or pray-reading will help you a lot. It will help you to live such a life. And it will help you to bring your entire being in your daily life under the leading by the Spirit. Then whatever happens to you, it will be so easy for you to have the leading. If you are faithful and not doubting and not analyzing, it will be so easy for you to have the leading. If

you will just believe, you will be clear. Then every situation and every happening will spontaneously be clear to you. You will see what is under the leading by the Spirit and what is not. You will not need to seek this or to seek that. You will be entirely under the leading by the Spirit. Of course, to say this is very easy, but to live such a life will cost you something. You have to pay a price.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

THE GENUINE AND PROPER LIVING OF THE SONS OF GOD

As Christians today, we all have been very much influenced in our human culture by religion. Even those who claim to have no thought about religion, the atheists, cannot stay away absolutely from the influence of religion. As long as you are a human being, born as a descendant of Adam and living on this earth, you are under the influence of religion. Religion is a very big matter. Even in the constitution of many countries, there is a part concerning religion. Religion is so common to human culture. It is natural to human culture. In a sense, religion is more natural than marriage. In human history and among human societies a good number of persons were never married. But no one has ever escaped the influence of religion. Religion is a big influence. I would liken the influence of religion to a thick, strong box. All the descendants of Adam have been put into this box.

Although we have given more than twenty-five messages on Romans 8, it may be that you still consider Romans 8 as something religious. For example, when we talk about the leading by the Spirit, spontaneously you may consider that you need to seek after the Lord's leading concerning a business trip or concerning getting married or concerning what school you should attend. This is the religious understanding. To consider that the leading by the Spirit is just a matter of our activities, our actions, our programs, our enterprises, our education, our housing, or our car, is just according to the religious understanding.

MORE THAN ONE KIND OF LIVING

I am afraid that many of the brothers and sisters have at least three kinds of lives—the family life, the church life, and the meeting life. Are you the same in your home life, in your church life, and in your meeting life? It might be that you talk one way at home but then talk another way in order to prepare yourself for the meeting. This means that your living in your home life is one way, and your living in the meeting life is another way. When you read the newspaper, you may live in one way, and when you read a Life-study message, you may live in another way. You may consider that the Life-study messages

bring you into the Lord. If so, this means that when you read the newspapers, you are outside the Lord. So you have two lives, or two livings. One is in the Lord, and the other is not in the Lord.

As a little minister of the Word, whenever I am speaking, I am also exercising simultaneously to sense the condition of the dear saints who are the listeners. The more I speak in these Perfecting Meetings, the more my realization is that the speaking may make the audience more religious. In other words, I am afraid you may understand what we are speaking on Romans altogether in a religious way. Why? Because you do not apply what you have heard in this meeting to your home life. You do not apply what you have heard in these meetings to all the small avenues of your daily living. You do not apply what you have heard in these meetings to some of the corners of your private life. It may be that you have applied some of the points to your living. But your kind of application makes the speaking religious.

A DEFINITION OF RELIGION

In the past we have given a definition of religion. Religion is to do something for God, to worship God, yet without the Spirit. Now I would add something more to this definition of religion. When we say something is religion, we also mean that you have more than one way to live in your human living. In one of the ways for living, you do not apply the spiritual teachings to your life. You live a life without God. You just live it by yourself. But because you are religious and you are loving God, you would not do anything grossly sinful. This means that in your living there are two sections: one is the secular section. It is not bad or sinful. The other is the religious section.

It seems that with your human life there is the outer court, and there is the sanctuary. Some of the things you do in the outer court, and other things you do in the sanctuary. In the meeting you are all very religious, but when you are dismissed, the religious atmosphere changes. It becomes only a little better than the atmosphere at a ball game. This means that unconsciously you have made the spiritual things from Romans 8 religious. All these things have not become your living. They are still in the realm of your performance. As long as you make a spiritual thing only a section of your daily living and not your whole daily living, that is a performance. That is religion. Today human society everywhere is filled with performance. Politeness is performance. In the offices and in the schools people are nice and polite and regulated. But if

you go into the back room, and if you check their weekend life, you may see something different.

Sometimes a brother may act one way with the brothers at the meeting and another way with his wife at home. With the brothers he is so gentle and nice, but he may treat his wife as if she were a slave. This means that he has two ways of living. One way is the way of living with his wife, and the other way is the way of living with the brothers in the church.

THE GENUINE AND PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE

We must be those all the time living our life in one way. Whether we are at home, in the church matters, or in the meeting, we live our life one way. Most of the brothers do not apply Romans 8 to the way they talk to their wives. I do not mean that the husbands are mean or bad. They may be very gentle and very nice, but their gentleness is not according to their application of Romans 8. If you do not apply Romans 8 when you talk to your wife, the Perfecting Training has been in vain. It has been mainly helping you to be more religious. Romans 8 is altogether a chapter on the genuine and proper Christian life. It is an extraordinary chapter. Its style, its composition, and the way of its presentation are altogether extraordinary. The more you get into it, the more you would appreciate it in this way.

Romans 8 is not a chapter full of teachings. It is just a mentioning of a life, or of a living. It shows the genuine living of a collective people who have the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—to be such an all-inclusive life-dispensing Spirit, dispensing Himself all the day long into their tripartite being. This is to saturate their spirit, their soul, and their body. This is to transform them and to build them all together into one Body. This chapter describes such a people. As such a people, they just live.

LIVING AS SONS OF GOD

All the human beings are genuine descendants of Adam. Whether we are American, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Indonesian, French, or English, we are genuine descendants of Adam. We are born of him, and spontaneously we all live a life of Adam.

But when you come to Romans 8, after the first thirteen verses, it says, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” In other words, they are descendants of God. No human beings have to perform to live a life

of Adam. Their politeness and other things are a performance, but their genuine daily living is not a performance. That is a living of Adam. We are sons of God. We have a new birth. We have a new life and a new nature. Even we have been made a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). So, on the one hand, we are descendants of Adam, the sons of Adam. On the other hand, we are the sons of God.

The problem is here: Do we live as the sons of God or as the descendants of Adam? Romans 8 is not a kind of teaching or exhortation or charge. It is just a depiction of the living of the sons of God. These sons of God are still a tripartite man. They have a spirit, they have a mind representing the soul, and they have a body.

Also in this depiction, it shows us how God has been processed, and after this process He as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is now the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit indwelling our spirit to saturate our entire being with what He is. He is indwelling us to infuse us with all His being so that we may become His sons to live as He lives, to have a living not as the descendants of Adam but as the sons of God. As such, we are led all the day by the Spirit of God. This is a living not just in the meeting and not just in the church life. It is not a living just in the time of pray-reading or in the time of studying the Bible. It is a living all the time. We just live this way.

THE LAW OF LIFE BEING A PERSON

We need to consider once again the eleven positive items in Romans 8:1-14. The first item is the law (v. 2). This law is the law of the Spirit of life. We have pointed out in other chapters that the law of the Spirit of life is just the Triune God working, operating, moving, and anointing within us. He is the law. So the first item of the positive things is a person working within us as a law. Most Christians have never realized that the law of the Spirit of life is the Triune God, a wonderful person. Too many times when Christians talk about the Spirit, they do not consider a person. This person who is the Spirit is not only the Spirit, but He is also the Triune God.

The second item is the Spirit, and the third is life (v. 2). This person who is working within us as the law is the Spirit. He is also the life within us. He is the law, He is the Spirit, and He is the life. All three are one person. *The Spirit* denotes mainly the person; *the life,* this person's life; and *the law,* the function of His life. Every life is a law. Animal life is a law; plant life is a law.

The peach life is a law. No one teaches the peach tree to bring forth peaches. The peach life is a law regulating the peach tree to produce peaches. Every animal has a life, and that life is its law. Even our human life is a law. So actually, the law, the Spirit, and the life all refer to the same person. This same person is the law, He is the Spirit, and He also is the life.

OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

Fourth, there is the spirit (v. 4). This means our human spirit. Today this spirit is not merely our human spirit. It is our spirit mingled with the life-giving Spirit. It is mingled, strengthened, enriched, uplifted, and empowered by and with the divine Spirit. If you fully realize that the Triune God is within you as the law, that you have His Spirit, that you have Him as the life within you, and that now your spirit has been strengthened, empowered, enriched, and uplifted by and with the Spirit, surely you would be beside yourself.

THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Next are the things of the Spirit (v. 5). Following this, is the mind set on the spirit (v. 6), followed by the peace (v. 6). After this you come to the Spirit in three aspects: the Spirit of God (v. 9), the Spirit of Christ (v. 9), and the Spirit of the resurrecting One (v. 11). These are not three Spirits but one Spirit with three aspects: the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the resurrecting One. Finally, there are the sons of God (v. 14).

Are these items of religion? Are these items for our activities or a program? No! These are the items for us just to live a life. These are for us to live everywhere and at every time. These are for us to live a meeting life, a church life, and a home life. Our living is constituted with all these constituents.

We do not need teachings or exhortations, but we need to see all these constituents of our genuine and proper living as sons of God. We do not need to try to live this way, but we need to realize all these items. My! A law who is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is working, operating, moving, and anointing within us! This must be the first constituent of our Christian living. We must have our living thoroughly saturated with this law. We should not apply this law simply to certain parts or sections or avenues of our living. To apply this law only to certain sections of our life is to be

religious. It would not give us the proper and genuine Christian living as sons of God. We need a living as the sons of God.

For us to have such a living, the first thing we must see is that the law within us is a person. He is within us all the time working and anointing and living and moving. Also we have the Spirit, and we have the life. We also have a wonderful mingled spirit within us. So we surely can have the things of such a wonderful Spirit. Our mind should be on this spirit. Then we have peace. Following this we experience and enjoy and participate in the wonderful Spirit in three aspects: the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the resurrecting One. *The Spirit of God* indicates the origin, the source—the Originator and the Father. It is the Spirit of that Originator, of that Planner. *The Spirit of Christ* indicates the Spirit of the One who has gone through all the processes to accomplish and to finish whatever the Originator has planned. *The Spirit of the One who raised* indicates the One who has brought everything that the Father planned and that the Son accomplished into our being in resurrection. Otherwise, Paul would not have used interchangeably different expressions denoting the same Spirit.

SONS OF GOD

The issue of the experience of all these items is that we are sons of God. We are such a constitution. This is not an activity or something of religion. This is not a kind of performance. This is the spontaneous, genuine, and proper living of the sons of God. In such a living there is no need to overcome sin. We are far away from sin. Sin is in another world, and now we are in this world, in the kingdom of the sons of God. In our kingdom there is no sin. Satan is in his kingdom, and we are in our kingdom. We are the sons of God. Do we need to seek holiness? No! Our God, the triune One, the processed One, the One who has become such a life-giving Spirit, is our holiness. He is our everything. We are the sons of God inheriting all that He is.

This is the genuine living of the proper Christian life, of the sons of God. If this is our way of living, we are not religious. We will not have different kinds of living in our home, in our school, in our office, in the church life, or in the meeting. Our living in all those places will be exactly the same. It will be the genuine and proper living of the sons of God.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

THE TRIUNE GOD AND OUR REGENERATED HUMAN SPIRIT

In Romans 8 there are eleven positive items that may be considered as the components of the spiritual leading. When we experience these eleven items, we are sons of God led by the Spirit of God. Actually, these eleven items may be divided into three groups of three items each plus two other items. The first group is the group of the law, which is composed of the law, the Spirit, and life (v. 2).

The second group is the group of our regenerated and mingled spirit. This group contains the human spirit, the things of the Spirit, and the mind set on the spirit (vv. 4-6).

The third group is the group of the Trinity. The Spirit of God, no doubt, is the Spirit of the Father (v. 9). The Spirit of Christ, of course, is the Spirit of the Son (v. 9). The Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead should be the Spirit in the Godhead (v. 11).

So there are three groups: the group of the law, the group of the mingled spirit, and the group of the Trinity. If we live by these three groups, we have a tenth item, peace (v. 6). Peace is a condition we have by living in such a way. There is also a result—the sons of God (v. 14). The condition of such a living is peace, and the result is the sons of God.

Actually, these eleven items do not refer to a very complicated, confused, and mixed-up situation. Rather, they reveal to us a simple life. Life is always simple. When you study it, it seems complicated, but when you live it, it is so simple. To understand our physical body is very complicated, but simply to live in our physical body is so simple. Even little children who do not know very much can live quite well.

Romans 8 is a thorough study of our spiritual life. No other chapter in the New Testament reveals the spiritual life so much in detail as Romans 8. The spiritual life is just a life filled with the Triune God. In Romans 8 the Triune

God is referred to repeatedly in different ways and in different manners. Even *the law of the Spirit of life* implies the Trinity.

THE GROUP OF THE TRINITY

In the last group, the group of the Trinity, the title *the Father* is not mentioned. But *the Spirit* is used three times: the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. This threefold mention of the Spirit surely indicates strongly the Trinity of the Triune God. Even in the sequence you can see the Trinity. Why is the Spirit of Christ not mentioned first? Why is it mentioned in the middle of the three? First is the Spirit of God, referring to God the Father; second is the Spirit of Christ, referring to Christ the Son; and third is the Spirit of the One, referring to the Spirit of the Godhead.

THE GROUP OF OUR MINGLED SPIRIT

Such a life filled with the Triune God is one that is lived through our human spirit. This brings us to the second group. The second group is the group of our mingled spirit. In this group there is our human spirit mingled with the life-giving Spirit. Our spirit is mingled by and with the Spirit. Then there are the things of the Spirit, that is, the mingled spirit. The things of the mingled spirit are the things of God. The mind set on the spirit is a mind that is minding Christ. Even in the Bible you have such a term as *the mind of Christ* (1 Cor. 2:16). By this you could see that the Trinity is wrapped up with our mingled spirit. Our spirit is mingled by and with the Spirit. And the things of such a Spirit are the things of God the Father. The mind set on such a spirit is the mind of Christ.

THE GENUINE AND PROPER CHRISTIAN LIFE

The spiritual life, or the Christian life, is just one filled with the Triune God, and it is one wrapped up with our human spirit. This kind of teaching is very subjective. It is just the believers and God living together. Romans 8:1-14 does not touch other items, such as holiness or victory or humility or kindness. In a sense these are trivial matters in the spiritual field.

Rather, this chapter reveals to us that a genuine and proper Christian life is just one filled with the Triune God who is wrapped up with our regenerated spirit. If you take care of these two points, you are under the leading by the Spirit. You know you are under the leading by the Spirit because you have

peace. When you have a life filled with the Triune God who is wrapped up with your spirit, you have peace. Anytime and anywhere, under any kind of situation, you have peace. By this peace you know that you are living with the Triune God, and you are under the leading by the Spirit.

SONS OF GOD

As such a person, you surely are a son of God. You are no longer merely a son of Adam but a son of God. To become a son of God having a life filled up with the Triune God who is wrapped up with our human spirit is a matter of sanctification or even transformation. By beholding and reflecting with an unveiled face as a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18). This means into the image of the glory of the Son of God.

There is one thing I have to make clear: If you say that we could become a part of the Godhead as an object of worship, that is blasphemy. But if you say that we could be made like God in life and in nature, not as an object of people's worship, this is altogether right. The Bible says that we will be like Him (1 John 3:2) and that we were begotten of Him (John 1:13). That surely means we have His life and His nature (2 Pet. 1:4). How then could you say that we are not the same as God? To say that believers of Christ could not be like God is like saying someone who is born of a man could not be like a man.

In Romans 12:2 Paul uses the word *transformed,* and in Romans 8:29 he uses the word *conformed*. God's goal is to conform us, that is, to make us the same in form as His firstborn Son. His firstborn Son is the mold, like a mold used for making cakes. Christ is our mold, and we are the pieces of dough. We have been put into Christ, and God is molding us. Today you are under God's molding. God is conforming you to the image of His firstborn Son, making you the same as He is.

A LIFE FILLED WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

The genuine Christian life is one filled with the Triune God. Forget about trying to be victorious or powerful or dynamic or full of impact. Take care of being filled with the Triune God. This Triune God is wrapped up with the believer's regenerated spirit. If you take care of these two things—of having a life filled with the Triune God wrapped up with your regenerated spirit—this is the genuine and proper Christian life. If you live such a life, you will have

peace in every place and with everyone. You will have peace, and you are a son of God. This is a thorough description of the meaning of the leading in Romans 8:14.

There is no need to ask someone what style of haircut you should have or what style of clothing you should wear. The local church code is just the Triune God wrapped up with the regenerated spirit! Our style is according to this code. Our haircut is according to this code. Our clothing is according to this code. Everything we do is according to this code, and we live this code. This is our leading.

In Romans 8 the Triune God is involved as a law, as the Spirit, and as the life. He is also involved with our spirit and with the things of Himself. He is involved with so many things that are of Himself. He is involved even with our transformed, renewed mind, which becomes the mind of Christ. He is also involved with the Spirit in three aspects: the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the One. The Christian life must be a life altogether and thoroughly involved by and with such a Triune God.

We have to spend so much time on this one thing because in the past we have picked up too many teachings of how to be holy, how to be humble, how to be loving, how to be victorious, and so many other "how to's." But we have not realized that the genuine "how to" is simply the Triune God wrapped up with our human spirit. This is the real "how to." This is the way to be holy. This is the way to be victorious. This is the way to be humble and kind. This is the way to love your wife and to submit yourself to your husband. This is the way to take care of your children and to honor your parents.

The Triune God in us, the believers, is the law that works spontaneously. He is the Spirit, and He is the very life. He is one with our spirit. He is the very source and foundation of all the things related to our human spirit. He becomes the very element of our mind. He is the Spirit in three aspects: He is the Spirit as the Father; He is the Spirit as the Son; He is the Spirit as the resurrecting One.

This is the way for everything in our Christian life. You do not need to see some other way. There is only one unique way, the Triune God. This is the Triune God wrapped up with our very inner being. This is the leading by the Spirit of God, and this is also our living. This is the life that we live.

THE NEED TO SEE SUCH A LIFE

My burden is just to show you and to present you such a life. We all need to look unto Him for His mercy that He would grace us to see such a life. Just a little seeing of this life is adequate for you to live such a life.

By this kind of understanding or apprehension you can surely realize how wonderful the Christian life is. It is not a matter of learning some teachings. It is altogether a matter of the Triune God. Many Christians call God the living and true God. Yes, in the Bible Paul does call God the living and true God (1 Thes. 1:9). But today many believers who call God the living and true God do not realize that this living and true God is involved in Romans 8 as the Triune God wrapped up with our spirit.

We must see that our Christian life is nothing but the Triune God mingled with our regenerated spirit. This is our life, this is our living, and this is our leading. This is a way without any struggle, without any strife. It is a way full of rest. It is without our own endeavor and without our doing. In this kind of life you will praise Him all the day long. You will be filled with praying, with singing, with praising. Even the Bible will be a new book to you. Every page will be new. Romans 8 will be so new to you every day. You will be under the leading by the Spirit. I surely hope that we all would see this.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

THE MYSTERIOUS AND ABSTRACT WAY OF THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT

Prayer: O Lord Jesus, You are our God and our Lord. We praise You that You have a people on this earth seeking after Your heart and coming together week after week. Lord, we thank You for such an audience. We trust in You that You would speak to us afresh in a new way. Lord, we need Your understanding. Grant us the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of understanding. Bring us into the depths of Yourself. Lord, we want to see some things here. We want to see something in Your depth. Lord, grant us the view. Grant us the sight. Grant us the inner light. Grant us even the utterance. We need Your expression. Lord, cleanse all of us. Lord, remember that we are weak vessels. We need Your strengthening. How we need You to strengthen our physical body. We need the strength in our body to match the need of the Spirit. Lord, do make every one of us so alive and vigorous. Lord, we trust in You, and we worship You. We worship You for such a fellowship in this dark age. In such a dark age You still separate us unto Yourself, unto Your Word, unto Your purpose, and unto Your eternal economy. Thank You, Lord, we are in it. Be with us through all the meeting.

THE LAW OF LIFE, OUR SPIRIT, AND THE TRIUNE GOD

In the last chapter on Romans 8:1-14 we saw three groups of three things plus one condition and one result. The first group is the group of the law, including the law, the Spirit, and life. The second group is the group of our human spirit mingled with the Spirit, including our spirit, the things of the Spirit, and the mind set on the spirit. The third group is the group of the Triune God, including the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the One. When we experience these groups of things, we enjoy a condition of peace. We also experience a result, being sons of God led by the Spirit of God.

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

The burden of this chapter is mainly to spend time concerning the first group, but before we get into that, we would like to spend more time concerning the second group of things. In the second group there are three things that are very mysterious. The first item of the second group is what we

call the mingled spirit. This is not merely the Spirit of God nor merely our human spirit. This is the spirit that is the mingling of our human spirit with the Spirit of God. This is a mystery.

Romans 8:4 is difficult to translate. It has been hard for the translators to make a definite decision whether *spirit* in Romans 8:4 refers to the Spirit of God or to our human spirit. Some versions of the Bible render *spirit* in Romans 8:4 with a small letter *s*, indicating that the spirit is our human spirit. Other versions, such as the King James Version, render *spirit* with a capital *S*, indicating that it refers to the Holy Spirit. In his note on Romans 8:9 J. N. Darby refers to the same problem: "An instance of the difficulty of putting a large or small 'S.' It is clearly the state and characteristic of the believer; but it is so by the presence of the Spirit."

Since coming into the Lord's recovery, you have heard this term, *the mingled spirit*. But I am afraid that this term, *the mingled spirit,* may be just a kind of teaching or theology to you. For example, some today recite the Apostles' Creed, and others recite the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, as a kind of religious practice. I am afraid that your realization of the mingled spirit may be somewhat like this. This matter of the mingled spirit is not just some vain teaching. It is a fact that is too great! The fact is that the Spirit of God is not only living and true, but He is within you. Not only is He within you, but He is also mingling Himself with your spirit to make your spirit and Him one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). If you could realize this in a thorough way, you would be excited. It is not a small thing. This is a very complicated matter. It is not a complication with two small things involved. It is a universal and great complication with God's Spirit and our spirit involved. Today these two spirits are just one (v. 17).

Although, according to your knowledge, you may be bold to tell me that your spirit is mingled with God's Spirit, I am concerned to look at your living. How do you live? Do you live a life by your spirit mingled with God's Spirit, or do you live a life by something else? I am afraid that this fact of the mingled spirit is in your understanding but not in your living. The fact of the mingled spirit, our spirit mingled with God's Spirit, must not be merely our theology. This must be our reality in a living way.

When I talk to my wife, I want to have the assurance that I am talking to her by my spirit mingled with the Spirit of God. This afternoon in a little

prayer time with my wife, I praised the Lord that today He is not only the living and true God, but He is mingled with our inner being. He is the Spirit mingled with our innermost being, and this innermost part of our being is our spirit. In my prayer I said to the Lord that this seems quite mysterious, but it is a fact. It is a fact not only revealed in the living Word but also realized by our experience. In our experience I cannot deny such a fact. Without such a fact my living would be altogether another way.

All of us have to realize that there is such a fact that our spirit is mingled with God's Spirit. We have to realize this is a fact that has been wrought into our being. This is a fact that is wrapped up with our innermost being. This is a big involvement and a big complication.

THE THINGS OF GOD

In this group of three, the second item is the things of God. Those who are according to such a mingled spirit mind the things of God. This brings in more complications. First there is the complication of the mingled spirit, and now there are the things of God. We Christians have the poor habit of understanding and taking the Bible for granted. We simply take for granted a phrase such as *the things of God*. What are the things of God? To understand the Bible, you must interpret every phrase according to the context. According to the context in Romans 8, *the things of God* does not refer to things like creation. In Romans 8 such a term is related to all the things concerning Christ.

This can also be proved by 1 Corinthians 2:10-11: "To us God has revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God." If *the things of God* referred to things like the creation, we would not need the Spirit of God to know them. But these verses indicate that the things of God are not known by man but by the Spirit of God. To know the outward things such as the creation, we do not need the Spirit of God. To know the invisible things of God, we need the Spirit.

All the invisible things of God are embodied in Christ. Christ is the reality of all the things of God that are invisible. These are the things of God that we cannot know apart from the Spirit of God. Verse 12 says, "We have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know

the things which have been graciously given to us by God." The things graciously given to us by God are not the outward things such as the heavens and the earth. The things graciously given to us by God are the things concerning Christ.

THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Verse 14 says, "A soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually." Here Paul inserts something into the phrase *the things of God*. He inserts *of the Spirit*. First, they were things of God. When these things have been revealed to us and become our experiences, they become the things of the Spirit. So Romans 8:5 says that those who are according to the mingled spirit mind the things of God.

THE THINGS OF CHRIST

Again I would point out that all the things of God are things concerning Christ. These things of Christ include God's selection, His predestination, His redemption, His justification, His reconciliation, His regeneration, His transformation, His sanctification, His conformation, and His glorification. All these items are the things of God. We need to have such a realization and appreciation of all these things of God. For example, conformation is just one item of so many things of God. According to our experience, this is the Triune God wrought into our being, making us the same as Christ.

You have to learn how to mind the things of God, such as how God selected you before the foundation of the world. Sometimes you need even to pray in this way, worshipping, praising, and thanking God by enumerating all these items: "O Father, thank You for Your selection. How wonderful that I was selected by You before the ages in eternity without a beginning!" Use more time to qualify your praises and your worship. After this you may pray, "Father, not only have You selected me, but You have also predestinated me in Your Son. This transpired before the foundation of the world."

Do you want to be holy and spiritual? The way to be holy and spiritual is to worship God with these kinds of praises. If you would worship God for a period of time with this kind of praise, you would see how holy and spiritual and heavenly you would be. To go from His selection to His reconciliation might take you forty-five minutes. You should not "drive your car of praise"

too fast. If you are going to have a good sightseeing, you cannot drive so fast. You have to drive slowly so that you can enjoy all the scenery. Spend some time to worship God by enumerating all the items that you have been enjoying of Christ. These are the things of God. To mind these things is to mind the things of God. All these things, no doubt, bring you back to the source, that is, the Father.

THE MIND SET ON THE THINGS OF GOD

After this there is the third item, that is, the mind set on the things of God. The things that you are praising for become your enjoyment and become a base, a ground, for you to set your entire soul on. You have to set your mind on these things. Do not set your mind on your checking account or on your new car. Sometimes after brothers and sisters have bought a new car, their mind has really been set on the car for at least a month. They muse on the car. They like to look at it and to touch it and to consider it and to wash it. This is to set your mind on a car. You have to turn your mind. When you are washing your car, forget about the car. Set your mind on the things of God. This is the wrapping up of all the things of God with your inner being.

First, your spirit is mingled by and with the Spirit of God; then it is wrapped up with all these things of God concerning Christ. If your mind is set on all these wonderful things of God concerning Christ, you would surely be a wonderful person—filled up with Christ and saturated with all the things of God. These are the three items of the second group.

THE LAW, THE SPIRIT, AND THE LIFE

Now let us come back to the first group of items. The first group is very mysterious and even somewhat abstract. You have the law of the Spirit of life. What is the law? What is the Spirit? What is life? All three of these are somewhat abstract. They are not so substantial.

ONE PERSON IN THREE ASPECTS

I must point out to you again that all these three things are one person in three aspects. Of course, the Spirit is a person. You should not consider the Spirit as a power or as an instrument. You must consider the Spirit as the divine person. In the same principle the law and the life also must be a person. The Spirit is a person, the life is a person, and the law is also this same person. This is one person with three aspects within you. One person is in you with

three titles. He is called the Spirit, He is called the life, and He is also called the law. These are not three persons but one person in three aspects. The Spirit must be the Spirit of the Trinity. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ, the second of the Trinity, is life (John 14:6). In the Epistles we also are told that Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). No doubt, life here refers to the second of the Trinity.

What about the law? The natural law always brings us to the source. If there is a law, that natural law goes to the source. Who is the source? The Father. So the Father is here as the source of the spiritual, natural law. The Father is the source of this automatic, working law. So with the law of the Spirit of life, we have the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. We have these three working in us as the law and as the Spirit and as the life. The Triune God as a complete person is working within us as the law, as the Spirit, and as life.

APPLYING THE LAW

How can we apply this? Do not forget that the law is just the Triune God Himself working within us in an automatic way. Within us there is a kind of work going on automatically, not by activity and not by accident. This is the law. When we come into this building and need lights, we go to the switch. When we touch the switch, the light comes. If we keep the switch on all the time, light will be shining all the time. This is not an activity, nor is it an accident. This is according to the working of the law of electricity. The electricity was installed into the building according to the law of electricity. There is something that regulates the electricity. That something is invisible, abstract, and mysterious, but it is so real. The electricians have to install the things properly because they have a law to follow. Actually, what is installed into the building is not only electricity but also a law. An electrical law has been installed into this building. If someone fulfills the law of electricity, the electricity in the building works not by activity nor by accident but by law. Our Triune God today within us is such a law.

Sometimes Christians trust too much in their prayer in a superstitious way. This is like someone coming into the building who does not know the law of electricity and does not know where the switch is. So he kneels down and prays and fasts and does not sleep for three days and three nights. He prays in this way, “Lord, You are almighty; You are omnipresent. Lord, You can make this room full of light. Lord, do it!” Some put their trust in this kind of superstitious prayer. Such a prayer could never cause the room to be full of

light. There is no need to pray like this. You just need to go to the switch. Within seconds light will be shining everywhere. This is not a miracle; this is the working out of the invisible, untouchable law.

My burden is to help you to realize that such a thing is in you. How wonderful that such a thing is in you! Now I would ask, Are you living? Recently, I told a brother that the pray-reading and the calling on the name of the Lord and the singing of the hymns are being somewhat wrongly used. You think that when you call on the name of the Lord Jesus at the top of your voice, that is living. But that is not living. Then you might argue that we have printed and published some messages saying that you need to call on the Lord's name as loudly as possible. But you have to read the context of these messages to understand what I mean. Suppose you are always a quiet person. To such a person I would say that if you are going to get the Spirit, you must call on the name of the Lord loudly. You must cry! That message was published to this kind of people. After you began to shout loudly, another message came out encouraging you to be quiet. Loudness is not the Spirit.

Now I would tell you that the Spirit is the law of the Spirit of life. You do not need to beat the switches, nor do you need to pray loudly. Learn to be quiet to touch the inner invisible switch. Sometimes the more the young people were shouting, the more they were dead. The more they were shouting, the more the life was gone. The shoutings, the callings, the pray-readings, and the singings became a performance. It was not the automatic working of the law of the Spirit of life.

You have to realize that within you there is such a law. It is a law like the law of digestion. After you eat your meal, you do not need to kneel down and pray concerning the digestion of your food. In fact, if you pray in this way, you might get stomach trouble. After a meal you had better simply take a short walk. You do not need to pray concerning your digestion, because within your stomach there is the law of digestion. Likewise, within your spiritual being, there is a law that works all the time. This law works within you automatically. This law is nothing less than the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. To have your spirit mingled with God's Spirit is a great matter, but to have such a law working in your inner being is something even greater. This law is the Triune God. The Father as the source is working within you as a law.

AN ABSTRACT, MYSTERIOUS WAY

Do not make the leading in Romans 8 a material or physical thing. I am burdened to turn your understanding of Romans 8 from the physical way to the abstract, mysterious way. Our God is almighty, but it seems even He cannot change your understanding concerning Romans 8. You understand Romans 8 mostly in a physical way. This is why I stressed the second item of the second group concerning the things of God. You have to realize that *things* here does not refer to material or physical things. *Things* here refers altogether to divine, spiritual things. We do have a physical, outward being, our body. We know that this physical, outward being is not so valuable as our inward, invisible being. Today science mainly deals with the outward being. Education and scientific teachings mainly deal with the physical being. Not so many teachings are genuinely touching our inward, invisible being.

Romans 8 does not touch the outward being that much. Although it refers to the outward being to some extent, mainly it touches our inward, invisible being. I realize that these messages are somewhat mysterious. It is not so easy even for me to give you some substantial illustrations from my experience concerning the automatic working of such a law of the Spirit of life within me. It is not easy, because it is too abstract and too mysterious. There is such a thing within us, but it is difficult to explain. In my experience I do know that I have been under the working of this law. My daily living, my daily walk, has been regulated by this automatic working law. Many times I could only talk up to a certain point, and many times I would not go to a certain place or do certain things, simply because there was an automatic working of the invisible, abstract, and mysterious law within me. This law is a person. This law is the Triune God with the Father as the source. He is automatically all the day long working within you and me. This is the law.

A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION

We need a vision to see the things in Romans 8. It is not something natural. It is something of a spiritual revelation. This is why Paul, when he began to talk about the church as the Body of Christ, prayed for us that we might have a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). He prayed that we would not have the natural apprehension or the religious way to understand the spiritual, invisible, mysterious, and abstract things. We all need a change of our understanding and a change of our apprehension of the spiritual things. Human apprehension cannot make these things substantial. Only a spirit of

wisdom can substantiate these things that are not substantial. We need this spirit to know the law of the Spirit of life that works within us automatically. We need a vision. We need a revelation of the Spirit. But whether you have seen it or you have not seen it, still you have it. Whether you have realized it or you have not realized it, still you have it. The law of the Spirit of life is within you working automatically.