WATCHMAN NEE

The Mind of CHRIST

Living Stream Ministry

THE MIND OF CHRIST

by Watchman Nee

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MIND OF CHRIST

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 18:

Notes On Scriptural Messages 2: Issue No. 35

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:1-11

During the past few weeks, this passage of Scripture has often been in my heart. As Christians, we should pay close attention to this portion of the Bible.

Verse 1 says, "If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions." If we look at the words of this verse, there does not seem to be anything that we can get out of it. Apparently it does not say much. But what does this verse really mean? After reading this verse, many people think that it is insignificant, but I must tell you that it has a very deep significance. If we can understand the significance of this verse, we can fulfill what is mentioned in the following verses. We may say that verse 1 is the "soil" of the succeeding verses. A seed cannot be sown in the air because the air had no ground in which the seed can be rooted. A seed has to be sown in a soil rich and deep enough to give it opportunity to grow. This verse is the soil, the nutrition, and the source of water for the next ten verses. Without this verse, it is hard for the next ten verses to be carried out.

The words "if there is...in Christ" are very important. According to Paul, if there is encouragement in Christ, then thinking the same thing, as mentioned in the next verse, could be achieved. If there is any consolation of love in Christ, then the love mentioned in the next verse can also be achieved. Furthermore, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, any tenderheartedness and compassions in Christ, then joining together in soul and thinking the one thing mentioned in the next verse can also be achieved. If there is no encouragement in Christ, we cannot think the same thing. If there is no consolation of love in Christ, we cannot have the same love. If there is no fellowship of the Spirit, and no tenderheartedness and compassions in Christ, we cannot be joined in soul or think the one thing. In short, we must have

these things in Christ in order to have the result spoken of in the next verse. If we do not have these things in Christ, we cannot have the result in verse 2.

Brothers and sisters, do you have any encouragement and any consolation of love in Christ? Do you have any fellowship of Spirit, any tenderheartedness and compassions in Christ? If you do not have these things in Christ, how can you carry out what is mentioned in the subsequent verses? If you are in Christ and have encouragement, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and tenderheartedness and compassions, then it is very easy for you to think the same thing, have the same love, be joined in soul, think the one thing, and make the Lord's joy full.

Paul applies verse 1 as the source, foundation, fertilizer and nutrient. If there were no such verse, how could Paul advise the Philippian brothers and sisters to think the same thing, have the same love, be joined in soul, think the one thing, do nothing by way of selfish ambition, nor by way of vainglory, but to be lowly in mind and regard the virtues of others? How would the Philippian brothers and sisters answer him? They might say, “Sir, although these things are good, we cannot do them. Christ can do them but we do not have His strength. As long as we belong to the world, how can we accomplish this? To love those who are lovable is all right but to love those who are unlovable is hard. I have my mind and others have theirs. I have my thoughts and they have theirs. How can we be of one mind?” Therefore, Paul took care of this concern from the very beginning by telling them that all these things will become easy, “If there is...in Christ.” In order to be satisfied and full, we need to be fed first. In order to be filled, we need to be fed first. In order to be strengthened, one needs to be supplied with strength first. One brother made a very good point. He said everyone exhorts others to “put out with more strength,” but he would rather advise people to “put in more strength.” If one does not put in strength, how can he put out strength? This is what verse 1 means. Paul shows us that there is strength in Christ. How very important are the words “in Christ”! Because I am in Christ, I am able. Outside of Christ I am a sinner, but in Christ I am saved. Outside of Christ I am a failure, but in Christ I am an overcomer.

Verse 2 says, “Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.” Because of the supply in verse 1, we have verse 2. Since we are “in Christ,” we can do the things in

verse 2. If we have taken a meal and are still hungry, we have taken our meal in vain. If we have something in Christ, we should be able to do many things.

Why do we need to “think the same thing”? Is this possible? Can we have “the same love”? Can we be “joined in soul, thinking the one thing”? While in Foochow I spoke with a brother about thinking the same thing. He said, “Does it mean that I have to change my mind to agree with yours or you have to change your mind to agree with mine? This might be easy to do with two people, but it would be hard with three people. Which of the two minds needs to be changed in order to agree with the third? It is even harder to be of one mind among four or five hundred or even one thousand. How can we think the same thing among so many minds?” According to Paul, it is easy to think the same thing. The answer is in verse 5, which says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” This does not mean that I lay aside my mind to be one with yours or that you lay aside your mind to be one with mine, but that we receive the mind of Christ into us. Your mind is one with His, and my mind is also one with His. If every one of us is one mind with Him, even though we are many, it is easy to be likeminded. When we set out to do something, you have your tune, and I have my song; you have your decision, and I have my opinion. At that time should you submit to me or should I submit to you? One might think that you should submit to me and another might think that I should submit to you. Neither is God's way. God's way is in verse 5: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Oh, what a loss to God if one brother or sister walks on the wrong path, unwilling to submit to Him! What a loss God will suffer! Being likeminded will not only make God joyful but make His joy full. Paul, in these verses, represents the Lord. God's heart and the Lord's heart can be made full of joy only when the believers are in the situation in verse 1! There are many things that can make the Lord joyful. But Christians with the same mind make Him not only joyful, but also make His joy full. To save people will make the Lord happy. To overcome will make the Lord happy too. But to be likeminded will make the Lord's joy full. We have to be likeminded to such an extent that whatever our mouth says, our hearts agree, and we practice accordingly. The words in this verse the heart. The Chinese character for the word mind has as its root the word heart. To be one is an inward and not an outward matter. God can make us one to the point that we are one not only in word but also in our heart.

The like-mindedness of some people is only in word but not in their hearts; their hearts are not one. Their attitude reveals this. People around them can tell the difference. Of course, these ones may still say with their lips that they are likeminded. This kind of like-mindedness is not what we mean. The like-mindedness that we mean is according to being “in Christ” in verse 1.

Verse 3 says, “Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves.” This verse is still based on the fact that one is in Christ. Therefore, one who is in Christ should not do something and should do something. What does selfish ambition mean? It means that one has his own preference. Besides Christ he has his own aim. For example, if there is a problem between two persons and you take sides with one of them, you are wrong. You must stand only on the Lord's side for the Lord's sake; otherwise, you have selfish ambition.

What kind of glory is vainglory? There is a verse in the Bible which says, “More and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Glory has a weight; it is not floating about but it is weighty. This kind of weighty glory can only be seen by God. The obvious glory—that which is easily seen by men—is vainglory. But man cannot secure this kind of glory. He can long for it but never obtain it. Who can secure anything that is vain and floating about? All man can do is constantly long for it.

Unfortunately, sometimes arguments occur among the brothers and sisters. They are either caused by selfish ambition or by some who are seeking for vainglory. One wants to be greater than the other. Both of them insist and neither will give in. In fact whoever who wants to be great cannot really become great because there are always those who are greater!

When a person is flattered and highly praised, it seems that he has received much glory. Actually, his feet are walking in vanity and emptiness. Brothers and sisters, please remember that all glory from man is vainglory. There is a story of a renowned English novelist who wrote a very famous novel. One day he was invited to a banquet by an English lord. There he met a lady who continued to praise his novel. He rose up and said to her, “You are not worthy to praise my writing.” He considered the lady's compliment as shameful. Oh, who is worthy to compliment us? Apart from the Lord, no one is worthy! Whenever someone praises us, we become degraded. Should we then covet

praise? If your heart is for the future, aspiring to the Lord's word of “good and faithful servant,” and if you desire the crown in that day, how can you receive and seek after someone's praises today? Moreover, no one is worthy to praise us.

We should not only shun vainglory on the negative side but, on the positive side, we should in lowliness of mind consider one another more excellent than ourselves. What is lowliness? Lowliness means to leave no ground for oneself. Whoever gives ground to himself can never be lowly. All those who say that they have some kind of authority, and that they should receive something will never be lowly. To be lowly is to leave no ground for oneself. One may speak words of lowliness with his lips, but may not be lowly in his mind. Many things that pass through the lips may not necessarily pass through the heart.

How is an attitude of lowliness of mind expressed? It is expressed through “considering one another more excellent than yourselves.” Considering others more excellent than yourselves is a sign or trademark of lowliness. How difficult it is to consider others more excellent than yourselves! Once I met an elderly Christian who had served the Lord many years. A brother asked him, “Of all the Christian virtues, which is the most difficult to attain?” He replied, “The most difficult thing to attain is Philippians 2:3, which says, ‘in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves.’” Indeed, being lowly in mind is most difficult! What sin caused Satan to become Satan? It was pride. He fell because he wanted to be equal with the Most High. What sin caused man to become a sinner? It was also pride. Adam thought that after eating the fruit he would be like God, discerning good and evil, so he ate and fell. Lowliness of mind is the most difficult of all the virtues to attain. Perhaps no one on earth can genuinely achieve it. It is possible to find some who have ability, eloquence, or talent. But it is very difficult to find a genuinely humble person.

How can we consider others more excellent than ourselves? One believer put it well by saying, “When I look at myself, I look at my old man; when I look at others, I look at their new man.” If we recognize our nature and corruption, and we consider God's grace upon others and His transformation of others, we cannot help but consider others more excellent than ourselves. The believers in Rome should have received help from Paul, but Paul wanted to receive help from them because their faith had spread abroad. Paul wanted to receive help from the recent work God had done among them.

I once brought a problem to a Western missionary. I asked, “Does God demand more from the believers, or do the believers demand more from their fellow believers? My thought was that perhaps God demanded more. I considered that because we are so low and the Lord is so high, He would demand more. She replied, “No.” I asked her for the reason, and she said, “What we can see are men's obvious failures; but what the Lord sees are men's hidden victories.” Indeed, this word comes from deep experiences. What we see is a person's obvious failures—once, twice or even tens of times. But the Lord sees his hidden victories—once, twice or hundreds of times. Perhaps you were tempted five times and failed five times, while someone else was tempted three times but failed only once. Perhaps he has many hidden victories which you have not yet seen. You may have had ten battles and were defeated only once; he may have had hundreds of battles and been defeated only once. If we understand this, we cannot but consider others more excellent than ourselves.

Verse 4 says, “Not regarding each his own virtues, but each the virtues of others also.” This is not an easy matter. Due to my bad health in recent years, I have often been unable to take care of the things of others. Oftentimes it seems that we cannot even take care of our own things. How can we then regard the virtues of others? Regarding the virtues of others requires a life of self-denial. Recently I met a lady missionary from the China Inland Mission. I asked if she had met Mr. Hudson Taylor and whether she had seen anything special about him. She said, “According to what I know, he has a special characteristic: whenever you visit him, it seems that he is not busy. He considers your matter to be the most important. Actually his day is filled with writing many letters and seeing many people. He cares for others as though he has no other cares.” This is self-denial. Oh, if the Lord were as cold as we are, not caring for anyone, where would you or I be today? The Lord cared for the things of men. He died because of our sins. We must learn to be a person who cares for the things of others.

Verse 5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” This verse is a conclusion of verses 1 through 4. If one seeks for encouragement in Christ, much more can be said. If we have the mind of Christ Jesus, everything will be fine with us, and we can do all things. Since some may ask, “what is the mind of Christ?”, Paul gave his answer in verses 6 through 8.

Verses 6 through 7 say, “Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped, But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men.” Christ was entitled to lawfully hold His existence in the form of God; He is worthy to hold this as His right. Therefore, He “did not consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped.” He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men.” What kind of mind is the mind of Christ? The mind of Christ involves Him giving up His legal right. Perhaps you wish that certain ones would treat you a certain way. But Christ did not even claim what He was entitled to. He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped; rather, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave. This is the mind of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I often feel that legal rights are not a good thing because we all think that we are entitled to certain legal rights. But our Lord said, “You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them. It is not so among you” (Matt. 20:25-26). The teaching of Matthew 5 through 7 can be summarized in two phrases: give up what you deserve and, instead, receive joyfully what you do not deserve. Others can demand an eye for any eye, a tooth for a tooth, but the Lord said to pray for those who persecute you. Lay aside what you deserve and receive what you do not deserve. On these hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:40). Whether at home or abroad, no Christian should voice his right. If the Lord had said, “Can the Father send me?”, the Father could not have sent Him. On the one hand, the Lord said, “I and my Father are one.” At the same time, He also said, “My Father is greater than I.” Is there a difference of great and small within the Triune God? No. The matter of greatness and smallness is not based on existence but on willingness. The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit; this is the humility within the Godhead.

The form of a slave indicates the lowliness of Christ; the likeness of men indicates the human limitations suffered by the Lord. The form of a slave is in apposition to the form of God as man is in apposition to God. God is unlimited. But man is limited by time and space; he is limited in his eating, drinking, and sleeping. The form of God is glorious whereas the form of a slave is lowly. The mind of Christ is in His being willing to humble and restrict Himself.

Verse 8 says, “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.” Christ's

obedience is to obey One who is equal to Him, not One who is greater than He. Christ's obedience is an obedience even unto death, and that the death of a cross.

Brothers and sisters, Christians should be more in oneness and love. The way of verses 6 through 8 is truly the way of the cross! If a brother has not yet learned to deny the self, is still unwilling to lay down his legal right, and who does not know how to humble himself among his peers, then he has never walked the way of the cross. There was a Western missionary who said, “A certain person always encourages others to walk the way of the cross, the narrow way of the cross. However, I see him as one who has never entered into this way.” Indeed, if we have never denied ourselves, we have never taken the way of the cross. We often say that we want to choose the way of the cross but we do not realize that we need to deny ourselves in daily matters that is, to die. This is the way of the cross.

Once a sister met a doctor who was an active believer in the Brethren group. He was well-educated, knowledgeable about the Bible, and quite eloquent in his preaching. This sister said to him, “Sir, what you preach is not wrong; but the way you take is wrong.” He argued that what he preached was the denial of the self and the bearing of the cross. The sister said, “That is right; but what I see is that you have never died.” He humbly sought for her advice, and she spoke frankly to him according to the Bible. Later he wrote her a letter, saying, “After you left, I told God that I did not know what the cross was, or what the way of the cross was, or what it was to deny oneself? I told Him, ‘God, in the midst of all my ignorance, I consecrate myself to You. I pray that You will enable me to deny myself.’ After this, difficulties came. My wife opposed me. When I could no longer bear it, a voice reminded me, ‘In these matters you should deny yourself and die.’ Formerly I preached about the cross and the denial of the self. Yet I did not realize in what things I should die and how to die? Now I know that it is carried out in the practical matters. When I speak in his way, many people are provoked to oppose me. My medical practice has also been affected. Now I know that I must die among those who are with me.”

Brothers and sisters, many people know the truth and the necessity of denying the self, but how does one die? One dies among those he is with, among the people he can see and touch. May God bless us so that we can

think the same thing, have the same love, be joined in soul, and think the one thing, so that the Lord's joy may be full.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 08:

The Present Testimony (1): Issue No. 15

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:18-23

In Genesis 2:18-23 there are two types: Adam, who typifies Christ, and Eve, who typifies the church (Eph. 5:31-32).

Ephesians 5:25-29 speaks of the believers' relationship with Christ; Genesis 2:18-23 speaks of the believers' relationship with God.

In Genesis 2 we can see a big difference between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of man. God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Man did not say this.

The thought stressed in the Bible is what God has said. When we desire sinners to be saved, we usually think only in terms of the benefit to the sinners themselves. We think if they do not repent, they will perish and suffer, and if they believe in the Lord Jesus, they will receive eternal life. But in Genesis 2:18-23, God's thought is on Christ, not on man. When sinners are saved, they are given by God to Christ—”the men whom You gave Me out of the world” (John 17:6). God has not only given Christ to men, but has also given men to Christ. God has presented a special gift to Christ, which is the sinners. God's intention in doing this is to satisfy Christ's heart.

The one great purpose for the believers to live on earth is to live for Christ. Adam was not created for Eve, but Eve was created for Adam. In the same way, believers are made for Christ. For this reason, we should satisfy Christ.

There are two stories of marriages in the Bible. They show, on the one hand, the direct relationship between Christ and the church, and on the other hand, the indirect relationship of God giving the church to Christ. The two stories are Abraham seeking Rebekah for Isaac, and Jacob marrying Rachel through suffering under Laban. Isaac did not know Rebekah; his father, Abraham,

arranged the marriage. As to Rachel, however, Jacob himself suffered for the marriage. If Rebekah was not good, Isaac could have complained to his father, since Rebekah was selected by his father. Of course, we know that the one whom Abraham chose for his son was a true satisfaction to his son. God has chosen the church for Christ, and God must make the church a satisfaction to Christ. Rachel was dispositionally not that pure, and she was jealous. But Jacob did not murmur because he loved Rachel and was willing to suffer much for Rachel's sake. Christ is to the church as Jacob was in his marriage to Rachel, while God is to the church as Abraham was to Rebekah in the marriage of his son. The church is given to Christ through the hand of God. Our attention now is on the aspect of the church as Rebekah, who was given to Christ by His Father.

In God's view, Christ seems to be incomplete without us, as though it was not good for Christ to live alone, and as though He would still be lacking if He did not have the sinners. God's purpose in saving us is not just for us but also for Christ. God wants Christ to be satisfied, pleased, and completed. Therefore, He gives us to Christ. Let us see that we are called not just for our own blessings, but also to satisfy Christ's heart. Our responsibility is not to fail God. To whatever extent we satisfy Christ is the same extent God has not failed Christ.

There are two passages in the Bible which speak of “satisfaction.” One says that in the coming days, Christ will see “the travail of His soul...and will be satisfied” (Isa. 53:11). The other says that “when [the believers] awake [in resurrection], [they] will be satisfied with Your [Christ's] likeness” (Psa. 17:15b). May we be able to satisfy Him.

We ought to save the sinners, for he who has life should beget more life and should beget the same kind of life that he has. The reason that God created man and saved him is that He is life and that He begets the same kind of life as He is. However, we must never forget that this is all for Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

JEHOVAH

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 09:

The Present Testimony (2): Issue No. 21

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:13-18

There are many precious portions in the Bible. This morning God has given me light from this portion of the word and has nourished me. I would like, therefore, to share with you what I have received.

GOD AND JEHOVAH

One thing that we should notice in the Bible is that God's name is not used carelessly. Every time God mentions His name, it is with a purpose. Every time God uses His name, it is not used carelessly. Even the name Jesus is very meaningful and is not used haphazardly. For example, there is Jesus Christ, there is Christ Jesus, and there is the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. If we change Jesus Christ to Christ Jesus, we will be wrong doctrinally. The same is true of the name which God reveals to man. In Exodus 3:13-18 God purposely points out that besides being God, His name is Jehovah. This reveals His relationship with Israel. What is the difference between God and Jehovah? Let us first consider how God revealed Himself through His name in Genesis. From this we can find out the meaning of His names. From Genesis to Exodus 3, God used different names to reveal Himself. He used at least three names to reveal himself. In Genesis 1 He uses the name God. In Genesis 2 He uses a different name— not God, but Jehovah God. Why does Genesis 1 use God while Genesis 2 uses Jehovah God? The amazing thing is that God did not tell man the meaning of the name Jehovah. Although Abraham knew the name (because God told him once that His name was Jehovah), he never knew the meaning of the name. Not until Exodus 3:14-15 did God begin to tell man the meaning of the name Jehovah.

Why does Genesis 1 not mention Jehovah or Jehovah God, but only God? The name God—Elohim—means the strong and mighty One. The name God has to do with the creatures; it refers to His relationship with the creation.

But Jehovah is a name that is related to man. Genesis 2 speaks of the relationship between God and man. Therefore, Jehovah God is mentioned right away. This speaks of God's relationship with man. In Genesis 1 we do not see man. Even when the creation of man is mentioned on the sixth day, the emphasis is still on creation. This is why the name God is used. In Genesis 2 we see man, and so it speaks of Jehovah God. Every time the word Jehovah God is used, it denotes God having a relationship with man. Every time the word God is used, it implies His power and His relationship with the creation. Let us now consider a few portions of the Word to show the difference between God and Jehovah.

"And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord [i.e. Jehovah] shut him in" (Gen. 7:16). Can you see the difference here? All those that went in the ark went in male and female, as God had commanded, and Jehovah shut Noah in the ark. Can we change it around? No, we cannot. It was God who commanded. A command has to do with God's authority. Therefore, the name God is used here. But after man came, Jehovah rather than God shut him in. This is because shutting in has to do with God's care. This shows a difference in usage between God and Jehovah.

"This day will the Lord [i.e. Jehovah] deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam. 17:46). Here it says that Jehovah would "deliver thee into mine hand," for the purpose that "all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." Does it say that "God will deliver thee into mine hand...that all the earth will know that there is a Jehovah?" No! The reason is that Jehovah is related to us; He cares for us and delivers the enemy into our hand. Moreover, God does not tell all the earth, those outside Israel, that He is Jehovah; He only shows them that He is God. Jehovah speaks of a relationship with those who are close to God, while God speaks of a relationship with ordinary men, in which He reveals His power to men.

"And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord [Jehovah] helped him; and God moved them to depart from him" (2 Chron. 18:31). The One who helped

Jehoshaphat was Jehovah, while the One who moved his enemy was God. Jehovah helped Jehoshaphat because he was close to God and intimate with God. God used the title God to Jehoshaphat's enemy because they had no relationship with Him. This is another example.

God is the common name, while Jehovah is the name of intimacy. God refers to His power, while Jehovah refers to His love. God refers to creation, while Jehovah refers to His intimacy. Genesis 1 does not mention Jehovah because it covers the creation. Even when chapter one mentions man, it is in relation to creation and power. Genesis 2 speaks of God's intimacy with man and His relationship with man; therefore, it mentions Jehovah God. Why does it say Jehovah God in chapter two, instead of just Jehovah? This proves that the Jehovah in chapter two is the God in chapter one. Jehovah God is not only the One who is powerful, but is also the One who draws near to man. However, even though the name Jehovah is used from Genesis 2 until Exodus 3, the meaning of the name Jehovah is not explained until Exodus 3:14.

I AM JEHOVAH

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exo. 3:14-15). This was God's response to Moses' question about what he should say to the Israelites if they asked about the name of the God of their forefathers when he told them that the God of their forefathers had sent him to them. God told Moses that He is "I am that I am" (i.e., Jehovah), which means the self-existing and the ever-existing One. It was Jehovah who had sent Moses. What was His name? His name was "I am that I am." Who had sent Moses? The "I am" had sent him.

I am! I am that I am! Brothers and sisters, do you see the preciousness in this name? I feel its preciousness particularly today. I am... I am... I am... How wonderful! I am... Do you realize that God is...? God's Word is most amazing. What He says is most amazing, and what He has not said is also most amazing. What God has fully said is amazing, and what He has not fully said is also amazing. What He has spelled out is most amazing, and what He has only half-uttered is also most amazing. What God has said forthrightly is

amazing, and what He has said hesitantly is also most amazing. Here God does not say fully what He is. He merely says that He is... This implies that there is something not yet said. The “I am” has sent Moses. On that day Moses received God's revelation.

If God adds the word power to the words I am, then He is not love. If He adds love to the first words, then He is only love and not power, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, comfort, protection, a high tower, and shelter. God only says that He is, without saying what He is. This allows those who believe in Him to add in other terms; actually, they are not terms, they are spiritual realities! We can add in whatever we want by faith. If we have the need and faith, we can add whatever we need to the words God is and receive God's answer to our need. If we need comfort, God is our comfort. If we need a shelter, God is our shelter. If we need a high tower, God is our high tower. If we need victory, God is our victory. If we need holiness, God is our holiness. If we need a way, God is our way (John 14:6). If we need light, God is our light. If we need the bread of life, God is our bread of life. Whatever you need can be added to His name. We should not have any doubt. We can add whatever we want to His name.

This is like a checkbook with signatures on all the checks. When the checkbook is given to you, you can put in whatever amount you want. If you tear out one check and write one thousand on it, you will have one thousand. If you write ten thousand on it, you will have ten thousand. Since someone has signed them, all you have to do is write what you need on one of them. Many people do not know God, and many people do not know Jehovah. I feel that the length, the breath, the height, and the depth of this name are sufficient to include everything.

After seeing this, it is no wonder that those who know God say that the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runs into it and is safe (Prov. 18:10). After we understand the meaning of this name, we will proclaim with David that “And those who know Your name put their trust in You” (Psa. 9:10). Because the Old Testament saints knew God's name as Jehovah, they were able to pray, “For the sake of Your name, O Jehovah, / Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (25:11); “save me, O God, by thy name” (54:1); “do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake” (109:21). They also proclaimed, “Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us” (44:5); “He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's

sake" (23:3); "I will lift up my hands in thy name" (63:4). This is why they could praise, saying, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise" (48:10); "in thy name shall they rejoice all the day" (89:16); "sing unto God, sing praises to his name...his name JAH" (68:4). God Himself also declared, "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (91:14).

God's name reveals God Himself. God's name is the foundation of our faith. If we can enter the reality of God's name in the power of the Holy Spirit, extraordinary things can be accomplished through God's name.

THE LORD JESUS IS JEHOVAH

Some are ignorant about this matter; they think that Jehovah is God's revelation in the Old Testament and wonder if we can enjoy the benefit of this name in the New Testament. We thank God! Jehovah in the Old Testament is the Jesus in the New Testament. The meaning of Jesus is Jehovah our Savior.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He admitted that He was the Jehovah in the Old Testament. He said, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). In this verse the Lord Jesus tells us that He is the "I am."

A little later He said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am" (v. 28). "Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am" (v. 58). The Lord Jesus clearly said that He was Jehovah. The Jews understood what this meant; therefore, "they picked up stones to throw at Him" (v. 59).

We can rejoice because our Lord Jesus is the I am. He is! He is everything for our sake. He is the I am! He says of Himself that He is the life, He is the resurrection, He is the light of the world, He is the bread of life, and He is the good shepherd. We can derive all kinds of supply from the Lord's name. Once we have His name, we have everything. We thank the Lord that He has given this name to us.

JEHOVAH

"Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord [Jehovah] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is

done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Cannanites...unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exo. 3:16-17). This name was especially used during the journey from Egypt to Canaan. During this journey the name "I am" is used. From the time we were saved until the time of the kingdom, no matter how many tribulations we pass through, Jehovah is still the I am. He is the one that is called "I am that I am." Friends, during the journey that began at the time we were saved until the coming kingdom, Jehovah's name is enough to lead us through everything. Jehovah is not God's name in creation. Jehovah is God's name for the believers in the wilderness. It is the name in the wilderness and the name that will bring us through the wilderness into Canaan.

THE BELIEVERS' RESPONSIBILITY

What effect does the name Jehovah have on the Israelites? It makes the Israelites responsible before God for their conduct.

God does not reason. If God ever reasoned with man, man would never prevail against God. One prophet in the Old Testament said that God overcomes even when He is judged (Rom. 3:4). God's reasoning is too deep, and man can never come up to it. God does not reason; He Himself is the reason. We can consider a few examples from Leviticus and Numbers:

"You shall do My ordinances and keep My statutes to walk in them: I am Jehovah your God" (Lev. 18:4).

"You shall keep My statutes and My ordinances, which if a man do he shall live by them: I am Jehovah" (18:5).

"I am Jehovah" (18:6b).

"I am Jehovah your God" (18:30b).

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy" (19:2).

"Do not turn to idols, or make for yourselves molten gods: I am Jehovah your God" (19:4).

“You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am Jehovah your God” (19:10).

“And you shall not swear falsely by My name, and so profane the name of your God: I am Jehovah” (19:12).

“You shall not curse the deaf, or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am Jehovah” (19:14).

“You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am Jehovah” (19:16).

“You shall not take vengeance, or bear a grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Jehovah” (19:18).

“I am Jehovah your God” (19:25b).

“You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, neither shall you put any tattoos on you: I am Jehovah” (19:28).

“You shall keep My sabbaths, and you shall reverence My sanctuary; I am Jehovah” (19:30).

“Do not turn to the mediums and spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God” (19:31).

“You shall rise up before the greyheaded, and honor the aged; you shall fear your God: I am Jehovah” (19:32).

“The alien who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you; you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am Jehovah your God” (19:34).

“You shall observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them: I am Jehovah” (19:37).

“Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be Mine: I am Jehovah” (Num. 3:45).

Is there any reason to God's command? You must not sin, “for I am Jehovah”! There is no other reason! I will scourge you and chastise you, because “I am Jehovah.” “The Levites shall be Mine,” because the Israelites owed God something? No, it is because “I am Jehovah.” You shall not curse the deaf, because “I am Jehovah.” You cannot this or that, because “I am Jehovah.” There is no other reason. If anyone among us obeys God because He has said “I am that I am,” he is blessed and will not sin. He can find many reasons in the world to sin. But because of one great reason: “I am that I am,” he will not sin and will be blessed!

Simply put, there are two reasons for God being “I am that I am.”

(1) I am; I am the powerful One. Therefore you cannot do it. I am; I am your power, protection, holiness, righteousness, and supply. Why do you have to sin? You may say, “I have lust within me.” Jehovah says, “I am. I am righteousness and holiness. Why do you have to sin?” You may say, “I do not have money, therefore I have to borrow.” Jehovah will say, “I am the One who supplies you. Why do you have to borrow? If you sin, it is not because I will not help you nor because I cannot protect you from sin. I am that I am. I can protect you. You sin because you want to sin.”

(2) I am that I am. “I am not only power, wisdom, and the one who loves you and has chosen you. I am not only these. I am that I am, I am Jehovah, I am your God. If you do not do well, I will discipline you and chastise you. If you sin, I will chastise you.” In the first point, He is the power. In the second point, He will judge. In the first case, He shows us that He is man's holiness and righteousness. In the second case, He shows us that Jehovah Himself is holy and righteous. He will judge us according to His holiness and righteousness. In using this name, it seems as if He will not reason with us. He told His people, “I am Jehovah, I am the Lord, therefore you cannot sin. I am Jehovah. I have brought you out of Egypt. I am Jehovah. I will bring you into Canaan. I am Jehovah, therefore you must not do any of these things.”

I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB

“And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exo. 3:15).

Here is another matter. Who is this Jehovah your God? He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As far as He is concerned, God is Jehovah, the I am. As far as man is concerned, Jehovah is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On God's side, God is God, that is, Jehovah. This is God's revelation to man of what He is in Himself. On man's side, God revealed Himself through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the same way that He was powerful in them, He is powerful in us.

Why did God not say, He is the God of Adam? Adam had sin, but so had Abraham. Why did He not call Himself the God of Adam? Why did He not call Himself the God of Abel, the descendant of Adam? Why did He rather say He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why was the Lord Jesus a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh? Why did God call Himself the God of these three men among so many other men? Is it because these three men were somewhat different from others? In addition to the fact that God made a covenant with these three men, which made them special, they were representatives of men. God chose these three men to represent three kinds of people on earth today.

What kind of person was Abraham? He was a giant in faith. He was an uncommon and extraordinary person. God is the God of Abraham, meaning that God is the God of extraordinary and outstanding persons. But thank God, He is not only the God of Abraham. If God were only the God of Abraham, we would be disappointed, because none of us is an extraordinary and outstanding person. God is also the God of Isaac. What kind of person was Isaac? Isaac was an ordinary man. He was a man who would eat when you gave him food, who would sleep when you gave him a bed. He was not an extraordinary person. Nor was he an evil person. But God is also the God of ordinary persons. What a comfort this is to us! However, God is not just the God of ordinary men. He is also the God of evil men. He is the God of Jacob. Jacob is the most crafty man in the Bible. Through these three persons, God tells us that He is the God of Abraham (the best persons), the God of Isaac (the common persons), and the God of Jacob (the evil persons). He is God to those who are outstanding in their faith. He is God to those who are merely ordinary people. He is also God to the vilest among all men such as the robbers, the thieves, and the prostitutes. If I am one like Abraham, He is God to an extraordinary person like me. If I am an ordinary person like Isaac, He is also God to an ordinary person like me. If I am an evil person from my mother's womb, one who would argue with my brother, and who is evil from

my youth, He will say that He is also God to an evil person like me. God is not just the God of Abraham. He is not just the God of Isaac. God is also the God of Jacob. Are you exceptionally good? God has a way with you. Are you an ordinary person? God has a way with you. Are you a particularly evil person? God also has a way with you.

RESURRECTION

From that day until now, God has always called Himself by this name; He has never changed. Even when the Lord Jesus was about to die, He declared that God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is the God of the living, and that is why man will resurrect. Here the Lord added another meaning to the name. God called Himself this to show that He is the God of resurrection. Although Abraham was good, he still died and stunk. However, God will resurrect him. An ordinary person like Isaac also died and stunk. But God will also resurrect him. Although Jacob was crafty, he also died and stunk. But God will resurrect him also. In the realm of resurrection, all natural things will pass away. God is the God of the living; He is not the God of the dead, nor the God of those who are about to die. He is God to these three persons in the realm of resurrection. Therefore, every Christian is destined to deterioration, no matter how talented he is, how common he is, or how evil he is. Our God wants to reconstitute us, so that we will receive something new in Him. Although by our natural constitution we have many differences, God will not obliterate these things; He will be God to us just the same. He knows that what He sees is not our natural self, but the life that He gives us. Naturally speaking, there are many differences between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But in resurrection, they have all received the life of God. God does not care for our natural constitution; He only cares for His own work in grace. Therefore, He can give grace to, use, and perfect men who are entirely different, treating them as if there were no difference at all among them.

What is the meaning of resurrection? It means the passing away of the natural and the coming of the supernatural. It means the passing away of the first and the coming of the second. Whether you are a talented person, an ordinary person, or a crafty and evil person, your eyes need not be set on your talent, your unattractiveness, or your craftiness. God can give you something new in His Son. God is showing us that everything natural and of man is useless. Only that which is supernatural and of God is useful. He said that He

is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob because His eyes are on resurrection.

AN ETERNAL MEMORIAL

"This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exo. 3:15). This is My name forever. This means that I forever am. With Me, there is only one "I am." In this verse, the name Jehovah speaks of two things:

(1) I forever am Jehovah. As My name is, so will I be forever.

(2) My memorial. This is to make you remember that I am Jehovah forever, and I will also remember that I am Jehovah unto all generations. Unless God has forgotten that He Himself is Jehovah, and unless we also forget that He is Jehovah, He will forever be I am to us—He will be all that we need. Hallelujah!

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 08:

The Present Testimony (1), Issue No. 4

In the Bible God demands faith of His children. Without faith we cannot please Him. All spiritual blessings and arrangements in our circumstances can only be received through faith. We marvel that God considers the faith of the believers so important. Without exception, all the aspects of God's full salvation in the Bible are gained by faith. One thing we know: God hates man's own works, whether they are those of a sinner or those of a saint. Anything from ourselves, anything done independently of God, and anything done according to one's own intention by one's own strength, is hateful to God. Many of these things may seem very good in man's eyes, yet God hates them all. The Lord Jesus told us that there is only one who is good—God. In the Lord's eyes, no one is good. Therefore, anything not according to the will of the good God or anything not done through the power of the good God is not good; it is sin. Nothing but God is good. For this reason, every work outside the will and power of God is not good. Hence, all that a believer does must be of God and through God.

Here the matter of faith comes in. Faith has two basic principles: (1) stopping man's own work and (2) waiting for God's work. We commonly think that faith is believing, depending, and waiting for God's work. But there is a step before this, that is, stopping man's work. This stopping of one's own work is the work of faith. Waiting for God to work is something that happens inside a believer and is not visible. But stopping one's own work is something that is outwardly visible at times. The greatest accomplishment of faith is not that God works for the believer, but that the believer stops his own work.

The importance of this step cannot be overemphasized. God has never allowed His own work to be mingled with the work of man's flesh. He demands the believers to totally stop everything that is of the self, whether it be in intention or in ability. He likes to be trusted and entrusted by the believers. How is such a heart of trust in God expressed? It is expressed in an

absolute stillness and quietness of the self. This is the first step of the work of faith. Does a man still tire himself with planning and working, after he has fully entrusted a work to his friend? If God is reliable and His power sufficient, does He still need our help? If we believe that God works for us, why are we still anxious? Is it because we are afraid that He will not do well? If so, we have not yet believed. Faith demands that we fully rest. This is a rest in which the heart is free from anxiety and the body free from labor. If there is still restlessness in our heart and body, whether it be anxiety or labor, it shows that we have no faith. The first principle of faith is to stop our own work. If we are still worried from looking at our poor self and our difficult environment, it means that we have never yet relied on God. If we still use our own ability, power, friends, connections, and tact to labor, it means we have not yet realized our uselessness; we have not yet completely committed matters into the hand of God. A life of faith is a life of giving up the self. Acts of faith are but acts of self-surrender. Faith requires us to give up our pettiness with its worries. It also requires us to give up our ability with its accompanying labor. Putting an absolute stop to our own work is the first expression of the work of faith.

It is interesting that this kind of faith does not come from the believer himself. Inasmuch as the faith at our initial salvation was given by God (Eph. 2:8), the faith in our daily life is also given by God. Nothing else is needed to prove how useless a believer can be in himself; we only need to look at the matter of faith in God. The believer himself does not even have faith; he has to receive it from God. All faith is given by God. This is what the apostle meant when he said that faith is one item of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Are we not many times very willing to believe in God and fully trust Him in our circumstances? We have heard other brothers telling us that we should exercise faith to believe in God. But no matter how hard we exercise, is it not true that we simply cannot believe? Many times we exert such an effort that it seems as if our hearts are almost bursting. Yet is it not true that this kind of faith produces no effect? We center our whole being on struggling with doubt, yet we still do not reach our goal. Such a situation is most painful. The most difficult time a believer has is when he is struggling with doubt.

This, however, is not faith. Faith cannot be invoked or generated by man, nor can it be brought forth from his heart. Faith is given by God. This faith controls the believer; the believer does not control this faith. Many times, we

desire faith in order to achieve something, only to find that there is no way to obtain such faith. At other times, we ourselves have no intention of doing anything, yet God grants us faith and causes this faith to be expressed through our prayer, thus bringing forth the greatest achievement. God does not grant faith to satisfy our cravings. Our rightful position is death, as those who prostrate themselves in the dust. According to the will of God, the saints on the earth should live for His will and glory. It is wrong for a believer to decide, desire, or do anything out of himself. God wants us to be His vessel, but that requires us to die. Even in the matter of believing in God for the fulfillment of a certain work, God wants us to simply be a vessel. When He wants to accomplish something, He grants us the faith to petition in prayer for His work. Only then will He move to accomplish the work. Of course, this is a suffering to the flesh, because there is no possibility for its activity and no room for its craving. But since a true believer lives only for God and not for himself, he is happy and willing to simply be a dead instrument to accomplish the supreme will of God.

See what wisdom God has! If faith were ours, something that came from within us, it would be possible for us to direct our faith. In other words, if we wanted something carried out, all we would have to do is believe a little, and we would get God's work done. But this is not the way faith works. Faith is given by God. Before God gives faith, there is no way for us to believe. Many of us have experienced that we often had no way to enter into rest because we could not produce faith. Then suddenly God would grant us faith. (Sometimes this comes through one or two verses; sometimes it comes after prayer, when a believer understands the will of God in his intuition.) When this happens, we are immediately assured, and our hearts are spontaneously calmed down. It seems that we have the assurance that God will definitely accomplish His work. There is no need for struggling. There is no need for anxiety. There is not even the need to worry about exercising. Assurance simply comes spontaneously without invitation. When God grants faith this way, the believer immediately has the work of faith, that is, rest without anxiety. Any other way is not faith and will never give rest.

At this point, we must clarify something. To say what we have said does not mean that we can now neglect everything and simply wait for the visitation of this faith. There are two kinds of faith: special faith and general faith. Special faith is a kind of faith granted by God for a special matter. It is a faith which believes that God will surely accomplish a certain matter for us. We do not

have this kind of faith in every situation. General faith is the daily faith of an experienced believer toward God. This kind of faith is not directed towards any special matter, but it is directed towards all things. Such a believer believes that whatever God does can never be wrong. He believes that whether it be failure or success, God's good pleasure is there. Although we do not always have special faith in everything that happens to us, we should have general faith. We must believe that our God does everything right and that everything is in His hand. He knows whether it is good for us to suffer or succeed. We should have this kind of general faith all the time. Even when special situations arise, we should not lose this kind of faith. But regardless of which kind of faith we have, faith should always have its manifestation in our conduct; there should always be rest for those who have faith; and there should also be no struggle and fleshly energy in trying to help God.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVING BY FAITH AND THE COURSE OF ENTERING INTO A TRUTH

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 11:

The Present Testimony (4), Issue No. 33

Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:38

Two weeks ago I read many verses concerning living by faith. Today I will quote only one verse. Today I will continue with the matter of living by faith, which we began about two weeks ago. We have covered what it is to live by faith and will not repeat it today. However, we have to add a few words to the last message before we can go on with today's subject. What I will speak on is not in any particular order, but will be miscellaneous points, a little here and a little there.

Two weeks ago I mentioned the “wave-like” living of a believer, in which he fluctuates between joy and dryness. For these people, their life goes up and down all the time. After the meeting, some brothers asked me concerning the matter of intensity. They did not understand why the intensity of joy would become less and less, and the intensity of dryness would become more and more, but that in the end there would be no more difference between the two. Concerning this point, I must add a few words today. We use the word intensity with a special meaning. On the one hand, there is the real intensity; on the other hand, there is the intensity in the emotion. The intensity of joy that I mentioned last time refers to the intensity of feeling. That intensity becomes less and less. What is real is just the opposite; the intensity of what is real increases. Concerning dryness, the process is the same: in reality it increases, while the feeling decreases. The joy that I mentioned the other day refers to the feeling of joy, which in intensity becomes less and less. The dryness which I mentioned refers to the reality of dryness, which increases in intensity. As far as duration is concerned, the period of joy becomes shorter, while the period of dryness becomes longer. In feeling, the intensity of joy becomes less and less, and in reality, the intensity of dryness becomes more and more. In the end, one feels neither joyful nor dry.

Why are our feelings unreliable? They are unreliable because the God we trust has not changed, the work of the Lord has not changed, and the work of the Holy Spirit has not changed. No matter what your feelings are, they will not affect these things. This was all I said last time. This was only one of the reasons. I will give another reason today. The things on God's side have not changed. The question is whether or not the things within us have changed.

For example, we may have lost all taste for reading the Bible, we may not pray well, and we may feel that we do not have power in our work. We are not as excited as before, and we think that we have fallen. But my question is what is our motive? If our motive has changed, I have nothing to say because we have indeed fallen. But if our motive has not changed, we have not fallen. If our heart is still right, all we have to do is live by faith; we do not have to worry about our feelings.

Once Mr. Hudson Taylor came to Mr. Frost, who was his co-worker of many years, and said, “I am very distressed. I am not the same as when I first came to China. When I first came to China, my soul burned when I saw men who were not saved. I prayed earnestly day and night for God to send men from England and America. For so many years, I loved men's souls, and prayed earnestly, and worked diligently. But there is one thing which is gone: I have lost the initial feeling of excitement; I have fallen. What should I do?” When Mr. Frost heard this, he thought, “This is terrible. Mr. Taylor is the leader of the China Inland Mission. If he has fallen, it is indeed terrible.” So he went and prayed for about two weeks. He prayed that God would show him the way to help Mr. Taylor. One day God showed him the clear way. He went to Mr. Taylor and asked him, “Did you consecrate yourself to God when you left England to come to China?” Mr. Taylor said, “Yes, of course I consecrated myself to God.” Mr. Frost then asked, “Have you ever taken anything that you consecrated back, during the past years?” He answered, “No.” “Has your love for souls diminished?” He answered again, “No.” “Has your love for the Lord changed?” The answer was again “No.” “Have you become worldly?” “No.” “Have you decreased your work in saving souls?” “No.” Mr. Frost then said, “If you have all these things, why should you care about your feelings? What can the feelings do?” This apparent failure of Mr. Taylor taught Mr. Frost a lesson that we should not care about our feelings as long as the intention of the heart is right.

It does not matter if we feel we do not like reading the Bible or that we do not find any interest in it. The thing that matters is our motive. Do we have the intention to read the Bible? It does not matter if we feel dull after praying three or five sentences. The thing that matters is whether or not you want to pray. If we did not want to pray, why are we kneeling down? It is one thing for us to feel that it is a good thing to pray; it is another thing for us to want to pray.

Perhaps in testifying to others, we feel terrible after saying a few words. Whether or not we love to testify is one thing; whether or not we have the intention to testify is another. Has our heart for testifying to others changed? Have we loved the world? Has our love for God changed? If our motive has not changed, it does not matter that we feel this way or that way. Please remember clearly that the fluctuating life is something that occurs only in our feelings. Within us, there is only one line; it is neither high nor low. Real failure occurs only when our inward being has changed or when our motive has changed. If our motive has changed, then indeed we are fallen and degraded. After this, if we rise again, it will be a real rising. If we do not rise up, then we have not risen yet; this is not like what is ordinarily referred to as highs and lows, or fluctuations in life.

Now I will speak on living by faith, and what it is like in our spiritual experience. Many Christians still consider it a big problem in their spiritual experience when they find it difficult to deal with the so-called high and low times. For example, when they first hear a new truth, they become very happy. But after two or three days or two or three months, the truth seems to be lost. It seems as if what they received the first time is now all gone and lost, and they consider this a great pity. For this reason, many good brothers have asked what is the proper course of our spiritual experience. In other words, they want to know how they can spiritually advance and progress. This is what I am going to speak about.

Suppose one first hears a truth, such as how to overcome his temper or his rashness, or the truth of Romans 6:6, about the crucifixion of the old man by the Lord's death for the annulling of the body of sin, so that one will no longer be a slave to sin. As a result of hearing this, he becomes happy. He goes home and tells others that from now on, he will no longer lose his temper, for he has received an overcoming truth. He seems to have reached the top of a mountain. He may think that he has reached the peak experience. If he is a

husband, he may go home to find his wife doing this and that thing wrong. The first two times, he may hold back his temper. But in the end, he will not be able to hold it back anymore. Now he is bewildered. He thought he understood the truth and would never lose his temper again. But he lost his temper again. Does this mean the truth is unreliable? At such times the environment seems to have made a hole in his boat of truth; all the truth seems to have drained away. Such a person may ask God once more to apply His Word in him so that he will be able to overcome once again. The next time he encounters some frustrating thing, he tries to hold back again. He does this until he can hold back no longer, and he falls again. He cannot understand why the truth that gave him so much joy is all gone. Such trials become more and more severe, and he might think that Romans 6:6 does not work in him anymore; then he becomes disappointed. At such times he sees no light at all; everything is in darkness. When he is standing on the mountaintop, he seems to be able to talk about everything. But now he no longer thinks that those truths are the sword of the Spirit; they seem to be weapons of reed and are completely powerless when he holds them in his hand.

What does this all mean? This is like coming down from the mountaintop and entering into a tunnel. Suppose that there are three mountains. Through the second mountain there is a tunnel. When you think you have the experience of the first mountain, God will bring you down to the plain and put you in an environment in which everything is dark. You will enter the tunnel of the second mountain. After a while, God will lead you out of the tunnel, and you will again experience the joy of the first mountain. But then, you will be on the third mountain. The law of spiritual progress is to go from mountaintops to tunnels and from tunnels to mountaintops. Every time you hear a truth, you will feel that you have obtained it. For example, I may speak on the Lord's teaching on the mount in Matthew 5 to 7, which covers the conduct of Christians. After you hear and receive it, you may think you have reached the peak and are above the world. But you have to remember that this truth is not yours. You only feel this way. In God's eyes you have not attained yet. God has prepared an excellent way; He takes you from a mountaintop down to a plain, and He puts you in your family, your school, your hospital, or in other environments. He puts you in a very dark place, so that you must undergo trials. He brings you down from your idealistic peak experience into a dark tunnel.

All the teachings, truths, and feelings which you received the first time will go with you into the tunnel. Then you will say to God, “God, I cannot lay hold of Your truth. May the truth lay hold of me.” When you hear a truth for the first time, you think that it is yours and that you have laid hold of much of the truth. You try your best to lay hold of it, understand it, and practice it. After you make up your mind to do this, God will test you by putting you in many different environments like your family or school. He will permit your family members to disturb you, your colleagues to trouble you, and many other events to surround you. At that time you will see that the truth you once held onto has become like a reed; it seems that it has flown away. You feel that your weapons have been confiscated and everything is lost. You will think that Romans 6:6 cannot be applied to you and slowly lose your grip on the truth. In the end, you give up altogether. This opens the opportunity for God to lay hold of you with His truth. Do not think that this kind of tunnel experience will last for two or three days or for three to five months. Sometimes it lasts for three to five years. At least it is possible for it to last for a year or two.

While you are in such trials, you might think that all is lost. After one or two days, one or two months, or even one or two years, you will not remember the truth anymore, and your hand will lose its grip. Then God will remind you of the truth you once heard, the truth which once gave you an exciting mountaintop experience. Then a small voice may say, “Does not Romans 6:6 say that our old man has been crucified with the Lord, and that the body of sin is annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves?” By then, God will bring you to the point where you can believe. At first you may wonder, “Is this real? Perhaps I have not received it. Perhaps I do not yet understand.” You dare not be as bold as the first time and try to act calmly as if nothing has happened. But the same word comes back and reminds you again. Then God will remind you little by little that this is God's Word. You will respond, “Although I still fail, God's Word is sure.” Now you find that you can believe. You have come out of the tunnel of the second mountain and have come to the third peak. This will not give you the same feeling you had at the first peak. Without the experience of the tunnel, you cannot have the experience of the third peak. The darkness is past, but trials and difficulties are still there. Nevertheless, you have overcome. The truth you acquire this time is really yours. The truth you received at the first peak was only in your feeling. This is why God disarms your self-confidence at the first peak. He is delivering you from a life of feelings into the realm of living by faith.

The order of receiving any truth from God is this: first He conveys the truth to you through His servant, through some books, or He may give you the understanding directly through reading the Bible. After He gives you the truth, He will immediately begin working and create a sense of need for this truth in you. He will cause something to happen in your environment or work through other things. You will find that unless you experience the deliverance of this special truth, you will not be able to get through. In the beginning, you may think that the truth you understand can save you. Only when you are put in a trial do you realize that the truth is not yours. After this, you gradually forget this truth. But in your hour of darkness and forgetfulness, the Lord begins to work. Without realizing it, He begins to constitute you with the truth. By the time you come out of the tunnel, you will rediscover that the truth which you forgot in your dark hours has now become ours.

Many believers think that great joy and excitement mean power. But I have to tell you that excitement in one's feelings is actually a hindrance to a life of faith. God has to strip you of everything you have received through your feeling, until only God and His Word remain. He causes you to believe in a calm way; there is no feeling, no excitement. You believe “coldly.” When you do that, you are brought up to the mountaintop again. There is joy again, but the joy is different from the first experience of joy. The first experience is groundless, but this joy has a basis. This time God causes you to experience the real victory, not like the previous idealistic victory, because you have passed through the tunnel experience.

Please remember that every time a believer wants to acquire some spiritual experience, he has to first pass through the test of the tunnel before he can really acquire anything. When you acquire a new truth, you are very happy. But you must be careful; immediately after this there is a tunnel waiting for you. If you do not realize this fact and instead doubt the reliability of God's Word, you will be in danger. Because many Christians do not know this principle, they stay inside the tunnel and never come out. God's goal is to remove your outward feelings and your outward crutches, so that His Word will take hold of you and so that you will be empowered through faith. Brothers, before you acquire a spiritual truth, you must always go through the tunnel experience. The feeling on the first peak is not trustworthy. Only after you have gone through the tunnel experience can the truth be yours. This is true with any kind of truth.

At first, we hear a truth and receive it. This is where the teachers come in. They share the truth with us. But we must not think that just because we have heard and understood it, that it is ours. God has to bring us down from the peak to the plain and into the tunnel before we can be on the third peak again. At that time the truth will be ours. There is a particular danger with the preachers. When they reach the first peak, they think they have acquired something, and they blow their trumpet to tell others about it. Those who hear also think that they have acquired the truth. But when they are brought by God to the plain and into the tunnel, they will think that what they heard was wrong. The mistake is with the preachers themselves. When they are on the first peak, they need not be hasty in telling others anything, for everything will surely go into the tunnel. The length of time in the tunnel is not certain; it can be long or short. Only after they have come out of the tunnel will the truth be theirs. After they have gone through the tunnel experience, they will realize what that truth really means. God leads us this way in order to show us that the just live by faith and not by feeling. When we are brought into the tunnel, we realize that the only thing that will bring us through is the Word of God. Only God's Word counts; feelings do not count. After we pass through the tunnel experience, the truth will be ours. When we are brought into the tunnel by God, we think that we have lost all the truth. Actually, God is turning the truth that we have received in our feelings into real experience through the test of the tunnel. In other words, when we are in the tunnel we acquire the truth in a real way.

Let me now relate to you a story to illustrate this matter. I have a friend who is a very good poet. One day he went to a potter to watch how porcelain ware is made. He saw many people making many vases out of mud, smoothing them out, and painting flowers and letters on them. Finally, the vases were burned in the furnace. He thought of the pain the vases had to go through and wondered if the burning was necessary. A vase that has not gone through the fire looks the same outwardly as a vase that has gone through the fire. But inwardly they are very different. A vase that has passed through the fire can hold water with flowers. A vase that has not passed through the fire dissolves once water is poured into it. There must be the burning. He noticed that of the numerous vases that went into the furnace, only about one-third would come out of the fire undamaged. He was touched by this, and he went home and wrote a poem based on Peter's word about the “fiery ordeal” (1 Pet. 4:12). In the poem he metaphorically described himself as a vase, upon which

were painted flowers and letters and colors. It was beautiful, yet it could not stand the touch of a finger or the splash of water. Unless he went through the fire, nothing would be solid or firm. There was no choice but to enter the furnace. Within the furnace, there was the sound of crying and murmuring. But he had to suffer this before he could possess the lasting beauty. When the time came, he emerged out of the furnace. Then there was not only outward beauty, but an inward firmness. All the pictures and letters had firmly become one with him; they belonged to him and could not be erased or washed away anymore. Now he could be presented before anyone, even before a king.

Our experience of acquiring the truth is similar to the experience of the vase. When the flowers and letters are first painted, we think everything is fine. But we cannot stand any touching and are destroyed by any washing. The truth is not ours; we only understand it in our mind and are excited in our feeling. We rejoice over it a little too soon. We have to remember that every time we go through a test, it is to help us to possess the truth that we have just heard. Suppose we have just heard the truth concerning patience. A test will come to make us impatient. The test we will face will put us in exactly the opposite place of the truth we received in our feeling. God wants to put us through the burning of the furnace. Many people go into the furnace and never come out again. But if we go through the fire and come out again, what we have acquired will be firm. Then we will be on the mountaintop once again. The truth which we received before is unusable; but the truth we now have is usable. The sword which we acquired before could not be used to fight; the sword we now have, can. What we had before was only a nice outward appearance; what we now have within is something solid. Previously, we were in the realm of the mind and the emotion; now we have really acquired something.

When we hear a new truth, we go home rejoicing. But what follows are the trials. We must pass through the fire. Here lies the difference between faithful ones and unfaithful ones. It is not enough just to put some nice colors on a vase to make it look nice outwardly. It must go through the fire and come out of the fire before it can be useful. What we receive in our feeling is of no use before God. We have to go through the fire and lose every outward thing before we will receive something real. When we receive a new truth and feel very happy about it, we must not think that we have the truth already. In the tunnel everything is dark; there is no light at all. But we should not think that we have lost the truth we have received initially. We have to realize that this is

the time we are actually acquiring the truth. God's goal is to remove us from a life in the emotions and teach us to live by faith. There is only one principle: the just shall live by faith and not by feelings. With every spiritual experience the principle is the same: first there is the mountaintop feeling of joy, then there is the experience of the tunnel, and then another mountaintop joy that is genuine. After this, what we have obtained is real.

Why does God always give us a mountaintop feeling of joy at the beginning of our spiritual experience? God has His intention for doing this. If we do not have a taste of the truth, we will not receive it. Madame Guyon said that God allows us to have a taste of the joy of every new truth, so that we will not want to lose it even when we are in the tunnel. When we pass the test and come out of the tunnel, we will have a full taste of the joy of that truth. First we have a foretaste. After the trial we come into the full and unrestricted enjoyment.

Now we see the proper course of a Christian path. We cannot possess any truth without going through the test of the tunnel. Faith is the principle because feelings are unreliable. God takes away our feelings so that we can have the opportunity of trusting in Him. If our feelings are not removed, we will not trust in God.

Some brothers have asked, “Why is the truth that we think we received in the first peak, the truth we received in our feelings, not trustworthy? Why do we have to pass through the experience of the tunnel before it becomes trustworthy? What does this have to do with our feelings?” The reason is that when we receive the mountaintop feeling of joy concerning a certain truth, we think we have everything and everything is ours. Actually, we still have nothing. God puts us in a tunnel so that the truth can become really ours. When we enter the tunnel, everything is dark and there is no support anywhere. It seems as if God's Word has failed, and we do not understand why. It seems that God's Word, promises, and facts are all the same and ineffectual. It seems that our feelings have failed us, and according to our feelings, everything is lost. After a while, the truth comes back to look for us. Even though circumstantially we do not feel anything, the truth seems more real and is easier for us to believe. God is delivering us from what we think we have and understand according to our feeling, so that we can actually possess and understand these things. Mr. Andrew Murray once said that the Holy Spirit explains the Word of God to us. I will add a word: only the Holy Spirit can explain God's Word to us. For example, every evening we have our Bible

study. Even though we have read and expounded every verse, this does not count; we must forget about these things and allow them to fail inside the tunnel before there can be the beginning of faith. The Holy Spirit must explain the same thing to us a second time. Whatever we think we understand, we understand only in our feelings. We must pass through the tunnel. Only the experience we gain in the tunnel is real. This is the principle of faith.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NUMBERING OF SPIRITUAL DAYS

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 19:

Notes on Scriptural Messages (3), Issue No. 47

Scripture Reading: Gen. 4:17-22; 5:4-21; 11:31-32; 12:4; 16:16; 17:1, 25; 25:7; 35:28-29; 47:9, 28; Exo. 12:2; Lev. 27:3-7; Deut. 1:2; Josh. 14:10; Matt. 20:3, 6; John 13:30; 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Acts 13:36; Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 1 Kings 6:1 (cf. Acts 13:18-22); Joel 2:25

You may think that we have read too many verses today. Actually, there are not that many. We only read a few of the verses in the Bible that have to do with time. Our goal is to see what God says about time and how He numbers our spiritual days. One interesting thing is that in Genesis 4 and 5, which we have just read, there are two genealogies. In chapter four there is the genealogy of Cain; in chapter five there is the genealogy of Seth. Adam had three famous sons (although he had begotten more than three). They were Cain, Abel, and Seth. Abel died in his youth and had no genealogy. As for Adam's other two sons, the Bible records both of their genealogies. In chapters four and five we see two groups of people begetting generation after generation. One group, including Lamech and Tubal-cain, came out of Cain. The other group descended from Seth; Abraham, Moses, and Christ were all his descendants. You can see these two branches continuing to propagate. Cain's genealogy is recorded in chapter four, and Seth's genealogy is recorded in chapter five. They are similar. One genealogy tells us who begat whom, and who begat whom. The other also tells who begat whom, and who begat whom. However, there is one big difference. That is, in chapter four it only says that Cain begot Enoch, and Enoch begot Irad, and so forth. It does not tell us how many years Cain lived; there is altogether no record of their days on earth. Chapter five is different. Not only does it mention “births,” but it also mentions “deaths” and the ages of the people. Hence, chapters four and five are not quite the same. Chapter four purposely does not record the ages, not because they are forgotten. Chapter five clearly records men's ages; it tells us who lived to what age, and begat whom, and then lived on for how many more years. Then it tells us the total number of years that such a person lived. We

saw that Adam is recorded in chapter five. It says that he lived nine hundred thirty years. From Adam and Seth to Noah, the genealogy was clearly recorded. This is the basic difference between these two chapters.

Why is there this difference? In God's eyes, Cain had no years that could be countable. Perhaps he was married at age fifty, gave birth to a son at age sixty, and lived until he was six hundred years old. But God made no account of Cain and forgot him. In God's eyes, this person had never lived. He was dead. Even when he was living, he was still dead. Therefore, only his birth (which is equivalent to his death) was recorded, and his actual death was not recorded. Since he had not lived before God, there was nothing countable, and there was no death. Who do the men in chapter four represent? They represent those who have not been born again, those who are dead in Adam, have no life, and have no countable days. The men in chapter five represent those who are in the Lord. The name Seth means a replacement. Because Abel died, Seth was appointed to replace Abel. This shows that only those who are born again have countable days.

We have also read another verse, Exodus 12:2: “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” God told the Israelites to rename their month. They were to rename the current month as their first month. Have you ever heard of people renaming the months? We have heard of the renaming of years but not of the renaming of months. For example, during the various Chinese dynasties, the years were named according to the name of the reigning monarch. When one king passed away, the name of the years was changed. When the Republic of China came into existence, the name of the year changed again. For example, today is the twenty-second year of the Republic of China. We call a year the first year because a new beginning has come. However, no one ever renames the months. Yet the Bible renamed the months. It might have been the fifth month, and God changed it to the first month. Why did He do this? He did it because the Israelites left Egypt, the Passover Lamb was slain, and the Israelites were freed from the hands of Pharaoh. Why did the months have to be renamed? They were renamed because this was the beginning of a spiritual history.

Do you have a spiritual history? Today among us some may be quite old; some may even have grandchildren. However, I want to ask you, have you been born again? If you have not been born again, in God's eyes you are not

even a month old. You may be fifty or sixty years old physically, yet your first spiritual month has not started thus far! If the Israelites had not left Egypt, if they had not escaped from the bondage of Pharaoh, if they had not struck the blood on their door posts and escaped the punishment of God, they would not have had a first month before God. Therefore, the beginning of our spiritual history starts with the blood. Please remember that the day that you accept the precious blood is the day of your new beginning. If that day has not yet come, you have no days before God thus far. There is a question we always like to ask: “How many births do you have? How many births have you celebrated?” If you say only one, then I fear for you. You need two births. It is not bad for our wretched body (which becomes the temple of God after our regeneration) to have one birthday. However, we need another birthday. I am afraid that there are some of you who have had only one birth. Such people do not have a first month; they are like Cain who had no days before God. He could have lived for five hundred or seven hundred years, and he might have achieved many things, yet none of these are countable. When the Israelites were in Egypt, God did not count their days. The month they left Egypt was counted as their first month. Therefore, the counting of our spiritual days begins with our regeneration and salvation.

One day I was conversing with a brother, and I asked him a question. It was strange that Paul asked Timothy, who was quite young, to ordain elders. Are not elders supposed to be quite elderly? How could he, being so young, ordain elders? Is this not illogical? How could Timothy ordain elders? Please remember that God has a different way of numbering a person's days. You may be sixty years of age but have had only one month before the Lord; or you may be twenty years of age and have had only ten years before the Lord. Your days are counted from the time you are saved. The days before you were saved were not counted; they were put aside. Today I am not talking about your years before you were saved and how they were not counted. Therefore, I will only say this much.

Now let me say a few words to the believers. Not only are the days before a person's salvation not counted; even after a person is saved and believes in the Lord, not every single day is counted. You may have believed in Him for five years, but that does not mean that you are five years old. Please remember that the number of years is one thing, and age is another thing. This does not make sense according to the world's mentality. However, it is

quite true in the spiritual sense. You may have been born again for fifty years and not be fifty years of age.

Did we not just read two verses that we can use as a comparison? Let us read it again carefully that we may understand how God numbers days. Let us read Acts 13:18-22 very carefully and see how many years there were between the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the time that Solomon built the temple. Paul said, “And for a time of about forty years He carried them as a nurse in the wilderness...And after these things, for about four hundred and fifty years, He gave them judges...and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had deposed him, He raised up David for them as king [for forty years].” How many years are there? Forty years plus four hundred fifty years is four hundred ninety years. Four hundred ninety years plus forty years twice is five hundred seventy years, which plus three years of Solomon's reign up to the time of the building the temple becomes five hundred seventy-three years. Therefore, from the time of Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon when he built the temple was five hundred seventy-three years.

Now let us see what is recorded in 1 Kings 6:1: “And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.” Here it says four hundred eighty years, not five hundred seventy-three years. There is a difference of ninety-three years! There must be an error either with the book of Acts or with the book of the Kings. Otherwise, why would there be such a discrepancy of years? They both recorded the period from Exodus to Solomon's building of the temple. There must be an error in one of them, or both of them are wrong. But you cannot say that, because the spiritual principle in them is the same.

Let us read the record in Acts. Forty years in the wilderness is correct. Saul's reigning for forty years is also correct. David's forty years cannot be wrong. The temple was built in the fourth year of Solomon's reign; therefore, only three years were past when he built the temple. All these years cannot be wrong because the Israelites were reigning at that time. But during the age of the judges, the Israelites were captured several times. Let us see how many years they were captured away as slaves. Judges 3:8 says, “Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of

Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years." This was the first captivity which lasted for eight years. The second time was recorded in verse 14 of the same chapter: "So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years." "And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel" (4:2-3). This can be considered as the third captivity because the Israelites at that time did not have their own judges and were completely in the hands of the Gentiles. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (6:1). This was the fourth time. Another time was recorded in 13:1: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." The Israelites lost their freedom and had to serve the Gentiles altogether five times. How many years in total? Eight plus eighteen plus twenty plus seven, and finally another forty years must be added together. How many years are there altogether? Exactly ninety-three years, no more and no less. This matches the difference between Acts 13 and 1 Kings 6; both are ninety-three years. It is apparent that Paul counted those ninety-three years, but they were not recorded in the first book of the Kings. Therefore it has only four hundred eighty years, whereas it should have been five hundred seventy-three years!

Why were those ninety-three years not counted? There was a reason. Those were the lost years! Oh, whenever we are captured, lose our freedom, serve the Gentiles, and do not have our own judges are the times when we do not have any years to be counted. Now we have gone one step further. We see that not only were we dead before we were born again, but even after we are saved and have eternal life, God considers many days to be dead. Even if we have been redeemed and belong to God, if we are entangled by the world and sold to Moab, the days in which we do not freely serve the Lord are days when we cannot be considered as God's children, and they cannot be counted. The days when we are serving man but are not serving God are lost. We need to count from the day we were saved until now. How many days have we belonged to ourselves? How many days have we been free? How many days have we been controlled by others? How many days can be countable before God? Perhaps we may say that we have believed in the Lord for five or eight or ten years. Yet

how many of these days were spent foolishly? How much time should be discounted? We have wasted too many days. Will these days before the Lord add up to even one year? The days that are spent according to our own will or the will of another, the days in which we fall away from God, will be forgotten. Oh, let us ask, “Have I spent any days before God? Do I have a beginning in the first month?” This is the first question. Then the second question is, “I have been born again for many years, yet how much time have I wasted? How much time is counted before God?” The days we spent as a slave and without fellowship are lost. How many days do we have before God? This is a matter of utmost importance!

Remember how Paul spoke to the Corinthians: “And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able” (1 Cor. 3:1-2). This means that they had wasted many days. They had become aged children. Their ages had increased, yet they were still like children. They should have grown, yet they had not grown at all. Oh, the lost years! They should have become strong men, and they should have been able to run the course that lay ahead and eat solid food. They had wasted many days, and still they remained fleshy. In their daily walk, in their submission to the Lord and trust of the Lord, they should have had many experiences. They should have been able to guide others. However, they still did not know. We may have believed in the Lord for eight or ten years yet not progressed since the day we were born again. Therefore, the apostle said that even after we have been born again, there are many days that cannot be counted, and it is possible that we can remain as infants.

Please remember the parable of the Lord concerning laboring in the vineyard. The Lord went out several times to hire laborers. What did He say? “He went out...and saw others standing idle in the market place, and to those he said, You also go into the vineyard” (Matt. 20:3-4). To be idle means to stand inactive, not doing anything. The Lord wants you to work! Even when He went out at the eleventh hour, which is four or five in the afternoon, He still saw people standing there. The Lord said to them, “Why have you been standing here all the day idle?...You also go into the vineyard” (vv. 6-7). What is the meaning of these words? This is a parable. It says that for His work, God has set a boundary which is the vineyard. Outside of this boundary is idleness. It does not matter what you are doing outside. As long as you are outside, you are idle. You may have been the president of the government for

many years, a professor for a long time, a good father for many years, or a good mother for many years. You may have been an excellent pastor or a missionary all your life. You may have spent your whole lifetime for the church and for spreading the gospel and heavenly kingdom. You may have even contributed greatly to the works of society; yet God says that you are idle. No matter how busy you are, if you are not living in the will of God, you are idle in the eyes of the Lord. It does not matter how much you have sweated. You may even claim that you have been busy working at home and do not have even one moment of free time, yet God says that you are an idle person.

Are men really idle, having nothing to do? No. There is not a person in this world who is not working. Everyone is extremely busy. Some are busy with their daily necessities. Some who are rich and have abundance are busy with earthly pleasures. Some are busy making their living, and others are busy with pleasures. There is no one who is not busy. Even many Christians are working zealously for the Lord. What then does God mean by being idle? It means to be outside the vineyard; anyone who is outside the vineyard is idle. Any works, activities, or labors that are outside of God's will are vanities. You may be working very busily in spiritual matters, but God will speak to you quietly, “Why are you idle? Any work outside of the vineyard is not mine.” Therefore, in God's eyes you are extremely idle. Only those who are inside the vineyard belong to God. The whole question rests on whether or not a work is from God and whether or not it is for God. The days spent outside the will of God are not counted. As the Lord said to those people who came at five o'clock in the afternoon, “Why have you been standing here all the day idle?” (Matt. 20:6). For some, their entire life and all their years have gone by, and nothing is counted. “All the day” here means an entire life. Brothers and sisters, how about us? It does not mean that we should all give up our jobs to preach the gospel. This is not God's word. The most important thing is that every one of us, in whatever we do, should be fully clear that we are standing according to God's will. Let us do everything according to God's will and let the vineyard be our center. There are different types of work in the vineyard; they are not all the same. Some work involves digging the ground, other work involves sowing seeds, and other work involves repairing. Whatever work you are doing, it is all right as long as you are working for His vineyard. Some work is very dirty, such as preparing the fertilizer. Some work is cleaner, such as picking the grapes. Do not think that you have to be like certain ones in order to do God's

work or that you have to do certain work in order for your labor to count. There is no such thing. Any time spent in the vineyard is countable.

You may have been saved for sixty years, fifty years, or for just three years or five years. How much time, energy, and money have you spent for the Lord? Undoubtedly, you have to work. But for whom are you working? It is all right for you to be involved in earthly matters as long as you are sure that you are in the will of God. God does consider those who do not have a job and just engage themselves in gospel preaching as the workers of the vineyard. Some may be doing “God's work,” and yet it is not God's will. On the contrary, God has to call them to work. It is all a question of your heart and the will of God. Therefore, consecration is absolutely necessary. If you are saved but have not consecrated yourself, the life you live is considered idle. If you say that you have done nothing in saving souls, nor anything else for God since you were saved, your life must have been idle. This is the true accounting. The days that are lived for the self, that are lived in captivity or in sin, are not counted by God. How many years can you live on this earth? Seventy years? Eighty years? Not too many can live that long. Have you ever seen a Christian who is one hundred years old? Perhaps you have not. If you subtract the days before you were saved from your short life span, how many more days are left? Brothers, how many more years will you live? There may be sixty more years until that day. The Lord may say, “The days you have lived before me are less than ten years.” Perhaps fifty years from now the Lord will say, “You have lived only a few days before me. The rest of the days have all been forgotten.” Oh, may we number our days and use the rest of our days wisely!

Now, let me mention another matter briefly. This matter is not only mentioned in the New Testament but is exemplified in the Old Testament. One of the examples is Abraham. According to Acts 7, when Abraham was in Mesopotamia, that is, Ur, God appeared to him and charged him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house to go into Canaan. How did he respond? If he disobeyed, he would lose his peace. Yet he was not willing to obey to the end. He came to Haran and became “a halfway Christian.” He not only went out himself, but he also brought along his nephew Lot and his father. God told Abraham to leave his kindred, but he brought them along. God told him to go to Canaan, but he went only to the border. He became a “borderline Christian.” With many Christians, you cannot consider them totally cold because you can sense a little warmth in them. But you cannot consider them hot because they are not. It was the same with Abraham; he

left Ur of the Chaldees but had not entered into Canaan. Today some may think that they are too spiritual for the world and too worldly for the Christians. In this way, they become borderline Christians.

However, we see that God again called Abraham after his father died (Gen. 12). This time, God did not call him from Ur but rather from Haran. God's will never wavers. Once it is spoken, it stands forever. God told Abraham that he should move to Canaan. The fact that he had moved to Haran did not change God's will. God called him the second time, and Abraham had to leave. Surprisingly, as soon as he started his journey from Haran, the Bible immediately recorded his age as being seventy-five (Gen. 12:4). His age was not recorded when he was in Ur or when he reached Haran. Only when he left Haran and entered into Canaan did the Bible record his age as being seventy-five. This shows us the beginning of his years. God does not count the days that are in the halfway state and in the border region. He demands that we surrender to Him absolutely. Oh, the days spent in Haran are the lost and forgotten days! If we desire God's blessings, we need to leave Haran. God does not count any days in which the self is mixed. I do not know indeed how many days I have lost, how many years I have lost. When I review my past history, I do not know how many days are to be condemned. God did not take notice of any time that was spent in Haran. We spend many days in a foolish way, in a way that is against our conscience and according to our own will. Many times we are lazy and only care for an easy life. All these are just Haran. All these are lost and become null and void. The counting begins at age seventy-five.

Unfortunately, this was not the only period that Abraham lost. The same thing happened again in chapter sixteen. In chapter fifteen God promised Abraham that he would have a son. In chapter sixteen he was influenced by his wife's suggestion and fell into a presumptuous sin before God. Her intention was good, and she tried to help God. She gave Hagar, her maid, to Abraham, and the latter bore him a son. This was the effort of the flesh and was not something from God. Interestingly, Abraham was recorded as being eighty-six years old in the last verse of chapter sixteen; in the first verse of chapter seventeen he was recorded as being ninety-nine years old. There is a total gap of thirteen years. During these entire thirteen years, not one incident was recorded, nor was any altar built. (Altars were often built by Abraham.) Also, there was no appearance, no new revelation, or any new promise. This period was the period when Ishmael grew up. Let us remember that anything which comes out of our own will and our own flesh is not counted by God and

is lost. God began to keep record again at the age of ninety-nine. The entire thirteen years were lost, forgotten, spent in vain, and counted as nothing.

Let us ask ourselves whether or not during the last few years we have had any new experiences, any new light, or any new messages? In these last few years, did we save any souls or help anyone? Oh, let us consider! A few years have passed. Do we know God in a deeper way? Do we have a renewed assurance concerning God's promise? Do we have any new consecration toward God? Do we have any new altar that we built ourselves? Please remember that if the answers are no, all those days were lost. There is an elderly sister who is still alive today; the time that we can still be with her may not be too long. Once she said that with a Christian, every day he lives on earth should count, and that this is the way to gain the reward. Many times for us, ten days of living do not add up to one day. If we would only live daily by fulfilling our duty, everything would be all right. Please remember that this is a daily matter and cannot be treated lightly. If we live foolishly, rebelliously, sinfully, and act according to the self's will, this type of living in God's eyes is a waste of time and a squandering of our days. What a pity!

Why did God mention the age of ninety-nine? Because Abraham was circumcised during that year. Abraham had to experience circumcision. After one year, Isaac was born to him. We know that the meaning of circumcision is to rid oneself of the flesh. Therefore, the days in which the self and everything of the flesh had not been dealt with cannot be counted. Because Abraham received circumcision, he was counted again at the age of ninety-nine. Oh, many Christians today are extremely loose; they make light of their daily lives. But let us begin from today to strip off everything fleshly and offer all on the altar so that we will not live a life in vain again and not waste our days any longer. All those of us who are saved know that we have eternal life, but let us count our days and strive to gain back our precious moments. No doubt, we very much desire the return of our Lord. But if the Lord delays, let us count every one of our days. Do not let fifty years pass by and find out that forty-nine of them were lost. Oh, let us consider how many days we have spent in a foolish way. We do not know how many days there are left. Therefore, awake! We see from Abraham that many of his years were lost and gone. How wonderful it would be if he had not lost all those years!

It is most interesting to see the journey that the Israelites took in the wilderness. Recall the fact that the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Kadesh

took only two years. This is recorded in Exodus 12 to Numbers 13. Due to their unbelief they did not enter into Canaan. They journeyed another thirty-eight years before they entered into Canaan. Those two years of journeying were normal but the thirty-eight years were just a waste. From Mount Horeb they circled around until they returned to the original place. We have also seen from the book of Deuteronomy that from Mount Horeb through Mount Seir to Kadesh-Barnea was a journey of only eleven days but it took them thirty-eight years to finish it. This circle was so large that they made their eleven-day journey in thirty-eight years! This was not three years or five years. All the time they circled around; there was no beginning and no end. This is the experience of many Christians. Some problems can be solved in three to five days, but they wait three to five years and the problems remain unsolved.

According to our knowledge, from the time Paul went to preach in Corinth to the time he wrote 1 Corinthians there was a span of only a few years. In that time, Paul hoped that they would become spiritual and grown-up men. Seeing that they remained as infants after these years disappointed Paul. It seems that he was saying, “It has been so long; it is already a few years!” From this we see that, according to Paul, being a spiritual man does not require a long period of time. It is not right to take three to five years. However, what is our point of view? When we see that a believer is living a foolish life, we make excuses for him, by saying, “Since he has only believed in the Lord for three or five years, how can he do what he is supposed to do?” However, Paul's view was totally different. After one year, a person should have the stature of a one-year-old. He should not take three to five years to do that. Three to five years after salvation is enough for a person to become a grown-up spiritual person. Unfortunately, in these days there are many fifty-year-olds who are still babies. They have never consecrated themselves and do not know what is meant by walking on the right path, seeking after God's will, or fellowshipping with God. They cannot help others. They read the Bible but do not have any light; they do not know how to lay hold of God's promises. Many have taken thirty-eight years to go through an eleven-day journey. These are the days that are forgotten and lost.

Every time I think of this matter, I become sorrowful and find the thought unbearable. However, I still thank the Lord who gives me comfort in my despair. In Joel 2:25 He said, “I will restore to you the years/That the swarming locust has eaten.” Thank the Lord that He still has a way. You may

be sixty years old this year and have wasted thirty or forty years. You may say, “What should I do about this today? I do not have a chance any longer. How much longer do I have to live? My strongest years have already been eaten up by Satan.” What has been lost will never come back. This is like what Mr. Gladstone, a very famous politician in England, said in his old age to a young missionary, “Sir, you are still young. I give you my blessing for going again to preach the gospel in the foreign countries. Unfortunately, I am already old. Although I have succeeded to become the most important man on the political stage, and although I have been a pillar and have spent much time and energy for England, I regret the time spent in the past. If I had three lives, I would spend every one of them to preach the Word of God. Today I am unable to do so because the strongest and the best time of my life has been eaten up. Therefore, I encourage you to run for the Lord and gospel.”

Once there was a young girl who fell into sin and contracted tuberculosis. She was dying in the hospital. An old servant of the Lord preached the gospel to her, telling her that the Lord Jesus had borne all her sin and persuading her to confess her sins, repent, and accept Jesus as her Savior. At first this girl resisted. She wondered how the Lord could forgive a sinner like herself. However, after she accepted the Lord, she was saved and became very happy, and peace filled her heart. After a few days, this old servant went to see her again. He was surprised to find her with a very sad face and very sorrowful. The servant asked her, “Why? Do not let Satan cheat you.” She said, “No, I know that my sins have been forgiven.” “Then why are you so sorrowful?” She answered sadly, “My years and days are almost finished. I am lying here, and I am about to die. When I stand in front of the Lord, the Lord may reckon me as saved. But what do I have to bring to Him? I can only tell the Lord that I have come empty-handed! How can I face my Lord with empty hands?” Truly, if the Lord takes you today, what do you have to bring to Him? Have you ever saved a soul? That is why this sister was very sad. The old servant said to her, “Sister, do not worry. I will take what you have just said and will write a song right next to your bed to encourage others to preach the gospel. In this way, all those who preach the gospel and save souls because of this song will share their rewards with you.” He wrote the now well-known song: “Must I go, and empty-handed,/Thus my dear Redeemer meet?” Because of this song, many were touched to go out to preach the gospel. That is what the Lord means when He says, “I will restore to you the years/That the swarming locust has eaten,/The licking locust and the consuming locust and the cutting locust.”

Therefore, let us testify for Him today, serve Him, and recover the zeal which was in the beginning.

Ten years of a man's life on earth may be counted for only one day. But then one day may also be counted as one thousand days. David said that a day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand. Therefore, our service is not in vain. The days in heaven are not measured by twenty-four hours. This is spiritual accounting. The way we reckon a day is not necessarily the same way God reckons it.

All those who are for the Lord are in the light; everything that does not have the Lord is filled with darkness. The most tragic verse in the whole Bible is John 13:30: “Having taken the morsel, he [Judas] went out immediately; and it was night.” This is a very dark verse. Judas went out and left the presence of the Lord. It is forever a dark night when one betrays the Lord. From that day on, that man never saw day again; he never saw daylight, and everything for him was darkness. It is a very dangerous thing to leave the presence of the Lord. Whenever a person leaves the presence of the Lord, it is darkness for him.

Therefore, let each one of us consider how we are going to spend the rest of our days! May we not lose our days, but spend each day as a thousand. We should go on day by day and should never stop. Every step of our walk should be in the light of God's will, and we should not delay any longer. If we have fallen, we should rise up again right there. Let us remember that the fallen time is the lost time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WATCH AND PRAY

CWWN, The (Set 1) Vol. 11:

The Present Testimony (4), Issue No. 33

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:10-20

We are very familiar with this passage of Scripture. This afternoon we will not consider the whole passage. Instead we will only read verse 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.” Today we will pay special attention to this verse. For the sake of time, we will not even consider the first and last parts of this verse; we will only consider the few words in the middle: “praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance.” The apostle said that we should pray and petition at every time in the Spirit and by the Spirit. But even if we have prayed and petitioned at every time, it is still not enough; we have to have one thing: to watch unto this in all perseverance. If I say that the Lord is coming soon and that we have to be watchful, this may be understandable. If we encounter some trials and are told to be watchful, we may also understand this. But it is hard to understand the words, “watching unto this in all perseverance.” What does the “this” refer to? Which item does “this” indicate? We know that “this” refers to the prayer and petition mentioned above. The apostle was exhorting us to be watchful and persevering in our prayer and petition. If he had said that the Lord is coming and that we have to be watchful, we would all understand what he meant. If he had said that trials are coming or that danger or sufferings are coming, we would also know what he meant. But he said that we have to be watchful in prayer and petition. His words were not about the Lord's coming or about trials, but about prayer and petition. This is hard to understand. When many people come to this passage, they do not know what it means. Therefore, this afternoon may God grant us the light within this one short hour to understand what it means to be watchful in prayer and petition. If we learn what it is to be watchful, we will have learned a great deal in the matter of prayer. Please remember that we have to be watchful not only concerning the Lord's coming and the dangers and trials

that are coming, but we also have to be watchful in the matter of prayer and petition. What does it mean to be watchful? Being watchful is to open our eyes to observe and to keep surveillance; it is making sure that nothing escapes our attention. The apostle is not telling us to be watchful concerning tribulations and trials, but concerning prayer and petition. There is nothing more vulnerable than prayer and nothing more attacked than prayer. For this reason, we have to learn the proper lessons in prayer before we can go on.

Today I will mention a few things related to being watchful in prayer.

THE TIME OF PRAYER

In the Christian life, no time is more attacked than the time of prayer. We sometimes say that we have no time to pray. For this reason, unless we are watchful, we do not pray. It is amazing that we have time to eat, see guests, visit people, and do other things. But the strange thing is that once we intend to pray, we find that we have no time. For example, last night we might have said, “Oh, another day has passed, and I still have not prayed properly. Tomorrow I have to find a time to pray properly.” But the next day at the scheduled time of prayer, someone may be knocking at our front door, while another person may be waiting for us at the back door. It is so strange that at other times, everything is quiet. But once we begin to pray, all kinds of things begin to happen. We can find a great deal of time to do this and that. But we cannot find a time to pray. Many people have found this phenomenon most amazing. Brothers and sisters, please remember that prayer requires watchfulness; it requires that we open our eyes and keep surveillance. We cannot skip prayer just because it is hard to find the time, and we cannot just let the matter slip by. We have to realize that this is absolutely a work of the enemy; the enemy is frustrating us and coming up with all kinds of things to take away our time of prayer. I must say frankly that the reason so many Christians pray so poorly is that they have not seen this matter; they have not been keeping a watchful surveillance and have not carefully guarded every opportunity of prayer from slipping by. They have time to do this and that, to study the Bible, and to do other works, but they cannot find any time to pray or make petitions. Brothers and sisters, this is where Satan gains the victory. He knows that if we cannot find the time to pray, we will not pray, and subsequently he will not be restricted.

We know that at every time we have to be watchful because there are dangers ahead. Every time we have to be on guard because there are enemies

before us. If there were no danger or enemies, there would be no need to be watchful. In other words, there is the need to be watchful because there are dangers and enemies ahead of us. Therefore, when we pray and make petitions, we have to be watchful and struggle to find the time. If we want to wait until we have the time to pray, we will never have the opportunity to do so. All those who want to participate in the work of supplication and who want to advance in their prayer life have to make time; they have to set aside a time to pray. We have to guard this time and strive to lay hold of it. This means that we have to pray that God will give us the time to pray. We have to have prayers that guard our prayer time. We have to pray that we will not lose these times. Once these times are lost, there will be no prayer. Every person who wants to properly serve the Lord has to remember and realize that they have to set aside a prayer time. Andrew Murray said that those who have never set aside a time for prayer have never prayed. If we have never scheduled a time to pray, we will never have the time to pray. Furthermore, even if we schedule a time, we have to pray to guard this time and put a camp around this time with prayer, so that it will not be taken away by the enemy. This is what it means to be watching “unto this.” The first thing we have to be watchful about is the time of prayer.

THE TIME WHILE ONE IS PRAYING

We must not only be watchful and on guard for our time of prayer, but we must be watchful and on guard that we use this time properly. Not only must we try to have a time of prayer, we must also carefully watch and guard ourselves while we are praying. What does this mean? We know that a Christian is attacked more when he is praying than at any other time. We are attacked the most during our prayer. At ordinary times, our mind is very clear, and our thoughts are lucid. But once we start praying, our thoughts become confused and distracted, and we are drawn away to somewhere else. Before we pray, we are strong physically. Once we start praying, we feel physically tired and sleepy. Originally, we could talk to people until eleven or twelve o'clock or work until the same time. But if we pray until nine o'clock, we feel that the time is too long and that we have to sleep. We cannot explain why the body is well one minute, but we feel ill as soon as we pray. If we would not pray and go away to do something else, our energy will come back. But as soon as we pray, our energy is gone. Brothers and sisters, this is the opposing work of Satan. He does not want us to pray; he wants to cut off the wire that is linked to heaven. He knows the power of prayer, and he knows that prayer

will restrict him and bring down power from heaven. This is why he tries his best to attack our prayer. He knows that if he does not cut off this line, he will suffer loss. He knows that if you cannot fellowship with God, he can act any way he wants and do whatever he wants to you. This is why we can do whatever we want and nothing will interrupt us; we can carry various things out smoothly. But as soon as we decide to pray, nothing will go smoothly. Indeed, at no other time are Christians attacked as much as when we pray.

What should our attitude be concerning this? The only thing we can do is to be watchful. Therefore, we should not only be watchful and on the alert concerning the time to pray and not only sustain this attitude until the time we pray, but we should also sustain it when we are praying so that we might have a proper prayer. Brothers and sisters, we should open our eyes and see. We should not be deceived into thinking that we are not feeling well and that we should not pray. We must remember that this is an attack of Satan. Never think that you are tired and, therefore, that you should not pray because you may do harm to your body. No, you are deceived. There is not such a thing. Let me say this again. If you feel weak when you pray, do not think that you are weak. If it seems that your thoughts are not focused, do not think your thoughts are not focused. All this is the work of Satan in attacking and deceiving you. This is why you have to be watchful. “Watching unto this in all perseverance.” You have to guard your prayer properly with prayer. You have to build a wall of prayer around your prayer. Therefore, before you engage yourself in the work of prayer, you must first pray that God will enable you to pray and deliver you from everything that hinders you from praying so that you will not become weak and sleepy. You must pray that God will give you the energy to pray, that your thoughts will not wander, and that under the covering of the blood, you will not become tired, weak, spiritless, or confused. You should say to the Lord, “Lord, protect my prayer so that I can concentrate myself in prayer, be empowered to pray, and not be hindered by my natural weaknesses.”

Please remember that there are two kinds of soldiers in this world. One kind is a regular soldier that goes to war, and the other is a sentry. A sentry does not fight; he is there to protect. One may say that he is a guard of the soldiers who do the fighting. Many times we see a battalion of soldiers stationed in a courtyard with a few soldiers standing at the gate with their guns. What are these soldiers doing? They are protecting the soldiers within who do the fighting, keeping them from being attacked. We know that prayer

is a kind of attack on Satan; it is a warfare with Satan. We also need sentry prayers to guard our fighting prayers. Being watchful means being on guard. Being watchful in prayer means that we have to be careful in keeping guard, not allowing our prayer, which is our fighting army, to suffer any loss. Therefore, there are two things that we have to be watchful about. The first is not allowing Satan to take away our time of prayer, and the second is asking the Lord to protect our time of prayer so that we can have the strength to pray. One thing we have to remember is that all adverse circumstances are not real; they are illusions and deceptions from the enemy.

AVOIDING PRAYERS THAT ARE NOT PRAYERS

If we want to pray properly, there are still other things we have to do. One of these is to avoid all prayers that are not prayers. Satan will not only take away our time and our strength to pray but will cause us to say many vain words in our prayer. This is something that we have to open our eyes to and be on the alert for. We must be determined not to waste our time in prayer. Many prayers are not real prayers but are vain talk; they do not accomplish any work. I read a story about Mr. Evan Roberts which at first I could not quite believe. Mr. Roberts was a leader in the Welsh revival. One time in his living room, a few people were praying for a certain matter. One brother was in the middle of his prayer, when Mr. Roberts went over and covered his mouth, saying, “Brother, don't go on. You are not praying.” When I read this, I wondered how this could ever be. But he did do it. Now I know that he was right. Many of our prayers are in fact the result of Satan's instigating our flesh. Our prayers may be very long, but they are not real or useful. This is a fact. Many times in our prayers we encircle the world a few times, and we use up all our time and energy so that we can no longer pray properly or get any answers to our prayers. Although we may have prayed much, our prayers have not been answered and have not been effective. Our time and energy are all wasted. Prayer does not have to be very long, and there is no need to use many words. We must be careful not to put too much reasoning into our prayers. All we have to do is present our desire before the Lord; there is no need to add too much to this.

If what we say are vain words, we can be sure that God will not listen. Therefore, we have to be on the alert and be watchful. What is it to be watchful? It is speaking carefully before the Lord. There was a man who was really good at prayer. He once wrote a hymn; one line says that before a

person comes to God, he should first be prepared in what he wants to ask of God. How do we submit a petition before a judge? Do we do it with nothing in our hands? No, we have to prepare a statement first. This is the way we should come to God; we must first be prepared concerning what we are going to pray. We should not come to God presumptuously without first knowing what we want. Many times our prayers are not answered, and we cannot work and do not have the strength because our prayers are foolish, aimless mutterings before God. This is absolutely the trick of Satan. He puts foolish mutterings into us. This kind of prayer is completely useless and does not change anything after we pray. Therefore, we must be watchful in prayer and properly on guard. When we come to God to pray, we must be very careful that we guard our prayer.

We have to be very clear in our mind what our desire is. We must see clearly what it is we want from God when we come to Him. We should not wander aimlessly before God. We must know what we want. If we do not have such a want, we do not have a prayer. All prayers are governed by the heart's desire. Once two blind men came to the Lord and said, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!” The Lord asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?” (Matt. 20:29-32). The Lord is also asking you, “What do you want Me to do for you when you pray?” Some people can pray for fifteen to twenty minutes. If you pull them aside and ask them what they are asking of God, they would not be able to tell you anything. Although they have said many things about this and about that, they do not know what they want; they do not have any wants. How can we expect God to work through our prayers? Therefore, before we pray we must pay proper attention to our wants. We must examine watchfully what it is we want. It is a pity that many people have no wants at all and are merely muttering foolish, vain words before God with long prayers.

Another thing that is equally important is the words we use; that is, the things we say in our prayer. Recall the Syrophoenician woman who came one day to ask the Lord to heal her daughter. The Lord said that it was not right to give the children's bread to the dogs. This meant that the Gentiles were the dogs. But she thought, “That is all right. He said I am a dog; I will be a dog to Him.” She answered saying, “Yes, Lord, but even the little dogs under the table eat of the little children's crumbs.” How did the Lord answer her? He said, “Because of this word, go” (Mark 7:24-30). Therefore, the words we use are most important. The Lord answered her prayer because she said the right

thing. For this reason, we must not only have a proper desire before the Lord, we must also pay attention that our words would be right and compatible with our desire. Many times we want something in our heart yet after rambling for a long time, we find that we have deviated from our subject into other matters. All powerful prayers are carefully worded prayers. However, this does not mean that we have to compose a good prayer and recite it.

We have seen two things. If we are to pray before God, we have to take care of our desire and our words, and we have to closely guard them. Now we have to pay attention to a third thing. Not only should we take care of our desire and our words, but we must consider the way we pray. It is a pity that many people have good desire in their prayers and are proper in the use of their words, but they cannot watch themselves. All of a sudden their prayer strays off, and it cannot be brought back. Many times we have to consider if our prayers have wandered off. Many long prayers need much supervision and searching to see if the subject of request has changed through the use of wrong words. If this is so, we have to pull the prayer back and not allow it to slip away. Such a slipping away can very easily happen. At the beginning we may want something from God, but when sentence after sentence is piled up, the prayer goes off on a tangent and leaves the center. Many times when we realize we have left the center, we have to start all over again to put the words back into their proper place. We have to examine carefully if our prayer is in a good continuation. We must hold onto the goal and not give up. This is a most important point. Prayer requires that we be watchful, persistent, unrelenting, and alert in keeping out unnecessary words. For this reason, we have to supervise our prayer and protect it.

What we have just covered has to do with keeping out vain words and prayers that are not prayers. We have to be on the alert for the many words and reasonings, and we must keep them out. Under this third point, there are three items. First, in order to stop all useless prayers, we have to have a desire and specific want. Second, we need accurate wording; the things that we say in our prayers must be right. Third, we must maintain a proper condition by keeping out unnecessary words from our prayer and by refraining from praying prayers that are not prayers.

PRAYING AND PETITIONING AT EVERY TIME

If all our prayers are to be effective, we have to knit them together as a net. What does this mean? It means that we have to pray thoroughly and not leave

one matter untouched by our prayer. We must not allow one matter to slip by. If we do not have a net-like prayer, we cannot have a fruitful prayer. I do not want to go into detail about this matter today, but I will mention the principle in brief. A man who is capable in prayer will pour out all his desires before God and will use many kinds of prayers to surround the matter that he is praying for; he will form a net around the matter and will prevent the enemy from doing anything more. Our prayers today are too loose; they are not tight at all. Although many words are spoken, nothing is thorough, and the enemy can still carry on his work. If our prayers are like a net, the enemy will not find any gap to come in, and we will accomplish our work.

Let us illustrate with an example. Suppose a brother is traveling to the remote border regions to preach the gospel. We have a burden in our heart to pray for him. Because we have such an earnest burden for him, we pray to God about everything related to his journey. We pray about everything we can think of, including his needs, the train he will ride, the train track, his tickets, his luggage, his meals, his lodgings, his health, the porters, transportation, all the people he will meet, the houses where he will stay, the local people at his destination, his attitude, his demeanor, his preaching, his initial work, and his food and clothing during his stay there. In short, we pray about everything we can think of that is related to him. This is to pray by means of all prayer. It means to put a net around him, so nothing is left untouched by prayer and so he can have peace in everything. If we do this, Satan will not be able to do anything even if he wanted to because we have surrounded this brother with a net of protection. The enemy will not be able to bother him anymore. We have to pray even for the letters that go to him through the mail; we have to pray that the mail will not be lost and that the items that others send him will not be stolen. We have to pray about everything that is related to him. In this way, we will see a net of prayer around him, and the enemy will not be able to do anything. In order to do this, there is the need to be watchful. If we are not watchful and do not keep an eye on the matter, we will not realize that there are so many things to pray about. A hasty prayer, a prayer cut short, or a general prayer is often a loose prayer; it gives the enemy the ground to come in. Many times, loose prayers are a sign of the lack of desire, for if we have an intense desire, and we know what we are praying for, there will surely be a burden which will press us to pray for everything. Of course, this has much to do with our knowledge. For this reason, we must be watchful and open our eyes to oversee the situation. In this way we will be able to pray about

everything that we see, everything that we can think of, and everything that the other person will encounter. If we are not watchful, we may finish our prayer in two sentences and will not have anything more to say. If we want to serve the Lord properly in the matter of prayer, we must be very watchful and observing in the matter of time, energy, and everything that we pray about, and we must do this until all the things that we pray for have come to pass. This is indeed not easy. However, this is an expression of great love. If there is no love, there is no supplication, for all those who have never loved fervently can never pray for others. If there is no love, God's children will not be able to participate in the work of prayer. Concerning prayer, there are many principles. But today we can only mention a few basic ones. The rest we will have to find out ourselves. Finally I will mention another matter.

BEING WATCHFUL AFTER ONE PRAYS

A good doctor will not only be watchful about the medicine his patient takes, but he will also watch for any reactions in the patient after he has taken the medicine. He knows that if there is a reaction in the illness, there will surely be a change in the person's physiology, and he must change his treatment accordingly. For this reason, all proper prayers are not only uttered by all means but at all times. They must not only be uttered once, but again and again. They must not be uttered by all means once for all, but by all means at all times. Therefore, after our prayers, we have to pay attention to any new developments, reactions, or attitudes. We have to observe if the person or things that we pray for show any new signs. Otherwise, even though we have prayed, we are not watchful; and our prayer is still futile. If we pray for a person, we have to observe his condition afterward. This is very important, for this will affect our prayer before God. Prayer alone will not work, for it is powerless. (Of course, we cannot make this a general conclusion.) For this reason, we have to be very watchful even after we have prayed.

Suppose we are praying for one who opposes the Lord. We pray that God will make him believe, and we pray for him by all means. Not only are we praying by all means, we are also praying at all times. At the same time, we believe in God's promise and lay hold of His word. But after a few days, the situation becomes worse; he becomes more antagonistic. Many people do not understand this; they go on praying just the same. This is wrong. It is not enough just to pray. We must examine and present his opposition before the Lord and tell Him that this person has now become more antagonistic. At the

same time, we have to ask God why his situation has become worse and what we should do. If we are watchful, God may give us the light and show us that our prayer has affected the enemy. Otherwise, there would not have been such a change. If the opposition has become particularly serious, it probably means that the prayer has touched him. The enemy is afraid that we will snatch this person away. This is why he becomes more antagonistic. When we see this, we can start praising the Lord. Although outwardly the person may be opposing us more fiercely, we know that our prayer has struck him, and the enemy is trying to guard him more closely. When this happens, we can change our prayer and cast another net. Perhaps after a while, he will become milder. In the beginning he ignored us. Now he begins to talk with us. At this point we should cast out another net in prayer. We have to change our prayer according to the situation. This requires that we be watchful. Being watchful is overseeing and observing. One thing is certain, our knowledge governs our prayer. The more we know about a matter, the easier it is to pray for it. Therefore, if someone asks us to pray for something, he must first explain the thing clearly to us. The amount we know is the amount we can pray.

Watchfulness enables us to know the direction of prayer, and it enables us to see the condition of the person we pray for and how much he has changed. For this reason, we must watch all the time, and we must find out what changes have occurred since we prayed. Has the situation become worse, or has it become better? Has it gone forward, or has it gone backward? We must watch closely. Many times, we have to keep watching a person, a work, a tribulation, or a brother. Not only must we be faithful, we must be prudent as well. Our eyes should be the same when they are open as when they are closed. Just as we have to close our eyes to pray faithfully for others, in the same way we should open them faithfully to follow all the changes. If we only close our eyes, the enemy will have many opportunities to deceive us. Ephesians 6 is a chapter on spiritual warfare. The most important thing there is the prayer at the end. But this prayer can only be maintained with watchfulness. Therefore, in our prayer, we must be watchful, for our prayers will only be effective when we are watchful.

Brothers and sisters, the basic need is that we pray. But if we want to be powerful in our prayer, we have to add watchfulness to our prayer. It is a pity that many people have not learned the work of prayer. They are unclear about the matter of prayer. We have no other goal today than that God would revive us to function in the work of prayer. Do not forget that for God's children, the

thing in their life that suffers the greatest attack is the matter of prayer. If we do not pray, we will not have the power. This is why Satan specifically tries to disrupt our prayer life, so that we will not have the time or the energy to pray, so that we will use many useless words in our prayer, so that we will miss many items in our prayer, and so that we will become negligent after we pray and fail to note the changes that happen afterward. If we want to learn to pray properly, we must pay attention to these five things. By these, we will learn something in prayer. Although these five points are very simple, they are also very profound. Those who have prayed for many years have learned these five things, and those who are beginning their lessons in prayer should also take care of these five things. However, the more we go on in prayer, the more understanding we will have and the more experience we will acquire. May God give us the grace today to truly pay attention to these matters.