LIFE LESSONS

Volume 1
(Lessons 1-12)

Volume 2
(Lessons 13-24)

Volume 3
(Lessons 25-36)

Volume 4
(Lessons 37-48)

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LIFE LESSONS

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■Preface

These lessons have been specifically prepared for the home meetings of new believers. The first two volumes cover different matters between a believer and God which he should know, understand, and practice immediately after his salvation. Then the last two volumes cover the full salvation which God has prepared in Christ for us who have believed into Him, the riches which we have obtained in Christ, the experience which we should have in Christ, the things which we should accomplish in Christ, and the goal which we should attain in Christ.

It is difficult to avoid certain terms which are relatively deep and hard for new believers to understand. There is no need for added explanation while reading these lessons in the meetings. As lesson after lesson is read, a thorough understanding of the terms will be acquired. Even if there is not such a thorough understanding at the time, this understanding will be gained gradually.

Knowledge is empty and the letter kills; only Christ is reality and only the Spirit gives life. Thus, there must be prayer, confession of sins, and the abundantly rich filling and saturation with the Spirit of Christ before reading these lessons. In reading, there should be the practice of depending less on the mind and more on the spirit, rejecting the old way of knowledge and

emphasizing the new way of life. Sentence after sentence that is being read should be pushed out by the spirit with life that others' spirits may be touched for them to receive the life supply of the pneumatic Christ.

The Bible verses in these lessons are quoted in an economical and suitable way. Furthermore, their explanations are both concise and adequate, having no need for further explanation. The only need is to repeat what is read, to emphasize what is read, to read in a living way, and to pray-read. At times, the reading should be supplemented by hymns or testimonies. Never extend the meaning of the text or develop an understanding based on inference.

The Scriptures quoted in these lessons are from the Recovery Version of the New Testament and the King James Version of the Old Testament.

For these lessons to be beneficial to the home meetings, there is a great need for much prayer. May the Lord bless His recovery, perfect His saints, and build up His Body.

The author Taipei March 20, 1987

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Life Lessons, Vol. 1

LESSON ONE

KNOWING THAT YOU ARE SAVED

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SALVATION

Salvation refers to a person's being saved before God, which includes being forgiven of his sins, being spared from perdition, being regenerated, having the eternal life of God, and becoming a child of God.

II. THE PROOFS OF SALVATION

A. The Outward Proof—The Proof by the Bible Without

1. **"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).**

   This word was spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself.

2. **"For, Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).**

   This is the sure word of the Apostle Paul.

The two statements above prove that once a person believes and is baptized, calling upon the name of the Lord, he is immediately saved. This fact should be recognized and acknowledged immediately without dependence on human feelings.

3. **"He who hears My word and believes Him [the heavenly Father] who sent Me has eternal life, and will not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).**

   The Lord Jesus said this to us with full assurance.

4. **"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. I write these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:12-13).**

   This is a word testified by the Apostle John.

The two portions of Scripture above prove that once a person believes in the

heavenly Father and believes into the name of the Son of God (the Lord Jesus Christ), he has eternal life (that is, the life of God). He will not come into judgment and perish, but has passed out of death into life. A person is saved in this way to have the life of God based on what the Bible says and not on his own feelings.

5. **"But as many as received Him [the Lord Jesus Christ], to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born…of God" (John 1:12-13).**

This is also a word testified by the Apostle John, indicating that the Lord Jesus gives to those who receive Him by faith, that is, to those who believe into His name, the authority to become children of God. This authority is the life of God, enabling those who believe into the Lord Jesus to be born of God, that is, to be regenerated to become children of God. This is also proven by the words of the Bible and not determined by human feelings.

The words in the Bible are trustworthy and can never be changed or annulled. Human feelings will fluctuate according to mood and environment and are undependable. Since the Bible clearly states that a person is saved upon believing in the Lord Jesus, this fact is then established regardless of human feeling. We should stand on the trustworthy words of the Bible and disregard our fluctuating feelings, believing strongly and knowing with assurance that we have been saved.

B. The Inward Proof—The Proof by the Holy Spirit in Our Spirit

"The Spirit Himself [the Holy Spirit of God] witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

When we believe in the Lord Jesus, receiving Him as our Savior, God gives His Holy Spirit to us, putting the Spirit into our spirit (Ezek. 36:27). This Holy Spirit is in us to be with us eternally (John 14:17). He witnesses in our spirit that we are the children of God, who are born of God. Every one of us who believes in the Lord likes to address God as "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). It is very natural for us to address God as "Abba, Father." As we address God in this way, we feel sweet

and comfortable within. This is because we are children who are born of God, with God's life, and the Spirit of God's Son has entered into us. This is the inward proof of our salvation.

C. The Proof of Love—The Proof by the Experience of Life

1. **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who begets, loves him who has been begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1).**

Once we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we are born of God. God is love (1 John 4:16), and the life of God is also the life of love. Therefore, everyone who is begotten of God loves God and loves him who has been begotten of God, him who is a brother in the Lord.

2. **"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers" (1 John 3:14).**

This word states that, as believers, our love for the brothers in the Lord is a proof that we have God's eternal life. Loving the brothers in the Lord is an experience in the eternal life of God after we have believed in the Lord to be saved. There is an inexplainable joy and feeling of dearness when a saved person sees a brother in the Lord. This kind of love toward a brother in the Lord is also a proof for us to know that we have been saved. It can be called the proof of love, the proof of our experience in the life of God.

Therefore, whether it is by the definite word of the Bible, by the witnessing of the Holy Spirit in our spirit, or by our experience of love in life, we may know assuredly that we are saved. Furthermore, the salvation that we have received is an eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9). Once we have received this salvation, we shall by no means perish forever, and no one can snatch us out of the Lord's and the heavenly Father's hands (John 10:28-29).

III. THE JOY OF SALVATION

A. "The joy of...salvation" (Psa. 51:12); "songs of deliverance" (Psa. 32:7).

Salvation is a joyful matter, and God's salvation brings us joy. Therefore,

when we are saved, and especially when we know that we have been saved, joy will flood us and we will overflow with songs of salvation, singing forth the joy of salvation. This kind of joyful singing will spontaneously arouse our gratitude and adoration toward the very God who loves us and the very Lord who saves us.

B. "Behold, God is my salvation…and my song… Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:2-3).

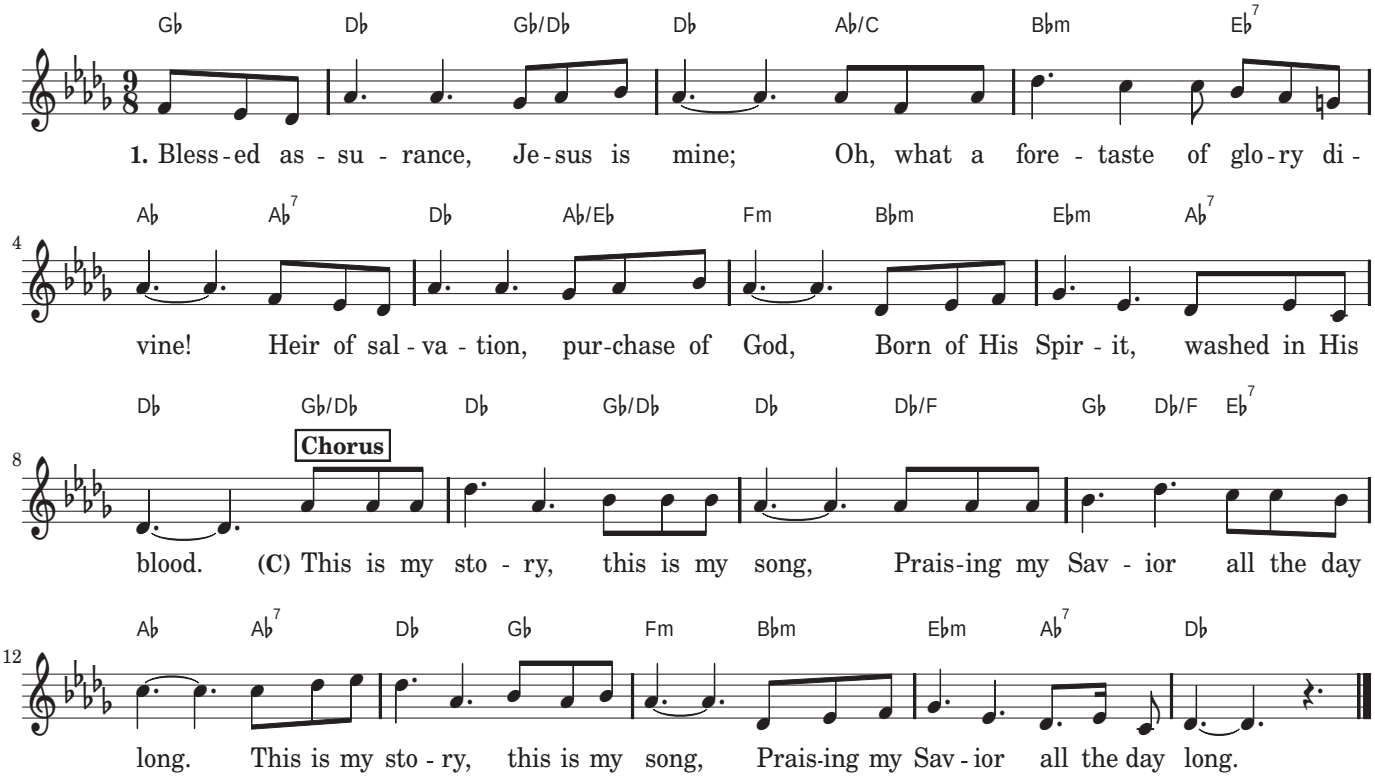
When we are saved and have obtained God's salvation, we will not only sing for joy, but we will also draw water out of the wells of His salvation, receiving from them a continuous and endless supply. This becomes the very encouragement and strength to us Christians that we may be delivered from sins and lusts and overcome the Devil and the world.

Blessed assurance

Assurance and Joy of Salvation—Born of the Spirit

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2. Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

LESSON TWO

THE NEED OF YOUR WHOLE FAMILY TO BE SAVED

I. THE UNIT OF GOD'S SALVATION

A. "And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9).

This word of the Lord Jesus was spoken to a great sinner, Zaccheus the tax collector, confirming that a family is the unit of God's salvation brought by the Lord. The Lord did not say that salvation had come to that person that day, but rather that salvation had come to that house. Undoubtedly, the Lord wanted Zaccheus's entire household to believe in Him and be saved. The Lord's word to Zaccheus was at once a suggestion and a notice to him!

B. "And leading them [the Apostles Paul and Silas] outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30-31).

This is the dialogue between the Philippian jailer and the two apostles. The jailer asked what he himself should do to be saved; however, the apostles answered that not only he himself but also he and his household would be saved. This proves that in the heart of the apostles, sent by the Lord to preach His gospel, the Lord's salvation was for the individual, while its unit was the household. Again, the apostles' word to the jailer is both a suggestion and a notice that he should not only pay attention to his personal salvation, but also to that of his whole family!

II. CASES OF FAMILY SALVATION

A. In the Old Testament

1. The Whole House of Noah

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the

ark" (Gen. 7:1); "In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark" (Gen. 7:13).

Here the Lord God charged Noah to enter into the ark with his entire house to escape destruction by the flood. This proves that God's desire is to take the family as the unit to which He applies salvation. We are also told that Noah brought his whole house, his wife, his sons, and his daughters-in-law, into the ark according to God's desire and that, as a result, he and his entire family were delivered by God. Such is the pattern we should all follow today.

2. The Houses of Israel

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor [also an entire family] next unto his house take it" (Exo. 12:3-4).

When God was about to strike the firstborn of the Egyptians, He instituted the Passover for the Israelites to save them from the judgment of the destruction of the firstborn. What God instructed them to take was not a lamb for each person but a lamb for a house. This also strongly proves that the unit of God's salvation is the family. Moreover, God charged that if a certain family was too small to eat a whole lamb, they should share one with their neighbor next door. Obviously, the neighbor was also counted as a family and not as an individual. This further proves that we should not only bring our own families to receive God's salvation, but we should also lead our neighboring families to share in God's rich and boundless salvation, which our family cannot exhaust.

3. The Whole House of Rahab the Harlot

"I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death" (Josh. 2:12-13). "And they burnt

the city with fire, and all that was therein…And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had"(Josh. 6:24-25).

This is the story of how Rahab the harlot and her household were saved when Joshua led the Israelites to destroy Jericho. She was willing to receive the Israelite spies and begged them to save her and her entire house from destruction. Joshua then fulfilled her wish. This also confirms that the family is the unit of God's salvation.

B. In the New Testament

1. The House of Zaccheus the Tax Collector

"And as He came to the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, Zaccheus, hurry and come down; for today I must stay in your house. And he hurried and came down, and welcomed Him, rejoicing…And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:5-6, 9).

This is the story of the salvation of Zaccheus the tax collector. In this story, what the Lord did was to stay in Zaccheus's house, and what He said was that today salvation had come to this house. This is evidence that the family is the unit of the salvation brought in by the Lord.

2. The House of Cornelius

"Send to Joppa and send for Simon who is surnamed Peter, who will speak words to you by which you shall be saved, you and all your household" (Acts 11:13-14). "And Cornelius was awaiting them, having called together his relatives and intimate friends" (Acts 10:24). "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word" (Acts 10:44). "And he charged them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48).

This is the story of the salvation of the household of Cornelius, who was a centurion in the Roman military, and of his intimate friends. This story also proves that a person's entire family is the unit of the salvation applied by the Spirit upon men. Cornelius led not only his whole family but also his intimate

friends to receive the Lord. This coincides with what was mentioned before, that is, that an entire Israelite household should share the Passover lamb with their neighbor.

3. The House of Lydia

"Lydia…who worshipped God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized and her household…" (Acts 16:14-15).

The story of this female believer and her house believing in the Lord and being baptized is also an example of the family as the unit of the Lord's salvation.

4. The House of the Philippian Jailer

"And they spoke the word of God to him together with all those in his house. And taking them with him in that very hour of the night, he washed their stripes; and he was baptized immediately, he and all his household" (Acts 16:32-33).

The case of this jailer's salvation bears an especially strong proof that the family is the unit of the Lord's salvation.

Besides these cases, there is the house of the royal official in Cana (John 4:46, 53), the household of Crispus, the ruler of a synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:8), and the household of Stephanas, another Corinthian believer (1 Cor. 1:16). The story of their salvation and of their entire households' salvation proves that the family is the unit of the Lord's salvation. This is a delightful matter in the heart of the sinner-loving God and is the Lord's goal in accomplishing redemption. We must imitate the ancient saints in taking care of God's heart's desire to lead our whole family to salvation that the goal of the Lord's redemption may be achieved.

III. THE ISSUE OF SALVATION

"But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15).

This is Joshua's last declaration to the children of Israel before his death, which not only indicates that he and his entire house are the object of God's salvation but also reveals the result of God's salvation with the family as a unit,

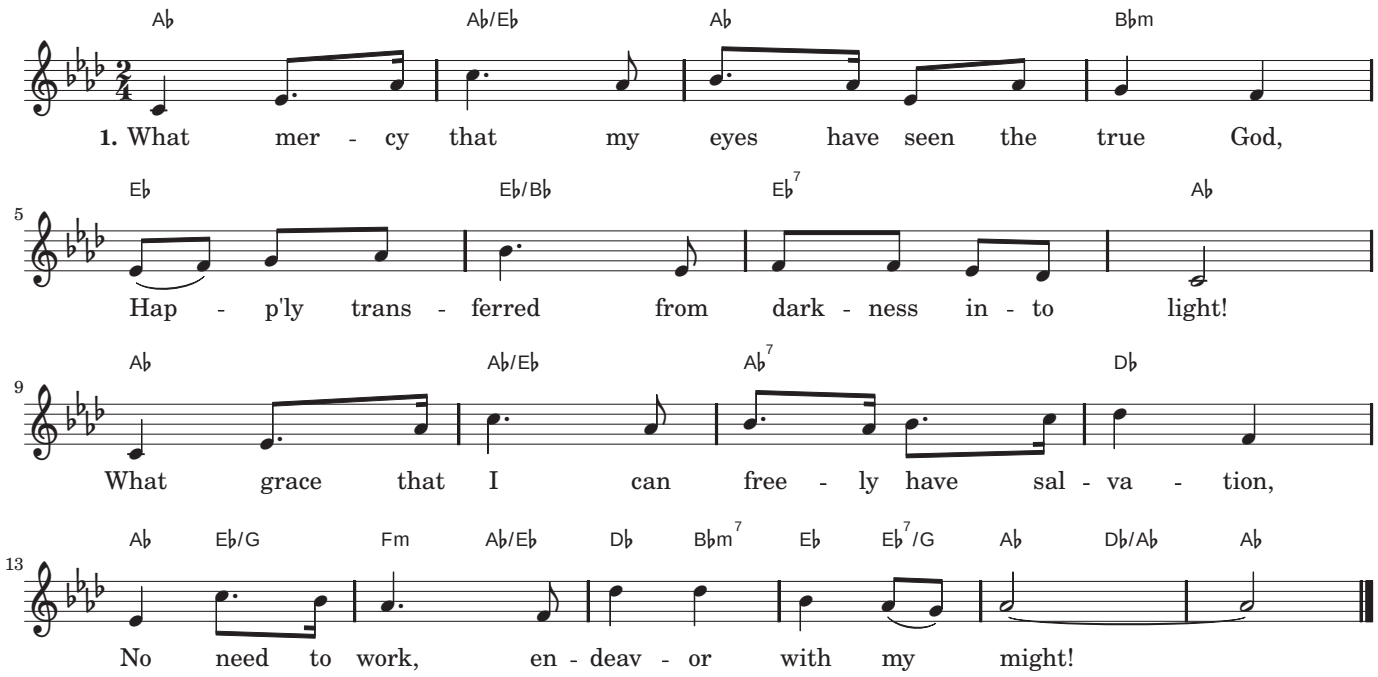
that is, that he and his house will serve Jehovah. May this also become the desire of each one of us before God and our declaration to the whole universe.

What mercy that my eyes have seen the true God

Preaching of the Gospel—Family Salvation

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2. Now that I'm saved, remember, Lord, my family,
Their sins You've borne, the way has thus been paved;
This day fulfill the promise You have given:
"Believe in Christ; your whole house shall be saved."

3. Lord, hear my prayer and gain all in my family!
My heart is burning with this vow to You:
"I and my house will serve the Lord forever!"
We'll worship God for He alone is true!

LESSON THREE

CLEARANCE OF THE OLD LIVING

Since we had a change in our being and became a new man once we were saved, we ought to have a new start, a new beginning, to live a new life. Consequently, there must be a clearance of our old living.

I. FORSAKING THE IDOLS

"You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1 Thes. 1:9).

This verse refers to the believers in Thessalonica. Once they believed in the Lord, they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. God is a jealous God; He will not tolerate one who serves Him to bow down and worship before any idol (Exo. 20:5). This is because there are demons hidden behind the idols. Therefore, after we believe in the Lord and turn to God, we must leave and forsake idols in every size and shape, whether they are carved or fashioned out of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, or stone. In the Old Testament, God demanded that His people smash and burn all idols (Deut. 7:5). We who belong to God should do the same, never preserving any idols in order to give them to others. This offends God and corrupts others. According to what is said in Deuteronomy 7:5, not only the idols themselves, but also all objects related to the idols must be smashed and burned.

II. DISCARDING THE EVIL AND UNCLEAN THINGS

"And a considerable number of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them before all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and was strong" (Acts 19:19-20).

These verses describe the new Ephesian believers, who originally were worshippers of a great goddess in Ephesus (Acts 19:27). After they believed and turned to God, they brought the evil books in their possession and burned them

before all. This case makes clear that after we have believed in the Lord, we should discard all evil and unclean things which have to do with idolatry and wicked works, such as books on fortune-telling and the horoscope, objects with the images or seals of a dragon, and all types of gambling paraphernalia. Things with dragon images and seals ought to be discarded because the dragon is a symbol of the Devil, Satan (Rev. 12:9). Since we are people who belong to God, who worship and serve God, what we wear and what we display and store in our homes must not show any traces of these evil and unclean things. On the contrary, our wardrobe, our ornaments, and our home furnishings and decorations should show people that we believe in the Lord and love God.

III. MAKING RESTITUTION

"And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, the half of my possessions, Lord, I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusations, I restore four times as much" (Luke 19:8).

These are the words of Zaccheus the tax collector to the Lord when he received Him, which demonstrate the overabounding power of the Lord's salvation. He was a tax collector who extorted from others and a money-lover. A great change occurred in him when he received the Lord; he volunteered to give half of his possessions to the poor and to restore four times the unrighteous money he had extorted from others. These actions were not conditions for salvation nor were they the instant requirement and commandment of the Lord, but they were the extraordinary issue of the Lord's dynamic salvation which came to Zaccheus. Based on this case of salvation, as soon as possible after we have believed in the Lord, we also ought to return any unrighteous gain to those whom we have wronged. Only then will we have a testimony before men and peace in our conscience. If we obtained the unrighteous gain in secret without others' knowledge, including those whom we have defrauded, then we should exercise wisdom to make restitution and to return what we owe in secret to avoid causing problems and implicating others. We should only make our restitution known to those who have knowledge of our dark deeds.
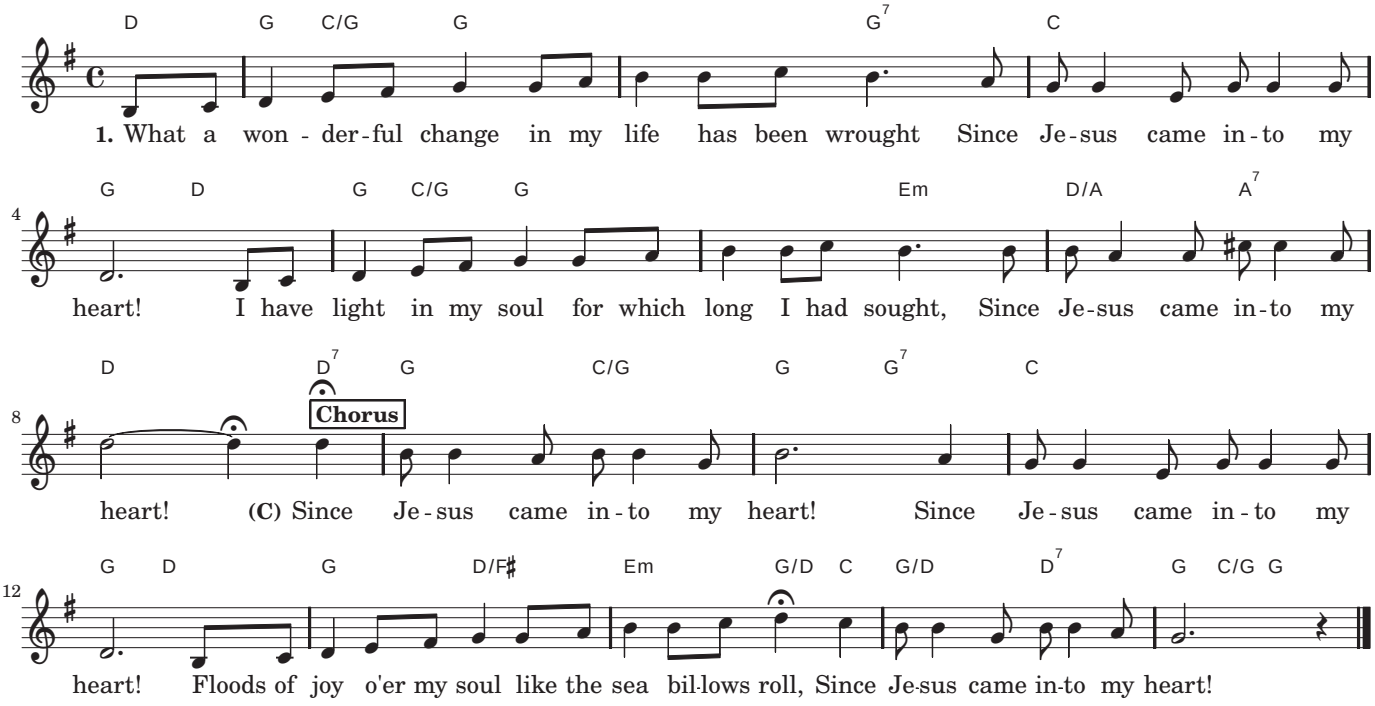
According to the principle of making restitution, after we are saved, we should likewise exercise wisdom to deal with any immoral relationships with others. Only then are we worthy of being acknowledged as a sincere Christian.

What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought

Assurance and Joy of Salvation—Changed in Life

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2. I have ceased from my wand'ring and going astray,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And my sins which were many are all washed away,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

3. I'm possessed of a hope that is steadfast and sure,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And no dark clouds of doubt now my pathway obscure,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

4. There's a light in the valley of death now for me,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And the gates of the City beyond I can see,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

5. I shall go there to dwell in that City I know,
Since Jesus came into my heart!
And I'm happy, so happy as onward I go,
Since Jesus came into my heart!

LESSON FOUR

PRAYER

The most important thing for a baby at birth is breathing. In our spiritual life, prayer is breathing and is as crucial to a new believer as breathing is to a newborn babe. Hence, after we believe in the Lord and call upon His name to be saved, we must continue to pray and call on the Lord. Then we can receive the spiritual air, which is the Lord's Spirit of life, that we may grow and be strong in the spiritual life.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAYER

The real significance of prayer is to contact God in our spirit and to absorb God Himself. Prayer is the contact of the human spirit with the Spirit of God, during which man inhales God into himself. Therefore, the emphasis of prayer lies not in asking God for things but in contacting and absorbing God.

II. THE FACULTY OF PRAYER

A person needs the proper faculty in whatever he does. We need our eyes in order to see, our ears in order to hear, and our spirit in order to pray.

A. "God is Spirit; and those who worship [including praying to] Him must worship in spirit and reality" (John 4:24).

B. "Praying at every time in spirit" [that is, praying with the spirit] (Eph. 6:18).

The above two verses tell us that God is Spirit, and to worship and pray to Him, we must be in our spirit, that is, we must use our spirit. Our spirit is the deepest part of our being. To pray in the spirit, or to pray with our spirit, is to use our innermost part to contact God. Therefore, we must pray not merely according to the thoughts in our mind, but according to the sense deep within our spirit. The faculty of prayer is not the mind but the spirit.

III. THE MEANS OF PRAYER

A. "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19).

To enter the Holy of Holies is to come before God in order to contact God and pray to God. This is by means of the redeeming blood shed by the Lord Jesus on the cross, which washes away all the sins that hinder our fellowship with God.

B. "That whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you" (John 15:16).

Here we are told that we should pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. To be in the name of the Lord Jesus is to be in the Lord Himself. When we pray, we need to pray not only by means of the Lord's blood but also by means of the Lord's name, that is, by means of the Lord Himself. We cannot come before God to pray by depending on our behavior. Even if our behavior is good, it is like filthy rags in God's eyes (Isa. 64:6). Neither can we depend on ourselves, because we also are filthy and unacceptable to God. Thus, when we come before God to pray to Him, we must rely on the Lord's blood to wash away the filth in our behavior, and must depend on the Lord Himself to replace our filthy being, so that it is as if the Lord Himself is coming to pray before God. Only such prayers are acceptable to God.

IV. WHAT TO PRAY ACCORDING TO

Prayer is not according to what your mind thinks, but according to what you sense in your spirit. You pray with your mouth whatever you sense in the spirit. When you come before God to pray, do not speak anything to God according to what you have decided on beforehand, but rather utter to God what you sense in your spirit at the time. Confess your sins if you feel in your spirit to confess, and praise the Lord if you feel in your spirit to praise. Do whatever the feeling in your spirit leads you to do.

V. PRAYING WITHOUT HINDRANCE

Praying without hindrance requires a good conscience, that is, a conscience which does not condemn. Once there is offense or condemnation in your conscience, your prayers will be immediately hindered and even stopped.

"Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies… having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience…" (Heb. 10:22).

Since we are sinful, we need to be sprinkled by the blood of the Lord Jesus from an evil conscience that we may come forward to the Holy of Holies to draw near to God and to pray to Him. Thus, whenever we pray, we must ask the Lord to sprinkle and cleanse us with His blood so that our conscience may be void of offense. We can then come to God boldly to pray from our spirit.

VI. THE DEALING IN PRAYER

The dealing in prayer is the confession of sins. When you come before God to pray, drawing near with a sincere heart and an open spirit, God, who is light, will shine in you to expose your real self and true condition. At this time, you must confess your sins. After you confess the first sin, you may sense another, and after you confess that, you may sense still another. You must thoroughly confess all your sins according to such feelings in your spirit. If you disregard the sense of condemnation within, surely your prayer will not touch God. It will be hard for you to pray because there is still the barrier of sin between you and God. Therefore, you must confess and deal with every sin. After you have dealt with all of your sins one by one, you should pray according to the sense in your spirit. Then you will surely touch God and absorb Him.

VII. THE BENEFITS OF PRAYER

A. "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41).

Prayer enables us to absorb God. Besides this, the main benefit of watchful prayer is that it keeps us from entering into temptation that we may not be tempted and seduced by the Devil to stray from the Lord.

B. "Let us therefore come forward…to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help" (Heb. 4:16).

The greatest benefit in praying before God and contacting God is that we receive mercy and find grace for timely help to meet our every need.

C. "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Another intimate benefit which we receive in coming before God to pray and make petition is that we will have the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guarding our hearts and thoughts from all anxieties. What an intimate blessing it is in the human life to be free from anxieties.

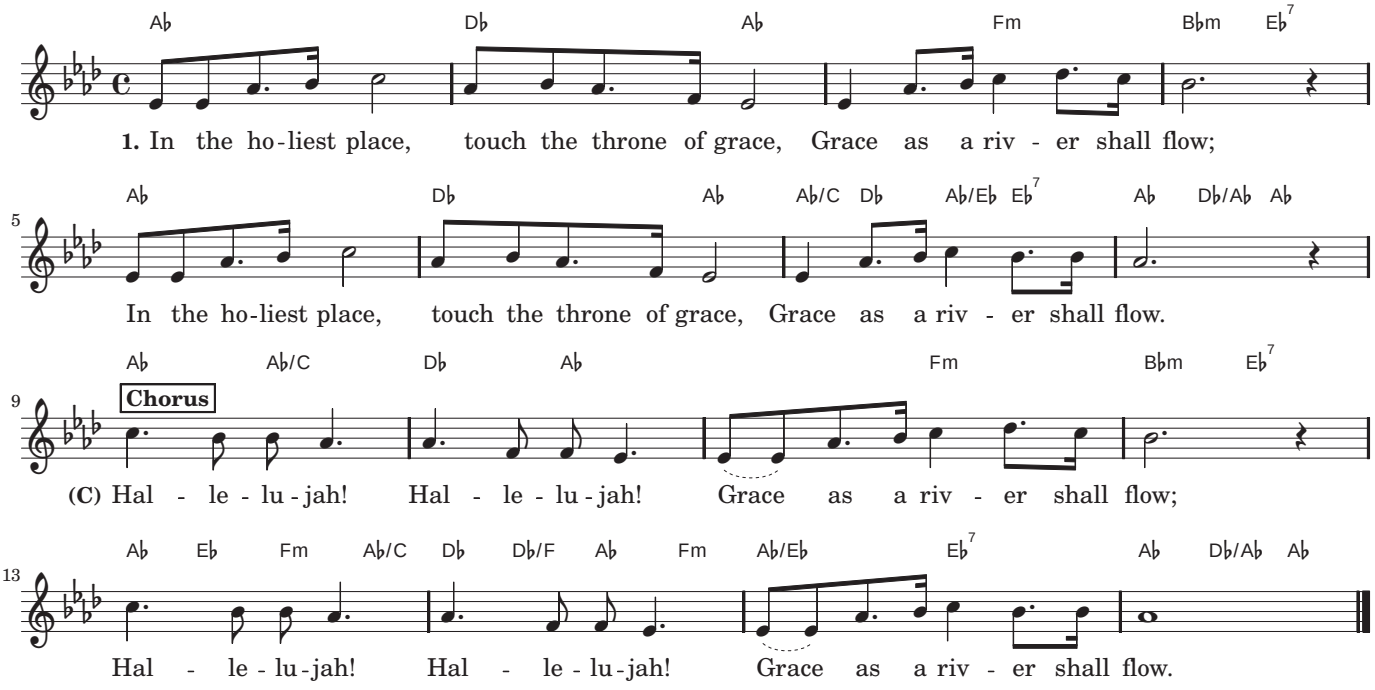
Besides this, according to the Bible, the benefits we gain from prayer cannot be fully told. May we who belong to the Lord never neglect prayer, but pray at every time (Luke 21:36), even unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). Then we shall surely enjoy God Himself and all His riches, and will be abundantly blessed by Him. He "is rich to all who call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12)!

In the holiest place

Prayer—In the Holiest

C557 Cb770 K557 P354 R127 S328 Tg770

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2. In the holiest place, live before His face,
Light of glory thru me will shine;
In the holiest place, live before His face,
Light of glory thru me will shine.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Light of glory thru me will shine;
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Light of glory thru me will shine.

3. To the spirit turn, and the incense burn,
Touch the living fountain of life;
To the spirit turn, and the incense burn,
Touch the living fountain of life.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Touch the living fountain of life;
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Touch the living fountain of life.

LESSON FIVE

READING THE BIBLE (1)

A believer needs to pray; he also needs to read the Bible. Prayer is likened to breathing, and Bible reading, to eating. Both ought to be practiced daily by every believer.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

A. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16).

The origin of the Bible is God; it was God who breathed His words of revelation through His Spirit into and out of the writers of the Scriptures. What was breathed out was not only words but also spirit.

B. "But men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Since the Bible is God's breathing of His words out of men through His Spirit, it is men's speaking of the word of God from God as they were borne by the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Bible is out from God, written by certain Old Testament saints such as the prophets, leaders, and kings among the Israelites, as well as by various New Testament saints, such as the apostles, Mark, and Luke.

II. THE CONTENT OF THE BIBLE

The content of the Bible is both extensive and inclusive; the two main aspects of this content are truth and life. Truth brings us revelation and knowledge of all the realities in the universe, such as the reality of God, the reality of man, the reality of the universe, the reality of the things of the present age, the coming age, and the eternal age, and in particular, the reality of the Christ appointed by God and the church chosen by Him. Life is God coming to be our life that we may be regenerated, grow, be transformed, and be conformed into the image of Christ, who expresses God, that we may become the expression of God.

A. "Your [the Father God's] word is truth [reality]" (John 17:17).

This word of the Lord Jesus indicates that God's word in the Bible is truth; it reveals the reality of God Himself and of His economy for us to obtain.

B. "Speak to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20).

This is what the angel spoke to Peter, charging him to preach God's words of life. The words of life are the words of the Bible which the apostles preached. Since the words contain life, they are able to supply life, and this life is God Himself. This proves that the main content of the Bible is not only truth but also life.

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE BIBLE

A. "It is these [the Scriptures] that testify concerning Me [Christ]" (John 5:39).

The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning Christ. Christ is the subject and content of the Bible, and the Bible is the explanation and expression of Christ. Christ is the living Word of God, and the Bible is His written word. Without Christ, the living Word, as reality, the written words of the Bible are but empty doctrines and vain letters. Yet without the written word of the Bible as His expression, Christ, the living Word, would be abstract and intangible. Therefore, we must read the Bible if we desire to know Christ.

B. "The sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

On the one hand, the Bible testifies concerning Christ; on the other hand, it makes us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, revealing to us the method of God's salvation in Christ and the way of man's salvation through faith, that we may know how to be saved.

C. "Having been regenerated, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

The living word of God in the Bible is the seed of life which enables us to

have God's life and to be regenerated.

D. "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).

The milk of the word here refers to God's word becoming the nourishing milk. To the newly regenerated spiritual babes, God's word in the Bible is the nourishing milk which causes them to grow.

E. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

According to its context, the words that proceed out through the mouth of God in this verse refer to the words of God in the Bible. The words of God in the Bible are not only our spiritual milk but also our spiritual food which nourishes us that we may grow and become mature.

F. "The entrance of thy [God's] words giveth light" (Psa. 119:130).

Once we enter into God's word, it becomes opened (unfolded) to us, and it gives us light, shining upon us and giving us wisdom and revelation.

G. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

The word of God in the Bible not only shines inwardly over our hearts and spirits to give us wisdom and revelation, but it also gives light outwardly to our steps and pathways so that we would not be lost.

H. "All Scripture is…profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The words of the Bible have the diverse functions of teaching, reproving, correcting, and instructing people in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

Besides the various functions mentioned above, there are many other functions of the Bible which are not enumerated here.

IV. THE PRECIOUSNESS AND SWEETNESS OF THE BIBLE

A. "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psa. 119:72). "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold" (Psa. 19:10).

These verses reveal the preciousness of God's word in the Bible for which our desire is continually stirred up.

B. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psa. 119:103).

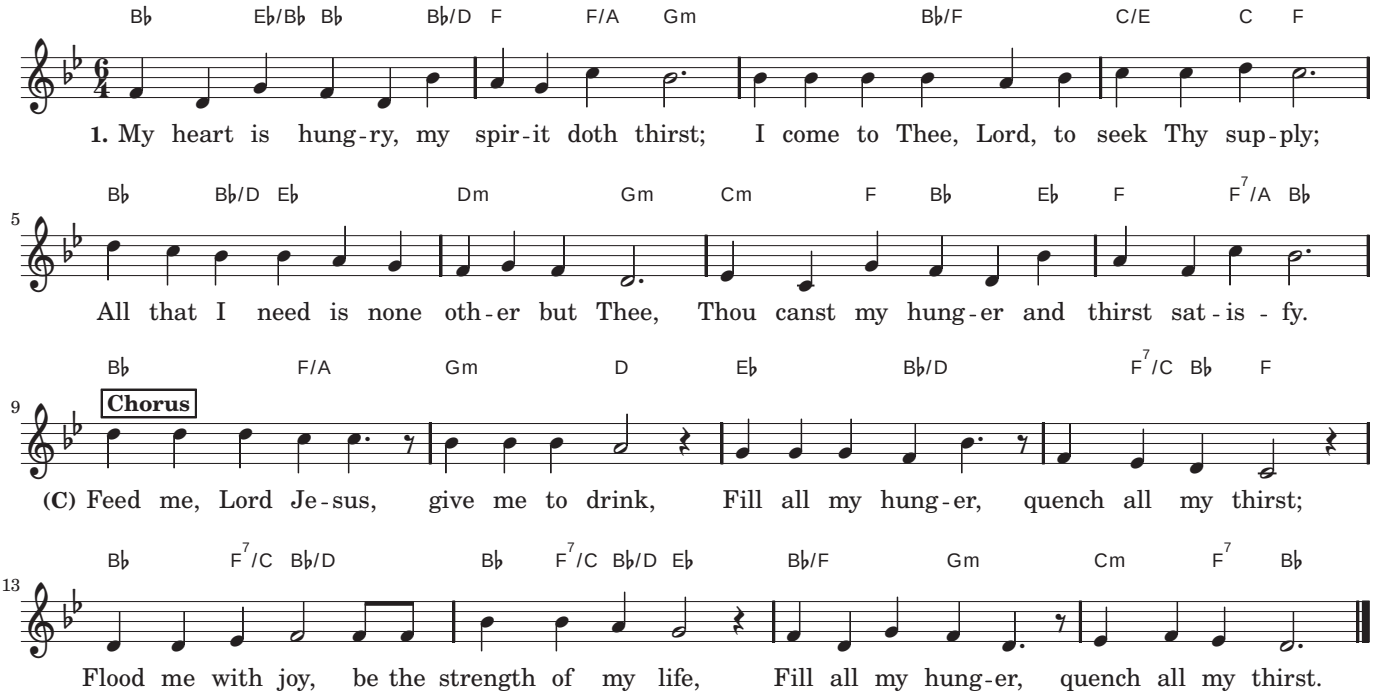
This shows the sweetness and loveliness of God's word.

My heart is hungry, my spirit doth thirst

Study of the Word—Feeding on the Word

C586 Cb811 K586 P370 R130 S343 Tg811

811



2. Thou art the food and the water of life,
Thou canst revive me, my spirit upbear;
I long to eat and to drink here of Thee,
Thyself enjoy through my reading and prayer.

3. Thou art the Word with God's fulness in Thee,
Thou too the Spirit that God my life be;
Thee in the Word I enjoy as my food,
Thou as the Spirit art water to me.

4. Thou from the heavens as food camest down,
Thou to be drink hast been smitten for me;
Thou as the food, my exhaustless supply,
Thou as the water, a stream unto me.

5. Thou in the Word art the Spirit and life,
Thus by the Word I may feed upon Thee;
Thou dost as Spirit in my spirit live,
Thus I may drink in the spirit of Thee.

6. Now to enjoy Thee I come to Thy Word,
On Thee to feed till my hunger is o'er.
Now in my spirit I turn unto Thee,
Of Thee to drink till I'm thirsty no more.

7. Feeding and drinking, Lord Jesus, of Thee,
Feeding by reading, and drinking by prayer;
Reading and praying, I eat and I drink,
Praying and reading—Lord, Thou art my fare.

8. Here, O my Lord, may I feast upon Thee;
Flood with Thy Spirit and fill by Thy Word;
May, Lord, Thou be such a feast unto me
As man hath never enjoyed nor e'er heard.

LESSON SIX

READING THE BIBLE (2)

V. THE SECTIONS OF THE BIBLE

The entire Bible is divided into two parts. The first part is called the Old Testament and the second part is called the New Testament.

A. The Old Testament

This refers to the first part of the Bible, which is composed of thirty-nine books that are divided into:

1. The Books of Law

These include a total of five books from Genesis to Deuteronomy and are called the books of law because in them are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which form the Law.

2. The Books of History

These include a total of twelve books from Joshua to Esther and record the history of the Israelites from their entrance into Canaan to their return from captivity. Hence, they are called the books of history.

3. The Books of Poetry

These include a total of five books from Job to the Song of Songs, pouring out the different spiritual experiences of the people of God through poetry.

4. The Books of the Prophets

These include a total of seventeen books from Isaiah through Malachi written by the prophets, the contents of which are mainly prophecies concerning the Israelites, the Gentiles, and Christ.

B. The New Testament

This refers to the second part of the Bible which is composed of twenty-seven books that are divided into:

1. The Books of History

These include a total of five books from the Gospel of Matthew to the Acts of the Apostles, the first four being a history of the Lord Jesus and the last being the account of the move of the disciples on the earth after the Lord ascended into the heavens.

2. The Epistles

These include a total of twenty-one books from the book of Romans to the book of Jude, which are letters written by the apostles to either the churches or individual saints, especially speaking about the church and the proper condition in the spiritual life and living of the church and the saints.

3. The Book of Prophecy

The only book of prophecy in the New Testament is the book of Revelation, the concluding book of the New Testament and the last book of the entire Bible. It contains prophecies related to the church, Israel, the world, Christ's second coming, the destiny of Satan, the ultimate judgment, and the coming age and eternity.

VI. HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Since the Bible is the word of God, its nature is divine and spiritual. We must read it with every part of our being.

A. First, Reading It with Understanding

"Then He opened their mind [to which understanding belongs] to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

In reading the Bible, we must first use the understanding of our mind to comprehend its text, which was written in human language, and to know its meaning.

B. Then Reading It with Wisdom

1. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom..." (Col. 3:16).

2. "God...the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and

revelation in the full knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17).

These two verses mean that we need to understand with wisdom the word regarding the divine things revealed by God in the Bible. Ephesians 1:17 also shows us that wisdom is joined to our spirit. This wisdom is not what we have naturally but what we obtain through prayer. Such wisdom in our spirit is deeper and higher than the understanding in our mind. We understand the letter of the Bible with the understanding in our mind, and we apprehend the truth in the Bible by the wisdom in our spirit.

C. Finally, Receiving It with the Spirit

"And receive...the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit" (Eph. 6:17-18).

Here we are told to receive the word of God by praying in the spirit. This reveals to us that we also need to exercise our spirit when we read and receive the word of God. This is done, undoubtedly, through prayer. Therefore, in reading the Bible, after we have understood the meaning of the text by our understanding and have apprehended the truth of the text with our wisdom, we should use our spirit by prayer to receive the truths in the Scripture into the deepest part of our being, that is, our spirit. In other words, after we understand the text and receive the truth therein, we still must exercise our spirit to turn what we have understood and realized into prayer that it may be assimilated in our spirit, becoming our life supply and the basis of our spiritual experience.

D. Pray-reading

Another simple, spiritual, and most beneficial way to read the Bible is pray-reading. We take the Bible text as prayer and pray-read with it. Not only do we read and pray simultaneously, or pray and read, read and pray; but also we directly turn the text we are reading into the very words of prayer to pray with. At times we may apply the text to ourselves through prayer. The more we repeat this kind of pray-reading, the more uplifted and released our spirit becomes and the greater, deeper, and richer the benefit is which we receive.

VII. THE TIME TO READ THE BIBLE

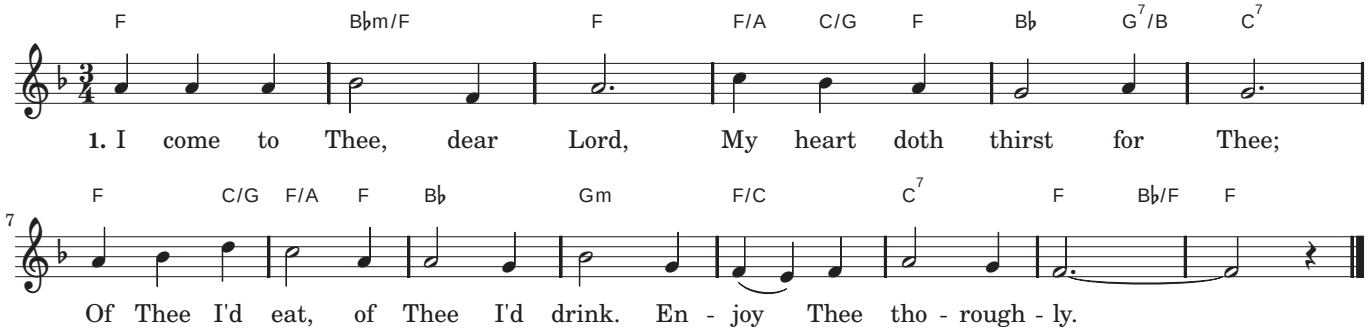
We may read the Bible at any time and should do it whenever necessary. However, generally speaking, it is best to read in the morning before we contact any persons or things, and it is especially good to match reading with prayer. Such times should not be too long. The most suitable way is to pray for ten minutes and read for ten minutes. Sometimes reading and prayer can be mingled together.

I come to Thee, dear Lord

Study of the Word—Feeding on the Word

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812



2. Just to behold Thy face,
For this my heart doth cry;
I deeply long to drink of Thee
My thirst to satisfy.

3. Thy glorious, radiant face
My heart delights to see;
Here I'd abide and ne'er depart,
Beholding constantly.

4. In such a fellowship
Thou, Lord, art grace to me;
My heart and spirit gladdened, filled,
I enter rest in Thee.

5. Lord, I would linger here,
Still seeking after Thee,
Continue in the Word and prayer
Till Thou dost flow thru me.

LESSON SEVEN

KNOWING THE TRUE GOD

God is the foremost item revealed in the Bible because He is the beginning of all things. Everything in the universe originated from Him and began with Him. God is also the main content of the Bible from its first book to the last. He created us and regenerated us and has everything to do with our life and our being. Thus, we should know Him first.

I. ALL IDOLS BEING FALSE GODS

A. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat…neither is there any breath in their mouths" (Psa. 115:4-7; 135:15-17).

According to these verses, all idols are false and are not the true God.

B. "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one. For if even there are so-called gods…even as there are many gods and many lords, yet to us there is one God" (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

These verses clearly state that since God is the true God, the one unique God, all the idols are nothing and the so-called gods are not God.

C. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity…of them that hate me" (Exo. 20:5).

This verse also tells us that the one and only true God is a jealous God who hates all the idols and will punish the sin of idol worship.

II. THE UNIQUE TRUE GOD

A. "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Isa. 45:5).

B. "Now to the King of the ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory unto the ages of the ages" (1 Tim. 1:17).

C. "How you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God" (1 Thes. 1:9).

These three verses clearly and emphatically reveal to us how God is the unique Jehovah, incorruptible, invisible, and existing unto eternity. Besides Him, there is not another true God.

III. ELOHIM—THE FAITHFUL MIGHTY ONE

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

Here in Hebrew, the word for God is Elohim. This is the first divine title used in the Bible to reveal God, and it means the faithful mighty One. It shows that the true God, whom we worship according to the Bible, is not only mighty but also faithful. He is the mighty One; so He could create the heavens, the earth, all things, and mankind, calling what is not being as being. He is faithful; therefore, He is dependable, ever unchanging, and immovable. His works according to His faithfulness are as enduring as the sun and as established as the moon (Psa. 89:33-37).

IV. JEHOVAH—THE SELF-EXISTING AND EVER-EXISTING I AM

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM [THE SELF-EXISTING AND EVER-EXISTING ONE]…Jehovah God…this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exo. 3:14-15).

Here God told Moses in plain words that His name is Jehovah. The name Jehovah is the second main divine title used by the Bible in revealing God. It means the self-existing and ever-existing I Am, the I Am who was, who is, and who is to come. It indicates that He is the I Am, and besides Him nothing is. Only He is, and He is the self-existing and ever-existing I Am, who was, who is, and who is coming. Thus, everything in the entire universe is vain and is not; only He is, only He exists forever, and only He is reality. He is everything to the people whom He created and who belong to Him. Whatever they need, He is.

V. THE TRIUNE GOD

A. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

The word God here is still Elohim. It is in the plural, denoting that this God, Elohim, is the very Triune God to be revealed later in the Bible. Hence, in this verse in Genesis 1, God called Himself "Us." Several times later in the Bible God also called Himself "Us" (Gen. 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8; John 17:21-22). These verses indicate that though God is uniquely one, He also has the aspect of three. He is the Triune God.

B. "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

After Christ resurrected and passed through all the necessary processes, it is shown here in plain words in this verse of the Bible that the unique true God is triune, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Although the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three and are distinct, they are one unique God. Although the name in this verse is of the Three, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, it is singular, indicating that the Three are still the one unique God despite the distinction between them.

C. "Except Him [the Son] who is from God, He has seen the Father" (John 6:46). "I [the Son] am from Him [the Father]"(John 7:29).

In these two verses, Christ the Son of God says that He is from the Father. This proves that the Father is the source.

D. "I [the Son] am from Him [the Father]" (John 7:29).

In the Greek text, the word "from" has the meaning of "from with." This reveals to us that the Son is not only from the Father, but from with the Father. When He came to earth, He brought the Father and the Father came with Him.

E. "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18).

This verse clearly states that the Son who brought the Father is the manifestation of the Father. The Father is the source, and the Son is the

manifestation. Therefore, "I [the Son] and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

F. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; even the Spirit of reality...He abides with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I am coming to you...and I in you" (John 14:16-20).

This section shows us that the Spirit is the transfiguration of the Son to be the reality of the Son, coming to abide with the disciples and to be in them. His being in the disciples is the Son in them. Therefore, the Spirit is the reaching and entering in of the Son. This indicates that the Son and the Spirit are also one. The Father is the source, the Son is the manifestation of the Father, and the Spirit is the reaching and entering in of the Son with the Father. The Three are just one God, who was manifested from the source to come among men and who reached the disciples to enter into them. This signifies that God is triune for the purpose of working Himself into those who believe into the Son to be their life and everything and to become their divine enjoyment.

G. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14).

This is the blessing of the Apostle Paul to the believers that they may enjoy the triune care of the Triune God in love, grace, and fellowship. The love of God the Father became the grace of Christ, God the Son, in the fellowship of God the Spirit, to be the daily blessing and enjoyment of the believers.

H. "But when the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of reality who proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26).

The word "from," as we have mentioned before, means "from with." The Spirit of reality sent by the Son from the Father is actually from with the Father. This proves that the Spirit is not only one with the Father but also one with the Son, who is one with the Father. This verse also demonstrates that all Three, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, coexist from eternity to eternity without succession.

I. "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me" (John 14:10).

This word shows us how the Father, the Son, and the Spirit not only coexist but also coinhere. Coexistence indicates distinction whereas coinherence signifies mingling as one. This confirms that despite a distinction among the Three, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, They are still one God; They are Three yet one, and all three are one. This is strongly proven by the following verses:

1. **"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called...The mighty God, The Father of eternity" (Isa. 9:6).**

This word clearly says that the Son is called the Father, proving that the Son and the Father are one.

2. **"And the Lord [Jesus Christ] is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17).**

This word also plainly shows that Christ the Son is the Spirit, proving that the Son and the Spirit are one.
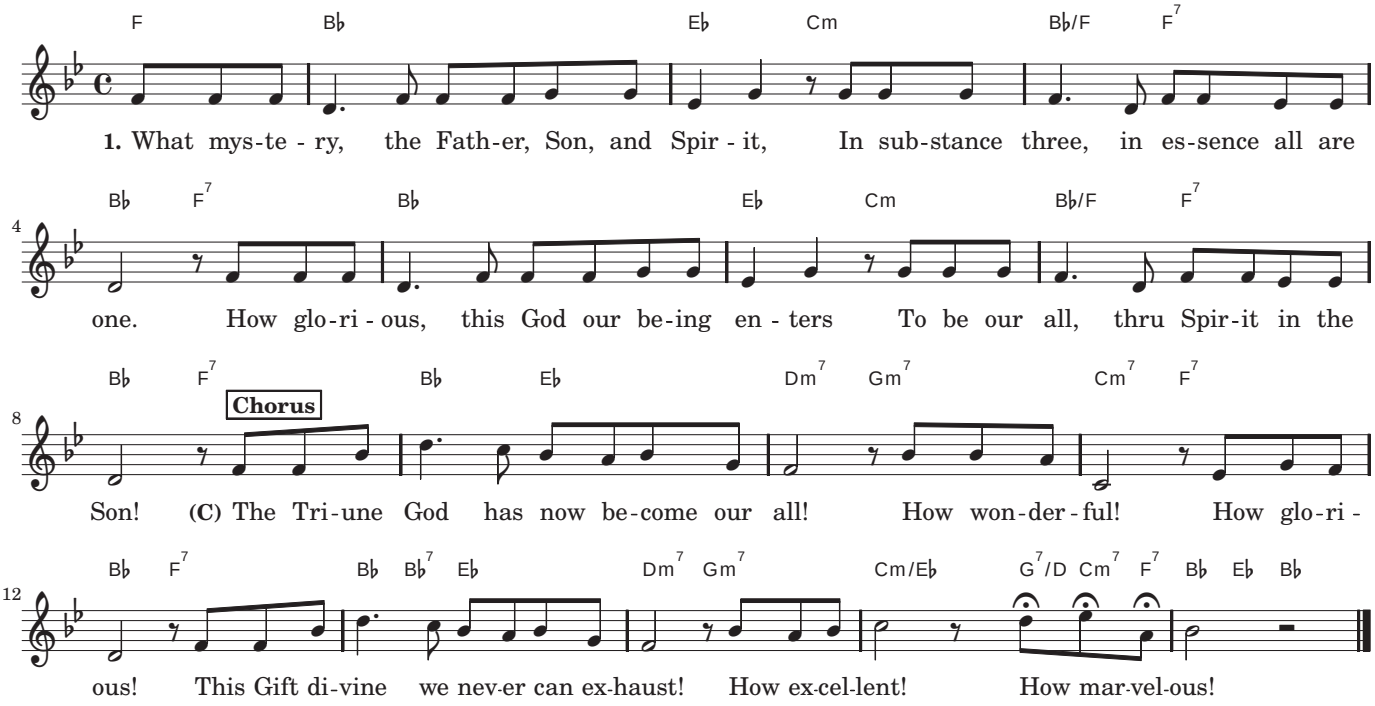
Therefore, the Bible reveals that although the true God is uniquely one, He is three, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; and while the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are distinct, They are still the one unique God.

What mystery, the Father, Son, and Spirit

Experience of God—By the Trinity

C447 Cb608 K447 P314 R119 S287 Tg608

608



2. How rich the source, the Father as the fountain,
And all this wealth He wants man to enjoy!
O blessed fact, this vast exhaustless portion
Is now for us forever to employ!

3. How wonderful, the Son is God's expression
Come in the flesh to dwell with all mankind!
Redemption's work, how perfectly effective,
That sinners we with God might oneness find.

4. The Spirit is the Son's transfiguration
Come into us as life the full supply.
Amazing fact, our spirit with the Spirit
Now mingles and in oneness joins thereby!

5. How real it is that God is now the Spirit
For us to touch, experience day by day!
Astounding fact, with God we are one spirit,
And differ not in life in any way!

LESSON EIGHT

KNOWING CHRIST (1)

Christ is the subject and center of the Bible and is the main content of the Bible from beginning to end. Even more He is the reality of our faith. We who have believed into Him and received grace must know Him in a thorough way.

I. THE SACRED TITLES OF CHRIST

A. Jesus

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

When Christ was incarnated to be a man, He was given the name Jesus by an angel. Jesus is equivalent to Joshua in Hebrew (Num. 13:16), which means the salvation of Jehovah, or Jehovah the Savior. Thus, He is the Savior, who will save His people from their sins.

B. Christ

"Mary, of whom was born Jesus, Who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16).

The second name of Christ is Christ, the equivalent of Messiah in Hebrew (John 1:41), which means the anointed One. This name reveals that He is God's anointed One, being anointed by God with His Spirit to create and to redeem in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

C. Emmanuel

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Jesus and Christ were names given by God. When men discovered that He was God, they called Him Emmanuel, which means God with us. This name reveals that Jesus, who is our Savior, and Christ, who is God's Anointed, are actually God Himself coming to be with us.

II. THE PERSON OF CHRIST

A. God

"Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5).

This word simply and strongly declares that Christ is God, who is over all, the complete God blessed forever.

B. The Son of God

"But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

We have already seen how God has the aspects of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. All Three—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—are God, even the one unique God. Since Christ is God, He is not only God the Father, but also God the Son, that is, the Son of God.

C. Man

1. **"In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh" (John 1:1, 14).**
2. **"The Man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).**
3. **"And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness, who was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).**

The three portions of the Word above clearly tell us that Jesus Christ, who is God, became flesh to be a perfect man with a human body and human nature. Therefore, He is God manifested in the flesh. He is God and He is man, a God-man, possessing both the divine and the human natures. As to His divine nature, He is completely God; as to His human nature, He is perfectly man. This is a great mystery.

D. The Creator

"You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb. 1:10).

This tells us that Christ is also the Creator.

E. The Firstborn of All Creation

"The Son of His love...Firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:13, 15).

This makes known to us that Christ is also a creature; He is the Firstborn, the first item, of all creation. As God, He is the Creator of heaven and earth; as a man, He is the first One of all creation.

III. THE WORK OF CHRIST

In being anointed by God to be God's anointed One to fulfill His eternal plan, Christ accomplished and will accomplish the following great things:

A. Creating

1. **"You in the beginning, Lord, have founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Heb. 1:10).**
2. **"Because in Him were all things created in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him" (Col. 1:16).**

These two verses tell us that the first great thing Christ did was to create the heavens and the earth, all things, and man. Hence, He is the Creator of all things.

B. Becoming Flesh

"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality" (John 1:14).

The second great thing accomplished by Christ, God's Anointed, was that He as God became flesh; that is, He came to be a man in the flesh to be the tabernacle of God among men, bringing God to men to be realized as reality and to be received as grace. Reality is God known and contacted by man, and grace is God received and enjoyed by man. In the fleshly tabernacle which He became, Christ lived with man for thirty-three and a half years, thus fully bringing God to man to be his reality and grace.

C. Being Crucified on the Cross

To fulfill God's eternal plan, Christ, who is God's Anointed, brought God to men in His earthly tabernacle to be contacted by men. After thirty-three and a

half years, He went to the cross to be crucified to accomplish the redemption in God's eternal plan. This is the third great thing He did, solving, once and for all, the problem of everything that God had condemned in the universe, such as Satan, sin, the world, the flesh, the old man, and the old creation. He did this for God and for those who are chosen by God, who will eternally inherit His salvation.

D. Being Resurrected from among the Dead

Christ gave up His own life, and He Himself took it back by rising from among the dead (John 10:17-18). This is the fourth great thing He did, which accomplished the following three matters pertaining to us:

1. **"Jesus…was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:24-25).**

The death of Christ accomplished redemption for us that we might be justified by God, yet His resurrection is needed to confirm the effectiveness of His death. Therefore, His resurrection is the evidence of our justification.

2. **"Even when we were dead in offenses, made us alive together with Christ…and raised us up together…in Christ Jesus"(Eph. 2:5-6).**

The resurrection of Christ released God's life from within Him for us to receive, making us alive together with Christ and raising us up together.

3. **"Who [God]…has regenerated us…through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3).**
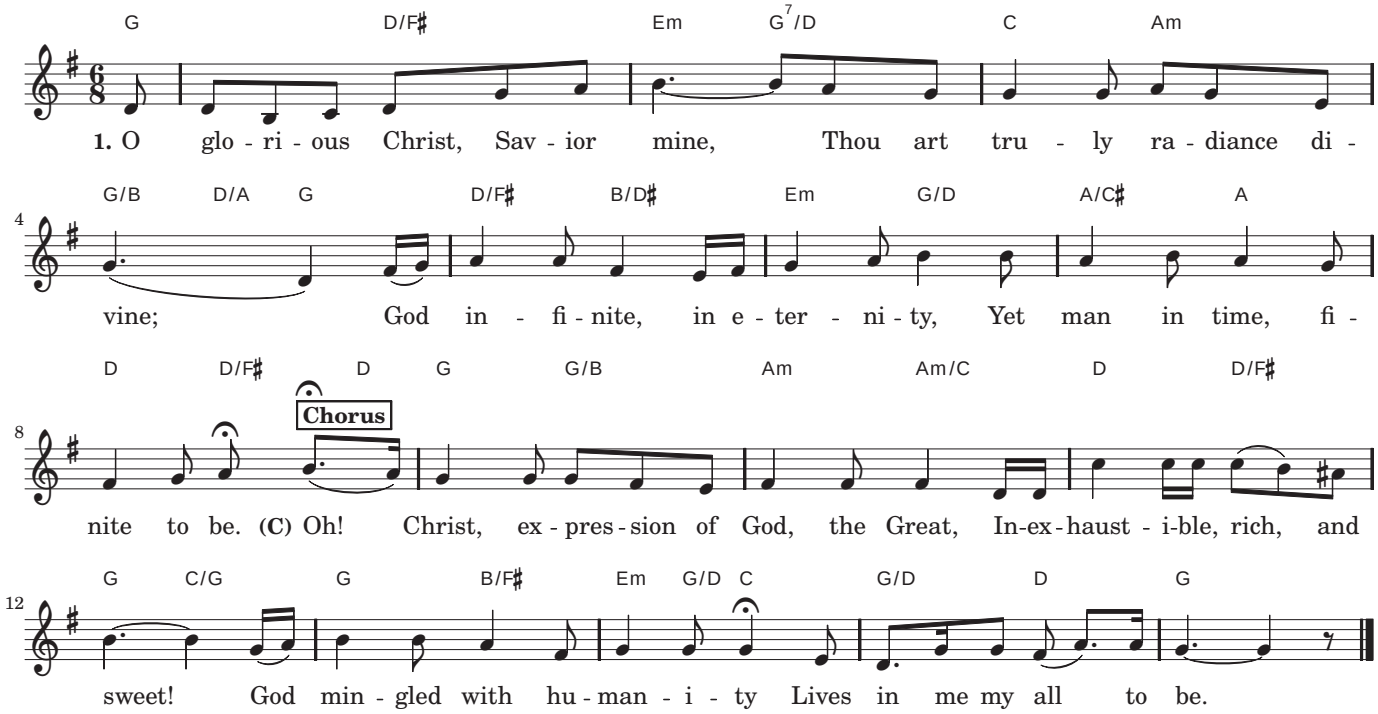
Since Christ resurrected to release His life into us, He regenerated us that we may be a born-again, new man.

O glorious Christ, Savior mine

Experience of Christ—As Life

C382* Cb501 K382* P240 R95 S215 Tg501

501



2. The fulness of God dwells in Thee;
Thou dost manifest God's glory;
In flesh Thou hast redemption wrought;
As Spirit, oneness with me sought.

3. All things of the Father are Thine;
All Thou art in Spirit is mine;
The Spirit makes Thee real to me,
That Thou experienced might be.

4. The Spirit of life causes Thee
By Thy Word to transfer to me.
Thy Spirit touched, Thy word received,
Thy life in me is thus conceived.

5. In spirit while gazing on Thee,
As a glass reflecting Thy glory,
Like to Thyself transformed I'll be,
That Thou might be expressed thru me.

6. In no other way could we be
Sanctified and share Thy vict'ry;
Thus only spiritual we'll be
And touch the life of glory.

7. Thy Spirit will me saturate
Every part will God permeate,
Deliv'ring me from the old man,
With all saints building for His plan.

LESSON NINE

KNOWING CHRIST (2)

E. Ascending into the Heavens

After Christ rose from among the dead, He ascended into the heavens. This is the fifth great thing done by Him as God's anointed One, accomplishing the following two matters for us:

1. **"Having ascended to the height [the heavens], He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8).**

Those taken captive refers to us, who were captured before by Satan and death. Now Christ, in His triumphant resurrection, has captured us from the hands of Satan and death, bringing us to the heavens to make us God's gift to Christ that Christ may give us as gifts to the church.

2. **"And seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).**

The ascension of Christ also brought us, who have believed into Him and have been joined to Him to be one, to the heavenlies, that we may attain to a heavenly position and live in a heavenly atmosphere and state.

F. Fulfilling His Heavenly Ministry

Upon His ascension into heaven, Christ proceeded to accomplish His heavenly ministry. He was anointed by God to do this sixth great thing, continually performing the following four matters on our behalf:

1. **"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry; inasmuch as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant"(Heb. 8:6).**

After Christ enacted the new covenant (Matt. 26:28) through His death on the earth, He ascended to the heavens to be the Mediator of this new covenant, executing it upon those who believe in Him.

2. **"Who [Christ] sat down on the right hand of the throne of the**

Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle" (Heb. 8:1-2).

Christ is also the Minister of the true tabernacle in the heavens today, ministering to His believers the heavenly life and the divine, heavenly supply.

3. **"Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God" (Heb. 4:14).**

Today, Christ is also our great High Priest in the heavens, interceding before God on our behalf that we may be saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:24-26).

4. **"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is a propitiation concerning our sins" (1 John 2:1-2).**

Christ in the heavens today is also our Advocate before the righteous God. If we sin after we are saved, based upon His being our propitiation, He pleads for us in order to recover the broken fellowship between God and us.

G. Coming Again

When Christ completes His heavenly ministry, He will come back to accomplish the seventh great thing as God's Anointed, which includes the following three matters:

1. **"Because the Lord Himself...will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are living, who remain, shall be caught up at the same time together with them in clouds into a meeting of the Lord in the air; and so we shall be always together with the Lord" (1 Thes. 4:16-17).**

Here we are told that when Christ comes again, He will rapture all believers to the air, whether they are resurrected or living, to meet with Him, that they may always be together with Him. This is the first matter He will perform in His second coming.

2. **"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26).**

This tells us the second thing Christ will perform in His second coming, that is, He will save all of Israel.

3. "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory… then He shall sit on His throne of glory; and all the nations shall be gathered before Him, and He shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31-32).

This portion of Scripture reveals to us the third matter the Lord will perform when He returns, that is, He will judge all the living unbelieving nations.

H. Establishing the Millennial Kingdom

After Christ cleans up the earth at His coming, He will set up the millennial kingdom. This is the eighth great thing He will accomplish as God's anointed One.

"The souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God…and they lived [were resurrected]…and shall reign with Him [Christ] a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4, 6).

These verses show us that after Christ comes to the earth, He will establish the millennial kingdom and will reign with His overcoming believers in it for a thousand years.

I. Being the Center of the New Jerusalem in the New Heaven and the New Earth

At the end of the millennial kingdom, the old heaven and the old earth will be abolished. Christ will be the center of eternity in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth to come. This is the last great thing to be done by Christ as God's Anointed in fulfilling God's eternal purpose. All those redeemed by God throughout the ages will then be with Him, enjoying the bountiful issue of God's work throughout the ages in God's eternal life forever and ever.

"And the city…the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:23).

This verse shows us that in the future in the New Jerusalem of the new

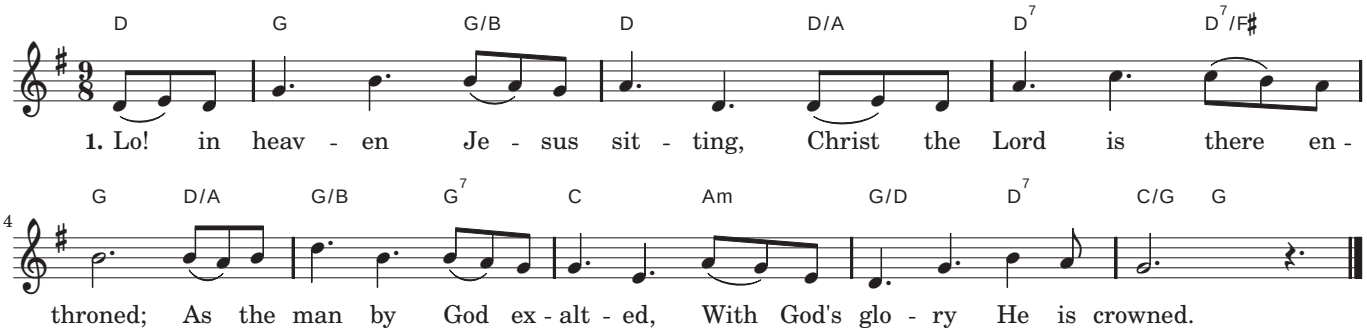
heaven and new earth, the unlimited glory of God will shine forth as light with Christ as the lamp, signifying that Christ is the center of the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth for all eternity.

Lo! in heaven Jesus sitting

Praise of the Lord—His Exaltation

C115 K115 P63 R28 S68 Tg132

132



2. He hath put on human nature,
Died according to God's plan,
Resurrected with a body,
And ascended as a man.

3. God in Him on earth was humbled,
God with man was domiciled;
Man in Him in heav'n exalted,
Man with God is reconciled.

4. He as God with man is mingled,
God in man is testified;
He as man with God is blended,
Man in God is glorified.

5. From the Glorified in heaven
The inclusive Spirit came;
All of Jesus' work and Person
Doth this Spirit here proclaim.

6. With the Glorified in heaven
Is the Church identified;
By the Spirit of this Jesus
Are His members edified.

7. Lo! a man is now in heaven
As the Lord of all enthroned;
This is Jesus Christ our Savior,
With God's glory ever crowned!

LESSON TEN

KNOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings in the Triune God for our experience and enjoyment. Therefore, we should also know Him that we may richly experience Him.

I. THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

"Baptizing them into…the Father and…the Son and…the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

In the divine Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, is listed last, showing that He is the ultimate expression of the Triune God.

II. THE TRIUNE GOD REACHING AND ENTERING INTO THE BELIEVERS

A. "The Father…will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever; even the Spirit of reality" (John 14:16-17).

It says here that the Holy Spirit is the Triune God reaching man, that is, the Triune God becoming the Spirit to reach man and be with him forever.

B. "The Spirit of reality…shall be in you…and I [the Son] in you" (John 14:17, 20).

This word further shows us that the Holy Spirit, who reaches us with the Father and the Son, will also enter into us. This indicates that He is the Triune God entering into the believers. When He enters into us, the Father and the Son enter into us (John 14:23).

III. WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS

A. The "Spirit of God" (Gen. 1:2),

participating in God's work of creation.

B. The "Spirit of Jehovah" (2 Chron. 20:14),

participating in God's relationship with man (Gen. 2:7).

C. The "Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:35),

participating in Christ's incarnation to sanctify man unto God.

D. The "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7),

participating in the birth, the living, and the sufferings of Jesus.

E. The "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9),

participating in the resurrection of Christ and the impartation of life.

F. The "Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19),

participating in the birth, living, and death of Jesus, as well as in the resurrection of Christ and the impartation of life, with a bountiful supply that the believers may be saved in all things.

G. The "Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2), "the life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45),

participating in Christ being man's life and giving man life.

H. "The Spirit…for the Spirit was not yet [before the resurrection of Christ], because Jesus was not yet glorified [through resurrection]" (John 7:39).

The Spirit here is the issue of the Holy Spirit having passed through all the items of what He is, mentioned above. Thus, He is the all-inclusive and consummated Spirit as the ultimate expression of the Triune God to reach and enter into those who believe into Christ.

I. The "seven Spirits" (Rev. 1:4),

referring to the sevenfold intensified Spirit, that the church in desolation may receive the sevenfold riches of grace and power.

IV. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the New Testament, there are two aspects of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, related to the believers. On the one hand, He is the Spirit of life in us to be the essential Spirit of God that we may have the divine life to live and to exist. On the other hand, He is the Spirit of power upon us to be the economical

Spirit of God that we may have the divine power and gift to work for God.

A. "The Spirit of reality...shall be in you" (John 14:17).

This is the Holy Spirit as the essential Spirit of God in the believers that they may have God's life to live for God.

B. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This is the Holy Spirit as the economical Spirit of God upon the believers that they may receive God's power to work for the Lord.

V. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. "The Spirit of reality who proceeds from the Father, He will testify concerning Me [the Son]" (John 15:26).

This is the Holy Spirit becoming the transfiguration and reality of Christ in His resurrection to testify concerning the reality of Christ in resurrection.

B. "And having come, He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment" (John 16:8).

This is the Holy Spirit coming to convict sinners of their sins that they may repent and believe into Christ to obtain eternal life.

C. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

This is the Holy Spirit, as God's essential Spirit of life, regenerating the repentant sinner in his spirit that he may have the life of God and become a child of God.

D. "He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

This is also the Holy Spirit, as God's essential Spirit of life, renewing man through regeneration that man may receive God's salvation of life.

E. "The Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (2 Tim. 1:14).

This is the Holy Spirit, as God's essential Spirit of life, abiding in us to continually supply us with God's life and riches.

F. "The anointing which you received from Him [the Son with the Father] abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

This is the Holy Spirit, as the essential Spirit of God, anointing the essence (element) of God into the believers, thus producing a teaching for them that they may abide in the Lord according to the teaching of God's essence.

G. "Having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

This is also the Holy Spirit, as God's essential Spirit of life in the believers, supplying them with God's holy nature, that is, the divine essence.

H. "Being transformed into the same [the Lord's] image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

This is still the Holy Spirit, as the essential Spirit of God in the believers, transforming them metabolically with God's divine essence into the Lord's image from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory.

I. "I am sending forth the promise [the Holy Spirit] of My Father upon you…until you are clothed with power from on high [the heavens]" (Luke 24:49).

This is the Holy Spirit, as the economical Spirit of God, being the power on the believers for them to work for God.

J. "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for profit…" (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

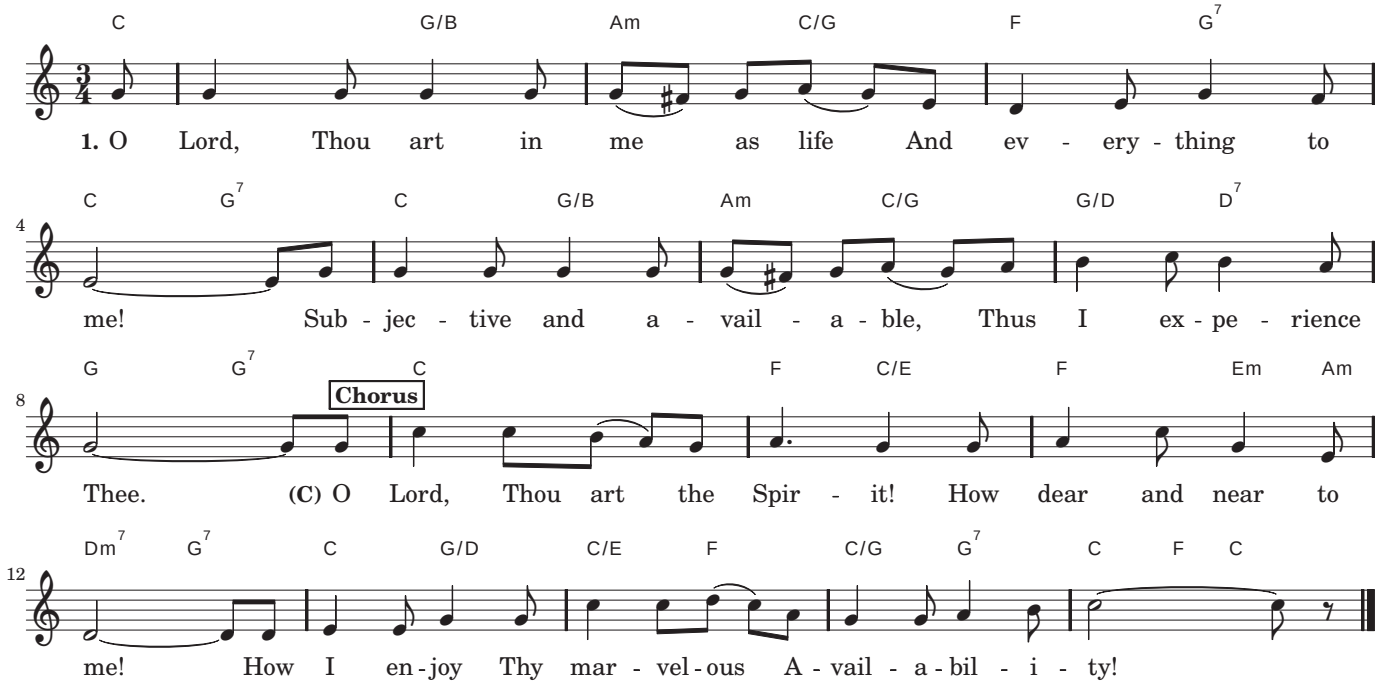
This is the Holy Spirit upon the believers, as the economical Spirit of God, giving them diverse gifts to work for God.

O Lord, Thou art in me as life

Experience of Christ—As the Available One

C400 Cb539 K400 P266 R100 S242 Tg539

539



2. To all my needs both great and small
Thou art the rich supply;
So ready and sufficient too
For me now to apply.

3. Thy sweet anointing with Thy might
In weakness doth sustain;
By Thy supply of energy
My strength Thou dost maintain.

4. Thy law of life in heart and mind
My conduct regulates;
The wealth of Thy reality
My being saturates.

5. O Thou art ever one with me,
Unrivaled unity!
One spirit with me all the time
For all eternity!

LESSON ELEVEN

KNOWING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The cross of Christ accomplished God's eternal redemption for us according to the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory to become the basis of our eternal salvation. Hence, we must thoroughly know the cross.

I. THE CROSS BEING PROPHESIED BY GOD

"Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf; because it is written, Cursed is everyone hanging on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

"Tree" here signifies the cross, which was made of wood. In Deuteronomy 21:23 of the Old Testament, God prophesied in the judgments of the Law that Christ would be hung on a tree, that is, be hung on the cross.

II. THE CROSS BEING A ROMAN FORM OF EXECUTION

"They cried out then, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate [the Roman Governor] says to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered. We have no king but Caesar [the Roman Emperor]" (John 19:15).

The Jewish form of execution was to stone a criminal to death (Deut. 22:24). However, about sixty years before the Lord's birth, the Jewish nation fell to Rome. Not long before the Lord was sentenced to death on the cross by the Roman governor, the Roman Empire had adopted crucifixion as the form of execution for the most evil persons. Thus, when the Jews sought to kill the Lord, they crucified Him through the hands of the Roman governor, fulfilling God's prophecy in Deuteronomy 21:23 concerning how the Lord would die. This was done by the sovereign hand of God.

III. THE TIME WHEN CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED

A. "Now it was the third hour [9 a.m.], and they crucified Him" (Mark

15:25).

Christ was crucified beginning at nine o'clock in the morning.

B. "Now from the sixth hour [noon] darkness came over all the land until the ninth hour [3 p.m.]" (Matt. 27:45).

Christ was crucified until three o'clock in the afternoon. From nine in the morning to three in the afternoon is a total of six hours. In the first three hours, God did not punish Him in the sinners' place; it was men persecuting Him. In these three hours, He suffered for martyrdom, not redemption. At noon, the earth became dark. From this point until three o'clock, it was not men persecuting Him but God judging Him in the sinners' place. In those three hours, He suffered for redemption, not martyrdom.

IV. THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CROSS

A. "Who Himself carried up our sins [plural, referring to man's sins in his outward deeds] in His body onto the tree, in order that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24).

The first thing Christ accomplished on the cross was to bear the various sins in our outward actions, that is, the sins committed by a person himself, that we may be saved and pass from death into life.

B. "But now...He has been manifested for the putting away of sin [singular, referring to man's sin in his inward nature] by His sacrifice" (Heb. 9:26).

On the cross, at the same time, Christ removed the sin in our inward nature, that is, the sin inherited by birth, that we may be delivered from our sinful nature within.

C. "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf; because...Cursed is every one hanging on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

Christ bore our outward sins and removed our inward sin on the cross, receiving the curse which, according to God's law, we should have received because of our fall and our sin.

D. "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him that the body of sin might be made of none effect, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves" (Rom. 6:6).

Christ not only dealt with our twofold sin on the cross, He also crucified our sinful old man that the body of sin might be made of none effect, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

E. "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

"I" is our old man. Since our old man has been crucified with Christ, our "I" is also crucified with Him.

F. "But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

Not only did Christ crucify our old man on the cross, He also crucified our flesh with its passions and lusts. Here it says that we who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts. We can do this based on the fact that the Lord crucified our flesh on the cross.

G. "...blood and flesh. He also Himself in like manner shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the might of death, that is, the Devil; and might release those who through fear of death through all their life were held in slavery" (Heb. 2:14-15).

On the cross, Christ destroyed the Devil, who has the might of death, and released us from the slavery of death.

H. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent [on a pole] in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross]; that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

Since Christ destroyed the Devil, who has the power of death, obviously He also judged and dealt with him, the old serpent who had poisoned mankind, that all who believe in Christ may have God's eternal life and pass from death into life. This is typified by Moses" lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, which brought the Israelites from death to life.

I. "Through whom [Christ] the world has been crucified to me" (Gal. 6:14).

On the cross, Christ destroyed Satan the Devil, and at the same time He crucified the world organized by Satan and hanging on Satan that the world would lose its usurping power on those who have believed into Christ.

J. "For He Himself [Christ]...has made both [the Jews and the Gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity, having abolished in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man" (Eph. 2:14-15).

On the cross, Christ abolished the Old Testament law of the commandments in ordinances, which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, making them one and creating the two in Himself into one new man, which is the church.

K. "Unless a grain of wheat [typifying Christ] falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit [typifying the members of Christ]" (John 12:24).

Christ not only dealt with all the above negative items for God and for us on the cross, but through His death on the cross He also released the divine life within Him into us so that we could become His many members which constitute His Body.

V. BOASTING IN THE CROSS

"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

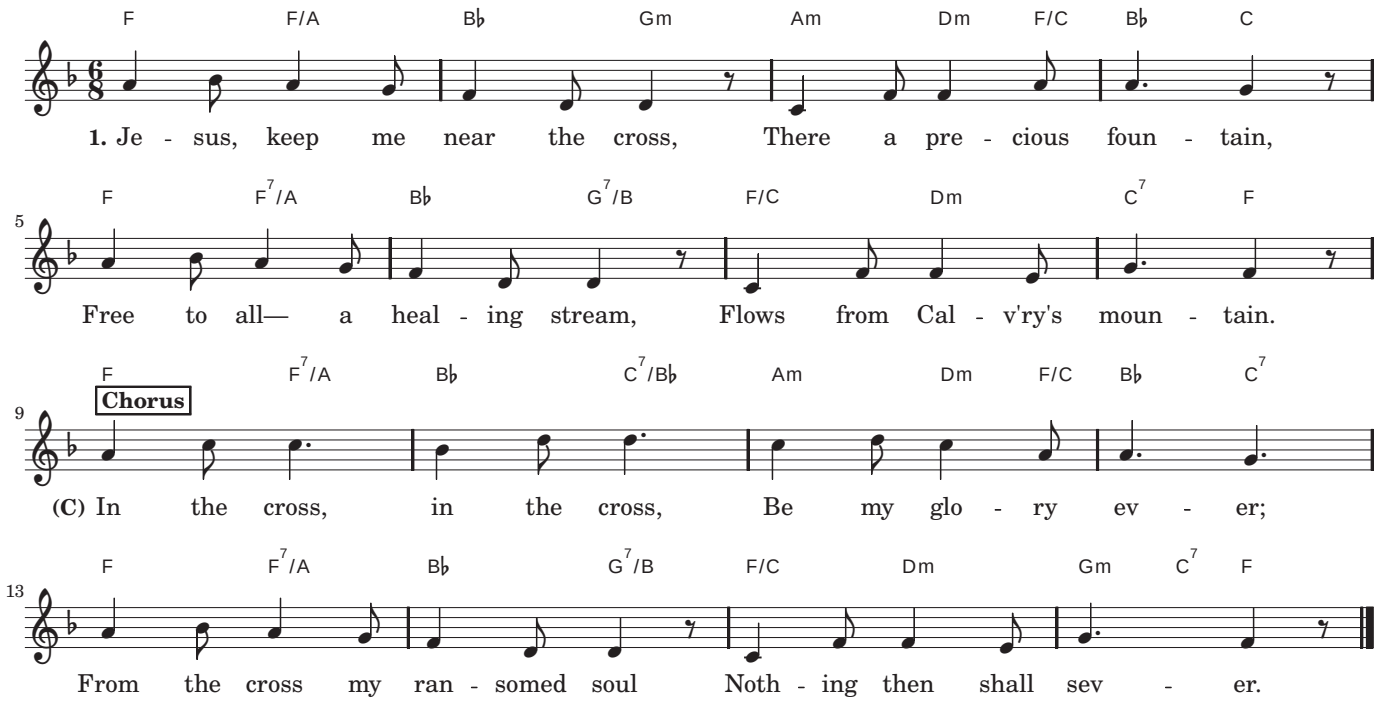
Those zealous for the Jewish religion forced others to be circumcised in order to boast in others' flesh (Gal. 6:12-13). However, the Apostle Paul, being gained by Christ, did not boast in anything but the cross of Christ.

Jesus, keep me near the cross

Gospel—Crying to the Lord

C456 Cb1059 K456 P464 R178 S486 Tg1059

1059



2. Near the cross, a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me;
There the Bright and Morning Star
Sheds its beams around me.

3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day,
With its shadow o'er me.

4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
Hoping, trusting ever,
Till I see my Savior's face,
Leave His presence never.

LESSON **TWELVE**

KNOWING THE CHURCH

The church is the goal God wants to obtain in His eternal economy. Each one of us who is saved participates in this goal, that God may obtain His heart's desire according to His good pleasure. Therefore, we must also know the church.

I. WHAT THE CHURCH IS

A. The Called Out Assembly

"On this rock I [Christ] will build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

The church is what Christ will build through His death, resurrection, and ascension. The term "church" is ekklesia in Greek which means the called out assembly. Thus, according to its literal meaning, the church is the congregation called out from the world by God. It is not a church building or any edifice for the worship of God.

B. The Body of Christ

"The church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

The church is the Body with Christ as the Head; it is constituted for Christ in His life and Spirit with all those who have believed into Him. It is a living organism and not a lifeless organization, such as the clubs and associations in society.

The body of a man is the fullness of a man to be his expression. Likewise, the church is the fullness of Christ to be His expression. Since Christ is the One who is unlimited, extensive, and filling all in all, He needs a great Body to be the fullness of Himself who fills all in all to express Him in all things.

C. The Counterpart of Christ

"Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

This word reveals that the church is also Christ's counterpart. As the Body of Christ, the church receives life from Him for His expression; this is a matter of life. As the counterpart of Christ, the church receives His love for the satisfaction of His heart's desire; this is a matter of love.

D. The House of God

"That you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth [reality]" (1 Tim. 3:15).

To Christ, the church is His Body and His counterpart, while to God, the church is His house. On the one hand, this house refers to God's dwelling place, and on the other hand, it refers to God's family, God's household. These two, God's household and God's dwelling place, are just one. God's household is the very house for God's dwelling (Eph. 2:19, 22). A person's house is his place of living, residing, and rest. The church, being God's house, is also such a place to God. Today, the living God is living, residing, and resting in the church on the earth.

God is living, and the church as His house is also living, having the life of God, living, residing, and resting with God. Thus, the living house of God is the pillar and base of all His reality, which is the reality (truth) of the universe. Everything of this living God is the reality in the universe. Without Him, the universe is vain and empty; yet all His reality is being supported and upheld by the church, which is His living house.

E. The New Man

"And having put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him [Christ] who created him; where [in the new man] there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all [men] and in all [men]" (Col. 3:10-11).

Just as all of mankind is a corporate old man created in Adam, the church is also a corporate new man. Christ, having abolished on the cross all the

ordinances which caused discord among men, created this new man in Himself (Eph. 2:14-15). This new man bears the image of its Creator, Christ, who is its life and its content. In this new man, there are no persons of the old creation belonging to any race, religion, culture, or class. Only Christ is all the constituents of this new man and is in all its constituents. The church as the Body of Christ takes Christ as its life for His expression; the church as the new man takes Christ as its person for the fulfillment of God's will.

II. THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE CHURCH

"The church of God…those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2).

The church is constituted with all those who have believed into Christ and who possess His life. Any person who has not believed into Christ and has not been saved cannot become a constituent of the church. Without being saved, even our closest relatives are not constituents of the church. Only after they are saved and have the Lord's life to become saints are they constituents of the church.

III. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

A. The Universal Aspect

"On this rock I [Christ] will build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

The church mentioned by the Lord in this verse is in the universal aspect. It is unique, including all who have believed into Him in the universe through all the ages and in every place.

B. The Local Aspect

"If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17).

The church mentioned by the Lord in this verse is in the local aspect. It is numerous and its local believers can speak to it. According to the local aspect, the church appears in every locality. Each local church includes only those who have believed into Christ in that place.

IV. THE DESIGNATION OF THE CHURCH

A. It Has No Special Name

The church is unique and has no need of special names. The church is the church; there should not be kinds of churches that are denominated according to their kind, such as the Presbyterian church, the Lutheran church, and the Baptist church. To denominate the church in this way is needless and not according to the biblical revelation.

B. It May Be Designated by the Name of Its Locality

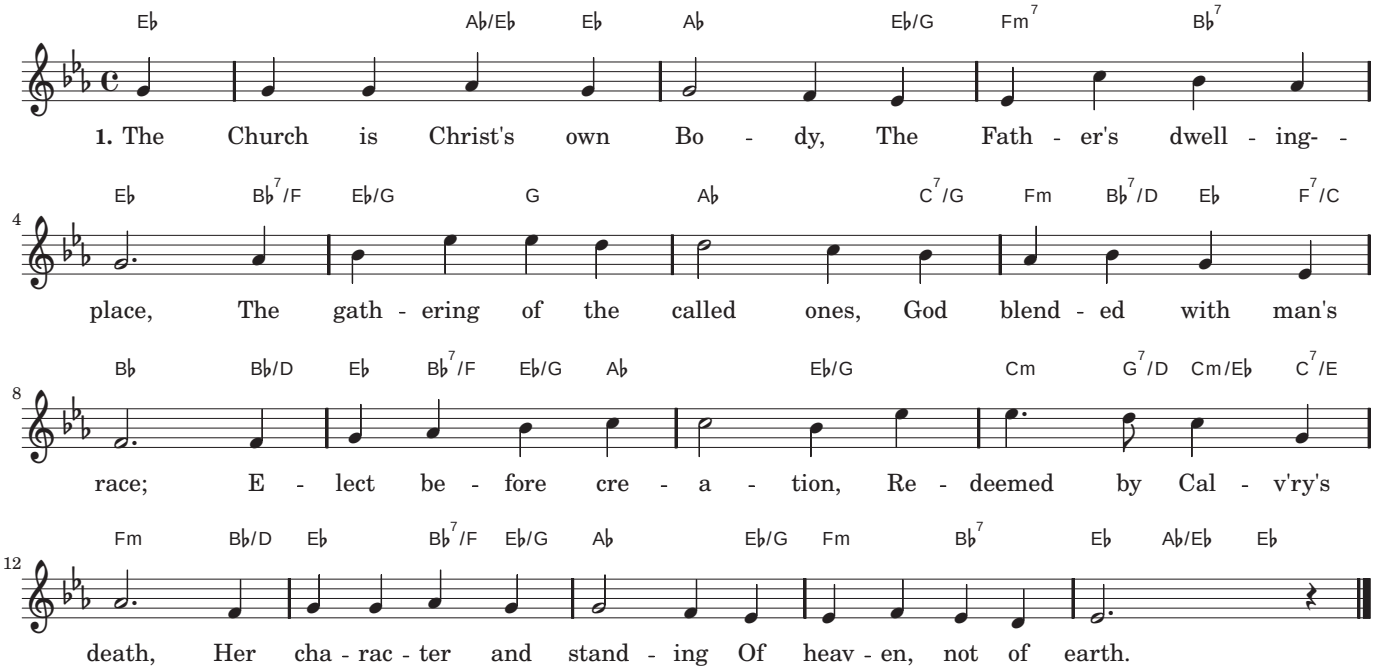
Although the church is unique in the universe, it is numerous in its local manifestation. The many local churches do not differ in nature; their difference is only in the different places where they are. Therefore, we may use the name of the locality in which a local church is to designate that church, such as the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), and the seven local churches in the province of Asia (Rev. 1:4, 11).

The Church is Christ's own Body

The Church—Her General Definition

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824



2. New man of new creation,
Born through her risen Lord,
Baptized in God the Spirit,
Made holy by His Word;
Christ is her life and content,
Himself her glorious Head;
She has ascended with Him
O'er all her foes to tread.

3. Christ is her one foundation,
None other man may lay;
All that she has, as Christ, is
Divine in every way;
Her members through the Spirit
Their death on Calv'ry own;
They're built in resurrection—
Gold, silver, precious stone.

4. One God, one Lord, one Spirit—
Her elements all one—
One faith, one hope, one baptism,
One Body in the Son;
The triune God is in her,
One Body members own,
By faith they are united,
In hope of glory shown.

5. From every tribe and nation
Do all the members come,
Regardless of their classes
United to be one.
No high there is, nor lowly,
No Jew, nor Gentile clan,
No free, nor slave, nor master,
But Christ, the "one new man."

6. One Body universal,
One in each place expressed;
Locality of dwelling
Her only ground possessed;
Administration local,
Each answ'ring to the Lord;
Communion universal,
Upheld in one accord.

7. Her local gatherings model
The New Jerusalem;
Its aspects and its details
Must show in all of them.
Christ is the Lamp that shineth,
With God within, the Light;
They are the lampstands bearing
His glorious Image bright.

Life Lessons, Vol. 2

LESSON THIRTEEN

KNOWING THE SECTS

The five great items mentioned in the previous six lessons are positive items which we should know; they are the most fundamental truths—realities—revealed by the Bible. Because of the decline and desolation of the church, however, we must also know a most basic negative item in the church's desolation. This is the matter of divisions, the so-called sects or denominations, which we see in Christianity today.

I. HAS CHRIST BEEN DIVIDED?

"But I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you…each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

In those days, in the church in Corinth, there were factions. One party said that they were of Paul, and another said that they were of Apollos. Another party said that they were of Cephas (Peter), and still another party, who considered themselves superior to all the previous parties, said that they were of Christ. Therefore, they were severely rebuked by the Apostle Paul, who had led them to salvation and who had established them as the church. Paul called them to account, asking them whether Christ had been divided. Obviously Christ has not been and cannot be divided. However, those who had believed and had been baptized into Christ were divided one from another. This offended Christ, dividing His Body, separating the unique church, which He redeemed by shedding His blood, into many different sects.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul asked the divided Corinthian believers, "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" Of course

not! Paul did not die to accomplish redemption for them; neither were they baptized into the name of Paul. It was Christ who died to accomplish redemption for them, and it was Christ into whom they had been baptized. Yet why did they say they were of Paul? This is just like some today who are redeemed by Christ and are baptized into Christ, who say that they are of Luther (the Lutheran sect), or of Wesley (the Wesleyan sect), or of the Baptist church (the Baptist sect), or of the Presbyterian church (the Presbyterian sect). Here Paul's rebuking and denouncing of the divisive Christians strongly condemn and deny all divisions, sects, and denominations in Christianity today.

II. THE BODY OF CHRIST BEING UNIQUE

"One Body and one Spirit…one Lord…one God" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Since Christ is not divided, neither should Christians who belong to Christ be divided into sects. Even the more, since the Body of Christ is unique, Christians who are members of this unique Body should not divide it into many different sects. We should only want the unique Body of Christ, not the many man-made sects. In this Body of Christ, there is only one Spirit; also, His Body has only one Lord, that is, one Head. Furthermore, all the members of His Body are regenerated by one God and Father, and they are indwelt by Him. The Triune God has been mingled with all the believers as one, and the essence of His divine oneness in the believers has further constituted them into an indivisible Body. The Spirit is the one life which they all possess. How can a body have two or more lives? The Lord is the one Head to whom they belong. How can a body have two or more heads? God is the one Father who begat them. How can the children of God have two or more Fathers? It is strange and unreasonable for a single body to have more than one life, or for a body to have more than one head, or for a family of children to have more than one father! Yet these unreasonable and strange things are actually being established, supported, respected, and promoted by a majority of Christians! None of the lovers of the Lord or those who know the Lord's heart and the truth of the Bible should do this. Rather, they should imitate the Apostle Paul to condemn and deny these things which offend

Christ, sadden God, and grieve the Holy Spirit.

III. SECTS BEING OF THE FLESH

"And the works of the flesh are manifest, which are…faction, divisions, parties, envyings" (Gal. 5:19-21).

In Greek, the word for party or sect (hairesis) is the same as the word for heresy (hairesis anglicized), which means to label something new in order to be different, resulting in a distinctive party—a sect.

The verses here tell us clearly that sects come from men's flesh. They also show us that there are always factions and divisions before the formation of a sect, and envyings after its establishment. What a shame! Is this not the very condition among Christians today? Should we not refuse this work of the flesh by following the Holy Spirit in us who sanctifies us?

IV. REFUSING FACTIONS

"A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse" (Titus 3:10).

In confronting factions among the Christians, the Apostle Paul gave his younger co-worker a frank and bold charge, which is also a charge to us, to refuse a factious person after sufficient admonition in love. This is to reject factions without lenience or compromise according to God's heart's desire and the truth of the Bible that the Body of Christ may not suffer damage and that the truth of God may not be adulterated.

V. THE FACTORS CONSTITUTING SECTS

The following three key elements are the factors which cause the Christians (not counting the nominal ones) to be divided, to be constituted as sects.

A. Special Creeds

The common faith of true Christians is unique. It includes the Triune God, the person and work of Christ, that is, the being of Christ and the doings of Christ, and the divine authority of the Bible. Besides these truths of our fundamental faith, to consider other matters to be the Christian faith (such as the method of

baptism of the Baptist denomination, the system of church administration of the Presbyterian denomination, the tongue-speaking of the Pentecostal denomination, the head covering and foot washing of other groups, or general doctrines such as the time and number of raptures, the interpretation of prophecies, and the understanding of certain parts of the Scriptures) and to make them special creeds is to label something new in order to be different and will result in sects.

B. Special Fellowships

With the existence of special creeds, Christians will be divided into different groups, having special fellowships in their different circles outside of the believers' common fellowship. Such special fellowships cause those believers who practice them to be constituted as sects separate from the believers in general.

C. Special Names

Special creeds not only lead to special fellowships, but they also produce special names, such as the name of a certain denomination or a certain church. These special names, in a more tangible way, cause those who so label themselves to be constituted into named sects, resulting in denominations. A denomination is a named sect. Therefore, those who know the Body of Christ must never bear such special names. The believers should only possess the unique and honorable name of Jesus Christ, and not exalt any other name besides this preeminent name. It should not be a glorious thing for one to say that he is a believer of a certain denomination.

VI. ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

1) "I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit [that is, the oneness of the Body of Christ] in the uniting bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).
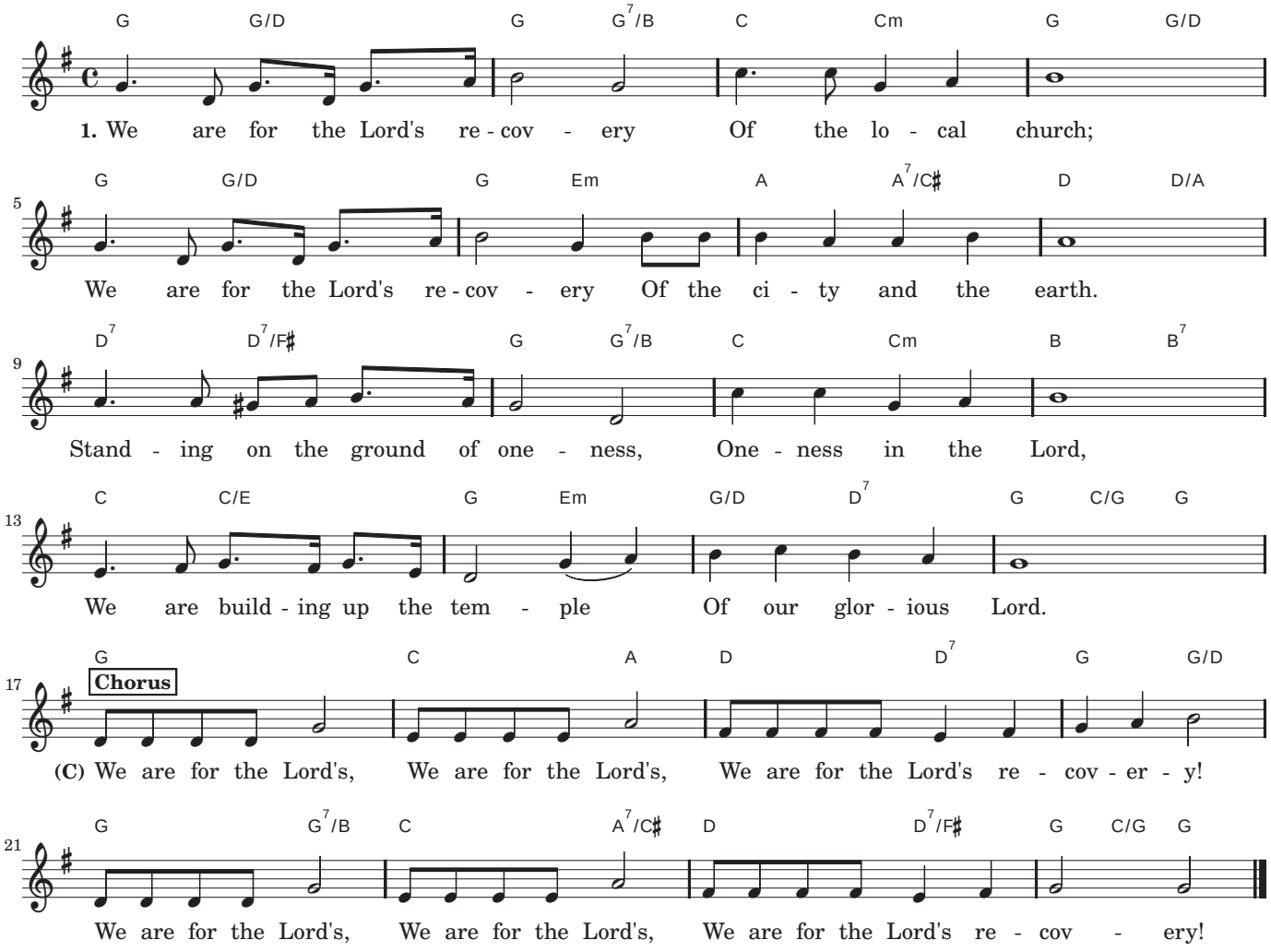
The Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit who lives in us, causes us to be constituted into the Body of Christ with God's life. Since there is one Body, there is also one Holy Spirit who lives in the Body. This one Holy Spirit is the oneness in the one Body. If we believers would live in this Spirit and walk according to this Spirit, the oneness of the Body of Christ would be kept. Otherwise, that oneness would be broken. In the status of one imprisoned because of the church, the Apostle Paul beseeched us in Ephesians 4:2-3 to keep this oneness with such virtues as lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, bearing in love, and the uniting bond of peace, that our walk may be worthy of our calling. God's calling is that we would be members of the Body of Christ. If our walk damages and hurts the oneness of the Body of Christ, it is not worthy of God's calling. Therefore, we must endeavor to live in the Body of Christ to keep the oneness of the Body, not participating in any divisions, sects, or denominations.

We are for the Lord's recovery

The Church—The Lord's Recovery

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2. We are for the Lord's recovery,
To our hearts so dear;
When we exercise our spirit,
Our vision is so clear.
Babylon the Great is fallen,
Satan is cast down,
And the local church is builded
On the local ground.

LESSON FOURTEEN

MEETINGS (1)

Since the church is the assembly called out by God from the world, it should meet continually. Meetings enable God's called out congregation to be supplied, established, and perfected, that the goal of God's calling this assembly may be accomplished.

I. GOD'S ORDINATION FOR THE BELIEVERS

1)"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25).

Here the assembling of ourselves together refers to our Christian meetings. God has ordained the way in which every living thing in the universe should exist. God's ordination is the very law by which a particular species lives. If the living thing obeys that law, it will survive and be blessed. God is the same toward us who have believed in Christ. God's ordination for us, which becomes our law of existence and blessing, is the meetings. As water is to the fish, and air to the birds, so are the meetings to the Christians. As the fish must live in the water and the birds must exist in the air, so the Christians must maintain their spiritual existence and living by the meetings.

II. A REQUIREMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

"...sheep...be one flock" (John 10:16).

Every kind of life has its own characteristic, and usually, many characteristics. The spiritual life we believers have received, being the life of God in us, also possesses many characteristics. For example, the hatred for sin and the separation from sin are characteristics of this life. The desire to draw near to God and the willingness to serve Him are also its characteristics. One of the many characteristics of our spiritual life is to flock together, to meet together. John 10:3 and 16 show us that since we are saved, we are the Lord's sheep. The characteristic of the sheep's life is to flock together and to dislike isolation from

the other sheep. Hence, the Bible says that we are not only the Lord's sheep, but even more, His flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In order to be a sheep which shares in the blessing of the flock, we must meet together with the flock. The characteristic of the spiritual "sheep life" within us requires this of us.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEVERS' MEETINGS

A. "For where two or three are gathered together into My name, there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20).

Here the Lord especially promised that wherever two or three of us who belong to Him are gathered together into His name, that is, meet in His name, He is in our midst. When we meet in His name, we enjoy His presence in a special way. His very presence undoubtedly brings us enlightenment, grace, supply, and all kinds of blessing. How precious this is! What a blessing this is! We can only enjoy such rich blessing by meeting together.

B. "And rising up that very hour, they returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven and those with them assembled together...and as they were speaking these things, He Himself [Jesus] stood in their midst and said to them, Peace to you!" (Luke 24:33-36).

This speaks of the two disciples who left Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. On their way, when they discovered that it was the Lord who had appeared to them, the Lord disappeared from them. Immediately they returned to Jerusalem, where they should have remained originally. When they arrived, they found the apostles and those with them assembled together, and the Lord appeared among them. They and the apostles and the other disciples all enjoyed the Lord's appearing and experienced the blessing of the Lord's presence when He returned among the disciples for the first time after His resurrection. This is also an evidence of the importance of meetings.

C. "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

After He ascended, the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was

poured upon the disciples when they were meeting together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not upon the disciples who were by themselves. Rather it was upon those disciples who were meeting together. Anyone who did not participate in that meeting missed an unprecedented blessing outpoured from the heavens. Again, this shows us the importance of meetings.

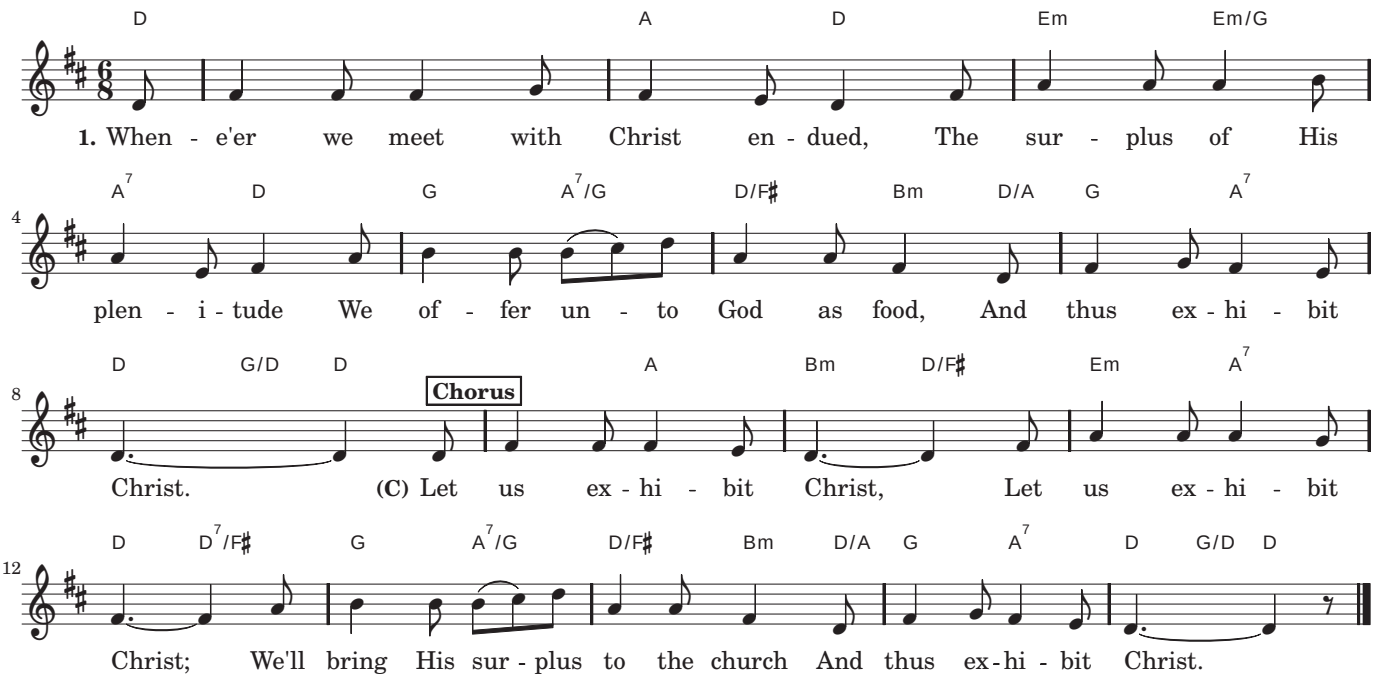
D. "And let us consider one another for inciting to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day [of the Lord's coming] drawing near" (Heb. 10:24-25).

What is mentioned here shows us that meetings can cause us to consider one another for inciting to love and to exhort one another for good works. This causes us to have spiritual fellowship with the saints to receive the life supply from them. Thus, we must not forsake the meetings, and so much the more as we know that the Lord will soon come back. Our Christian life is not like the life of a butterfly, which does well on its own; our life is like the sheep's life, requiring that we flock together and live a meeting life. Consequently, we need to meet, and the meetings are crucial to us.

Whene'er we meet with Christ endued

Meetings—Exhibiting Christ

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2. In Christ we live, by Christ we fight,
On Christ we labor day and night,
And with His surplus we unite
To thus exhibit Christ.

3. Our life and all we are and do
Is Christ Himself, the substance true,
That every time we meet anew
We may exhibit Christ.

4. In meetings Christ to God we bear
And Christ with one another share,
And Christ with God enjoying there,
We thus exhibit Christ.

5. The risen Christ to God we bring,
And Christ ascended offering,
God's satisfaction answering,
We thus exhibit Christ.

6. The center and reality,
The atmosphere and ministry,
Of all our meetings is that we
May thus exhibit Christ.

7. The testimony and the prayer,
And all the fellowship we share,
The exercise of gifts, whate'er,
Should just exhibit Christ.

8. The Fat.her we would glorify,
Exalting Christ the Son, thereby
The meeting's purpose satisfy
That we exhibit Christ.

LESSON FIFTEEN

MEETINGS (2)

IV. THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEETINGS FOR BELIEVERS

A. Bread Breaking Meeting

"And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread" (Acts 20:7).

To break bread is to eat the Lord's supper, remembering the Lord who died for us (1 Cor. 11:20, 23-25). This should be the first kind of regular meeting for us who have been redeemed by the Lord's death. See the following two lessons for details.

B. Prayer Meeting

1. **"If two of you agree on earth concerning anything, whatever they may ask, it shall come to them from My Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together..." (Matt. 18:19-20).**

Here the Lord is speaking concerning the prayer of a meeting. This kind of prayer is more powerful than the prayer of an individual, being able to bind on earth what has been bound in heaven, and to loose on earth what has been loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18).

2. **"These all were persevering with one accord in prayer, together with the women..." (Acts 1:14).**

Here again, the prayer of a meeting is mentioned. It was this prayer that brought in the blessing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

3. **"And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord to God and said...And as they were beseeching, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:24-31).**

It says here that in those days when the disciples were under persecution, they met together to pray with one accord. That kind of prayer caused them to be filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit and to speak the word of God with boldness.

4. "Prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him" (Acts 12:5); "where [the house of Mary] a considerable number were assembled together praying" (12:12).

On the day when Peter was imprisoned, the church prayed fervently for him, and a considerable number were assembled together in a sister's house, praying for him specifically. That prayer caused God to perform a great miracle, delivering Peter out of prison.

C. Meeting for the Exercise of Spiritual Gifts and for Mutual Building Up

"Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor. 14:26).

The meeting mentioned here is for the exercise of spiritual gifts and for mutual building up. In this kind of meeting, there is not a special person doing a specific thing, but everyone is exercising the spiritual gifts; one has a psalm, one has a teaching, one has a revelation, one does this, and another does that. Each one may participate with the goal of building up and edifying others.

D. Meeting for Reading the Word

"And having gathered the multitude together, they handed them the letter [written by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem]. And when they read it, they rejoiced at the consolation" (Acts 15:30-31).

Here it says that when Paul and his companions arrived in Antioch, they gathered the saints together to read to them the letter written by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Hence, we may also need to meet together occasionally to read the word of God in the Bible.

E. Meeting to Listen to Messages

"When we gathered together…Paul discoursed with them, about to go

forth on the next day" (Acts 20:7).

On that day, the believers in Troas met together to listen to Paul discoursing with them concerning the spiritual things of God, that they might be edified and established. Therefore, sometimes we should also meet to listen to spiritual messages spoken for God by the Lord's minister of the word that we may be edified and established.

V. HOW TO MEET

A. "For where…are gathered together into My name, there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20).

The most crucial thing in the believers' meeting is to be gathered into the Lord's name. This means that we have to meet in the name of the Lord. Since we are the Lord's and were saved by His name, we should gather only into that name and meet in that name. We must not gather into and meet in any other name, whether it is the name of an individual, of a corporate body, of a mission, or of a denomination.

B. "And [1] day by day, [2] continuing steadfastly [3] with one accord [4] in the temple and breaking bread [5] from house to house" (Acts 2:46).

This verse reveals to us that we should, first, meet daily; second, meet steadfastly and continually; third, meet with one accord; fourth, meet in a large place (such as the temple); and fifth, meet from house to house, that is, meet in every home.

C. "The whole church comes together in one place" (1 Cor. 14:23).

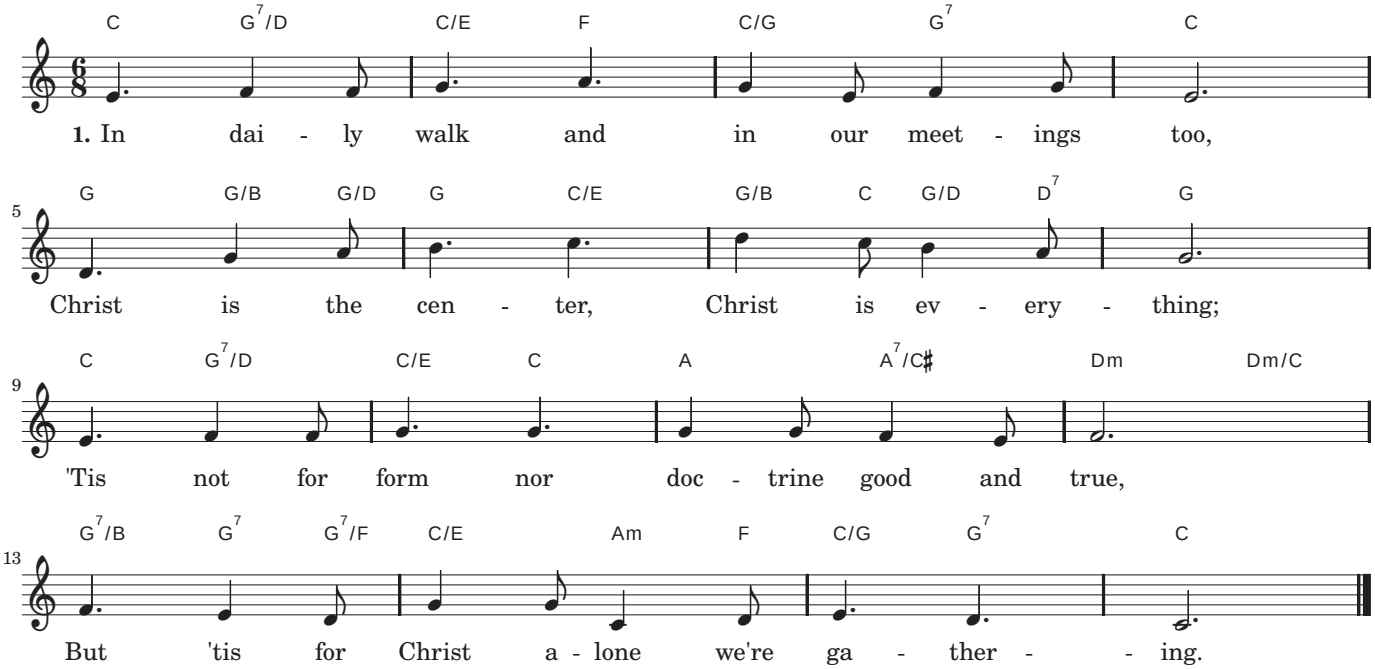
On the one hand, the church should meet continually in the homes of the believers; on the other hand, sometimes it is also necessary for the whole church to come together in one place. Separate home meetings, which should be regular, and meetings in one place, which should be held according to need, both have their own benefits and flavor. Thus, the church should have regular separate home meetings and should gather together in one place as the need arises.

In daily walk and in our meetings too

Meetings—Christ as the Center

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2. Christ is the way and Christ the light of life,
In Him we walk and by Him we are led;
Christ is the living water and the food;
Of Him we drink and we with Him are fed.

3. Christ is the truth, 'tis Him we testify,
Christ is the life, 'tis Him we minister;
Christ is the Lord, 'tis Him we magnify,
Christ is the Head, and we exalt Him here.

4. Christ is the All in all to God and man—
With Him both we and God are satisfied;
Christ, the reality within the Church—
By Him are life and numbers multiplied.

5. By all the hymns and prayers we offer here,
Christ the reality we would express;
All the activities in fellowship—
Christ thus in operation manifest.

6. 'Tis in His Name we meet, in Spirit act,
With nothing in our mind to formalize;
'Tis by His pow'r we pray, in unction praise,
And with Himself in spirit exercise.

7. All things forgetting, cleaving unto Christ,
Applying Him until maturity;
Let us count everything but loss for Him,
For Him, our All in all, eternally.

LESSON SIXTEEN

THE BREAD BREAKING MEETING (1)

"We gathered together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7).

"You come together...to eat the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20).

"You...partake of the table of the Lord..." (1 Cor. 10:21).

These three verses show us that the bread breaking meeting is a meeting in which the believers come together to eat the Lord's supper and attend the Lord's table. This meeting is divided into two parts, the first part for remembering the Lord and the latter part for worshipping the Father.

I. REMEMBERING THE LORD— WITH THE LORD AS THE CENTER

"And having taken a loaf...He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you; do this unto the remembrance of Me. And similarly the cup after they had dined" (Luke 22:19-20).

The bread breaking meeting is not for anything other than remembering the Lord with the remembrance of the Lord as its center for the Lord's enjoyment. Everything in this meeting, whether hymn singing, prayer, Bible reading, or words of inspiration, should take the Lord as the center, speaking either concerning His person and work, His love and virtues, His living or suffering on the earth, or His honor or glory in heaven, that others may consider or realize these things in order to remember the Lord Himself. In such a meeting, we should think of the Lord in our hearts and behold the Lord in our spirit that we would be inspired concerning the Lord. Then we will express our inspiration through songs, prayers, reading of the Bible, or words, that the feeling of the entire meeting would be directed to the Lord and that all would remember the Lord.

A. Eating the Lord's Supper

The three verses quoted in the beginning of this lesson show us that the

breaking of bread is to eat the Lord's supper and to attend the Lord's table. Eating the Lord's supper is for us to remember the Lord; attending the Lord's table is for us to have fellowship together in the Lord's accomplishments for us. In the aspect of eating the Lord's supper, we should mainly do the following three things:

1. Remember the Lord

a. "The Lord Jesus…took bread…broke it and said, This is My body, which is for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:23-24).

According to what the Lord has established, whenever we break bread, there is not only a loaf of bread prepared for us to break and eat, but next to the bread there is also a cup prepared for us to receive and drink. By eating the Lord's bread and drinking the Lord's cup, we eat the Lord's supper in remembrance of the Lord. The bread and the cup are both symbols. According to what the Lord said, the bread signifies His body that He gave for us and the cup signifies the blood that He shed for us. His body was given for us on the cross and His blood was shed for us also on the cross. He gave Himself for us in order to impart life into us that we may partake of Him. He shed His blood for us in order to redeem us that our sins may be forgiven.

When we see or receive the bread that we break, we should consider how the Lord became flesh for us, how He died for us in the flesh, and how His body was broken for us and given to us that we may have His life. In the Bible, bread refers to life. The Lord said that He is the bread of life which gives life to the world (John 6:33-35). Whenever bread is mentioned, we must think of life. The Lord's body being broken to be given as bread to us means that He gave His body for us that we may have His life. We partake of His life when we receive His broken body. All of this is signified by our breaking of bread and by the bread which we break.

b. "Similarly also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25).

In the bread breaking meeting, we should consider the Lord and what He did for us not only when we see or receive the bread which we break but also when we see or receive the cup which we drink. This cup signifies the new covenant, which the Lord enacted for us by shedding His blood. Whenever we see or receive this cup which we drink, we should consider how the Lord partook of flesh and blood for us (Heb. 2:14), how He not only gave His body for us that we may have His life, but how He also shed His blood for us that we may have the topmost blessing, that is, to be delivered from sin and obtain God and all that is of Him. By this symbol, we should consider how the Lord bore our sins, was made sin for us, and was judged and cursed for us, shedding His blood, which constitutes our cup of blessing, our eternal blessed portion. We should also consider how we are redeemed, forgiven, sanctified, justified, reconciled, and accepted by God through the Lord's blood; how it cleanses us from our sins and washes our conscience that we may come to God with boldness; how it speaks better things before God; and how it resists the attacks from the evil spirits for us that we may overcome the Devil who accuses us.

In the Bible, the bread denotes life and the cup signifies "portion," such as "Jehovah is the portion of…my cup" (Psa. 16:5). Originally we were sinful and evil, and the portion we deserved from God should have been the cup of God's wrath, that is, to go into the lake of fire to suffer the torment of eternal perdition (Rev. 14:10; 21:8). However, God made the Lord Jesus drink the cup of wrath for us on the cross (John 18:11). He received God's righteous judgment for us and fully tasted the torment of perdition in the lake of fire; He shed His blood to fully redeem us from our sins and enacted the new covenant for us, giving us instead the cup of salvation (Psa. 116:13) and becoming our cup (of blessing) (Psa. 23:5). In this blessed cup of salvation, God Himself and all that He has has become our portion, our eternal blessed portion, and the portion of our cup.

2. Enjoy the Lord

"Jesus took the bread…broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat" (Matt. 26:26); "This is My body which is given for you; do this unto the remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19); "And taking the

cup…He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:27-28); "…which is being poured out for you" (Luke 22:20); "This do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

Although the center of the breaking of bread is to remember the Lord, such remembrance is not merely to reflect on the Lord and all that He has done for us, but even more to enjoy the Lord and all that He has accomplished for us. The Lord said that our eating His bread and drinking His cup is our remembrance of Him. His bread and His cup signify His body and His blood. Thus, to eat His bread and drink His cup are to eat His body and drink His blood. The Lord's body and His blood are He Himself given for us and the means by which He accomplished all things for us. Furthermore, to eat and to drink are not only to receive but also to enjoy. When we eat the Lord's body and drink His blood, we not only receive but also enjoy the Lord Himself and all that He has accomplished for us by giving His body and shedding His blood. To receive and enjoy the Lord in this way is to remember Him. It is when we thus eat, drink, and enjoy the Lord that we truly remember Him. This is the profound meaning of eating the Lord's supper.

Our eating, drinking, and enjoying the Lord at His supper are also our declaration and testimony. Our declaration is that we are joined to the Lord and are mingled with Him, just as the bread becomes mingled with us after being received into our body. Our testimony is that we live by eating, drinking, and enjoying the Lord, taking Him as our life every day. When we break bread to eat and drink the Lord, we declare that the Lord, by giving His body and shedding His blood, has come into us to be joined to us. We also testify that, by receiving the body the Lord gave for us and the blood He shed for us, we have partaken of Him and all that He has accomplished for us, we have been joined to Him, and we live by Him as our life and our life supply. This is our declaration as well as our testimony when we break bread.

3. Display the Lord's Death

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The word “declare” in this verse has the meaning of showing and displaying. Whenever we eat the Lord’s bread and drink His cup, we simultaneously remember the Lord and display His death. We remember the Lord, not His death. But while we are remembering the Lord, we display the Lord’s death for ourselves, the angels, and all things to see. When we remember the Lord, the bread and the cup are displayed separately on the table. The bread refers to the Lord’s body and the cup to His blood. Since the separation of the body and the blood signifies death, death is thus displayed. This is how we display the Lord’s death when we break bread to remember Him.

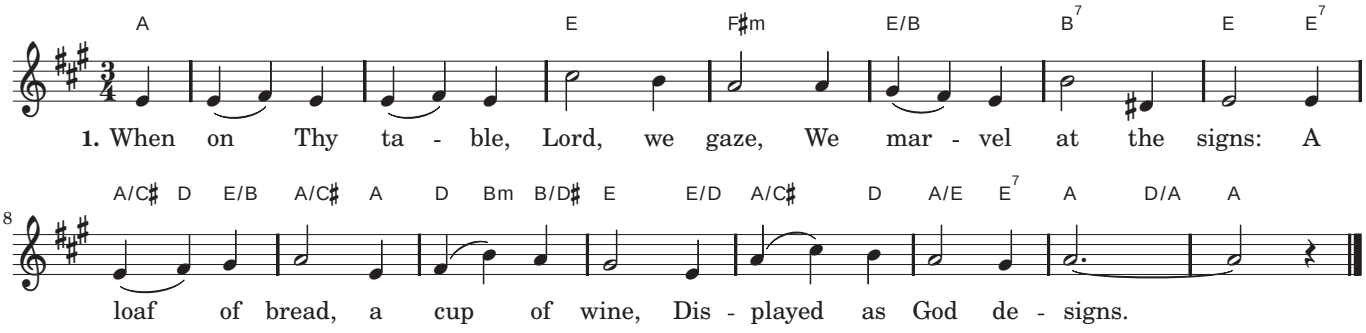
The Scripture quoted here says that we should remember the Lord and display His death until He comes. This implies that when we break bread to remember the Lord and to display His death, at the same time we are waiting for His coming. This shows that we should display the Lord’s death and thus remember Him in the spirit and atmosphere of waiting for His coming.

When on Thy table, Lord, we gaze

Praise of the Lord—Remembrance of Him

C179 K179 P117 R41 S96 Tg220

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2. The loaf portrays the bread of life
As heav'nly food to us,
Imparted by Thy mystic death
That we may share Thee thus.

3. The portion is the cup divine,
Composed of Jesus' blood;
This cup of blessing we receive
And gain what is of God.

4. We eat of Thee, the Bread of life,
By sharing here this bread;
Thus we remember Thee in love
And with Thyself are fed.

5. We all enjoy the blessings gained
By drinking of this cup;
Thus we remember Thee with joy,
Till we are taken up.

6. By feasting on this bread and cup
Thy death we now declare,
And testify Thou art our life
And all we daily share.

7. We're waiting for that glorious hour,
When in the fullest way
We'll feed on Thee and feast with Thee
And worship Thee for aye.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

THE BREAD BREAKING MEETING (2)

B. Attending the Lord's Table

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a fellowship of the body of Christ? Seeing that we who are many are one bread, one Body; for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

First Corinthians 11:23-25 shows us that the emphasis in eating the Lord's supper is the remembrance of the Lord, whereas 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 21 tell us that the stress in attending the Lord's table is the fellowship with the saints.

In the bread breaking meeting, we are eating the one bread, which signifies the body of Christ, and drinking the one cup, which signifies the blood of Christ. Our eating and partaking of one bread and our drinking and sharing in one cup imply mutual fellowship. We have this fellowship because of the Lord's body and the Lord's blood. Hence, such fellowship becomes the fellowship of the blood of Christ and the fellowship of the body of Christ. In this way, when we eat and drink together, sharing in the Lord's bread and the Lord's cup, we "partake of the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21). At this table, we share in the Lord's body and the Lord's blood with all the saints and have fellowship one with another. The blood of Christ, which we enjoy together, removes all the barriers between the saints. The bread, which we share and which symbolizes the individual body of Christ, comes into us to make us one bread, signifying the one corporate Body of Christ. In the aspect of eating the Lord's supper, the bread refers to the Lord's individual body, which He gave for us on the cross, while in the aspect of attending the Lord's table, the bread points to the Lord's corporate Body, which He constituted with all the regenerated saints through His resurrection from the dead. The former is physical and was put to death and given for us; the latter is

mystical and is constituted with all the saints in the Lord's resurrection. Therefore, each time that we break the bread, on the one hand we remember the Lord and enjoy Him by receiving the body which He gave for us on the cross; on the other hand, we enjoy the mystical Body which He produced through His resurrection from the dead, fellowshipping with all the saints in this mystical Body and testifying the oneness of this mystical Body. There is not only a relationship between us and the Lord, but a relationship between us and all the saints.

II. WORSHIPPING THE FATHER— WITH THE FATHER AS THE CENTER

The meeting for the breaking of bread is a meeting for the believers' worship. According to the procedure in God's salvation, we first receive the Lord and then draw near to the Father. Thus, in this meeting for worship, we should first remember the Lord and then worship the Father. The center of the section of remembering the Lord is the remembrance of the Lord, and the center of the section of worshipping the Father is the worship of the Father, where all the prayers, hymns, and words should be directed toward the Father.

A. "Jesus took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And taking the cup…He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant…and having sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:26-30).

On that day, after the Lord Jesus broke bread and sang a hymn with the disciples, He led them to the Mount of Olives to meet with the Father. A principle is implied and established here, that is, after we have broken the bread to remember the Lord, we ought to be led by Him to worship the Father together.

B. "I [the resurrected Christ] will declare Your [the Father's] name to My brothers; in the midst of the church [the meeting with the disciples after resurrection] I will sing hymns of praise unto You" (Heb. 2:12).

Here is mentioned what the Lord did when He appeared to and met with His disciples after His resurrection, that is, He considered them as brothers and declared to them the Father's name. He also considered them as the church and sang hymns of praise to the Father among them. Although the Lord is the only begotten Son of God, through death and resurrection, He regenerated us who believed in Him (1 Pet. 1:3) that we might become the many sons of God. He then became the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29), leading us, who are the many sons, with Him to the Father. After He was resurrected, He came among the disciples (John 20:19-29) and declared the Father's name to His brothers. Then in the status of the firstborn Son of God, He led His many brothers, who are God's many sons, to sing praises to the Father together, that is, to worship the Father together. According to this fact, after we have broken the bread in remembrance of the Lord, we should be led by the Lord to worship the Father. In this section of the meeting, we take the Father as the center, and, as depicted in Hymns, #52, all our singing of praises to the Father is the Lord in us leading us to sing praises to the Father.

III. THE PERSONS WHO BREAK BREAD

A. "Jesus took the bread…and gave it to the disciples" (Matt. 26:26).

When the Lord established the breaking of bread, He gave the bread and the cup to His disciples, that is, to those who have believed into Him, have His life, and belong to Him. Of course, only those who have such a relationship with the Lord and who know the Lord as their personal Savior can remember the Lord by eating His bread and drinking His cup and can display the Lord's death by His bread and His cup.

B. "And all those who believed…breaking bread" (Acts 2:44-46).

Those who break bread must be "those who believed," that is, those who have believed and received the Lord's salvation, who have the Lord's life, and who belong to the Lord. Only such believing persons can and may break bread. Therefore, only those who are saved, who are joined unto the Lord, and who do not live in sin are qualified to eat the bread and drink the cup. No one else can

have a share in the Lord's bread and the Lord's cup.

IV. THE TIME FOR THE BREAKING OF BREAD

A. "And they were continuing steadfastly...in the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42).

Here it says that the early believers continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread; that is, they continued without ceasing to break bread all the time. We should follow such a pattern.

B. "And day by day...breaking bread" (Acts 2:46).

The early believers continued so steadfastly in the breaking of bread that they did it on a daily basis. At the time, because they were fervent toward the Lord and loved Him deeply, they spontaneously broke bread every day. This tells us that, if possible, the more often we break bread to remember the Lord the better.

C. "And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread" (Acts 20:7).

The early believers began by breaking bread daily. Later on, they gradually acquired the habit of doing it once a week on the first day. The first day of the week, which is the Lord's Day, is the day of the Lord's resurrection and the beginning of a new week, signifying that the old things are passed away and a new life has begun. Therefore, it is most appropriate to break bread to remember the Lord on this day. Furthermore, although we display the Lord's death when we break bread, we are actually remembering Him in resurrection.

D. "Eat the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20).

Since the breaking of bread is to eat the Lord's supper, it is best to conduct it in the evening. Furthermore, in the evening, having finished all our work and having discharged all our burdens, we are lightened in heart and refreshed in spirit. It is a proper time in which we can remember the Lord without anxiety, and it is easy to sense the Lord's presence then. This, however, is not a legal matter. If it is difficult or inconvenient to conduct it in the evening, we may

evaluate the situation and change the time to the morning or the afternoon.

V. THE PLACE FOR THE BREAKING OF BREAD

A. "Breaking bread from house to house" (Acts 2:46).

The early believers broke bread from house to house in every home. It is clear that the place for the breaking of bread was their homes.

B. "When therefore you come together in the same place…to eat the Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20).

According to this word, the early believers also came together in one place to eat the Lord's supper. This must have occurred in a larger place. There is the sweet and intimate flavor of a small meeting when we gather to break bread in the homes. There is also the rich and uplifted atmosphere of a large meeting when we gather together in one place. The believers may break bread in separate homes or in one place, and this should be decided on by the church according to the need and the situation.

VI. AFTER THE BREAKING OF BREAD

A. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Those who break bread to remember the Lord should be those who long for the Lord, wait for His coming, and love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). Therefore, after we break bread, we ought to live a life of waiting for the Lord's coming.

B. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21).

Here it says that if we partake of the Lord's table, we cannot partake of the table of demons, and if we drink the Lord's cup, we cannot drink the cup of demons. According to the text preceding this verse, the table of demons and the cup of demons are the idol sacrifices. Thus, after we break bread, we cannot eat the idol sacrifices.

C. "Let us therefore keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven

of malice and evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).
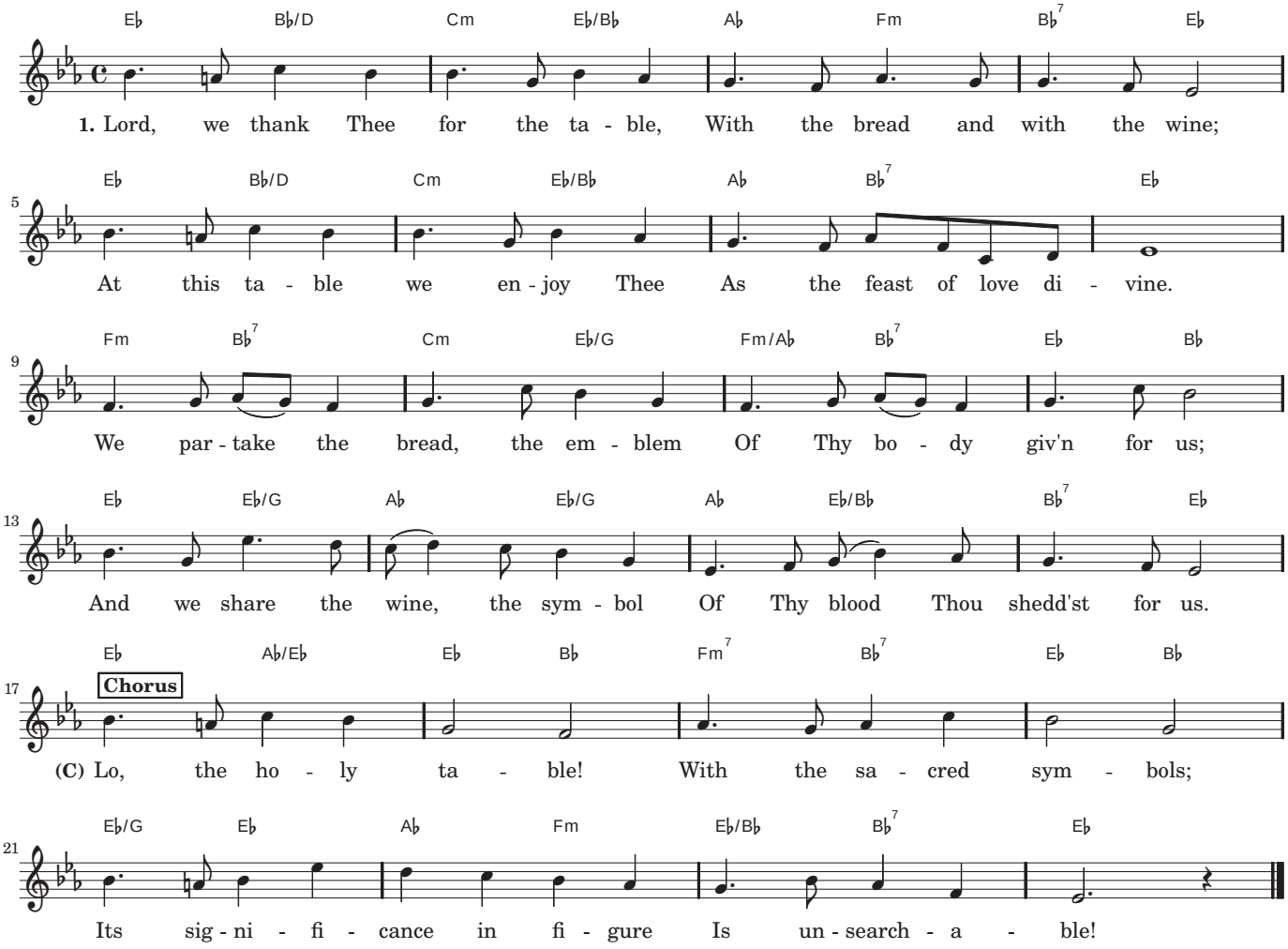
Here, leaven refers to all evil and all that corrupts us. In the Old Testament, immediately after they kept the Passover, the Israelites observed the feast of unleavened bread, removing all leaven from their living (Deut. 16:1-4). The breaking of bread in the New Testament replaces the Passover in the Old Testament. Thus, after the breaking of bread, we should keep the feast of unleavened bread as the Israelites did, removing from our life all evil and all that corrupts us. We would only live a holy life free from sin by the Lord's holy and sinless life, which is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, to be those who truly keep the feast of unleavened bread.

Lord, we thank Thee for the table

Praise of the Lord—Remembrance of Him

C178 K178 P115 R42 S97 Tg221

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2. By the death of Thy redemption,
That Thy life Thou may impart,
E'en Thyself to us Thou gavest
That we share in all Thou art.
By the bread and wine partaking,
We Thy death display and prove;
Eating, drinking of Thyself, Lord,
We remember Thee with love.

3. By this bread which signifieth
Thy one body mystical,
We commune with all Thy members
In one bond identical.
By this holy cup of blessing,
Cup of wine which now we bless,
Of Thy blood we have communion
With all those who faith possess.

4. Thou art our eternal portion,
Here we take a sweet foretaste;
We are waiting for Thy kingdom,
And Thy coming now we haste.
At Thy coming, in Thy kingdom,
With all saints that overcome,
We anew will feast upon Thee
And Thy loving Bride become.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

CONSECRATING OURSELVES

For us, the saved persons, to consecrate ourselves is a positive reaction to the Lord's salvation. Since we have enjoyed the Lord's great and free salvation, we spontaneously desire to repay the Lord. When we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, we allow the Lord to gain us as our repayment to Him.

I. THE BASIS OF CONSECRATION

A. "You are not your own…For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The basis of our consecration to the Lord is that, since He bought us with His blood as a price (Rev. 5:9), we have become His purchased slaves. We who believe in the Lord and who are redeemed and bought by the Lord are the purchased slaves of the Lord; we are not our own, but the Lord's. It is the Lord, not we, who has the right over us.

B. "For whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8).

Since we who are redeemed and bought by the Lord belong to Him, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. This is the basis on which we consecrate ourselves to Him for His use.

II. THE MOTIVE OF CONSECRATION

A. "For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this, that One died on behalf of all; therefore all died; and He died on behalf of all, that those who live may no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

We consecrate ourselves to the Lord because His love confines and constrains us. His love compels us so that we cannot help but consecrate

ourselves to Him. Since He died on our behalf, we all died; therefore, there is no need for us to die. Furthermore, He died that we may have His life to live to Him. Such love constrains us and compels us to love Him and consecrate ourselves to Him. This consecration is our gratitude for and repayment of His great love. His buying us with His precious blood to make us His purchased slaves is the basis on which we consecrate ourselves to Him. He died for us because of His love, and this love is the motive for us to consecrate ourselves to Him.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSECRATION

A. "I beg you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice…which is your most reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

When we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, we present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice, unlike the people in the Old Testament who offered dead sacrifices to the Lord. As a living sacrifice that has been presented, we are holy, that is, we have separated ourselves unto the Lord for His use, and we are well-pleasing to God, satisfying His heart's desire.

B. "Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto me…two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering" (Num. 28:2-3).

In the Old Testament, God required that His people offer the burnt offering to Him daily for His food that He could be satisfied. This typifies that, in the New Testament, we who belong to God should offer ourselves as a burnt offering daily to God for His satisfaction. The difference is that the Old Testament people offered dead sacrifices, whereas we offer living sacrifices. Although the nature of the two are different, their significance is the same, that is, to be God's food for His satisfaction. To offer ourselves to the Lord is to be a sacrifice for His satisfaction. What matters is not what we do for the Lord, but that we satisfy Him. This is the real significance of our consecration to the Lord.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF CONSECRATION

A. "...no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Cor. 5:15).

The purpose of our consecration to the Lord is to live to Him. Living to Him is higher than living for Him. When we live for Him, we and He may still be two, but when we live to Him, we and He must become one. When we live to Him, we take Him not only as our life but also as our person. In all our living and actions, we should cooperate with Him and allow Him to live Himself through us.

B. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

When we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, as mentioned previously, we present ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice to satisfy His heart's desire. This is a significant purpose of our consecration to the Lord.

C. "Present your bodies...which is your most reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

To present ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord is a most reasonable service. Such service does not depend on our working for the Lord but on our satisfying God. This also should be a purpose of our consecration to the Lord.

D. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

We believers, who have been chosen and redeemed by God, are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He has prepared for us to walk in. This requires our consent, which results in our offering ourselves to Him that He might work on us to complete His good works. This should be another purpose for which we consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

E. "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:20).

The consummate purpose of our consecration to the Lord is to glorify God, that is, to allow God to be lived out from us and expressed through us as a manifestation of His glory.

V. THE RESULT OF CONSECRATION

A. "Christ's slave…bought with a price" (1 Cor. 7:22-23).

The first result of our consecration to the Lord is that practically we become slaves bought by the Lord, submitting to His authority in all things.

B. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10).

We are God's workmanship under His molding, just as the clay vessel is molded in the hands of the potter (cf. Isa. 64:8). Another result of our consecration to the Lord is that the Lord has our consent to freely mold us.

C. "Present yourselves to God…and your members as weapons of righteousness to God. For sin shall not lord it over you" (Rom. 6:13-14); "Present your members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification" (6:19).

When we present ourselves and our members to the Lord, there is still another result; that is, our members become weapons of and slaves to righteousness that we may be freed from sin, no longer being lorded over by sin, unto sanctification.

D. "The priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto Jehovah" (Lev. 1:9).

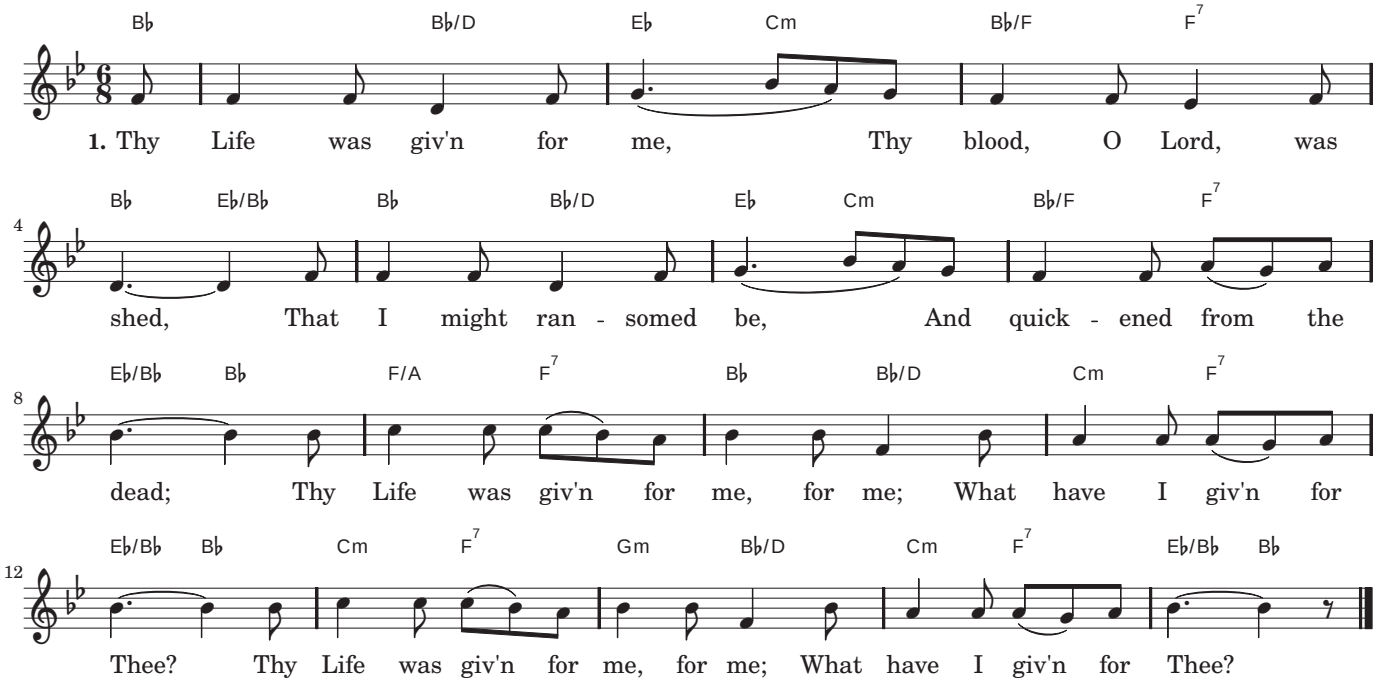
The result of offering a burnt sacrifice in the Old Testament was that the burnt offering became ashes before men and a sweet savor to God. If we present ourselves as a living burnt offering to the Lord, and if we are truly faithful to Him, we will be like ashes before men and a delightful savor to God.

Thy Life was giv'n for me

Consecration—Constrained by the Lord's Love

C331 Cb436 K331 P201 R81 S185 Tg436

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2. Long years were spent for me
In weariness and woe,
That through eternity
Thy glory I might know;
Long years were spent for me, for me;
Have I spent one for Thee?

3. Thy Father's home of light,
Thy rainbow-circled throne,
Were left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone;
Yea, all was left for me, for me;
Have I left aught for Thee?

4. Thou, Lord, hast borne for me
More than my tongue can tell
Of bitterest agony,
To rescue me from hell;
Thou suff'redst all for me, for me;
What have I borne for Thee?

5. And Thou hast brought to me
Down from Thy home above
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love;
Great gifts, great gifts Thou broughtest me;
What have I brought to Thee?

6. Oh, let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent;
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suff'ring blent;
Thou gav'st Thyself for me, for me,
I give myself to Thee.

LESSON NINETEEN

BEING FILLED INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (1)

We have already seen in lesson ten that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate expression of the Triune God and that He is the Triune God reaching and entering into the believers. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is for our experience of the Triune God. To experience the Triune God, we must have the practical experience of the Holy Spirit. A great part of our practical experience of the Holy Spirit is related to our being filled inwardly and outwardly with Him.

I. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bible clearly shows us that the Holy Spirit is with us in two aspects.

A. The Significances of the Two Aspects

1. In

"The Spirit of reality...shall be in you" (John 14:17).

Here the Lord tells us clearly that the Holy Spirit will be in us.

2. Upon

"...the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

On the one hand, the Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit being in us; on the other hand, He spoke of the Holy Spirit being upon us. To be upon us is outward and is absolutely different from being in us.

B. The Promises of the Two Aspects

1. The Lord Promising the "Comforter"— Being Promised before the Lord's Death

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter...even the Spirit of reality...shall be in you" (John 14:16-17); "If I go, I will send Him [the Comforter] to you" (John 16:7).

These are the words of the Lord before His death, promising the disciples that He would go in order to send the Holy Spirit as the Comforter.

2. The Father Promising the "Power"— Being Promised by the Father in the Old Testament and Spoken of Again by the Lord after His Resurrection

"I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you…until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49); "Wait for the promise of the Father…you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:4-8).

The Lord spoke these words to the disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, speaking again of God's promise in the Old Testament concerning the Holy Spirit. He promised that after He ascended to the heavens, He would send forth the Holy Spirit to be their power. The "power" is different from the "Comforter." The Comforter was the One who would enter into the disciples and be "in" them, while the power would come "upon" them. Thus, what the Lord said before His death and what He said after His resurrection are two different promises.

C. The Fulfillments of the Two Aspects

1. The Lord's Promise of the Comforter— Being Fulfilled on the Evening of the Day of Resurrection

"When therefore it was evening on that day, the first day of the week…Jesus came and stood in the midst…He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:19 22).

This is the Lord, on the evening of the day of His resurrection, coming among the disciples and breathing into them for them to receive the Holy Spirit. This fulfills His promise made before His death concerning the Comforter.

2. The Father's Promise of Power— Being Fulfilled at Pentecost

"And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place. And suddenly…out of heaven like a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting… and they were all filled with the

Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

This describes the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, fulfilling the promise of the Spirit of power, which was given by the Father and spoken of by the Lord to the disciples just before His ascension. Therefore, the Holy Spirit who descended was in the aspect of the power, not in the aspect of the Comforter, being different from what the Lord brought on the day of His resurrection. The Holy Spirit brought in on the day of resurrection is the "Comforter," and the Holy Spirit who descended at Pentecost is the "power."

D. The Functions of the Two Aspects

1. The Comforter Being for Life

"Comforter...may be with you...and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

It says here that the Holy Spirit as the Comforter is to be with us and in us. This speaks of the function of the Holy Spirit in the aspect of life. Therefore, the Comforter, that is, the Holy Spirit in the aspect of life, is for our inward life.

2. The Power Being for Work

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses..." (Acts 1:8).

It says here that the Holy Spirit's coming upon us is that we may have power to witness for the Lord. This shows us that the Holy Spirit's function as power is not for the life which we have inwardly from the Lord, but for the work which we do outwardly for the Lord. For our life within, God gives us the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, a Person to be our Lord within us, that inwardly He may be our life and the supplier and maintainer of our life. For our work without, God gives us the Holy Spirit as power that outwardly He may be for us to use as the power, authority, capability, and skill of our work.

E. The Symbols of the Two Aspects

1. Breath

"He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

This is the Lord's breathing of the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, as breath into the disciples on the evening of the day of resurrection. Breath is for life and signifies life. Thus, breath here is a symbol of the Holy Spirit as the inward Spirit of life.

2. Living Water

"Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit [the inward Holy Spirit of life], whom those who believed in Him were about to receive" (John 7:38-39).

The Lord's words here indicate to us that the Holy Spirit will flow out as the living water from within us. Surely this refers to the Holy Spirit as life within us, drunk by us as the living water to be our life supply. Therefore, the living water is also a symbol of the inward Spirit of life.

3. Wind

"A rushing violent wind...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2-4).

This is the disciples' receiving the Holy Spirit of power upon them on the day of Pentecost in the upper room in Jerusalem. This is not like the breath breathed from within the Lord into them on the day of resurrection, but a rushing violent wind blowing upon them from without, signifying the Holy Spirit of power. Wind is naturally powerful and signifies power. Therefore, wind here is a sign of the Holy Spirit being the outward Spirit of power and is different from breath.

4. Mantle

"I am sending forth the promise [the outward Spirit of power] of My Father upon you...until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The Lord's word here also shows us that we are to be clothed outwardly with the Holy Spirit of power, promised by the Father, as a mantle worn by us to be our power. This is typified by the mantle Elisha received from Elijah (2 Kings 2:13-14). Therefore, this mantle is also a sign of the outward Holy Spirit of

power and is different from the living water. This mantle Spirit, like the uniform of a public servant, brings authority and is useful for us to execute God's commission. The inward Spirit of life is the living water, which we can drink for our inward supply; the outward Holy Spirit of power is the mantle, which we can wear for our outward authority.

F. The Experiences of the Two Aspects

1. That of the Lord Jesus

a. "That which is begotten in her [Jesus] is of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20).

The Lord Jesus was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit. The life within Him is altogether the element of the Holy Spirit.

b. "And having been baptized...the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him" (Matt. 3:16).

Although the Lord Jesus was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit, and the life within Him was totally the element of the Holy Spirit, He experienced the Holy Spirit coming upon Him to be His power to work for God only after He was baptized.

2. That of the Disciples

a. "It was evening on that day, the first day of the week...Jesus came and stood in the midst...He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:19-22).

By the breath the Lord breathed into the disciples on the evening of the day of resurrection, the disciples received the Holy Spirit into them.

b. "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place...out of heaven like a rushing violent wind"; "...the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 2:1-4; 1:8).

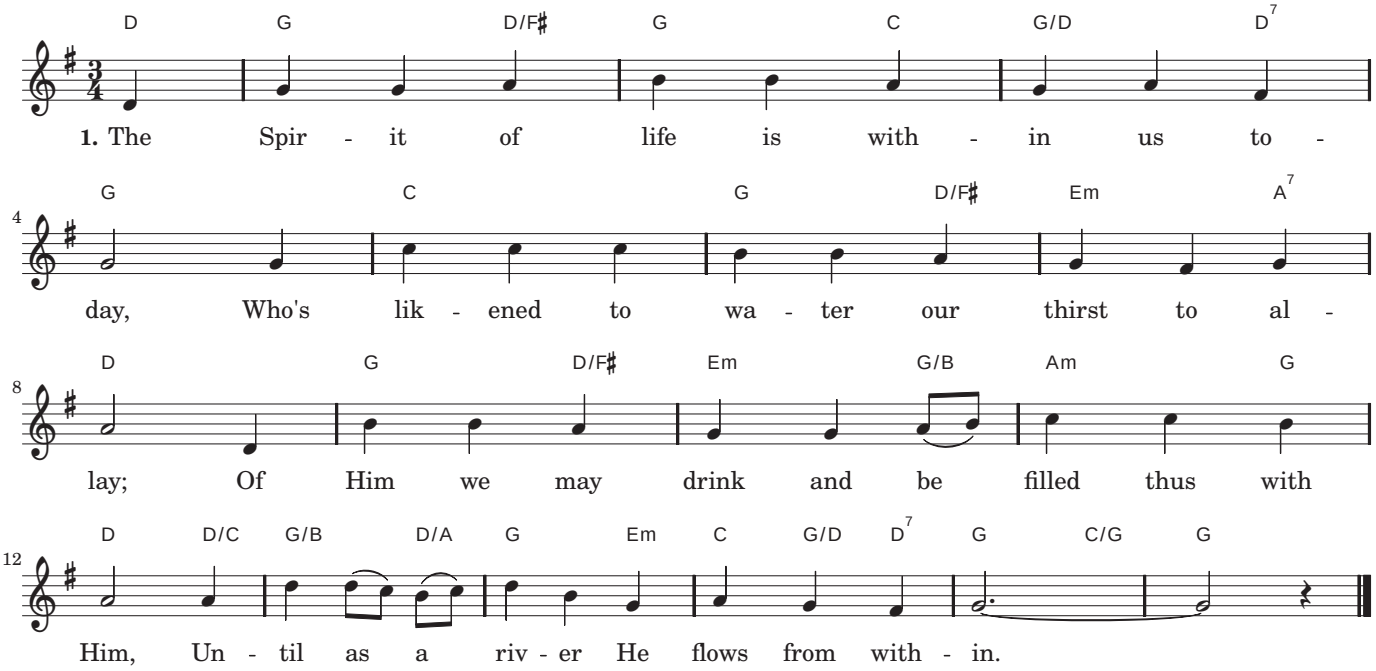
Although the disciples had received the Holy Spirit into them on the evening of the day of resurrection, the Holy Spirit still came upon them on the day of Pentecost.

The Spirit of life is within us today

Fulness of the Spirit—The Two Aspects

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278



2. The Spirit of pow'r comes upon us today,
Who's likened to clothing ourselves to array;
In Him we are baptized, with Him we are dressed,
For service equipping with power possessed.

3. The Spirit of life is as breath glorious,
As spirit of life it is breathed into us;
The Spirit of pow'r doth the wind typify,
Which bloweth upon us with pow'r from on high.

4. Into His disciples the risen Lord breathed,
The Spirit of life thus to them He bequeathed;
Th' ascended Lord poured at the Pentecost hour
Upon His disciples the Spirit of pow'r.

5. The Spirit of life is within as the life,
The Spirit of power is giv'n for this life;
As blowing of wind brings the fresh air to breathe,
The Spirit of power to life doth bequeath.

6. These are not two spirits apart and afar,
But of the one Spirit the two functions are,
To clothe us with God and to fill us within,
That we may be thoroughly mingled with Him.

7. Lord, fill with Thy Spirit of life every part,
That we may grow up in Thy life as Thou art;
And clothe us without with Thy Spirit of pow'r
Thy will to fulfill in Thy service each hour.

LESSON TWENTY

BEING FILLED INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (2)

II. THE INWARD FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To us the Holy Spirit is of two aspects—the inward aspect and the outward; therefore, to us there is also the inward filling and outward filling of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament uses two different words in its original language to describe the inward filling and the outward filling of the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the inward filling of the Holy Spirit, it uses the word pleroo, and speaking of the outward filling of the Holy Spirit, it uses the word pletho. First, we will look at the inward filling of the Holy Spirit.

A. The Fact of the Inward Filling of the Holy Spirit

"And the disciples were made full of joy and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).

This verse speaks of the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit inwardly. This Spirit who fills us is for life and living, since He is mentioned together with joy in the daily life.

B. The Function of the Inward Filling of the Holy Spirit

Being for the spiritual living that the spiritual life may mature—The inward filling of the Spirit is for our spiritual living that our spiritual life may mature. We may prove this with Acts 13:52, quoted previously, where joy and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together.

C. The Condition of the Believers after Being Filled Inwardly with the Holy Spirit— "Full of" the Holy Spirit

After we have been filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit, we are full of the Holy Spirit within. In the original language, "full of" is pleres, an adjective. To be

filled with the Spirit is a procedure and should take place time after time, whereas to be full of the Spirit is a condition which results from such a procedure and should be constant.

1. "Select seven well-attested men from among you, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3).

At Pentecost the communal living of the church made it necessary for some to serve tables, and thus seven men full of the Spirit and of wisdom were chosen. The Holy Spirit and wisdom being mentioned here together proves that the Holy Spirit is for life and living. The service of the tables was cumbersome, which required men with a proper life and a spiritual living. They had to be persons full of the Holy Spirit.

2. "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5).

It tells us here that Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He was not only occasionally filled with the Holy Spirit, but a man always full of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he had not only an abundant life and wisdom to serve many tables, but also an overcoming life and faith to stand for the Lord unto death (Acts 7:59-60).

3. "But [Stephen] being full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55).

Stephen maintained his condition of being full of the Holy Spirit. Although his persecutors hated him and gnashed their teeth at him, he was still full of the Holy Spirit. Hence, he was able to be faithful unto death, suffering martyrdom for the Lord's sake.

4. "For he [Barnabas] was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24).

Barnabas was also full of the Holy Spirit, and that was why he could be a good man, full of faith.

D. The Manifestation of the Believers Being Filled Inwardly with the Holy Spirit

1. The Expression of Life

"Out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive" (John 7:38-39).

Since the Holy Spirit in us is the Spirit of life, and since our being filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit is for the maturity in life, the manifestation of being filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit must be an abundant, overflowing expression of life, flowing as rivers of living water out of our innermost being.

2. The Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

The fruit of life borne by the Holy Spirit from within us, such as the different virtues listed in these verses, is also a manifestation of our being filled with the Holy Spirit.

E. The Way to Be Filled Inwardly with the Holy Spirit

1. Receiving the Co-death with Christ on the Cross

"The flesh lusts against the Spirit...crucified the flesh" (Gal. 5:17-24).

Our flesh lusts against the Spirit. Therefore, in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must first receive the dealing with our flesh through our co-death with Christ on the cross. It is only when we put the flesh and all that is of the flesh to death in Christ's death on the cross, not allowing the flesh and all that is of the flesh to have any place in us, that the Holy Spirit can gain ground in us, fully possessing us and filling us.

2. Offering Ourselves Fully to the Lord

After we have received the cross's dealing with the flesh, we still need to consecrate ourselves fully to the Lord for His use, at which time the Spirit of the Lord will possess us and fill us.

3. Believing the Filling of the Holy Spirit in Us

After we have dealt with the flesh and consecrated ourselves, we must then believe that:

a. The Holy Spirit will fill us—

the Holy Spirit already lives in us, longs to fill us, and is waiting for us to give Him the ground. Now that we have thoroughly dealt with ourselves, giving all the ground to Him, He will surely come and fill us.

b. The Holy Spirit has filled us—

since the Holy Spirit lives in us and longs and waits to fill us, once we empty ourselves and offer ourselves to Him, not only will He fill us, but He has already filled us. This is because once we are emptied and consecrated, He immediately fills us. This is not based upon feeling but based upon faith. Even if there is feeling, faith is still first, followed by the feeling.

4. Walking according to Spirit

a. "Do not walk according to flesh, but according to spirit...mind...the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4-5).

After we have received the dealing of the cross, consecrated ourselves, and believed, we still must walk according to spirit and not according to flesh, and we must mind the things of the Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit will possess and fill us within.

b. "Walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25).

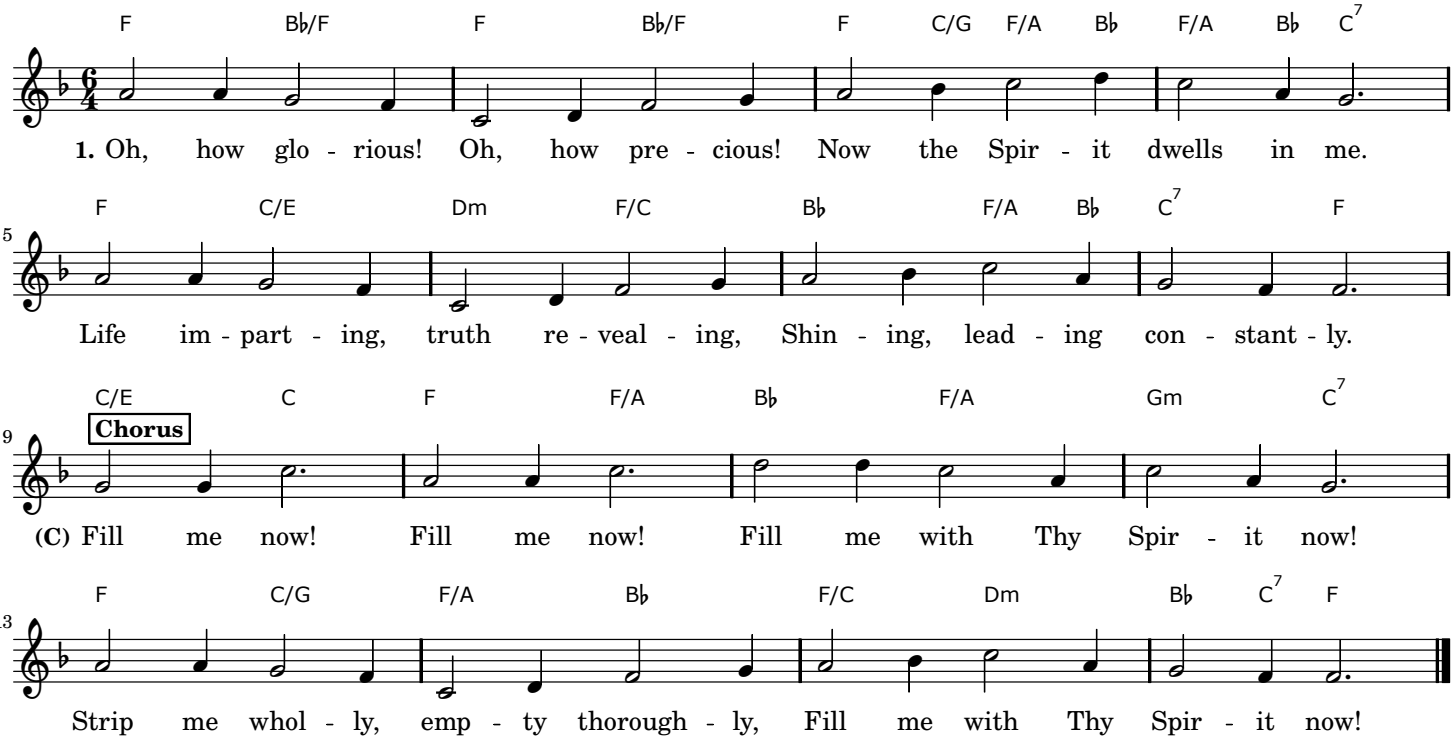
If we truly walk according to spirit, we will surely walk by the Spirit, not doing anything by the flesh or by depending on the strength of the flesh. In this way, we not only can be filled with the Holy Spirit instantly, but we also can be full of the Holy Spirit constantly.

Oh, how glorious! Oh, how precious!

Fulness of the Spirit—The Filling

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1360



2. Word of promise, real within me,
Life divine now freeing me—
From sin's cruel control releasing,
From death's power setting free.

3. Deepest springs of life dispensing,
Like the hart I thirst for Thee;
Desp'rate, may I drink Thy fullness,
'Till Thy river flows through me.

4. May my self be put to death, Lord,
Under Thy control I'd be,
Transformed to Thy living image,
I'd forever flow out Thee.

LESSON TWENTY-ONE

BEING FILLED INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (3)

III. THE OUTWARD FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The believers have the need of both the inward life and the outward power. The Holy Spirit of God in His two aspects meets this twofold need of the believers. The consummate work of the inward Holy Spirit of life in the believers is to fill the believers inwardly in the aspect of life that they may live a spiritual and overcoming life. The primary work of the outward Holy Spirit of power on the believers is to fill the believers outwardly in the aspect of work that they may carry out a work of authority for the Lord. Therefore, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit inwardly and outwardly.

A. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Bible clearly shows us that the outward filling of the Holy Spirit is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. The Prophecy

a. That of John the Baptist—

“He [Christ] shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 3:11).

The first person to mention the baptism in the Holy Spirit was John the Baptist. When he came out to baptize people into water, he prophesied to them that the Lord Jesus would baptize people in the Holy Spirit that they might receive the Spirit baptism.

2)That of the Lord Jesus—

“But you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5).

This is the Lord’s prophecy to the disciples after His resurrection and before

His ascension based on the prophecy of John the Baptist.

2. The Fulfillment

1)For the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost, on the one hand—

"But you [the first group of Jewish believers] shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5); "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place...a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

The prophecies of John the Baptist and of the Lord Jesus concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. According to the Bible, this fulfillment was divided into two parts. The first part was fulfilled in one place, while the second part was fulfilled in another place. Although it was divided into two parts and was fulfilled in two places, it was one complete fulfillment. It was separately fulfilled in two parts because the church is composed of two peoples, the Jews and the Gentiles. As depicted in these verses, the first part was fulfilled among the first group of representative Jewish believers in the upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

2)For the Gentile believers in the house of Cornelius, on the other hand—

"Now as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them [the Gentile believers] just as also on us [the first group of Jewish believers] at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said...you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:15-16).

The second part of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was fulfilled in the house of Cornelius, being accomplished upon the representative Gentile believers, as described in these verses. According to the principle of representation, just as the Lord baptized all the Jewish believers throughout the ages in the Holy Spirit once and for all on the day of Pentecost, likewise, He baptized all the Gentile believers throughout the ages in the Holy Spirit once and for all in the house of

Cornelius. From God's view, as all the Jewish believers throughout the ages received the baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, in the same manner, all the Gentile believers throughout the ages received the baptism in the Spirit in Cornelius' house. These two parts of the baptism in the Spirit combine to form one complete baptism in the Spirit. It is in such a complete baptism in the Spirit that Christ the Head baptized all of us who believed into Him, whether Jews or Gentiles (represented by the Greeks), in one Holy Spirit into one Body (1 Cor. 12:13).

3. The Fact

1)Being baptized in the Holy Spirit upon believing—

"For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Since Christ baptized all the believers throughout the ages in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius, He has already accomplished the baptism of the church in the Spirit through these two instances. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a fact already accomplished upon the church. Today, when a Jew or a Gentile believes in the Lord, he participates in the church and hence participates in this accomplished fact upon the church. We who have believed into the Lord and belong to the church are not baptized one by one and time after time in the Holy Spirit; rather, we have received the entire baptism in the Spirit, which includes all the believers and is once for all.

4. The Experience

To be filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit is to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit—

"But you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5); "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled…they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4); "The Holy Spirit fell on them…And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said… you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:15-16).

These verses show us that both on the day of Pentecost and in the house of

Cornelius, to be baptized in the Spirit was to experience the outward filling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when we are filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit of power coming upon us, we experience the baptism in the Spirit.

The fact of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was accomplished once and for all upon the church on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius; however, the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is instant and numerous upon the believers—The fact of the baptism in the Spirit has been accomplished once for all upon the church. The experience of the baptism in the Spirit takes place on the individual believers and is instant and numerous. A believer can receive the fact of the baptism in the Spirit only once, but he may experience the baptism in the Spirit many times.

B. The Function of the Outward Filling of the Holy Spirit

1. For Spiritual Work That It May Be Powerful

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses...unto the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8); "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

The inward filling of the Holy Spirit is for spiritual living that the spiritual life may mature, whereas the outward filling with the Holy Spirit is for spiritual work that the spiritual work may be powerful. To be merely filled inwardly with the Holy Spirit is adequate for life, but not for work. Before Pentecost, although Peter and the early apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit inwardly, they were not able to work for the Lord because they had not yet been filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly in order to receive power to work for the Lord. It was when they were filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly at Pentecost and received the Holy Spirit coming upon them as the Spirit of power that they were empowered to do an exceedingly effective work for the Lord.

2. For Confirming That the Lord Jesus Has Ascended and Has Been Appointed Both Lord and Christ

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having

received…the Holy Spirit from the Father, He poured out this which you both see and hear…Therefore…know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:33-36).

The outward filling of the Holy Spirit also confirms to us the Lord's ascension and exaltation and His being appointed both Lord and Christ. The outward filling of the Holy Spirit is able to empower us because it brings the heavenly scene to us. The Holy Spirit, who fills us outwardly, is poured down by the ascended Lord and therefore brings us the heavens and the scene of the Lord in the heavens, giving us the sense that the heavens are very near and that the heavenly scene has fallen right before us. Since the scene of the Lord Jesus' being exalted and glorified on the heavenly throne seems to appear before us, we are able to witness for the Lord in the heavens by the heavenly power, not caring for the earthly situation and difficulties.

C. The Manifestation of the Outward Filling of the Holy Spirit

1. Speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6).

Three groups of people—the disciples at Pentecost, the people in the house of Cornelius, and the disciples in Ephesus—spoke in tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly. Thus, tongue-speaking is a manifestation of the outward filling with the Holy Spirit.

2. Prophesying (Acts 19:6).

While being filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly, the believers in Ephesus not only spoke in tongues, but they also prophesied. Therefore, prophesying is also a manifestation of being filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly.

Of the many cases of the outward filling with the Holy Spirit recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, only three cases involving the three groups of people mentioned above had the speaking in tongues. In the other cases, the Bible does not mention tongue-speaking at all. This proves that speaking in tongues is not a necessary manifestation of the outward filling with the Holy Spirit.

3. Having boldness and power—"And they were all filled with the Holy

Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31); "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them..." (Acts 4:8).

To speak for God with boldness and power is also a strong manifestation of the outward filling with the Holy Spirit. The outward filling with the Holy Spirit is mainly for men to speak for God with boldness and power.

4)Having authority—

"Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, O son of the Devil, full of all deceit and all villainy, enemy of all righteousness...perverting the straight ways of the Lord...And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And instantly a mist and a darkness fell upon him" (Acts 13:9-11).

This word shows us that when the Apostle Paul was outwardly filled with the Holy Spirit, he had the authority to deal with the evil person utilized by the Devil. This kind of authority is also a manifestation of the outward filling of the Holy Spirit.

D. The Way to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit Outwardly

1)Repenting and dealing with sins—

"Repent...for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will cause us to receive the Holy Spirit. Hence, to be filled with the Holy Spirit outwardly, there is the need for thorough repentance and dealing with all sins.

2)Believing—

Believing that at the moment a person believes into the Lord, he is baptized in the Holy Spirit. After we have fully dealt with our sins, we have to believe that since the baptism in the Spirit is a fact accomplished by the Lord on the church and that since we are a part of the church, the outward filling with the Holy Spirit from the baptism in the Spirit is now our portion.

3)Obeying—

“The Holy Spirit also, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32).

The Holy Spirit is given by God to those who are obedient. Therefore, to receive the outward filling of the Holy Spirit, we must obey God.

4)Praying with one accord—

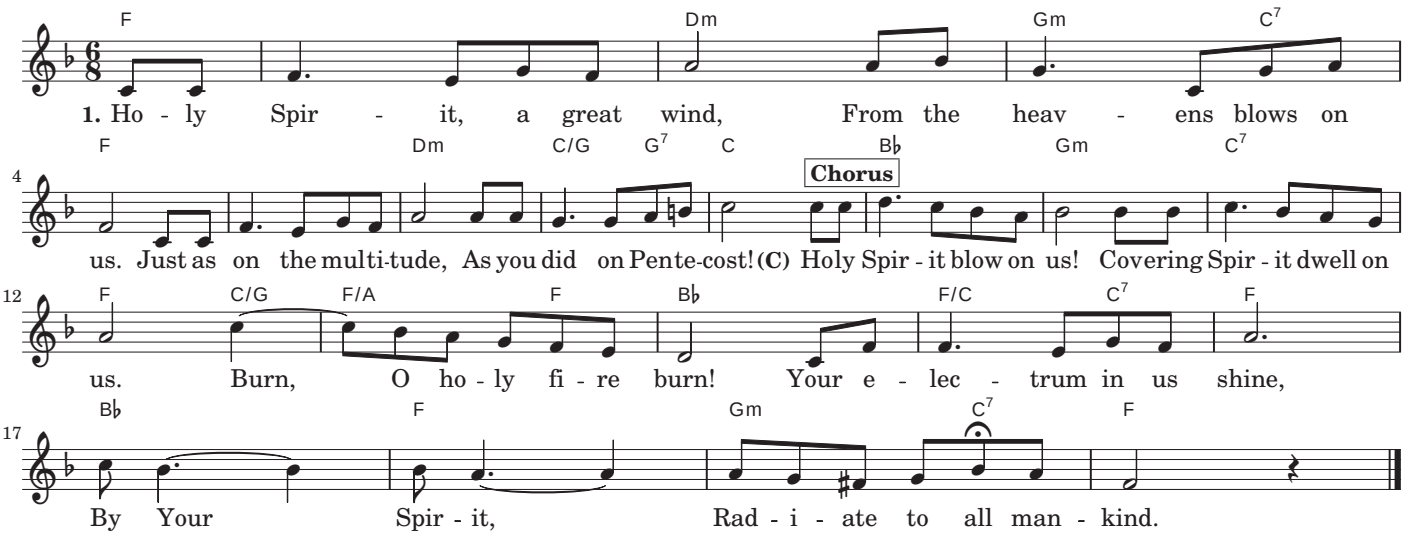
“These [who were to be filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost] all were persevering with one accord in prayer” (Acts 1:14).

In order to receive the outward filling of the Holy Spirit, there is the need for much individual prayer as well as prayer in one accord with those who pursue the Lord together. This is what the first group of people who received the outward filling with the Holy Spirit did at Pentecost.

The Story of the Wind, the Cloud, the Fire, and the Electrum

Fulness of the Spirit — As the Wind

8212



2. Come Lord soften hardened hearts,
Our whole being to revive.
Blow until we are renewed,
Till all sins do fall aside.

3. A great cloud the Spirit is,
To supply abundant grace.
As the cloud He covers us,
Just as the Tent of Meeting's place.

4. Covering Spirit give us life!
He's the power to sanctify.
Making us God's dwelling place
As in Spirit we abide.

5. Holy fire come and burn me!
All my being to consume.
Every part to purify,
That Your Spirit may have room.

6. Burn away all that's defiled;
All that's common has to go!
That I exactly like God am
All God's holiness to show.

7. Into me electrum shine!
Divine nature to partake.
With my spirit joined to God's,
Glowing life I'll radiate.

8. Man with God now mingled is
The two natures joined as one.
God expressed in human form
Thus God's testimony's done!

LESSON TWENTY-TWO

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Every saved person, having believed into the Lord, must preach the gospel and delights to preach the gospel. The life of God in us, which we have received, is such a life. The more we preach the gospel, the more this life is released, and we will grow accordingly.

I. WHAT THE GOSPEL IS

Being the glad tidings, the good news—

"Him that bringeth good tidings…that publisheth salvation" (Isa. 52:7);

"Those who announce glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15).

The gospel is the glad tidings and the good news of great joy, which God asked His servants to announce to men.

II. THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL

A. Jesus Christ—

"Bringing the good news of Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

The chief content of the gospel is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). He is the One who is both God and man (Rom. 1:1-4), who has become the sinners' Savior (Matt. 1:21).

B. "The gospel which I preached to you…that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Christ's death, by which He bore our sins, His burial, and His resurrection are also the main contents of the gospel. What Christ is, His person as the God-man, and what Christ has done, His work of redemption, constitute the contents of the gospel.

III. OTHER DESIGNATIONS OF GOSPEL PREACHING

A. Witnessing—

"Be My witnesses…unto the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

B. Leading people to the Lord—

"Andrew…found first his own brother Simon…He led him to Jesus" (John 1:40-42).

C. Sowing—

"Gathers fruit unto eternal life, that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:36).

D. Reaping the harvest—

"Beseech the Lord of the harvest that He may thrust out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38).

E. Paying a debt—

"I am debtor…to [men]…I am ready to preach the gospel to you" (Rom. 1:14-15).

F. Fruit-bearing—

"I [the Lord] chose you, and I appointed you that you should go forth and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

In the foregoing six portions of the Scripture, witnessing for the Lord, leading people to the Lord, sowing, reaping the harvest, paying a debt, and fruit-bearing are the other designations of gospel preaching.

IV. THE LORD'S CHARGE

A. "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

B. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation" (Mark 16:15).

After the Lord Jesus accomplished the redemption God had planned for His chosen people through His death and resurrection, and when He was about to

leave the earth and ascend into heaven, He charged His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation, discipling all the nations and baptizing them into the Triune God. This is a solemn charge. It was given not only to the disciples who were with the Lord but also to all those who have believed into Him and have been saved throughout the generations. We must, therefore, receive seriously this charge to go and spread the Lord's gospel.

V. THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL PREACHING—

REVEALING THE ATTITUDE IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL

A. Burning in spirit—

"Being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25).

B. Being provoked in spirit—

"His spirit was provoked in him as he beheld that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16).

C. Not being ashamed—

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one…" (Rom. 1:16).

D. Willing to sacrifice our status—

"For though I am free from all, I have enslaved myself to all, that I might gain the more…To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. To all men I have become all things, that I might by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it" (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

E. Gladly spending and being spent—

"But I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15).

F. Not being afraid of suffering evil—

"Suffer evil with the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8).

G. Leaving all—

"One who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for My [the Lord's] sake and for the gospel's sake" (Mark 10:29).

Burning in spirit, being provoked in spirit, not being ashamed of the gospel, willing to sacrifice one's status, gladly spending and being spent, not being afraid of suffering evil, and leaving all, as mentioned above, are the attitudes we should have in preaching the gospel. May the Lord give us grace that we may imitate the beautiful and excellent patterns of the early saints.

VI. THE PERSONS WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL

A. Being worthy of the Lord's gospel—

"Conduct yourselves worthily of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27).

B. Abiding in the Lord—

"He who abides in Me [the Lord] and I in him, he bears much fruit" (John 15:5).

The conduct of one who preaches the gospel must be worthy of the Lord's gospel. He also must be one who abides in the Lord and allows the Lord to abide in him, living together with the Lord without any barriers between him and the Lord.

VII. THE AUTHORITY FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

The authority of the resurrected Christ—

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and disciple all the nations" (Matt. 28:18-19).

The authority for gospel preaching is all the authority of Christ in heaven and on earth, which transcends all, rules over all, and controls all.

VIII. THE POWER FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

The power of the consummate Holy Spirit—

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses…unto the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The power for gospel preaching is the very Spirit of power, who is the consummate expression of the Triune God, including the Triune God and all the processes which He has passed through.

IX. HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

A. Praying—

"And as they were beseeching…and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

For the gospel preaching to be effective, one must be a praying person.

B. Being filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit—

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

To fulfill our prayer for the preaching of the gospel, there needs to be the outward filling with the Holy Spirit.

C. Following the Spirit—

"And the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join this chariot. And when he ran up…" (Acts 8:29-30).

To be able to preach the gospel, express the Lord's life, and bear the fruit of life, one must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

D. Being ready in season and out of season—

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2).

In order to preach the gospel with results, one cannot be limited by time.

E. Loving people, spending and being spent for them—

"But I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls, even if loving you more abundantly, I am loved less" (2 Cor. 12:15).

Loving others, spending and being spent for them, is also a wonderful and excellent way to preach the gospel.

F. Speaking the word of God—

"...spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

Speaking God's word and not our own is a great secret to successful gospel preaching. To this end, the booklet "The Mystery of Human Life" published by Living Stream Ministry is highly recommended.

G. Visiting from house to house to find the sons of peace—

"The harvest indeed is vast, but the workers are few; therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust out workers into His harvest. Go on your way...And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon it" (Luke 10:2-6).

In order that the gospel may be preached in a widespread manner with plentiful results, the most excellent way is to visit from house to house by knocking on doors to find the sons of peace and to bring them to believe, to be baptized, and to be saved.

X. THE REWARD FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Being rewarded—

"...preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward" (1 Cor. 9:16-17).

The reward here surely includes the crown of righteousness mentioned by the Apostle Paul (who also wrote these words) in 2 Timothy 4:7-8. It is difficult to ascertain what else this reward will include. In any case, it will surely be glorious.

XI. THE LOSS OF NOT PREACHING THE GOSPEL

A. Being woeful—

"Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

This is a word spoken by the Apostle Paul, who was faithful through his whole life to preach the gospel for the Lord. He said that woe would be to him if he did not preach the gospel. We do not know what woe may come, but surely it will not be a comfortable or honorable thing. This should serve as a warning to

us!

B. Being taken away—

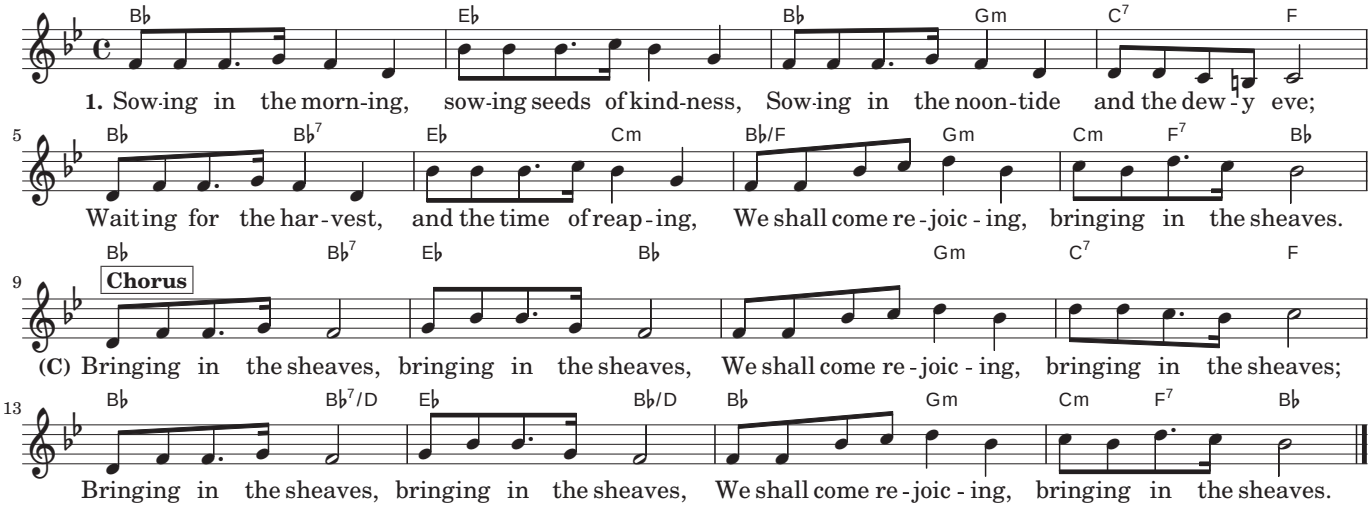
"Every branch in Me [the Lord] that does not bear fruit, He [the Father] takes it away" (John 15:2).

These are the Lord Jesus' personal words of warning to us, saying that the Father will take away every one of His branches which does not bear fruit; thus, this one will lose all the supply and blessing of being His branch and of abiding in Him. What a warning this is!

Sowing in the morning

Preaching of the Gospel — Sowing

1349



2. Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadows,
Fearing neither clouds nor winter's chilling breeze;
By and by, the harvest and the labor ended,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

3. Going forth with weeping, sowing for the Master,
Tho', the loss sustained, our spirit often grieves;
When our weeping's over, He will bid us welcome,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

SERVING THE LORD

Serving the Lord and preaching the gospel are related. After a person is saved, he must preach the gospel and he must serve the Lord. The more a Christian receives grace and is led by the Lord, the more he is delighted to serve the Lord.

I. THE MOTIVE OF SERVING THE LORD

A. "I love my master...I will not go out free" (Exo. 21:5).

A saved person wishes to serve the Lord, not out of others' encouragement or compelling, but out of an inward motive. This motive is his love for the Lord. His love for the Lord constrains him and impels him to serve the Lord. The verse here describes a slave in the Old Testament who, due to his love for his master, would not go out free at the end of his days of slavery; he would rather be a slave to serve his beloved master. This typifies the New Testament believer who should love the Lord and serve Him in the same manner.

B. "I beg you therefore...through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice...which is your most reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Here the Apostle Paul begs us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to serve God. His begging us is through the compassions of God, proving that God's compassions, which are out of God's love, should be our motive in serving God, stirring us up to love God and to serve Him.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SERVING THE LORD

A. Being a slave of the Lord—

"He who was called when free is Christ's slave" (1 Cor. 7:22).

To serve the Lord is to be a slave of the Lord Christ. In this verse, a slave refers to one who is sold and who has lost his freedom. Such a status reveals the

significance of serving the Lord. Our serving the Lord is not to do any great work, but to be a slave of Christ to serve the Lord. Thus, in Romans 12:11, the verb used to describe one who serves the Lord is simply the verb form of the word slave and should be translated "serving as a slave."

B. Being priests of God—

"And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting..." (Acts 13:2).

In the original language, ministering here refers to service as a priest; it is the same word as in Hebrews 10:11 for the "ministering" (serving) of a priest. To serve God as a priest is to handle before God all things related to the worship of God. This requires us to constantly draw near to God and stand before Him.

C. Being the members of Christ's Body—

"But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body [of Christ], even as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:18).

We believers are all members placed by God in the Body of Christ, and each member has its function. When we fulfill our office to minister in the Body of Christ according to our function, we are also serving the Lord.

D. Preaching the gospel—

"God...whom I serve...in the gospel of His Son" (Rom. 1:9).

To preach the gospel is also to serve God. This means that we bring sinners to God just as the priests brought sacrifices to offer to God. Thus, Romans 15:16 says that to preach the gospel in this way is to minister "as a priest the gospel of God." This kind of service is valuable, and it fulfills God's eternal economy.

E. Caring for the saints—

"Console the fainthearted, uphold the weak" (1 Thes. 5:14);

"Communicating to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

These words show us that we ought to care for those saints who are immature, weak, sick, needy, or in hardship. This is also a service to the Lord.

F. Serving the church:

1. As an elder—

"The elders among you…shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing…according to God" (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

To shepherd and oversee the flock of God, which are the saints in the church, is to serve the church and is quite valuable. This is also a service to the Lord.

2. As a deacon—

The word deacon is the noun form of the verb minister. Therefore, a deacon is a serving one who takes care of affairs in the church and ministers to the saints. Such service is of a general nature and is also a service to the Lord.

3. Doing general things—

Besides the duties of an elder and those of a deacon, there are many other miscellaneous tasks in the church, such as transporting guests, cleaning and arranging the meeting places, ushering, purchasing, doing clerical work, doing accounting, and serving in the business office, all of which require people's service. These are another category of service to the Lord.

III. HOW TO SERVE THE LORD

A. Serving with our whole being—

"Present your bodies"; "be transformed by the renewing of the mind"; "burning in spirit, serving the Lord as a slave" (Rom. 12:1, 2, 11).

Our entire being is of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. To serve the Lord with our whole being means that the spirit, soul, and body all participate in the service to the Lord. First, we must present our bodies to the Lord; second, the mind, the main part of our soul, must be renewed and transformed; third, our spirit must be burning. Thus, all three parts of our being participate in serving the Lord.

B. Following the Lord—

"If anyone serves Me [the Lord Jesus], let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall My servant be" (John 12:26).

In order to serve the Lord, we must follow the Lord. Those who serve the

Lord must take the way which He took. We need to follow the Lord wherever He moves. Where He is, there we also must be. He chose the cross and was willing to take the way of the cross, dying to Himself and to everything. We who follow the Lord must do the same. Thus we will be able to serve Him.

C. According to the counsel of God—

"For David indeed, when he had served his own generation by the counsel of God..." (Acts 13:36).

Our service to the Lord, like David's, must be according to the counsel of God and in God's counsel.

D. Needing to have an ear to hear—

"And his master shall bore his ear through...and he shall serve him for ever" (Exo. 21:6).

This says that, in the Old Testament, a master would bore the ear of one who desired to serve, signifying a dealing with his ears that he might be obedient and submissive. To serve the Lord today, we also need the Lord's dealing that we may have the ears to hear and be persons who are obedient and submissive to the Lord.

E. Coming near to and standing before the Lord—

"They [the priests] shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me..." (Ezek. 44:15).

This verse says that the priests of the Old Testament served God by coming near to God and standing before Him. In order to serve the Lord today, we should do the same. With an ear that can hear the Lord's word, we still must draw near to Him and stand before Him that we may know what the Lord wants us to do so that we can serve Him according to His desire.

F. Being faithful and prudent—

"Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household" (Matt. 24:45).

As the Lord's slaves who serve Him, we also need to be faithful and prudent.

To be faithful is to not be slothful or loose, while to be prudent is to seize the opportunity to accurately complete all the things with which the Lord has commissioned us according to His will. This is a prerequisite for us who desire to serve the Lord, to be well-pleasing to Him, and to be rewarded at His coming back.

G. Having the loins girded, and the lamps burning, and waiting for the Lord's coming—

"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning...looking for their own lord...when he comes..." (Luke 12:35-36).

Here the Lord tells us that to serve Him as His slaves, we need to have our loins girded and our lamps burning, and we need to wait for His return. To have our loins girded means to not be loose, to have the lamps burning is to live in the light, and to wait for the Lord's return is to be watchful. All these are essential qualifications for us who serve the Lord.

H. Coordinating in the Body—

"For also the body [of Christ] is not one member but many...If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed...But now the members are many, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:14-21).

Here we are shown that to serve the Lord as members of the Body of Christ, we must coordinate with the saints and not act independently in the Body of Christ, which is the church. This is also a qualification regarding how we should serve the Lord.

IV. THE GOAL OF SERVING THE LORD

Building up the Body of Christ—

"Out from whom all the Body, fitted and knit together through every joint of the supply, according to the operation in measure of each

one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

This word shows us that our coordination and service with the saints is to cause the growth of the Body of Christ and to build it up in love. Besides saving sinners, perfecting the saints, and glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31), our serving the Lord as His slaves is, even the more, to cause the Body of Christ to grow and be built up.

V. THE REWARD FOR SERVING THE LORD

A. Being honored by God the Father—

"If anyone serves Me [the Lord Jesus]...the Father [God] will honor him" (John 12:26).

For our service to the Lord, we shall be honored by the Father. What a reward this is!

B. Being blessed to sit at the feast and enjoying the Lord's serving—

"Blessed are those slaves whom the lord when he comes shall find watching...he will gird himself and will have them recline at the table, and he will come and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

This verse says that when the Lord comes back, the slaves who have been watchful to serve the Lord will be blessed to sit at the feast and will enjoy the Lord's serving. This is also a great reward from the Lord to those who serve Him.

C. Ruling with the Lord and enjoying the joy of the Lord—

"Well done, good and faithful slave...I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

This verse says that the good and faithful slave who serves the Lord will be set over many things and enter into the manifestation of the coming kingdom and into the joy of the Lord. Surely this is a great reward, which we should appreciate and long for.

VI. THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT SERVING THE LORD

Receiving many lashes—

“And that slave who knew his lord’s will, and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes” (Luke 12:47).

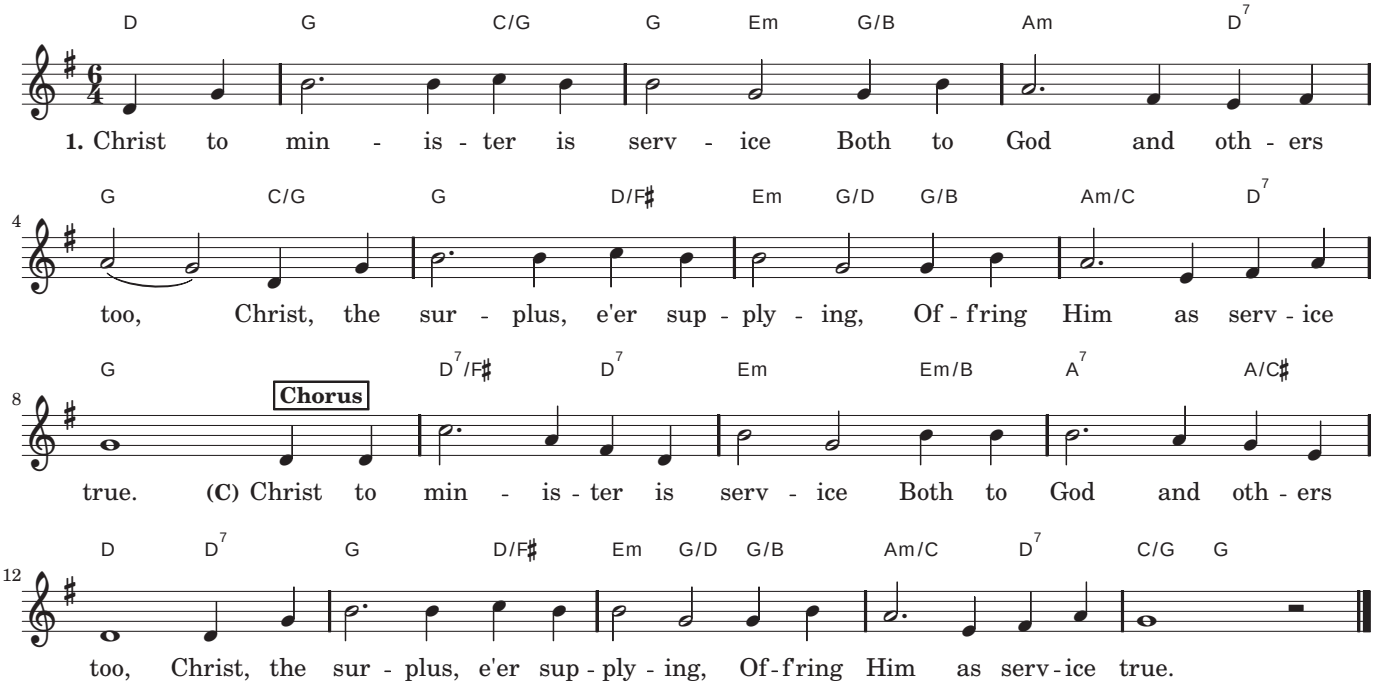
The Lord’s word here clearly and seriously tells us that if we who are the Lord’s slaves do not serve Him according to His will, when He comes we will receive many lashes. To receive lashes is to be punished. The Lord did not tell us how the punishment will be carried out, but any punishment, especially that which is repeated many times, is dreadful. May we who have received grace to be the Lord’s slaves to serve Him be admonished and warned because of His word.

Christ to minister is service

Service—Ministering Christ

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2. As the Israelites did offer
From the surplus of their land,
Thus some produce reaped of Jesus
Must be in our serving hand.

3. We on Christ, as land, must labor,
Harvest Him for all our fare;
Tasting Him to overflowing,
Christ with others we may share.

4. Holding Christ, as members growing,
Each his function must observe;
Christ receiving, Christ partaking,
To His Body Christ we serve.

5. Fellowship and testimony,
Ministry and worship too,
In all helps and ministrations
Christ is all our service true.

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR

THE OFFERING OF MATERIAL RICHES

(It is suggested that this longer lesson be read at two different times, the second beginning from the section on “The Use”)

From the time that man developed a problem with God because of the fall and left the position where he took God as everything, material riches have become a critical matter in the life of fallen man. In his fallen condition, man fell into the darkness of acknowledging only material riches and not God, of trusting only in material riches and not in God, and even of serving material riches, taking material riches as God, and allowing material riches to replace God. God’s enemy, Satan the Devil, exploited the fallen condition of men to come in and deceive men to worship idols, such as the god of wealth, for riches and gain. By being behind these idols, he supplants men’s worship and service that are due God. For this reason, the Lord Jesus told us that one “cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). In the original language, the service mentioned by the Lord here refers to the service of a slave, as we have seen in the previous lesson. This tells us that Satan utilizes material riches to seduce people to worship him on the one hand, and enslaves people in material riches, as misers, on the other hand. However, we have received God’s mercy and the Lord’s salvation, which delivered us from the authority of Satan and turned us to God (Acts 26:18). After we have received God’s salvation in this way, we are confronted with an issue in our practical living, that is, what we should do with material riches that Satan used in time past to delude us and all the world. What should our intention and attitude be toward material riches? How, in particular, should we treat these material riches? Should we be the same as we were in the old manner of living before we were saved? Or should we have a change regarding our material riches according to the salvation which delivered us from the authority of Satan and turned us to God? There are clear instructions concerning this matter in God’s word in the

Bible. In the last twenty-three lessons we covered seventeen subjects concerning the various crucial matters between us and God. Now we shall consider the matter of the offering of material riches.

I. GOD'S GIVING

A. "Nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment" (1 Tim. 6:17).

This word exposes Satan's plot to delude men, showing us that all the material things and enjoyment in our living apparently come from the uncertain riches, but they actually come from God's giving. They are supplied to us from God's rich giving. Hence, we must not set our hope on deceitful and uncertain material riches, but on the very God who gives us all things for our enjoyment.

B. "Beloved, concerning all things I wish that you may prosper" (3 John 2).

The prosperity here refers to material abundance and prosperity, pointing out that the material enjoyment of those who are saved and belong to God comes from God as a result of His prospering our material things. We ought to endeavor in our businesses. The Bible also requires that we learn to maintain good works for necessary needs (Titus 3:14, 8). Yet without God's blessing, all our labors, endeavorings, and painstaking enterprises will yield little. Therefore, in this matter of material supply, unlike the worldly people who trust only in their own abilities, we have to learn to set our hope in God.

C. "Now He who bountifully supplies seed to the sower..." (2 Cor. 9:10).

The Bible regards the offering of material riches as sowing. The seed is supplied by God and comes from God. This reveals that the material riches which the believers offer to God come originally from God and are given by God. We are thus offering to God what He has given to us.

II. THE LORD'S CHARGE

A. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20).

We need to look at this word of the Lord from the viewpoint of laying up material riches. To lay up material riches is to save what is left of a man's gain after the needs of his living have been met. Here, the Lord charges us not to lay up these surplus riches on the earth, but to lay them up in heaven, that is, to spend them on the heavenly Father, doing such things as helping those in need, thus making friends with them (Luke 16:9) and advancing His gospel (Phil. 1:5).

B. "Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying away for themselves as a treasure a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

This is the apostle's charge, which is simply the Lord's charge to us. The rich refers to those who have excess from their gain after the needs of their living have been met. To do good and to be rich in good works refer to distributing the surplus from one's living to the needy ones. To be rich in doing good and good works is to be ready to distribute and willing to communicate. This is also to lay up treasure in heaven, to lay up as a treasure a good foundation for the future. Doing this will enable one to lay hold on, that is, to possess, to use, and to enjoy, that which is really life, the eternal life of God. To save up the surplus riches from our living on the earth is to lay hold on and make use of our natural life; while to save up the same in heaven, spending it on God, is to lay hold on and employ the eternal life of God.

III. THE LORD'S PROMISE

A. "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).

This is a promise spoken from the Lord's own mouth. If we are willing to distribute our material wealth to the needy for God's sake, He will surely give into our bosom that which is rich and plenteous, a good measure, pressed down,

shaken together, running over. He will not give into our hands that which is scanty and limited. What a profitable deal this is!

B. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus which He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Concerning material riches, human beings, who are deceived by Satan, will only receive and not give. To want to receive and not give is Satan's ploy, which causes man to lose God's blessing. The best way to be blessed by God in material riches is to give, not to receive, just as the Lord Himself did for us. Thus, the Lord Himself promised us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Myriads of believers throughout the ages who have believed in the Lord's word and who have practiced accordingly confirm the trustworthiness of this promise from their experience.

C. "He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap" (2 Cor. 9:6).

This is a natural law established by the Lord in the biological realm. This law contains His promise. Offering material riches is like sowing. Since sowing eventually brings in reaping, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully. In man's eyes, the offering of material riches is to give away their riches. However, in God's eyes, such offering is a kind of sowing which will result in reaping. He who offers little shall reap little, and he who offers much shall reap much. We ought to believe in the Lord's promise in this law.

D. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

The "tithes" are the legal amount of offering which God required from the harvest of the Israelites in the Old Testament. The "storehouse" refers to the place in the Old Testament temple where all the offerings to God from His people

were stored. My "house" refers to God's temple in the Old Testament. This word superabundantly displays the infinitely rich promise of God. Although it was spoken to the Israelites in the Old Testament, in principle it applies also to the New Testament believers. If we will fully offer to God what belongs to Him that the church may be richly supplied, God will open the windows of heaven for us and pour out a blessing to us, which there will not be enough room to contain. This is a solemn promise of the Lord of hosts. We can offer to Him according to His promise to prove Him.

IV. THE USE

A. For the need of the church—

In the Old Testament, God wanted each of His people, the Israelites, to offer to Him a ransom for his soul. This offering was for the use of God's dwelling place, that is, the tabernacle and the temple (Exo. 30:11-16).

The church today is God's real tabernacle (dwelling place—Eph. 2:22) and real temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). We, all the New Testament believers, also should offer to God to meet the needs of the different expenses in the church where we are.

B. For the advancement of the gospel—

"For your fellowship unto the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:5).

Fellowship in this verse refers to participation and enjoyment. From the first day when they were saved to the time when Paul wrote this epistle to them, the Philippian believers continuously supplied the needs of Paul with material riches in his gospel preaching for the advancement of the gospel. Thus they participated and enjoyed with Paul in the advancement of the gospel. This tells us that once we are saved, we should offer to God the rich surplus from our material riches, which He gives us for the advancement of His gospel.

3)Supplying the Lord's servants—

"Philippians... you sent both once and again to my [the Apostle Paul's] need" (Phil. 4:15-16).

Those who serve the Lord with their full time have no time to make a living by a profession. Thus, there is a need for the believers to supply them with the material riches they offer to the Lord. First Timothy 5:17 tells us that the believers ought to supply material riches to the elders who take the lead well and those who labor in God's word and teaching (the local elders).

D. Supplying the needy saints:

1. "Communicating to the needs of the saints" (Rom. 12:13).

This verse shows that we should supply the lacking or needy saints with material riches. This is also one of the uses of our offering of material riches.

2."Only that we should remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10).

We should also remember the poor (with the stress on the poor among the believers), supplying them with the material riches we have received from God.

V. THE AMOUNT

A. "...according as any one of them was prospered, determined each one of them to send things for dispensing" (Acts 11:29);

"Let each one of you lay aside by himself, storing up as he may be prospered..." (1 Cor. 16:2).

We have seen previously that, according to 3 John 2, prosperity is God's blessing to prosper us. We should determine the amount of our offering to God based upon the condition of our being prospered due to His blessing. Each person should determine his own amount according to whatever he has, not according to what he does not have (2 Cor. 8:12).

B. "He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap; each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

In our offering of material riches, we will reap little if we sow little, and we will reap much if we sow much. Each person should purpose in his own heart how much he should offer without sorrow or necessity, since God loves him who

is a cheerful giver.

VI. THE WAY

A. "With much entreaty beseeching of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints; and… they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:4-5).

The churches in Macedonia supplied their material riches to the needy saints in Judea, on the one hand, by beseeching the apostles for a share in the grace and the fellowship of such ministry, and on the other hand, by giving themselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles through the will of God. This shows us that the offering of material riches which is most acceptable to the Lord is the offering of ourselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles, who are concerned for us, eventually asking them for a share in such grace and fellowship.

2)"But take heed not to do your righteousness [giving alms] before men to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you surely have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But you, when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall repay you" (Matt. 6:1-4).

For whatever use we offer our material riches, we must not do it intentionally for others to see in order that we may be glorified and rewarded by men; otherwise, we will not be rewarded by the Father, who is in the heavens. Therefore, we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. We should offer in secret that the heavenly Father, who sees what we do, may repay us, recompensing and rewarding us according to His promises to us mentioned earlier.

According to the Lord's charge in these words, we should do our best not to let others know of our offering of material riches. Either named donations or

open contributions must be avoided. For this reason, we have set up offering boxes in the meeting places in order to allow the saints to drop their offering into these boxes in a secret way. This matches the way God's people in the Old Testament put their money into the chest (2 Kings 12:9).

VII. THE SIGNIFICANCE

A. Fellowship with the receiver—

"the fellowship of the ministry to the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4).

Supplying the saints with material riches is a fellowship which brings mutual grace to both the giver and the receiver.

B. Righteousness toward men before God—

"He gave to the poor, his righteousness abides forever" (2 Cor. 9:9).

Giving material riches to the poor is righteousness toward men before God. God cares for the poor and wants His people also to care for them (Deut. 15:7-8). "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord" (Prov. 19:17). This is a law established by God which regulates the relationship between human beings. Thus, if we practice according to this law of God, our righteousness toward men before God will abide forever. In the constitution of the kingdom, the Lord Jesus also considered our giving of alms as righteousness (Matt. 6:1-4). If we who live in the Lord's kingdom of the heavens do not give alms and do not give our material riches for God's use, we are breaking the highest law of the kingdom. Giving to the poor the material riches that God has given to us is not only goodness (Heb. 13:16) but also righteousness. We may or may not do good, but it is imperative that we do righteousness since it is our duty. If we fail to do righteousness, we are unrighteous toward men before God.

C. A sacrifice well-pleasing to God—"But do not be forgetful doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16); "Receiving...the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).

Here doing good refers to the distribution of material riches to others, which before God is a well-pleasing sacrifice to God. Our offering of material

things to God's servants is also an acceptable sacrifice which is well-pleasing to God.

D. A fragrant odor well-pleasing to God—

"Receiving...the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).

The fragrant odor here refers to the sweet savor of the burnt offering (Gen. 8:20-21; Lev. 1:9). The offering we give to God's servants is not only a sacrifice to God, but also a fragrant odor of a burnt offering that is well-pleasing to God. This reveals that the sacrifice here is like a burnt offering that is satisfying and well-pleasing to God.

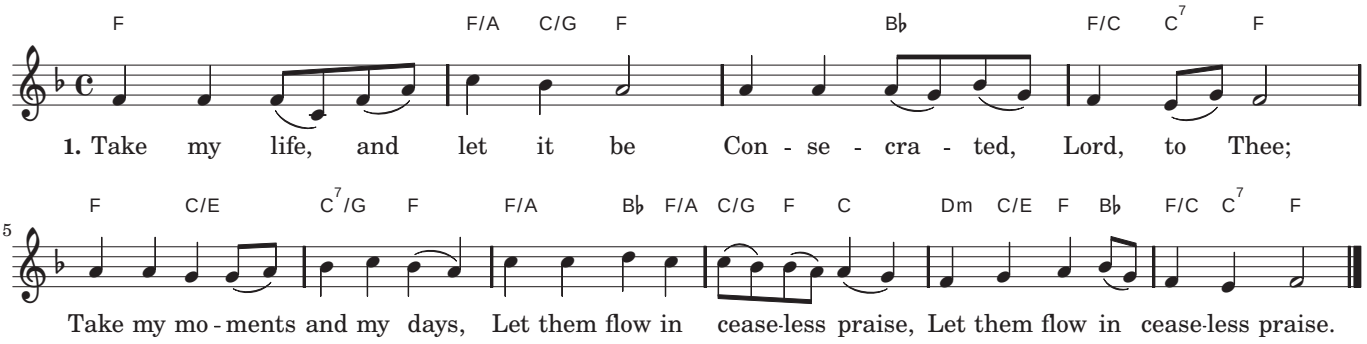
The four significances of the offering of material riches mentioned above should show us the importance and value of such offering. By being offered to God for God's use by us who are of God, what was considered by God as "mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke 16:9), that is, as deceitful riches (Matt. 13:22) and uncertain riches (1 Tim. 6:17) which will "fail" (Luke 16:9), can actually become our "fellowship" with the saints, our "righteousness" toward men before God, an acceptable "sacrifice" to God, and a well-pleasing "fragrant odor" to Him. Riches that deceive men, corrupt men, and destroy men can actually become such transcendent blessings that we have before God! This is all a result of our offering of material riches.

Take my life, and let it be

Consecration—Surrendering All to the Lord

C339* Cb445 K339 R84 S190 Tg445

445



2. Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee,
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

3. Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee,
Filled with messages from Thee.

4. Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose,
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

5. Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart; it is Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

Life Lessons, Vol. 3

LESSON TWENTY-FIVE

TRANSFERRED INTO CHRIST

(It is suggested that this lesson, which is lengthy and deep, be read at two different times, the second beginning from the section (IV) on "Transferred into Christ".)

The twenty-four lessons of the previous two volumes were an overview of the different matters between us and God which we, the sinners, should realize, know, and practice after we have believed in the Lord to be saved and have become a saint of God and of the Lord. Beginning with this volume, we will go further to look into the salvation which God prepared for us in Christ. We will also look into the riches we have obtained, the experiences we should have, the things we should accomplish, and the goal we should attain in Christ.

I. THERE BEING ONLY TWO MEN IN THE EYES OF GOD

A. Adam Being the First Man, the Initial Man

"The first man is out of the earth" (1 Cor. 15:47); "The first...Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45).

Though there are millions of people on the earth, there are only two men in the eyes of God. The first one is Adam. The Bible calls him the first man and also the first Adam. He is out of the earth; therefore, he is earthy. He is the beginning of man, and there is no man before him. Thus, he is the first man, the initial man. We people in the world are all his descendants, who are out of him and who are in him to be one man with him.

B. Christ Being both the Second Man and the Last Man

"The second Man is out of heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47); "The last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45).

These verses refer to Christ. Here the Bible calls Christ the second Man. In our eyes, since the first man is Adam, the second man should be his firstborn son,

Cain, as the second generation of mankind. However, the Bible, bypassing Cain and millions of his descendants, says that the second Man is Christ. This is God's view! In God's eyes, the first man after Adam is Christ. Before Christ, there was only one man, Adam, and there was not another man besides him. Thus, Adam is the first man, and Christ is the second Man. The Scriptures here not only call Christ the second Man, but also the last Adam, that is, the last Man. This tells us that God views Christ not only as the second Man but also as the last Man, and there is not another man after Him. Though there is a first man before Christ, there is not a third man after Him. Adam is the first man, and Christ is the second Man. Therefore, in God's view there are only two men in the universe—Adam and Christ. All the other millions of people are either in Adam, of Adam, and one man with Adam, or in Christ, of Christ, and one man with Christ.

II. BORN IN ADAM

"And He made from one every nation of men" (Acts 17:26).

In some manuscripts, the word "one" in this verse is rendered "one blood," referring to one man. This one man is Adam. From this one man Adam, or from this "one," God made every nation of men in the world. Every nation of men in the world is out of Adam and in Adam. Actually, before we were born, we were already in Adam. Because we were originally in Adam, it was possible for us to be born of Adam and be those who are of Adam.

III. WHAT WE HAVE IN ADAM

A. "For as through the disobedience of one man [Adam] the many were constituted sinners" (Rom. 5:19).

Of all the things which we have in Adam, the first is sin. The first thing Adam passed on to us was sin. To be sinful and to be sinners, we do not need to commit sins. Through the disobedience of the one man, Adam, we are already sinful and are constituted sinners. Adam was sinful and was a sinner through disobedience. We also are sinful and are sinners as long as we are in him.

B. "So then, as it was through one offense [the one in Eden] unto condemnation to all men" (Rom. 5:18).

Since we are sinners and are sinful in Adam, we are under condemnation. Since Adam caused us to be sinners, he also caused us to be condemned. We all participated in his one offense in the garden of Eden because we were all in him. While he was sinning, we were all in him, sinning with him. He included us and brought us with him when he sinned.

C. "For as in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Of all the items that we have obtained and now possess in Adam, the first is sin, the second is condemnation, and the third is death. Since we have sin, we are condemned; since we have condemnation, we will surely die. The result of sin and condemnation is death. This death is in Adam and includes several levels of meaning. First, it is the death of the spirit, that is, the human spirit losing its function because of the break in its fellowship with God. Second, it is the death of the body, that is, the human body losing its life and returning to dust. Third, it is the death of the soul, that is, the human soul going to Hades to be tormented (Luke 16:22-25). Fourth, it is the second death, that is, the human spirit, soul, and body being cast into the lake of fire to suffer the eternal torment (Rev. 20:15; 21:8). Today the spirits of the people of the world are dead to God. One day their bodies will die and their souls will go to Hades to be tormented. In the last day, their spirit, soul, and body will be resurrected and will come together to be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented eternally, which is the final and eternal death. These are the significances included in death, the common portion in Adam of the entire world.

IV. TRANSFERRED INTO CHRIST

A. "Everyone who believes into Him [Christ]" (John 3:16, lit.).

Here the word "into" literally implies entering into. Our believing causes us to enter into Christ. We were originally born in Adam, and we continued to live in Adam after our birth. When we believed into the Lord, our believing brought us into Christ that we might enter into Him and become a person in Him.

B. "For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Baptism immediately follows after believing. To believe and be baptized are two parts of one step for our entering into the Lord. To believe is to enter into Christ inwardly, while to be baptized is to enter into Christ outwardly. Our believing is our entering into Christ in reality in our spirit; our being baptized is our entering into Christ practically in water. Once we believe, we enter into Christ in the spirit. Then through baptism we confess and confirm this fact, displaying and declaring it. Thus, to believe and be baptized is a complete step which brings us into Christ, transferring us out of Adam into Christ that we may be a man in Christ.

C. "But of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Our responsibility is to believe and be baptized in order to enter into Christ. But to put the Spirit of Christ and the life of Christ into us is beyond our own ability; this is God's doing. When we enter into Christ through believing and being baptized, God puts the Spirit of Christ and the life of Christ into our spirit that we and Christ may have a spiritual organic union; all of this is God's doing. Therefore, as far as the Spirit and life are concerned, it is of God that we are in Christ Jesus. It is God who placed us in Christ and put the Spirit and the life of Christ into us that we might be joined as one with Christ in spirit. Except for our believing and being baptized, this was altogether God's doing through His Spirit. In this way, God practically transferred us out of Adam into Christ in the Spirit and in life that we may become a person fully in Christ.

V. WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST

We were born of Adam, having the things in Adam, which are the means by which our old man in Adam lives. When we are transferred into Christ, we also possess the riches in Christ, which are the means by which our new man in Christ lives. Such riches in Christ are innumerable. Those that we have chosen as important are listed below.

A. "Through the obedience of the One [Christ] shall the many be constituted righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

The first thing we have in Adam is sin, but the first thing we have in Christ is

righteousness. The first thing Adam brought to us was sin; the first thing Christ brings to us is righteousness. The disobedience of Adam made us sinful and constituted us sinners; the obedience of Christ constitutes us righteous that we may become righteous persons.

B. "Through one righteous act [the one at Golgotha] unto justification of life to all men" (Rom. 5:18).

The sins we have in Adam caused us to be condemned in him, while the righteousness we obtain in Christ causes us to be justified in Him. The one offense of Adam in the garden of Eden caused us, who were in him, to be condemned, while the one righteous act of Christ at Golgotha caused us, who are in Him, to be justified.

Furthermore, the sin and condemnation we have in Adam also caused us to have death, but the righteousness and justification we gain in Christ cause us to have life. Adam's sin brought us death, but Christ's righteousness brings us life. Due to Adam's sin, the death of Satan entered into us to do a work of death. Thus, our spirit, soul, and body, that is, our whole being, were invaded by death. Due to the righteousness of Christ, the life of God entered into us to do a work of life to swallow up the death in our spirit, soul, and body that our whole being could be made alive.

C. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

"Made alive" here refers to being resurrected. We originally were dead persons. Then Christ came into us, bringing God's life to make us alive. Thus, to be made alive is to be resurrected. The death Adam brought to us ruined everything of our life in the old creation. The resurrection Christ brings to us begins our life in the new creation that we may partake of everything in this life of the new creation.

D. "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

In Christ we obtain not only the three items of righteousness, justification,

and life but also every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. The selection of the Holy Father, the redemption of the Holy Son, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and all the heavenly, spiritual blessings spoken of in the New Testament have been given to us by God in Christ and are obtained by us in Christ.

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

It is concisely stated here that there are four important things which we obtain in Christ from God: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Wisdom is the main item and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are the detailed points. All that God has given to us in Christ is out of Christ's wisdom, or we may say that it is Christ as wisdom, which includes righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Righteousness is for us to be justified by God that we may be saved. This is in the past. Sanctification is for us to live a holy life that we may be victorious. This is in the present. Redemption is for our bodies to be redeemed that we may be glorified. This is in the future. We have obtained all these items, which are all Christ Himself, in Christ from God.

F. "...in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, they have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

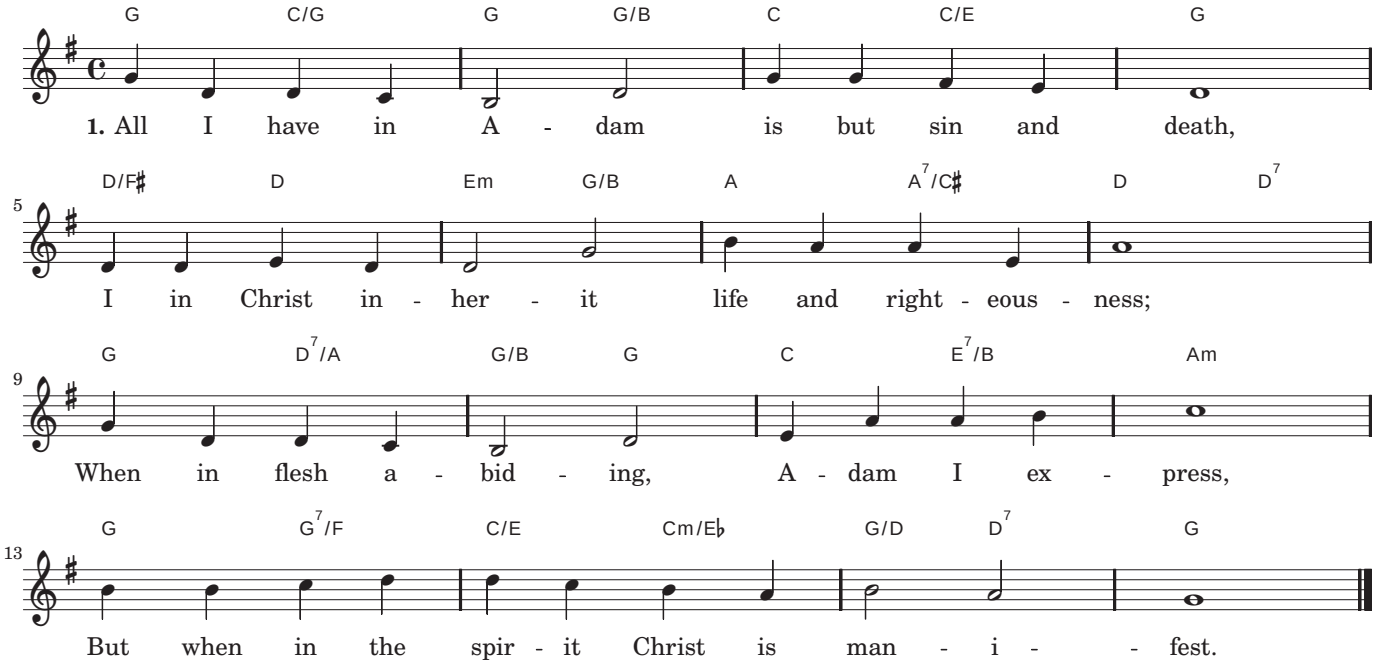
We also became a new creation in Christ. The old things in Adam have passed away and they have become new in Christ. This is a result of being transferred from Adam into Christ.

All I have in Adam is but sin and death

Experience of Christ—By Minding the Spirit

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2. When I am in Adam, though I may not sin,
Unto death, a sinner, sentenced I have been;
When in Christ I need not righteously to act,
I'm already righteous, justified in fact.

3. In the flesh I need no effort to express
Marks of Adam's nature and its sinfulness;
In the spirit I need not to strive or strain,
I can live as He is and in spirit reign.

4. Thru my death with Christ, from Adam I am free,
Thru my life with Christ, new life is given me!
Minding not the flesh, old Adam cannot move,
Minding just the spirit, life divine I prove.

5. Minding just the spirit is God's saving way,
Minding just the spirit, Christ we will display;
Minding just the spirit, we can overcome,
Minding just the spirit, we the race may run.

6. Minding just the spirit, we the cross will know,
And His resurrection pow'r thru us will flow;
Minding just the spirit, Christ will live thru me,
And His life within will reach maturity.

7. In the spirit Christ is life and all to me,
Strengthening and blessing all-inclusively;
Living in the spirit, holiness I prove,
And the triune God within my heart doth move.

LESSON TWENTY-SIX

JOINED TO CHRIST

After we have believed and are baptized into Christ, we have a life union with Christ and are joined to Him. Our being joined to Him is based on His first being joined to us. Therefore, we must first consider how He is joined to us, and then how we are joined to Him.

I. CHRIST BEING JOINED TO US

A. By Becoming Flesh

"And the Word [God] became flesh" (John 1:14).

Christ is the Word of God and is God Himself (John 1:1). The first step He took in joining Himself to us was to become flesh, that is, to become a man of flesh. As God, He took on a human body with the human nature to join with man as one, thus becoming a God-man. This was the beginning of His being joined to us.

B. Bringing Us through Death and Resurrection into Ascension

1. **"I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20); "Our old man has been crucified with Him" (Rom. 6:6); "...died with Christ" (Col. 2:20).**

These verses reveal to us that in His crucifixion, Christ brought us with Him through the death of the cross.

2. **"You were raised together with Christ" (Col. 3:1).**

This word shows us that in His resurrection, Christ also brought us with Him into resurrection.

3. **"...seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).**

This word shows us that in ascending into heaven, Christ also brought us with Him into ascension.

Christ can bring us through death and resurrection and even into ascension

because He is joined to us.

C. Living and Making His Home in Us

1. "Christ is in you" (Rom. 8:10).

Christ first became flesh to join Himself to us, and then He brought us with Him through death and resurrection and into ascension. After He accomplished God's eternal redemption through these steps, He came into us to further join Himself to us, applying to us what He had accomplished as God's full salvation. For this purpose, He became the One who is in us and is joined to us.

2. "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

In entering into us and being joined to us, Christ not only is in us but also is living in us; that is, He is living His life in us.

3. "That Christ may make His home in your hearts" (Eph. 3:17).

When Christ is joined to us within, He lives His life in us, and He also wants to make His home in our hearts; that is, He wants to saturate every part of our entire being, mingling with us as one. This shows that He will be joined to us to the uttermost.

II. WE BEING JOINED TO CHRIST

A. Through Believing and Being Baptized

"...believes into Him [Christ]" (Acts 10:43, lit.); "...baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Originally we were born in Adam, apart from Christ (Eph. 2:12). Through our believing and being baptized, we have entered into Christ. This is the beginning of the experience of our being joined to Christ.

B. Through God's Anointing

"But He who firmly attaches us [the apostles] with you [the believers] unto Christ and has anointed us [with the Holy Spirit] is God" (2 Cor. 1:21).

When we believe into the Lord and are baptized, God puts His Spirit in us and anoints us, firmly attaching us to Christ. On the one hand, it is we who

believe and are baptized into Christ; on the other hand, it is God who attaches us unto Christ by anointing us with His Spirit.

C. Becoming a New Creation in Christ

"...In Christ" (2 Cor. 12:2); "...in Christ...a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

By believing and being baptized into Christ, we become men of the new creation in Christ. We become such men by being joined to Christ in our experience.

D. Abiding in Christ

"Abide in Me [Christ]" (John 15:4); "Abide in Him [Christ]" (1 John 2:27).

After we enter into Christ to become a new creation in Him, we must remain in Him and abide in Him, taking Him as our dwelling and our resting place. In Christ we enjoy all that He is to us. We enjoy Him as our life and life supply, and as the peace, comfort, support, leading, joy, and hope that we need to live a heavenly, spiritual, holy, victorious, and transcendent life so that we may become transcendent persons, experiencing our being joined to Him in our living and our walk.

E. Living with Christ

"Because I [Christ] live, you shall live also...and I in you" (John 14:19-20); "...live with Him [Christ]" (Rom. 6:8).

Both of these passages speak of our living with Christ. Our being joined to Christ begins with our entering into Him, continues with our remaining in Him and abiding in Him, and is intensified by our living with Him. This is the experience in our living of being joined to Him and of taking Him as life (Col. 3:4).

F. Being Manifested with Christ in Glory

"You also shall be manifested with Him [Christ] in glory" (Col. 3:4).

The ultimate state of our being joined to Christ, taking Him as life, and living in Him is to be manifested with Him in glory when He is manifested. This is the
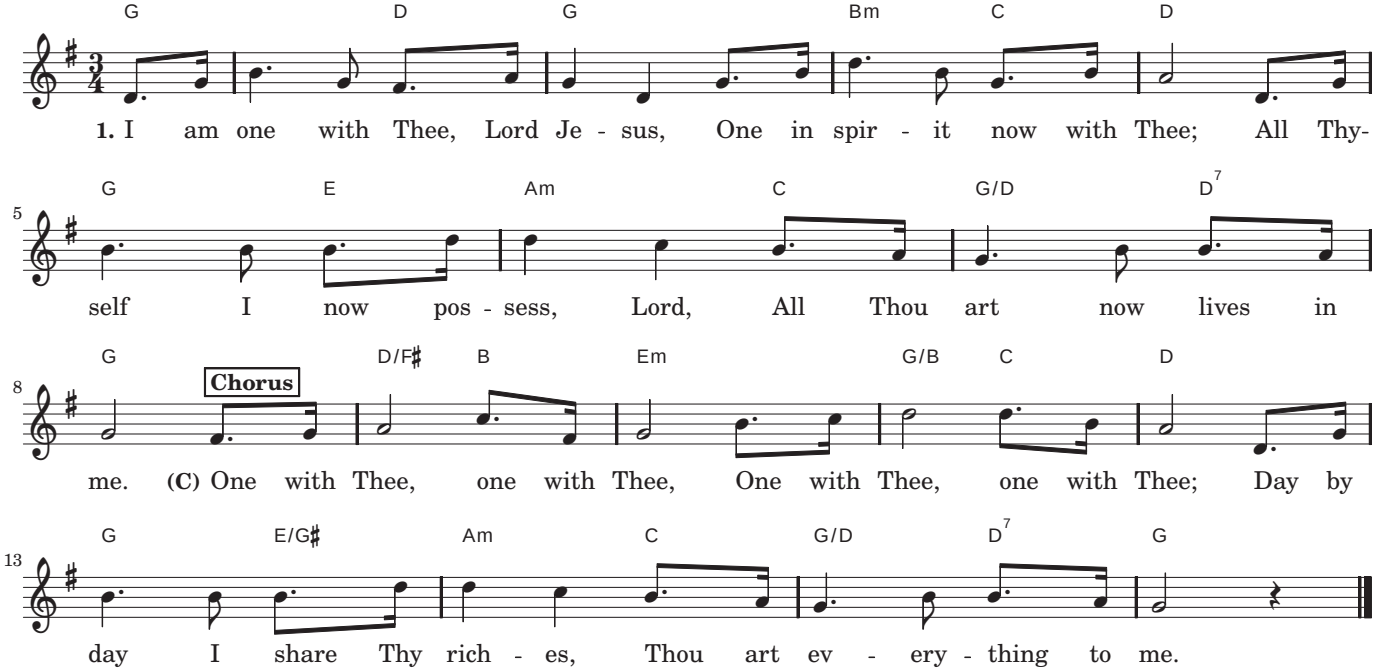
ultimate completion of our experience of being joined to Christ.

I am one with Thee, Lord Jesus

Union with Christ—One with Him

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2. Now I share Thy human life, Lord,
Filled with Thy humanity,
All of Thy complete obedience
Is available to me.

3. One with Thee in crucifixion,
On the cross I died in Thee;
I am dead unto the world, Lord,
And the world is dead to me.

4. One with Thee in resurrection,
Risen now to live in Thee,
With that life which is Thyself, Lord,
Now in me, Lord, even me.

5. One with Thee in Thine ascension,
In the heavens now with Thee;
Here a pilgrim and a stranger,
My true life is hid in Thee.

6. One with Thee in Thine enthronement,
Sharing Thine authority,
Even as I share Thy life, Lord,
I in Thee and Thou in me.

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN

ABIDING IN CHRIST

When we believe and are baptized into Christ, we are in Christ. In Christ we obtain and enjoy all the riches in Him. To maintain such a position in Christ and to continue to enjoy all the riches in Him, we must continue to remain in Him, with the result that we abide in Him. Therefore, we must consider this matter thoroughly.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABIDING IN CHRIST

A. Being Joined to Christ

"I [Christ] am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

There is a difference between being in Christ and abiding in Christ. Being in Christ refers to the fact of our having entered into Christ to partake of Him and to be joined to Him. Abiding in Christ refers to the experience of our remaining in Christ to fellowship with and enjoy Him. In this verse the Lord Jesus speaks to us specifically concerning such an experience. He describes our life of abiding in Him by the illustration of the branches abiding in the vine. He is the vine and we are His branches. This shows us clearly that, if we desire to live in Him to enjoy all His life supply, thus bearing fruit to fulfill our duty as His members, we must abide in Him. This is like the branches of the vine, which must abide in the vine in order to enjoy all the life supply of the vine and bear fruit in order to fulfill their duty. If we are separated from Christ, like branches separated from the vine, we cannot live in Him nor can we receive the life supply from Him to bear fruit for Him. Therefore, if we would live in Christ, we must not be separated from Him.

B. Having Fellowship with Christ

"...and report to you the eternal life, which...was manifested to

us…that you also may have fellowship with us [the apostles], and indeed the fellowship which is ours is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:2-3).

These verses tell us that the reporting of the eternal life to us enables us to have fellowship with the apostles, and that the fellowship of the apostles is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. In other words, the eternal life, the life of God in Christ, that is, Christ Himself as life, brings a fellowship to us, that we may have fellowship not only with the apostles but also with God and Christ. This fellowship is the flowing of God's life in us, causing us to have fellowship with God and Christ, to participate in all that They are, and to enjoy Their life supply. To have fellowship with God and Christ in this way is to abide in Christ. This abiding will result in three conditions, as given below.

1. Being Enlightened

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth" (1 John 1:5-6).

When we have fellowship with God, who is light, such fellowship brings us into God's light that we may be enlightened. Thus, we will not walk in darkness.

2. Confessing Our Sins and Being Cleansed

"But if we walk in the light as He [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin…if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9).

When we are enlightened by God in our fellowship with Him, we will see our own sins. If we confess our sins in God's light, He will forgive us our sins, and the blood of Jesus His Son will cleanse us from all sin. If we do not confess our sins in order to be cleansed, our sins will interrupt the fellowship which we have with God and with Christ. Only when we confess our sins and are cleansed is our fellowship with God and Christ restored. Then we may again abide in Christ without anything between us and Him.

3. Growing in Life

"...grows with the growth of God" (Col. 2:19).

By abiding in Christ and fellowshipping with Him, the life within us will continue to grow, and we will also grow with the growth of God's life unto maturity.

II. THE WAY TO ABIDE IN CHRIST

A. According to the Teaching of the Anointing

"As His anointing...has taught you, abide in Him [Christ]" (1 John 2:27).

The anointing mentioned here is the moving of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. Such moving of the Holy Spirit in us, as the ointment anointing us within, teaches us the truth. We should abide in the Lord according to the teaching of this anointing.

B. Walking as the Lord Walked

"He who says he abides in Him [Christ] ought himself also to walk even as that One walked" (1 John 2:6).

To abide in Christ, on the one hand, we must be according to the teaching of the anointing of the Holy Spirit inwardly, and on the other hand, we must walk as the Lord walked outwardly. This means that we must abide in Christ according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit inwardly and according to the walk of the Lord outwardly.

C. Keeping God's Commandments

"And he who keeps His [God's] commandments abides in Him" (1 John 3:24).

To abide in Christ, in addition to being according to the teaching of the anointing of the Holy Spirit and walking as the Lord walked, we must keep God's commandments, God's charges to us, and be those who are submissive to God.

III. THE ISSUE OF ABIDING IN CHRIST

A. Christ Abiding in Us

“Abide in Me [Christ] and I in you” (John 15:4); “...abides in Him [God], and He in him” (1 John 3:24).

The first issue of our abiding in Christ is that Christ and God abide in us to dispense Their riches to us, supplying and transfusing them into us.

B. Bearing Much Fruit to Glorify God

“He who abides in Me [Christ] and I in him, he bears much fruit” (John 15:5). “In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

If we abide in Christ, He also will abide in us, enabling us to enjoy all the riches of His life. Thus, we will bear much fruit to glorify God, that is to live out God that He may be expressed in us.

C. Boldly Meeting the Lord and Not Being Put to Shame

“Abide in Him [Christ], that if He is manifested, we may have boldness and not be put to shame from Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

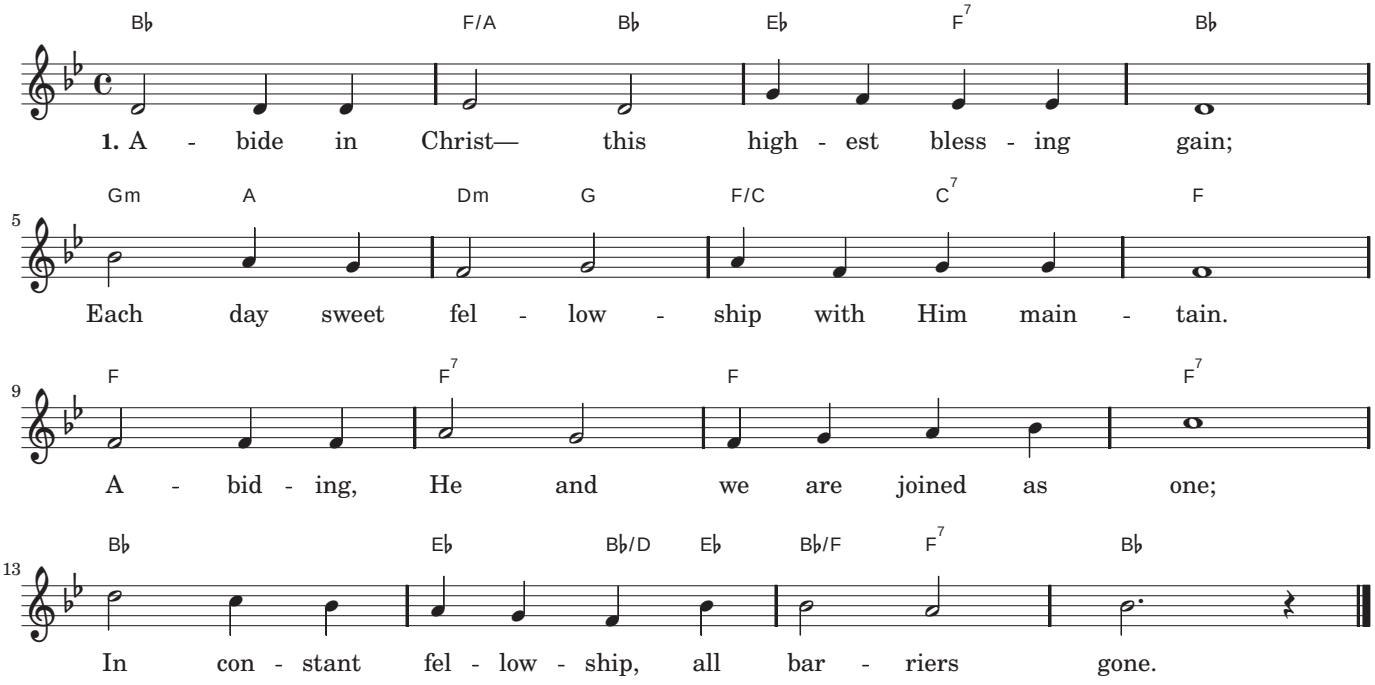
If we abide in Christ and bear much fruit by His life to glorify God, when He is manifested, we will boldly meet Him and not be put to shame from His glorious presence (cf. Matt. 25:30).

Abide in Christ—this highest blessing gain

Experience of Christ—Fellowship with Him

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2. Abide in Him, anointing then will flow;
In fellowship, the Spirit's lead we'll know.
Obeying, we His riches apprehend;
Led by the Spirit, we will be His friend.

3. Abide in Him, the light of grace will shine;
In fellowship, all shadows will decline.
Obey the light, His life in us will grow;
From darkness freed, our heart will comfort know.

4. Abiding, we are strengthened with each breath;
In fellowship, His life will swallow death.
Abiding, all our sighing turns to song;
In fellowship, our heart is gladdened, strong.

5. Abiding, this will Satan's strength disarm;
In fellowship, the world will lose its charm.
Abiding, we sin's power need not fear;
In fellowship, the self will disappear.

6. Abiding, thus conformed to Him we'll be;
In fellowship, His life fills constantly.
Abiding, we experience His power;
In fellowship, His riches, hour by hour.

7. Abiding, Lord, for Thee my spirit yearns;
In fellowship, Thy Spirit in me burns,
That all my being may be lost in Thee
And with Thee mingled through eternity.

LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT

EXPERIENCING CHRIST

(It is suggested that this deeper lesson be read at two different times, the second beginning from the section H on "Living Christ")

We believe and are baptized into Christ to be joined to Him and to abide in Him for the purpose of experiencing Him. When we experience Christ, we gain and enjoy Him practically that He may be expressed through us.

I. THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF EXPERIENCING CHRIST

A. Christ Being Revealed in Us

"It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15-16).

Our first experience of Christ is His being revealed in us. This is the key to our salvation and regeneration, and it is the central result of our being saved to be joined to God. It is also the beginning of our experience of Christ.

B. Christ Being in Us

"And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10).

Once Christ is revealed in us, we immediately experience His being in us, which shows us that our body is dead because of sin, the very sin we inherited from Adam, and that our spirit is life because of righteousness, the righteousness we obtained from Christ. This is an experience which Christ gives us.

C. Christ Abiding in Us

1. **"He who abides in Me [Christ] and I in him, he bears much fruit" (John 15:5).**

When we abide in Christ according to the fact of our being in Christ, Christ will abide in us, placing Himself in us to be our life and life supply that He may become our experience in life for us to bear much fruit.

2. **"If anyone loves Me [Christ], he will keep My word, and My Father**

will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (John 14:23).

Christ abides in us with the Father. We experience this when we love Him and keep His word.

D. Christ Being Our Life

"...Christ our life" (Col. 3:4).

The foremost and main thing that Christ does when He abides in us is to be our life that we may take Him as life and live by Him, no longer walking by our natural life. We should experience this day by day and moment by moment.

E. Christ Living in Us

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

We must not only experience Christ abiding in us to be our life but also experience Christ living in us to be our living. To experience Christ in this way, we must deny ourselves by being in His death, and be able to say that it is no longer I who live. We must die in order to experience Christ living in us.

F. Christ Making His Home in Us

"That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith...that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God"(Eph. 3:17-19).

We also need to experience Christ making His home in our hearts. He will not only live in us but also inwardly occupy every part of our being, make His home in our hearts, and settle down in us, saturating and filling our entire being that we may become the fullness of God.

G. Christ Being Formed in Us

"I [the Apostle Paul] am again in travail until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

We also must experience Christ being formed in us, that is, His growing in us unto maturity until we reach His very stature (Eph. 4:13).

H. Living Christ

"To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

"To live is Christ" is to live Christ. We must experience Christ in every aspect inwardly, and we must also experience living Him outwardly.

I. Magnifying Christ

"Even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (Phil. 1:20).

Outwardly, we should have the experience not only of living Christ but also magnifying Christ. All things that happen to us are for us to magnify Christ. The more difficult the environment and the busier the work, the more we can magnify Christ. This is the peak of our experience of Christ outwardly.

J. Christ Being Everything to the New Man

"Having put off the old man...and having put on the new man [which is corporate]...where [in the new man, the church] there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian [the most barbarous], slave, freeman, but Christ is all [persons] and in all [persons]" (Col. 3:9-11).

These verses say that we who have believed in the Lord and are regenerated have put off our old man and have put on the new man. In this new man, the church, there is not the old man of a certain race, religion, culture, or class but Christ who is our life and the element which constitutes this new man. Christ is all the persons in this corporate new man, and He lives in all these persons. We should have many experiences of Christ related to this matter, and we should also have this full experience of Christ when our experiences of Him reach their peak.

II. THE CONDITIONS FOR EXPERIENCING CHRIST

A. Abiding in Him

"He who abides in Me and I in him..." (John 15:5).

The first condition for experiencing Christ abiding in us is our abiding in Him. We must abide in Him, giving Him the time and space so that He may be able to abide in us.

B. Remaining in the Co-crucifixion with Him

"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Moreover, the experience of our co-crucifixion with Christ is also a basic condition for our experience of Christ. Since we are abiding in Him, we are surely remaining in our co-crucifixion with Him, that is, in His all-inclusive death, which nullifies our existence, so that it is no longer we who live. Thus, we allow Christ to live in us that we may experience and enjoy Him as our life.

C. Loving Him and Keeping His Word

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him" (John 14:23).

Loving Christ and obeying His word are also conditions for us to experience Christ abiding in us. If we love Him and keep His word, He and the Father will come to abide with us that we may enjoy all the blessings of the Triune God abiding with us.

D. Being Strengthened into the Inner Man

The Father "would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts..." (Eph. 3:16-17).

Our being strengthened by God with power through His Spirit into our inner man (our spirit) is the condition for our experiencing Christ making His home in our hearts. This experience of Christ is deep, and therefore its condition, which is that our whole being be strengthened by God into our spirit, is weighty.

E. Having All Boldness

"With all boldness, as always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (Phil. 1:20).

In order to magnify Christ, we must have boldness in all things, not caring for whether we live or die. This is the highest condition for our topmost experience of Christ.

III. THE MEANS OF EXPERIENCING CHRIST

“For me this shall turn out to salvation through… the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19).

We do not experience Christ by our ability or by our endeavoring, but through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is the Spirit of God, who participated in the incarnation, human living, and crucifixion of Jesus and the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ. This Spirit is the all-inclusive Spirit, the Spirit who is the ultimate expression of the Triune God. This bountiful supply of the all-inclusive Spirit is the power and means for us to experience Christ.

IV. THE ISSUE

A. Christ Being Formed in Us

“…until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19).

The first issue of our experience of Christ is that Christ is formed in us. This refers to Christ growing and maturing in us unto a full stature (Eph. 4:13) that He may be fully expressed through us.

B. We Becoming God’s Full Expression

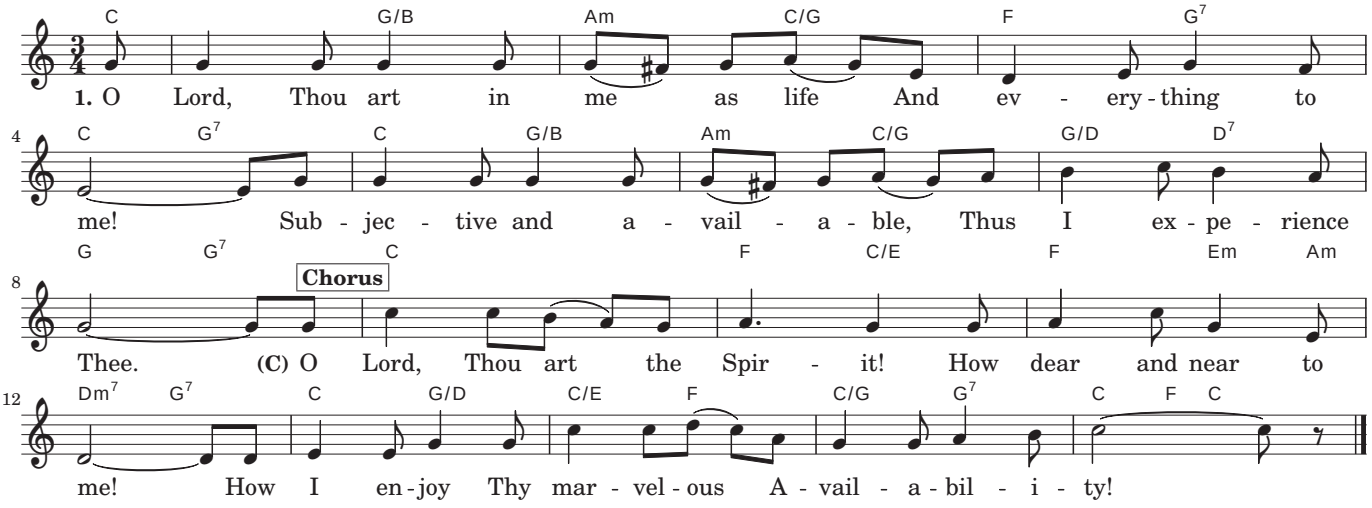
“…Christ may make His home in your heart… that you…may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth [the unlimited dimensions of Christ]…that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19).

The second issue of our experience of Christ is that we become God’s full expression. This refers to Christ making His home in us that we may apprehend with all the saints His unlimited dimensions, that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God to be the corporate expression of God.

O Lord, Thou art in me as life

Experience of Christ — As the Available One

539



2. To all my needs both great and small
Thou art the rich supply;
So ready and sufficient too
For me now to apply.

3. Thy sweet anointing with Thy might
In weakness doth sustain;
By Thy supply of energy
My strength Thou dost maintain.

4. Thy law of life in heart and mind
My conduct regulates;
The wealth of Thy reality
My being saturates.

5. O Thou art ever one with me,
Unrivaled unity!
One spirit with me all the time
For all eternity!

LESSON TWENTY-NINE

TAKING CHRIST AS EVERYTHING

The main revelation in the New Testament, especially in Paul's Epistles, is the very Christ, whom God in His economy has prepared for us to be our experience. We have looked at this matter in a concise way in the previous lesson. Now let us see, in the book of Philippians, its conclusion, which is to take Christ as everything.

I. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR LIVING

"For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

This word reveals to us that Paul, who experienced Christ richly and abundantly, took Christ as his living. In Philippians 1 he said that he lived Christ.

II. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR EXPRESSION

"As always, even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (Phil. 1:20).

This word shows us that Paul, who was rich in the experience of Christ, took Christ also as his expression. All his life and work were not for expressing himself or for displaying his knowledge, his ability, or his other merits and strong points. What he was and what he did were for expressing Christ, even for magnifying Christ, that Christ would be not only expressed through him but even magnified in him.

III. TAKING THE MIND OF CHRIST AS OUR MIND

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

This verse means that we need to take Christ's mind as our mind. Paul not only took Christ as his living and expression without, but he also took the mind of Christ as his mind within. According to the text which follows, the thinking in the mind of Christ in this verse was that of One who changed from the form of God into the likeness of man to become a man, even emptying Himself to take the

form of a slave and to humble Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of a cross.

IV. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR LIVED-OUT RIGHTEOUSNESS

"And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith" (Phil. 3:9).

In experiencing Christ, Paul was found by others to be a man in Christ, not having a righteousness which was from his own keeping of the law, but having the righteousness from God through his faith in Christ, which is just Christ Himself lived out from him to be expressed as his righteousness. In such a way, Paul took Christ as the righteousness which he lived out.

V. CONSIDERING THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST EXCELLENT

"...on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them refuse that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

Paul, who was rich in the experience of Christ, undoubtedly considered Christ to be the most excellent One. Thus, he shows us in one of the verses following Philippians 3:8 that he pursued the knowledge of Christ. His pursuit indicates his consideration of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Because of the Christ whom he knew, he forsook all things, that is, he suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse, that he might gain Christ.

VI. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR GOAL

"One thing—forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Paul, who pursued the knowledge of Christ in order to experience Him more deeply, considered his pursuit of Christ to be his only task. Thus, he pursued by forgetting the things which were behind and stretching forward to the things which were before. His pursuit was toward one aim, one goal, and that goal was Christ. He took Christ as his goal, pursuing to obtain the prize of the high calling

of God in Christ Jesus. This prize is also Christ, that is, Christ as the enjoyment of His pursuers. Paul pursued upward, toward the heavens, to gain Christ, whom he took as the goal and prize.

VII. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR VIRTUES

"Brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is well-spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Truthfulness, honor, righteousness, purity, loveliness, and that which is well-spoken of are six praiseworthy virtues. These virtues are the expressions of God's attributes lived out from within the pursuers of Christ, who is the embodiment of God. Paul, who pursued to experience Christ, charged the brothers to consider these things, that is, to live out these virtues and express all the attributes of God in Christ. Since he charged the brothers in this manner, he himself must obviously have been expressing God's attributes by taking Christ as his virtues.

VIII. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR POWER

"I can do all things in Him who empowers me" (Phil. 4:13).

Paul, who experienced Christ, was empowered by Christ; hence, he was able to do all things in Christ, which is mainly to live out the various kinds of virtues which express God's attributes mentioned in verse 8 preceding this word. This shows us that Paul experienced Christ by taking Christ as power to live out Christ as his magnificent living.

IX. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR SECRET

"I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to be in want" (Phil. 4:11-12).

In any environment and in any matter, Paul, who experienced Christ richly and abundantly, learned the secret to be content and to rejoice always. According

to his speaking throughout the book of Philippians, the secret he learned was just Christ. Thus, he took Christ as the secret to experience Christ, being content and rejoicing always in any situation and in any matter.

X. TAKING CHRIST AS OUR EXPECTATION

"For our citizenship is in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory, according to the operation of Him who is able even to subject all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

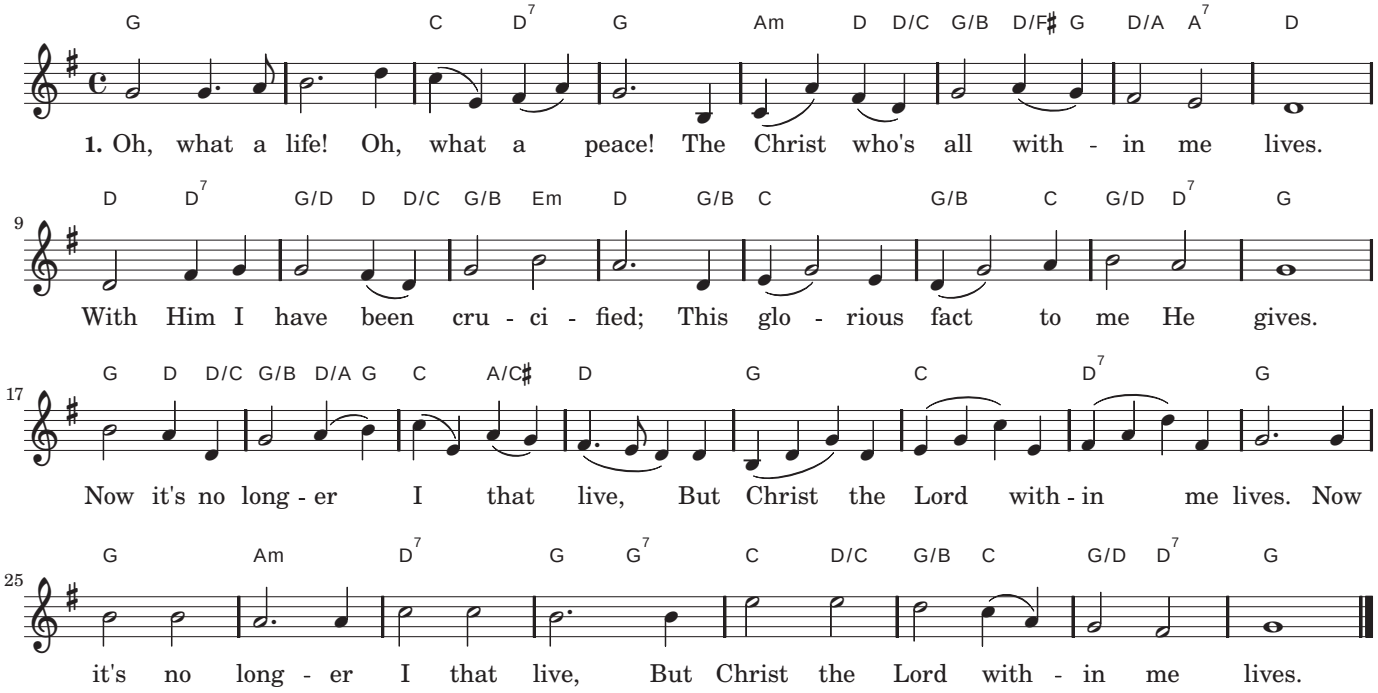
The life which Paul lived in the experience of Christ was one that awaited the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come from the heavens to transfigure his body of humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory. Thus, he took the Christ whom he experienced as his expectation.

Oh, what a life! Oh, what a peace

Experience of Christ—As Life

C378 Cb499 K378 P238 R93 S213 Tg499

499



2. Oh, what a joy! Oh, what a rest!
Christ now is being formed in me.
His very nature and life divine
In my whole being inwrought shall be.
All that I am came to an end,
And all of Christ is all to me.

3. Oh, what a thought! Oh, what a boast!
Christ shall in me be magnified.
In nothing shall I be ashamed,
For He in all shall be applied.
In woe or blessing, death or life,
Through me shall Christ be testified.

4. Oh, what a prize! Oh, what a gain!
Christ is the goal toward which I press.
Nothing I treasure, nor aught desire,
But Christ of all-inclusiveness.
My hope, my glory, and my crown
Is Christ, the One of peerlessness.

LESSON THIRTY

ONE SPIRIT WITH THE LORD

We can experience Christ and take Christ as everything because we have become one spirit with Him. This is a deep mystery, yet it is a sure fact which each of us who has believed into Christ and is joined to Him in His divine life must believe, confess, and practice.

I. GOD BEING SPIRIT

"God is Spirit" (John 4:24).

This speaks of the nature of God. As far as the divine essence is concerned, God, the complete Triune God, is Spirit.

II. THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD BEING THE SPIRIT

"...baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

The Triune God is three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Father is the source, the Son is the expression of the Father, and the Spirit is the realization of the Son. Hence, the Spirit is the ultimate expression of the Triune God.

III. CHRIST BECOMING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

"The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45b).

The last Adam is the incarnated Christ, who through death and resurrection was transfigured to become the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life (2 Cor. 3:6, 17) as God's ultimate expression.

IV. OUR CENTER ALSO BEING THE SPIRIT

"May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete" (1 Thes. 5:23).

This verse clearly and definitely reveals to us that our complete person is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. The body is our outermost part, by which we act and walk, and by which we contact the material things. The soul is the part between our body and our spirit as our personality and self, by which we contact the psychological things. The spirit is our innermost part by which we know and worship God, and by which we contact the spiritual things. Thus, the spirit is the center of our being and is crucial to God, more crucial than even the heavens and the earth (Zech. 12:1).

V. GOD RENEWING OUR SPIRIT AND PUTTING HIS SPIRIT IN US

"A new spirit will I [Jehovah God, who is related to man] put within you...I will put my Spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:26-27).

These verses refer to what God did when He saved us, the sinners. On the one hand, He renewed our spirit to make it a new spirit, and on the other hand, He put His Spirit within our renewed spirit, causing the two to be joined together as one.

VI. THE SPIRIT OF GOD REGENERATING OUR SPIRIT

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit...You must be born anew" (John 3:6-7).

When God saved us, He put His Spirit into our renewed spirit, and then His Spirit imparted His life into our spirit, regenerating it, that is, regenerating us to make us His children (John 1:12-13).

VII. THE SPIRIT OF GOD WITNESSING WITH OUR SPIRIT

"The Spirit [the Holy Spirit of God] Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

After the Spirit of God regenerates our spirit, He remains in our spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God.

VIII. OUR SPIRIT WORSHIPPING THE SPIRIT, WHO IS GOD

"God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit..."

(John 4:24).

To worship the Spirit, who is God, in spirit is to worship Him with our spirit. To worship God is to contact God, which includes such things as drawing near to God, praying to God, trusting in God, and thanking God.

IX. THE SPIRIT, WHO IS THE LORD, DWELLING IN OUR SPIRIT

"...His [God's] Spirit who indwells you" (Rom. 8:11); "...the Spirit...witnesses with our spirit" (Rom. 8:16).

Combining these two verses, we see that the Spirit, the Spirit of God, is the Spirit who indwells us and who is joined to us as one.

X. JOINED TO THE LORD AS ONE SPIRIT

"But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

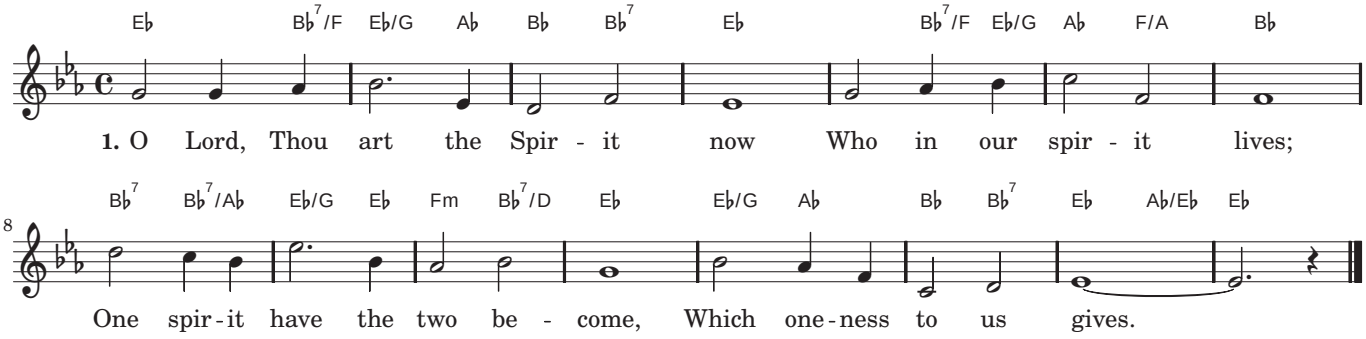
Based upon the various facts revealed in the foregoing verses, we may say that since we are joined to the Lord, we are one spirit with the Lord. This means that the spirit, which is the mingling of our spirit and the Lord's Spirit, is both the Spirit of the Lord and our spirit; it is the Lord's Spirit mingled with our spirit and our spirit mingled with the Lord's Spirit. The New Testament, in verses such as Romans 8:4-6 and Galatians 5:16 and 25, often uses this word, the spirit, which is the mingled spirit, to speak concerning what the Lord is to us and concerning our experience of the Lord. All our spiritual experiences after we are saved, such as our fellowship with the Lord, our prayer to Him, our living with Him, and our obedience to Him, are in this spirit, the Lord's Spirit and our spirit mingled into one.

O Lord, Thou art the Spirit now (mingling)

Various Aspects of the Inner Life—The Two Spirits as One

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2. Thy Spirit with our spirit, Lord,
The witness ever bears
That we the Father's children are
And of God's glory heirs.

3. 'Tis in our spirit Thee we touch
Thy riches to enjoy,
And as the Spirit Thou dost give
Thyself without alloy.

4. 'Tis in our spirit we may walk
And follow Thee alway,
While, as the Spirit, Thou dost lead
And light impart each day.

5. In spirit, by Thy Spirit, Lord,
We live and worship Thee;
Thou, in our spirit, thru Thine own
Strengtheneth constantly.

6. In spirit, with Thy Spirit, Lord,
We offer prayer to Thee,
While, as the Spirit, Thou in us
Groanest unutterably.

7. We to our spirit would return
And there would contact Thine;
'Tis in the spirit we may share
Our heritage divine.

8. What oneness, O my Lord, is this—
Two spirits intertwine!
Thy Spirit in our spirit lives,
And ours abides in Thine!

LESSON THIRTY-ONE

LIVING IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Once we believe into the Lord, we have a union with Him in life. This life then brings us the fellowship of life in which we should live, fellowshipping with God and sharing in all His riches. We ought to know this, pay attention to this, and practice this immediately after we are saved.

I. THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

"We...report to you the eternal life...that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed the fellowship which is ours is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:2-3).

Once we believe in the Lord and receive the eternal life, which was reported to us, it brings its fellowship of life, its flow of life, to us, that there may be a fellowship, a flow, between us and God. This fellowship carries God Himself and all His riches into us for our sharing and partaking.

II. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

A. Having fellowship with the apostles and with the church, which they represent—"...we...report to you the eternal life...that you also may have fellowship with us [the apostles]" (1 John 1:2-3).

The fellowship which we have through the entering into us of God's eternal life is of two aspects. On the one hand, we have fellowship with the apostles and with the church, which the apostles represent (1 Cor. 12:28); that is, we have fellowship with all those who possess the life of God. On the other hand, we have fellowship with God and the Lord. The aspect of our fellowship with all those who have God's life is called the fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:41-42). All those who have believed into the Lord to have the life of God participate in this fellowship. The Lord's life is reported by the apostles to those who believe into the Lord that they may become the church, the Lord's Body, and the apostles are the representatives of the church, which is brought into being through the Lord's

life. Hence, the fellowship of life in the church is called the fellowship of the apostles. When we have fellowship with the apostles, we have fellowship with the church.

B. Having fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus—"That you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed the fellowship which is ours is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

The other aspect of our fellowship in the Lord's life is our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The life to which this fellowship of life belongs is the life of God. This life is also the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Himself. Thus, this fellowship of life enables us to have fellowship not only with those who jointly possess God's life but also with God and the Lord Jesus. In this fellowship of life, there is a mutual fellowship and flowing between us and God and the Lord Jesus, and between us and all the believers. All these parties jointly participate in the Triune God and in the church, which is His organism, thus mutually sharing in one another.

III. THE MEANS OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE—THE HOLY SPIRIT

"The fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14).

Since the Lord's life is in the Holy Spirit and has entered into us through the Holy Spirit to be in us, our fellowship in the Lord's life is by means of the Holy Spirit. Hence, this fellowship is also called the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the Lord's life, both our fellowship with God and the Lord and our fellowship with the church or the saints are in and by means of the Holy Spirit.

IV. ANOTHER DESIGNATION OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE—ABIDING IN THE LORD

1) "And even as it [the anointing] has taught you, abide in Him [the Lord]" (1 John 2:27); "Abide in Me [the Lord]...for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

As branches of the Lord, the vine, we must abide in the Lord and not be separated from Him. To thus abide in the Lord is to have fellowship with the

Lord in order to practice the fellowship of the Lord's life, absorbing all the riches of the Lord as the branches absorb the supply from the vine.

V. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A BELIEVER TOWARD THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

A. To continue steadfastly—

"Continuing steadfastly in...the fellowship" (Acts 2:42).

Once we receive the Lord's life, we enter into the fellowship of His life. From then on, we should continue steadfastly in this fellowship of life.

B. To obey the teaching of the anointing—

"And even as it [the anointing] has taught you, abide in Him [the Lord]" (1 John 2:27).

For us to continue steadfastly in the fellowship of life, we must abide in the Lord as taught by the anointing, and we must obey the teaching of the anointing.

C. To walk in the light—

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7).

The fellowship of the Lord's life brings us into God's light. We must walk in this light that we may have fellowship with God and the Lord and with all the saints, and that we may maintain the fellowship of the Lord's life.

D. To confess our sins—

"But if we walk in the light...we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin...if we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us...and cleanse us" (1 John 1:7-9).

If we live in the fellowship of the Lord's life, the Lord's light of life within will show us our sins in the fellowship of His life. We will sense our sins and confess to God, and He will then forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness that we may more deeply live in the fellowship of His life.

The preceding four items are our responsibility toward the fellowship of

life.

VI. THE ISSUE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

A. Receiving God's light—

"God is light...if we say that we have fellowship with Him...if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:5-7).

This word shows us that when we have fellowship with God, who is light, we will surely receive God's light and walk in it that we may have uninterrupted fellowship with one another.

B. Being cleansed by the Lord's blood—

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

When we are enlightened by the Lord's light of life in the fellowship of life, and thus realize our sins and confess them to God, we are cleansed by the Lord's blood.

C. Having the Lord abide in us—

"He who abides in Me and I in him..." (John 15:5).

When we abide in the Lord to have fellowship with Him, we have the Lord abiding in us as our enjoyment of life.

D. Bearing much fruit to glorify God—

"He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit" (John 15:5); "In this is My Father glorified" (John 15:8).

When we abide in the Lord as branches in the Lord, the vine, and have an uninterrupted flow with Him, we receive the supply of the rich sap from Him as the vine to bear much fruit that the Father may be glorified.

The above four items are issues of our living in the fellowship of the Lord's life.

VII. THE BREAKING OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

A. The relationship of life between the believers and God being eternally unbreakable—

"They shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

The relationship of life between the believers and God will never be broken, because they have received the eternal life from God, which causes them never to perish. Moreover, since God's hand is mighty, nothing can snatch them out of His hand.

B. The fellowship of life between the believers and God being breakable—

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7).

The word "if" in this verse indicates that the fellowship of life between us and God is breakable. If we walk in God's light, we will live in the fellowship of God's life. However, since we often fail to live in God's light, often disobeying and sinning, we often lose the fellowship of God's life, thus causing it to be broken.

VIII. THE RESTORATION OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

By the confession of sins—

"If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Thank God that although our fellowship of life with Him can be broken, it can also be restored. If we are willing to confess our sins to God according to His shining, He will forgive us and cleanse us from our sins. This is according to His faithfulness based on His word and according to His righteousness because of the Lord's blood in order that our fellowship of life with Him may be restored.

IX. THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE NEEDING TO BE MAINTAINED BY THE SENSE OF LIFE

A. The Lord's life in us not only has its fellowship but also has its sense. This sense of life is for the fellowship of life. The fellowship of life is maintained in the

sense of life. Whenever we neglect the sense of life, the fellowship of life is broken and lost, and the sense of life thus becomes dull.

B. If we will once again care for and obey this dull sense of life, the fellowship of life will be restored, even deepened, and the sense of life will also be keener. These two—the sense of life and the fellowship of life—reciprocally affect each other in a continuous cycle, causing the believers to grow in life.

X. THE DANGER TO A BELIEVER NOT LIVING IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

A. Losing the supply and function of life and suffering loss—

"Every branch in Me [the Lord] that does not bear fruit, He [God] takes it away" (John 15:2); "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

If a saved person, who is a branch of the Lord, the vine, does not bear fruit, he will be taken away. The reason for his fruitlessness is that he does not abide in the Lord, in the fellowship of His life. Hence, he is taken away, cast out, dried up, gathered, and cast into the fire to be burned. If we do not abide in the Lord and live in the fellowship of life, we will run a great risk of being cut off from the Lord and of losing our supply and function, thus suffering loss. However, this is not to perish but to suffer loss, to be punished (1 Cor. 3:15), because here the Lord is not speaking about the conditions of salvation but about the conditions of fruitbearing.

B. Being fearful and put to shame—

"Abide in Him [the Lord], that if He is manifested, we may have boldness and not be put to shame from Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

If we abide in the Lord and have fellowship with Him, we spontaneously walk before the Lord and live in His will. This will cause us to have boldness and not be put to shame at the Lord's coming. Otherwise, when we see Him, we will be in fear and will be put to shame, being separated from His presence. Such
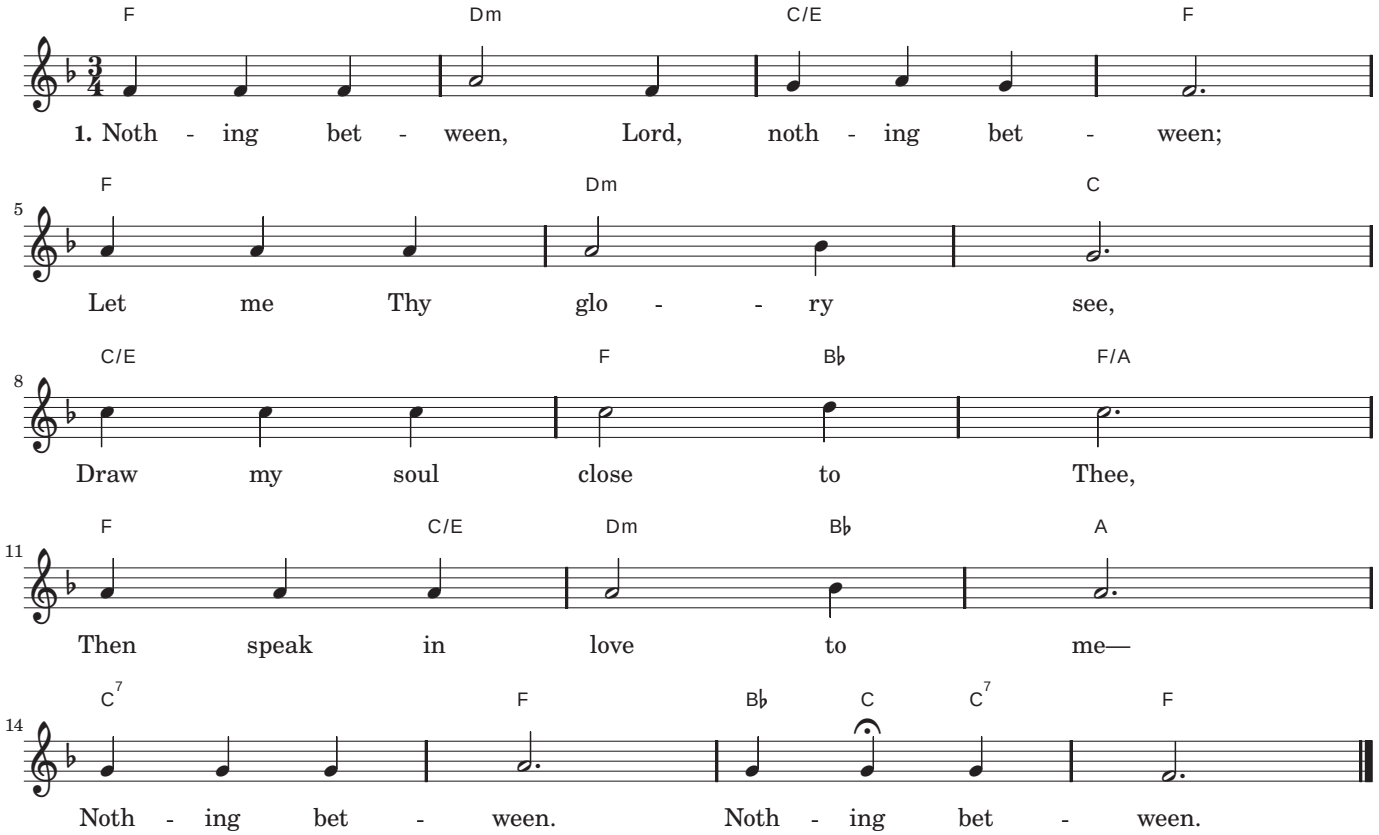
danger should warn us to live in the fellowship of the Lord's life.

Nothing between, Lord, nothing between

Longings—For Fellowship with Christ

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2. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Let not earth's din and noise
Stifle Thy still small voice;
In it let me rejoice—Nothing between.

3. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Nothing of earthly care,
Nothing of tear or prayer,
No robe that self may wear—Nothing between.

4. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Unbelief disappear,
Vanish each doubt and fear,
Fading when Thou art near—Nothing between.

5. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Shine with unclouded ray,
Chasing each mist away,
O'er my whole heart bear sway—Nothing between.

6. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Thus may I walk with Thee,
Thee only may I see,
Thine only let me be—Nothing between.

7. Nothing between, Lord, nothing between;
Till Thine eternal light,
Rising on earth's dark night,
Bursts on my open sight—Nothing between.

LESSON **THIRTY-TWO**

OBEYING THE SENSE OF LIFE

When we believe into Christ and are joined to Him in life, His life in us produces a sense of life, which we who are joined to Him, who are one spirit with Him, and who experience Him must pay attention to and obey in our spiritual life.

I. WHAT THE BELIEVERS HAVE ONCE THEY ARE SAVED

In order to obey the sense of life, we must know the six items which we have once we are saved.

A. The Light of Life

"He who has the Son has the life" (1 John 5:12); "The life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

The moment we receive the Son of God as our Savior, we have the Son of God and we have the life, because the life is in Him (1 John 5:11). This life is the light of men. Therefore, since we have this life, we also have the light of life illuminating us within.

B. God's Laws Inscribed on the Heart

"I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them" (Heb. 8:10).

In the Old Testament God's laws were written on tablets of stone outside of man. In the New Testament, God imparts, or puts, His laws into our mind within us and inscribes them on our hearts. This is accomplished through God imparting His life to us and putting it inside of us, that the law within His life may become the law of our heart and of our mind. A law is not necessarily a life, but a life surely is a law with an innate ability and function. Furthermore, the higher the life, the higher the law of this life. Since the life of God within us is the highest

life, this life in us is not merely a law, but the highest law with the highest innate ability and function. Once we are saved and have the life of God, we have this law of life inscribed on our hearts.

C. The Law of the Spirit of Life

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2).

The Spirit of life is the Spirit of God in our spirit. Since the Spirit of God is of life, His law must also be of life. This is the law of the Spirit of life. Hence, the law of the Spirit of life and the aforementioned laws written on our hearts are related and are one. That the laws are written on our hearts indicates that these laws are in life, the emphasis being on the function of life. The law of the Spirit of life indicates that the law of life within us is of the Holy Spirit, who is in our spirit, the emphasis being on the function of the Holy Spirit. As soon as we are saved, we have both.

D. God Operating Within

"...God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

Once we are saved, God comes to live in us and to operate in us that we may will within and work without to fulfill His good pleasure.

E. Christ Living Within

"Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Once we are saved, we also have Christ living in us as life. His living in us is both effectual and active.

F. The Anointing Within

"The anointing which you received from Him [the Son with the Father] abides in you" (1 John 2:27).

In the Bible the anointing oil refers to the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18). As soon as we are saved God anoints us with His Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22). The anointing is the inward moving of the Holy Spirit, with whom we are anointed. The moving of the

Holy Spirit is like an ointment anointing us within, causing us to sense God's mind and teaching us in all things.

II. THE SENSE OF LIFE

A. The shining of the light of life within us causes us to have a sense within.

Since the light of life is the Lord's life shining in us, this shining will definitely produce a sense of life within, so that we may sense what is of the Lord and what is pleasing to Him.

B. The manifestation of the function of the laws inscribed on our hearts by God and the law of the Spirit of life also enables us to have a sense within.

Since both the laws written on our hearts by God and the law of the Spirit of life within us are an innate function of the Lord's life in us, whenever this function is manifested, we will have a feeling. This feeling is the sense of life, which we can perceive through the function of the law of life.

C. God's operating in us also causes us to have a sense within.

Since God's operating in us is an activity, it will produce a feeling within. This feeling is the sense of life in us, which causes us to sense what God desires us to will and to do.

D. Christ's living in us also causes us to have a sense within.

Christ's living in us is full of doings, definitely causing us to have a sense within. Since this sense is out of the activities of Christ's life within, it is surely of life. Therefore, it also is the sense of life.

E. The anointing in us also causes us to have a sense within.

The Holy Spirit anoints us as the ointment within us. His moving also causes us to have the sense of life in our spirit. Hence, after we are saved, we have not only life but also the sense of life within that we may know inwardly the mind of God and the things pertaining to God.

III. THE BELIEVERS' RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE SENSE OF

LIFE

A. Walking Only according to Spirit, Setting the Mind on the Spirit

"Walk...according to spirit;...the mind set on the spirit" (Rom. 8:4-6).

The sense of life in us is from the Spirit and is also in our spirit. Thus, our first responsibility toward the sense of life is to walk only according to spirit, setting our mind on the spirit. That is, we should obey the spirit and mind the spirit in everything.

B. Caring for the Inner Sense of Life

"The mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

When we set our mind on the spirit, we have life and peace within. Both life and peace are the sense of life within, which can be perceived by us. Hence, we need to care for the sense of life and peace within.

C. Obeying with Fear and Trembling

"Even as you have always obeyed...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

We must obey with fear and trembling the operation of God which we sense within, whether this operation is for the willing or the working. Fear is our inward motive, and trembling is our outward attitude. We should obey in this way the sense of life within us.

D. Abiding in the Lord according to the Teaching of the Anointing

"As His anointing...has taught you, abide in Him [the Lord]" (1 John 2:27).

The anointing in us teaches us to know the Lord and the things pertaining to the Lord. We should abide in the Lord to have fellowship with Him according to this teaching.

IV. THE ISSUE OF OBEYING THE SENSE OF LIFE

A. Enjoying Life and Peace

"The mind set on the spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

By setting our mind on the spirit, we have the sense of life. If we obey this sense of life, we will enjoy life and peace. Life is satisfaction, and peace is rest. The enjoyment of the satisfaction of life and the rest of peace is an immediate issue of our obeying the sense of life.

B. Abiding in the Lord

"As His anointing...has taught you, abide in Him [the Lord]" (1 John 2:27).

The teaching of the anointing gives us the sense of life within. By obeying this sense of life, we can abide in the Lord. This also is an issue of obeying the sense of life.

C. Living Out Our Salvation

"You...obeyed,...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

We have obtained salvation, but after obtaining salvation, we still need to live out this salvation, as this verse says, "Work out your own salvation." When we obey with fear and trembling the sense of life that comes from God's moving within us, we live out the salvation that we have obtained. This also is an issue of our obeying the sense of life.

D. Fulfilling God's Good Pleasure

"You...obeyed...God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

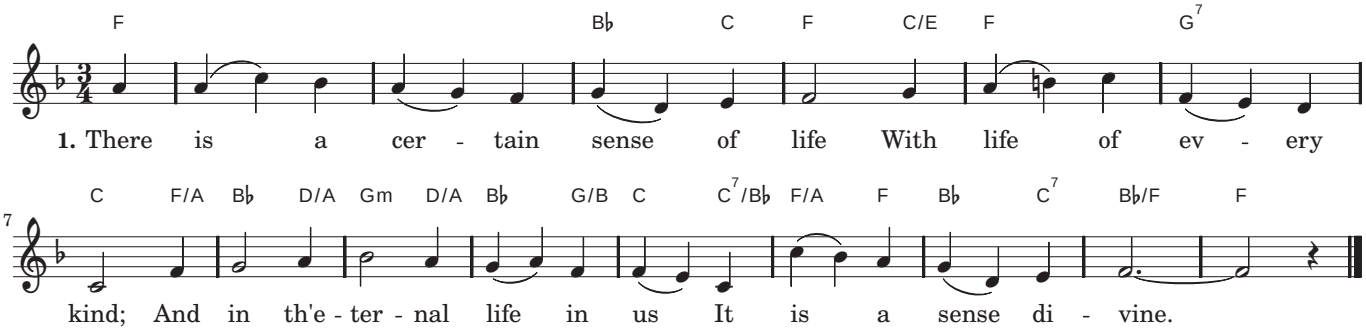
The fulfilling of God's good pleasure is another issue of our obeying the sense of life from the operation of God in us.

There is a certain sense of life

Various Aspects of the Inner Life—The Sense of Life

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738



2. The higher any life may be,
The better is its sense;
The life divine the highest is
And has the highest sense.

3. It is the sense of life in us,
It is the sense of God;
'Tis in our spirit made alive,
And more than sense of good.

4. It is the inner sense in us,
The inmost consciousness,
Discerning matters inwardly,
God's will to thus express.

5. 'Tis by this sense that God we know,
The sense of inner life;
'Tis pow'rful and spontaneous,
And not of any strife.

6. The greater is our growth in life,
The keener is this sense;
The more we walk and act in life,
The more it is intense.

7. The sense of life when exercised
Will make our spirit bold,
And by this inner sense of God
True fellowship we hold.

LESSON THIRTY-THREE

OBEYING THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING

Obeying the teaching of the anointing is intimately related to obeying the sense of life covered in the previous lesson. Obeying the sense of life is related to Christ as life within us, whereas obeying the teaching of the anointing is related to the moving of the Holy Spirit within us. The former is a matter of life and the latter is a matter of the Spirit. These two together are just one thing, that is, to live in the Spirit of life, to live and walk by following the operation of the law of life, and to live a spiritual and victorious life which manifests the Triune God in Christ.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANOINTING

"And you have an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20); "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you" (1 John 2:27).

In biblical typology, the ointment signifies the Holy Spirit, with whom God anoints those whom He would use (Luke 4:18). The anointing of the holy ointment is the moving of this Holy Spirit as ointment within us. This is not merely the ointment but the anointing. It signifies not only the Holy Spirit but also the moving of the Holy Spirit. This is/the continuous anointing and moving, which we receive from the Holy One, the Father and the Son, and which abides in us.

II. THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING

"The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things..." (1 John 2:27); "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know" (1 John 2:20).

The teaching of the anointing is the sense and the knowledge that come from the anointing, the moving, of the Holy Spirit as the ointment within us. This

teaching does not cause us to understand or to know by the written word or by speaking; rather, it causes us to sense and to realize by its moving and gentle rubbing, which often are comprehensible but unutterable. The sense derived from the anointing and the sense of life from the Lord's life within us are actually one. The moving and gentle rubbing of the Holy Spirit become feelings which we can sense through the sense of life from the Lord, causing us to understand God's mind and the things pertaining to God.

III. THE ELEMENTS OF THE ANOINTING

The anointing carries with it certain elements, just like the paint which can be applied to furniture. The elements which the anointing carries with it are just God Himself, God's substance. The more this anointing gently rubs us within, the more the elements of God and the substance of God are rubbed into us. Thus, this anointing brings us not only its teaching but also God's elements. It causes us not only to know God and the things pertaining to God but also to obtain God's rich elements. It causes us not only to do the things of God but also to gain the increase of God within, resulting in our growth and our increase in stature in the elements of God.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ANOINTING OF THE OIL AND THE APPLICATION OF THE BLOOD

"The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. And the priest shall pour of the oil into the palm of his own left hand: and the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the Lord: and the priest shall put of the oil that is in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering" (Lev. 14:25-28).

The blood of the trespass offering mentioned here typifies the redeeming

blood which Christ shed for us. The oil mentioned here typifies the Holy Spirit, with whom God anoints us. The Holy Spirit as oil anointing us signifies God in the Spirit as His ultimate expression reaching us. God's reaching us in this way must be based on the blood of the redemption which Christ accomplished for us. This redeeming blood of Christ is the very basis upon which God reaches us. In the Old Testament type, first the blood was put upon the person, and then the oil for anointing was put upon the blood. In the New Testament, first the blood of Christ sprinkles us (1 Pet. 1:2); then the Spirit, with whom God anoints us, is anointed into us and is being continually anointed into us based upon the redemption of Christ's blood. Thus, in order for us to obtain this Spirit and to have the Spirit anointing us continuously, we must rely on the precious blood of Christ's redemption.

V. THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR MIND

The teaching of the anointing is the sense which comes from the moving of the indwelling Spirit in our spirit, causing us to sense deep within the things which God wants us to know. The understanding of the mind is our interpretation of the teaching of the anointing. This interpretation is in the comprehension of our mind. By this means we understand the things which God wants us to know through the teaching of the anointing. This can be illustrated by the experience of a person who goes to see a movie after he has just been saved. He feels uncomfortable and uneasy deep in his spirit, but he does not understand the reason. Eventually, after being taught, his mind comes to realize that there are many ungodly elements in the matter of watching movies, and he begins to understand that the discomfort and uneasiness in his spirit is the anointing, the moving, of the Holy Spirit within him. In this way he is taught by the anointing, the moving, of the Holy Spirit in him, and he is sanctified.

VI. OBEYING THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING

"The anointing which you received from Him abides in you,...and even as it has taught you, abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

This word tells us to abide in the Lord according to the teaching of the anointing within. To walk according to the teaching of the anointing is to obey the teaching of the anointing. This is necessary for our abiding in the Lord and our maintaining fellowship with the Lord. When we obey the inward teaching of the anointing, we are following the Spirit, we are living in the fellowship of the Lord's life, and we are living before God.

VII. THE ISSUE OF OBEYING THE TEACHING OF THE ANOINTING
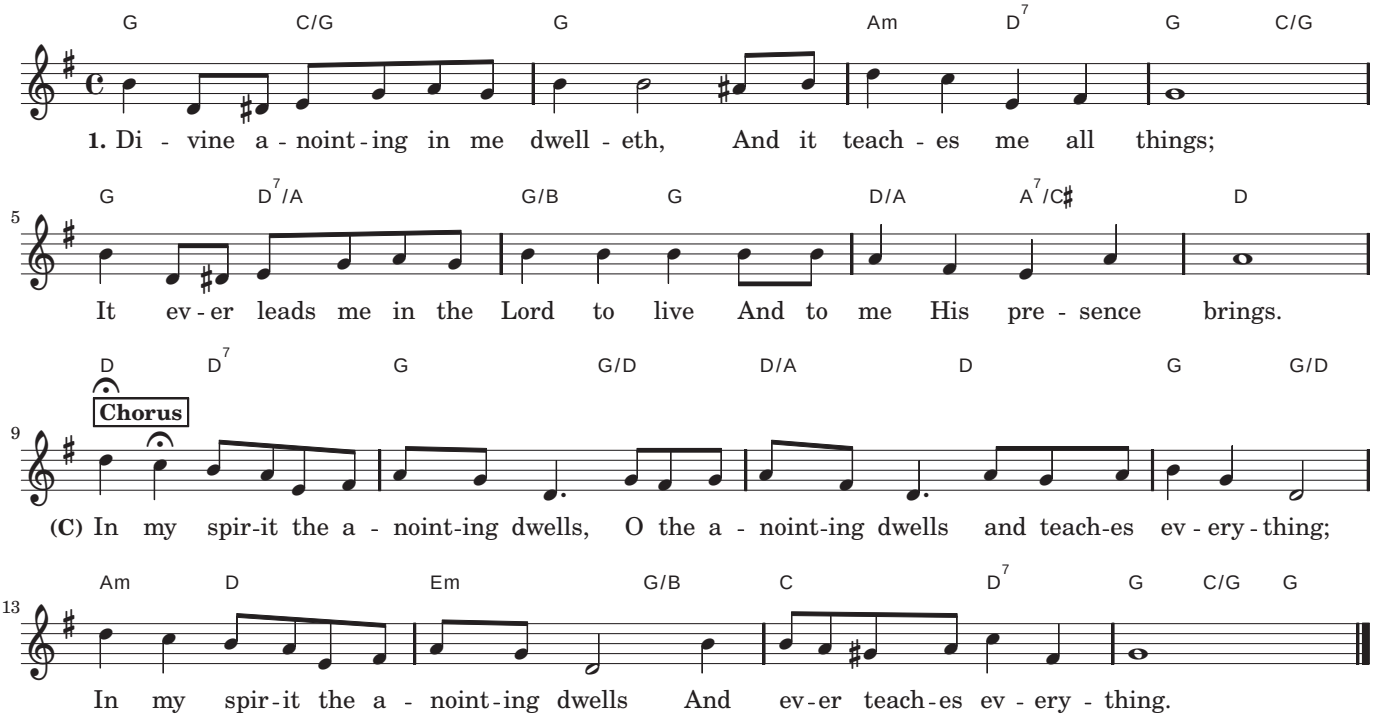
Since the anointing is the gentle rubbing and moving of the Holy Spirit in us with God's element, when we obey its teaching, we have the increase of God's element within and are led to live before His face at every time and in every place, abiding in Him and fellowshipping with Him in an uninterrupted flow. Thus, we obtain His abiding in us and enjoy the topmost blessing of His presence. At such a time we enter into the realm mentioned in the chorus of Hymns, #551, which says, "I have passed the riven veil, here the glories never fail...I am living in the presence of the King." This is our passing through the veil of the flesh to live before God, our entering into the Holy of Holies, our living in our spirit to have fellowship with God face to face.

Divine anointing in me dwelleth

Fulness of the Spirit—The Anointing

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2. It is the moving of the Spirit
Gracious as the ointment pure;
'Tis based upon the sprinkling of the blood,
And it ever shall endure.

3. With God's own essence it anoints me,
God to know subjectively,
That I may have His very element
Fully saturating me.

4. 'Tis by this inner life-anointing
I in fellowship may move;
In God, the light of truth, I'm walking,
And the love of grace I prove.

LESSON THIRTY-FOUR

WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

Obeying the teaching of the anointing, in the previous lesson, and obeying the sense of life, in Lesson Thirty-two, are closely related. Likewise, the subject of this lesson— walking according to spirit—and obeying the teaching of the anointing, in the previous lesson, are just one. Hence, these three—obeying the sense of life, obeying the teaching of the anointing, and walking according to spirit—are but three aspects of one thing. Obedience to the sense of life is related to Christ as life and is a matter of life; obedience to the teaching of the anointing is related to the Holy Spirit's anointing, or moving, as the ointment and is a matter of the Spirit of life; walking according to spirit concerns our walk according to the mingled spirit, and is not only a matter of the Spirit of life but also of our regenerated spirit. These three join together Christ, who is life, the Spirit of life, and our regenerated spirit. Christ as life causes us to have the sense of life, the anointing and moving of the Holy Spirit causes us to be taught by the Spirit, and our being mingled with the Spirit of the Lord's life into one spirit causes us to walk in our spirit according to the sense of the Lord's life, which comes from the moving of the Spirit of life. This is the processed Triune God mingling Himself with us as one. This mingling is in Christ, who became the life-giving Spirit, through the Spirit of life as His ultimate expression, and in our regenerated spirit. As a result, the Triune God accomplishes His New Testament economy, that is, His eternal economy.

I. THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE MINGLING OF TWO SPIRITS INTO ONE

"He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17).

The New Testament clearly and emphatically reveals to us that we, who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit to have God's Spirit of life indwelling our regenerated spirit, are one spirit with the Lord. This means that our regenerated

spirit and the Spirit of life, who regenerated us, are mingled as one spirit. In such New Testament verses as Romans 8:4, and also verses 5 and 6, as well as Galatians 5:16 and 25, the word "spirit" refers to this mingled spirit, which is the Spirit of God and also is our spirit. On the one hand, it is our spirit; on the other hand, it is the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul was full of the experiences of this mingled spirit. Thus, he told us to walk according to this mingled spirit. This is not merely to walk according to the Spirit of God but to walk by following our regenerated spirit, which is indwelt by the Spirit of God's life.

II. THE LIVING AND WALK WHICH THE BELIEVERS SHOULD HAVE

"That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk [live and walk] according to flesh, but according to spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

According to the desire of the Triune God, who mingled Himself with us, our living as believers is not only a living that is scriptural, nor merely a living that is "sanctified" and "victorious," but a living that is a walk according to the spirit in us, which spirit is the mingling of two spirits as one. Such a living causes our flesh, our self, our soul, and our natural life to lose their position and function, and allows the processed Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, to gain the full ground in us in order that He may reach the goal of mingling Himself with our tripartite being, the spirit, the soul, and the body, that is, that we may be fully occupied by Him and filled and saturated with Him, taking Him as our life, our person, and our everything, that we may be completely one with Him to be His full expression. This experience far surpasses that which is expressed by such spiritual terms as obeying God, being sanctified unto God, abiding in the Lord, and fellowshipping with the Lord. This living not only satisfies the righteous requirement of God's law so that, with respect to His righteousness, He is no longer hindered; it also fulfills the purpose of God's economy so that He is fully satisfied with respect to His holiness and has absolutely no shortage with respect to His glory.

III. TWO KINDS OF WALK

A. "Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

"Walk" in this verse is the same word as in Romans 8:4. It refers to the general walk in our living, and it is different from the walk in Galatians 5:25, which is according to a rule.

B. "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk [according to a rule] by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Walking orderly refers to walking in a definite line, by a definite rule. Although this too is a "walk by the Spirit" in our living, it is not general but specific and according to a definite rule. In Galatians 6:15 and 16, Paul, the author of the book, advises us that we must walk according to "this rule," the rule that circumcision is nothing, and that the crucial thing is to be a new creation. The two kinds of walk in our living as believers, whether the general walk or the specific walk that is according to a definite rule, must be according to the spirit in us, which is the mingling of the two spirits into one.

IV. LIVING AND WALKING ONLY ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

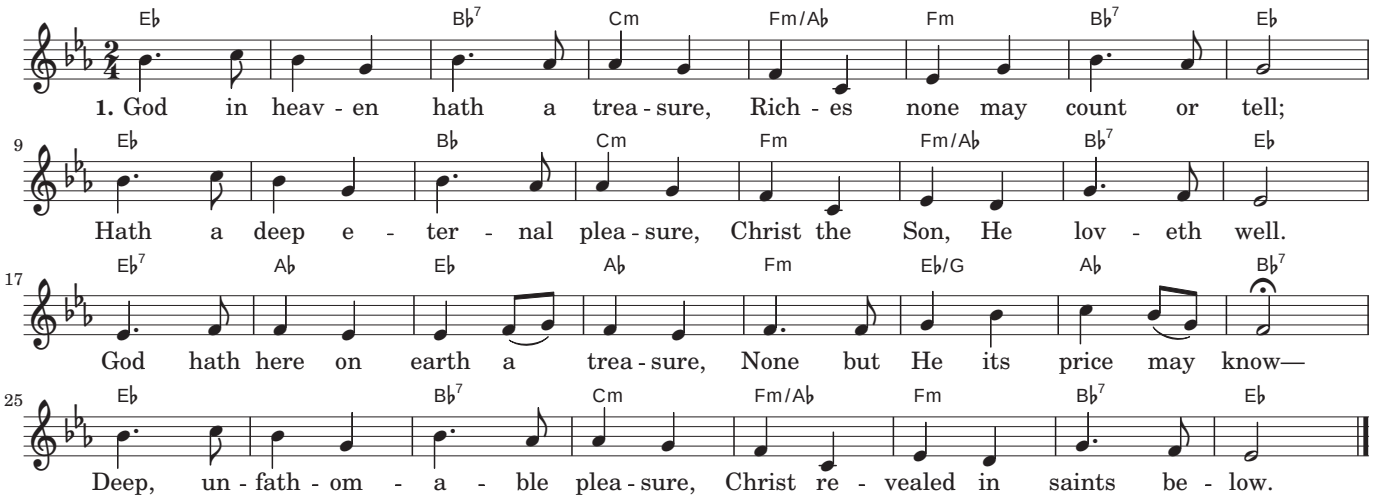
"Do not walk [live and walk] according to flesh, but according to spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

Since, as indicated previously, living and walking according to spirit is so crucial, we must not live and walk according to flesh but according to spirit. Actually, any living and walking that is according to things other than the spirit is a living and walking according to flesh. If we do not walk according to spirit but endeavor to walk according to the Bible, we are actually, if not apparently, walking according to flesh. This is because we are keeping the words of the Bible with our own strength, just as the Israelites kept the law with their own power. One who walks according to spirit does everything by the spirit and not by his own strength. In this way, our walk is not merely to do what pleases God according to His will but to carry out what God wants us to do by God Himself, who is the Holy Spirit mingled with our spirit.

God in heaven hath a treasure

Experience of Christ — Expressing Him

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2. God in tongues of fire descending,
Chosen vessels thus to fill
With the treasure never ending,
Ever spent—unfailing still.
God's own hand the vessel filling
From the glory far above,
Longing hearts forever stilling
With the riches of His love.

3. Thus though worn, and tried, and tempted,
Glorious calling, saint, is thine;
Let the Lord but find thee emptied,
Living branch in Christ the Vine!
Vessels of the world's despising,
Vessels weak and poor and base,
Bearing wealth God's heart is prizing,
Glory from Christ's blessed face.

4. Oh to be but emptier, lowlier,
Mean, unnoticed—and unknown,
And to God a vessel holier,
Filled with Christ and Christ alone!
Naught of earth to cloud the glory,
Naught of self the light to dim,
Telling forth His wondrous story,
Emptied to be filled with Him.

LESSON THIRTY-FIVE

AWAITING THE LORD'S COMING

If we, the believers, live a life in the Triune God that is sanctified, spiritual, victorious, and one spirit with the Lord according to that which was covered in the previous ten lessons of this volume, we will surely await the Lord's coming with eager expectation.

I. THE LORD'S PROMISE

"The Son of Man [the Lord] is about to come" (Matt. 16:27); "I [the Lord] come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

In these two portions and in many other verses in the New Testament, the Lord definitely promised that He will come again.

II. WHAT THE LORD'S COMING IS TO THE BELIEVERS

A. The Rapture of the Believers

1. **"The Lord Himself...will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are living, who remain, shall be caught up at the same time together with them in clouds into a meeting of the Lord in the air; and so we shall be always together with the Lord" (1 Thes. 4:16-17).**
2. **"So also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken...Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken" (Matt. 24:39-41).**

Both passages clearly show us that, when the Lord comes back, He will rapture us who belong to Him from this dark world and this corrupted earth to meet Him and be together with Him forever.

B. The Transfiguration of the Believers

"From which [the heavens]...the Lord Jesus Christ...will transfigure the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory, according to the operation of Him who is able even to subject all

things to Himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

These verses reveal to us that the Lord Jesus will come from the heavens to transfigure with His great power the believers' body of humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory. This is for the redemption of our body, which will free us from all the problems in the old creation (Rom. 8:23).

C. The Rewarding of the Believers

1. **"Behold, I [the Lord] come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book [because he will be rewarded]" (Rev. 22:7).**
2. **"Behold, I [the Lord] come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12).**
3. **"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever...to give the reward to Your [the Lord God's] slaves the prophets, and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great" (Rev. 11:15-18).**

The above three passages indicate to us that, when He comes again to possess the kingdom, the Lord will reward all those who belong to Him (Of course, some will receive His punishment, because He said, "My reward is with Me," implying that there is not only reward but also punishment.)

III. THE ATTITUDE THE BELIEVERS SHOULD HAVE TOWARD THE LORD'S COMING

A. Waiting

"We should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope, even the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:12-13).

Regarding the coming of our Lord, we should have a godly living in which we await His glorious appearing. This appearing should be the blessing we hope for.

B. Watching

"Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes" (Matt. 24:42); "And take heed to yourselves lest at some time your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare; for it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth. But be watchful, at every time beseeching, that you may prevail to escape all these things which are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34-36).

These two portions of the Scripture tell us that we must be careful and watchful, and we must be beseeching, so that when the Lord comes we may overcome and be able to escape all the calamities which will come upon all peoples on the earth and to stand before Him.

C. Loving

1. **"Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord...will award to me in that day; and not only to me, but also to all those who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).**

Even more, we need to desire and love the Lord's coming again, not that we may gain His reward, but that we may gain His lovely Self.

2. **"Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).**
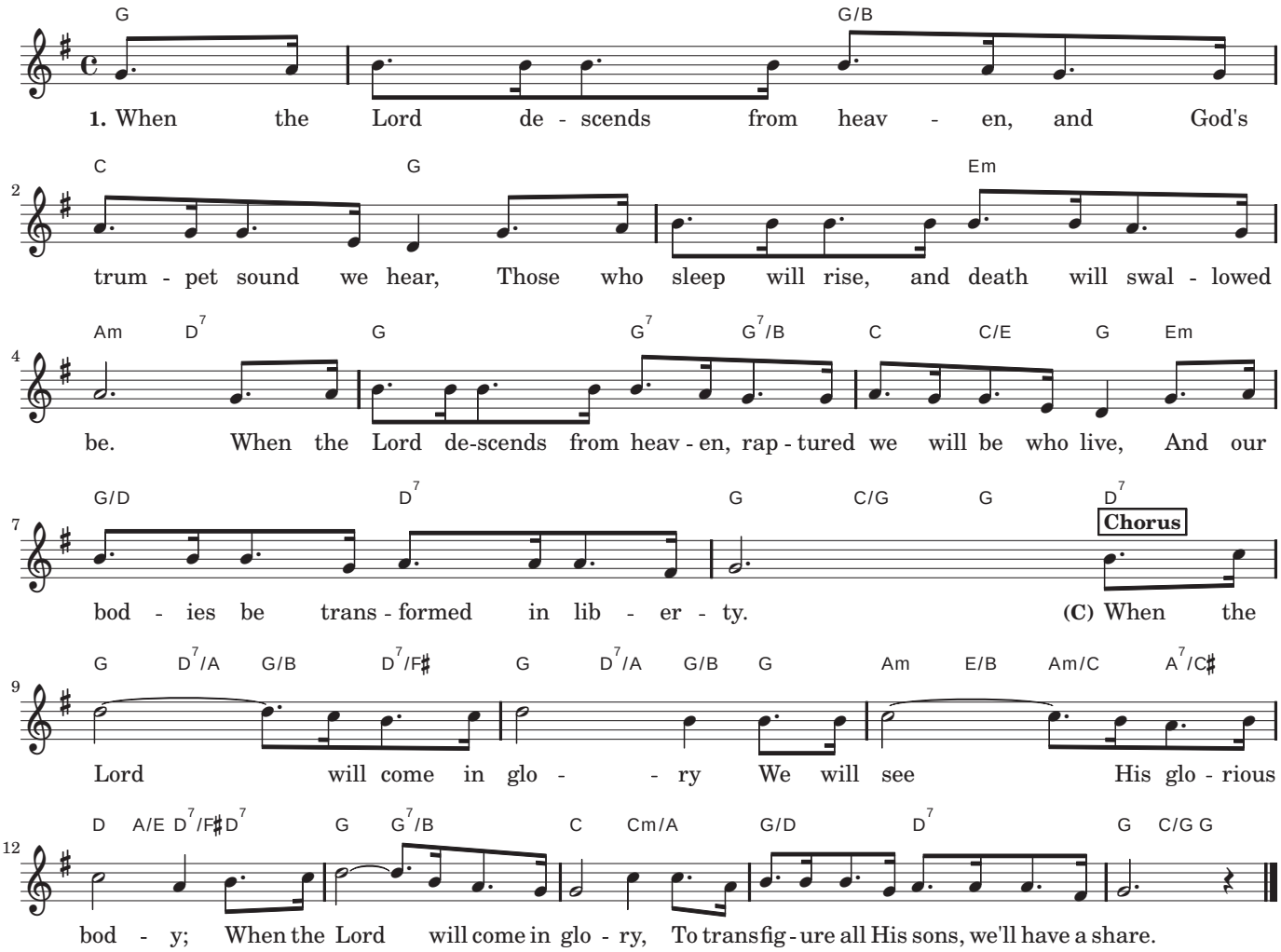
This should be the longing and cry of those who love the Lord and who love His coming again. This should also become our constant prayer.

When the Lord descends from heaven

Hope of Glory—Waiting and Watching

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2. When the Lord descends from heaven, then the morning bright will dawn,
This dark night will pass, and weeping will be o'er.
When the Lord descends from heaven, days of glory will begin;
Sighing and corruption gone forevermore.

3. E'er the Lord will come from heaven, the bright morning star will shine,
Those who watch escape the trial, gain the prize.
Then the Lord will come and as the Sun of righteousness will reign;
Earth will be restored, God's mercy realize.

4. Soon the Lord will come from heaven; may we watch and wait with prayer,
Loins be girt about, and lamps be burning bright.
Soon the Lord will come from heaven, may we serve Him faithfully,
Thus the ministry fulfill, our gifts incite.

LESSON THIRTY-SIX

RAPTURED TO MEET THE LORD

After we have believed in the Lord and are saved, because of the demand of the divine life which we have received and because of the intensity of our love toward the Lord, we desire to pursue a life that awaits the Lord's coming. In such a life of loving the Lord and waiting for the Lord, we also expect, according to that which is revealed and prophesied in the Bible, to be raptured to the Lord, to meet together joyfully with Him.

I. TWO CATEGORIES OF RAPTURE

According to the Bible, the rapture of the believers is divided into two categories according to the difference in their individual life and work before the Lord after their salvation. The first is the rapture of the overcoming believers, and the second, the rapture of the majority of the believers.

II. THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMING BELIEVERS

A. The Need

1. **"For then there shall be great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21).**

The Lord Jesus prophesied here that, at the end of this age, great tribulation, such as is unequaled either before or after its time, will come upon the people of the world.

2. **"...and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare; for it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth" (Luke 21:34-35).**

"That day" refers to the day mentioned above, the day of the coming of the great tribulation, which is unequaled before or after its time. At the end of this age, the day of the great tribulation will suddenly come as a snare upon all the

inhabitants of the earth.

3. **"...the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).**

This verse tells us that the great tribulation, which is about to come, is to try the people of the whole inhabited earth.

4. **"Whenever they say, Peace and security, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as birth pangs to a woman with child, and they shall by no means escape" (1 Thes. 5:3).**

The coming great tribulation mentioned previously will come suddenly upon men when they are saying, "Peace and security," that is, when they are seeking peace and security. It will come upon them as birth pangs to a woman with child, and they will by no means escape.

According to the revelation in the foregoing Scriptures, the believers who live in this corrupt, dark age, which will be beset with calamities, definitely need to be raptured that they may be delivered out of this evil earth to be with the Lord, whom they long for.

B. The Promise

1. **"But be watchful, at every time beseeching, that you may prevail [or, be counted worthy] to escape all these things which are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).**

In the original language, "to stand" in this verse is in the passive voice; hence, it has the meaning of being put in a certain place, referring to our being raptured to the presence of Christ. In this word the Lord promised that if we are watchful and beseeching so that we overcome to escape (or, are counted worthy to escape) all the coming tribulations, we will be placed in, that is, raptured to, His presence.

2. **"Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).**

In this word the Lord promised us that if we keep the word of His

endurance, He will keep us out of the hour in which the people on the whole earth will be tried, that is, He will take us out of the hour in which the whole earth will suffer the great tribulation.

C. The Fact

1. **"...so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left" (Matt. 24:39-41).**

This is the Lord's prophecy, that at His coming, some believers will be raptured and others will be left. Undoubtedly, those who are raptured are the believers mentioned previously, who overcome or are counted worthy to escape; those who are left are the believers who are defeated and who remain.

2. **"And she [the woman] brought forth a son, a man-child, who was about to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne" (Rev. 12:5).**

The woman refers to the totality of God's chosen people throughout the generations. The man-child refers to the overcomers among God's chosen people, who will rule the nations. Before the end of this age, the overcomers among God's chosen people will be raptured to God and to His throne in the heavens.

3. **"...the Lamb standing on mount Zion [in the heavens], and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand...These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men as firstfruit to God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:1-4).**

This word of prophecy discloses to us that before the end of this age, a group of overcomers, signified by the one hundred and forty-four thousand, will be raptured to the heavens to stand with the Lamb-Christ on the heavenly mount Zion. Purchased from among men, they are those who follow the Lamb absolutely and who have become the firstfruit to God and to the Lamb.

D. The Time

1. **"I also will keep you out of the hour of trial which is about to come**

on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

The hour of trial for all those who dwell on the earth is the time of the great tribulation. Here, the Lord promises the overcoming saints that He will keep them from the hour of trial; that is, He will take them away from the earth, which is under trial, to the heavens before the great tribulation.

2. "...a man-child...was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness...so that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days," that is, "a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. 12:5-6, 14).

One thousand two hundred and sixty days, or three and a half years, is the time during which the people of the earth will be tried by the great tribulation. Before the three and a half years, the overcoming man-child, the overcoming saints, will be raptured to God and to His throne in the heavens.

E. The Place

"Caught up to God and to His throne" (Rev. 12:5); "On mount Zion [in the heavens]" (Rev. 14:1).

These two verses show us that the overcoming believers who are raptured before the great tribulation are taken to mount Zion in the heavens, where God and His throne are.

F. The Conditions

1. "But be watchful, at every time beseeching" (Luke 21:36); "Watch...be ready..." (Matt. 24:42-44); "...looking for their own lord...that when he comes..." (Luke 12:36).

The items mentioned in these verses—to be watchful, to beseech at every time, and to look for the Lord's coming— are the conditions for us to be raptured as the overcomers among the believers.

2. "...those who have loved His [the Lord's] appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8); "You have kept the word of My [the Lord's] endurance" (Rev. 3:10); "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My [the Lord's] works

[which the Lord accomplished and will accomplish] until the end" (Rev. 2:26).

The items mentioned in these verses—to love the Lord's appearing, to keep the word of the Lord's endurance, and to overcome and keep the works which the Lord accomplished and will accomplish, that is, to keep all that the Lord has accomplished for us—are also conditions for us to be raptured as the overcomers among the believers.

III. THE RAPTURE OF THE MAJORITY OF THE BELIEVERS

A. The fact—

"And He who sat on the cloud [the coming Christ] thrust His sickle over the earth [that is, sent the angels], and the earth [the believers] was reaped [raptured]" (Rev. 14:16).

This verse speaks of the rapture of the majority of the believers, which is apart from that of the overcoming believers.

B. The persons—

the resurrected saints and the believers "who are living, who remain" (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

These verses indicate that the majority of the believers who will be raptured are the dead saints, who will be resurrected, and the believers who are living and remain after the rapture of the overcoming believers.

C. The time—

"...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together [being raptured] to Him...the day...will not come unless...the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is revealed" (2 Thes. 2:1-3); "...at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:52).

These two passages tell us that the time of the believers' rapture will be after the revelation of Antichrist, at the end of the great tribulation, when the angel sounds the last trumpet and the Lord comes to gain His kingdom (Rev. 11:15; 1 Thes. 4:16).

D. The place—

"...in clouds...in the air" (1 Thes. 4:17).

The majority of the believers will be raptured to the air, unlike the overcoming believers, who will be raptured to the throne of God in the heavens.

E. The condition—

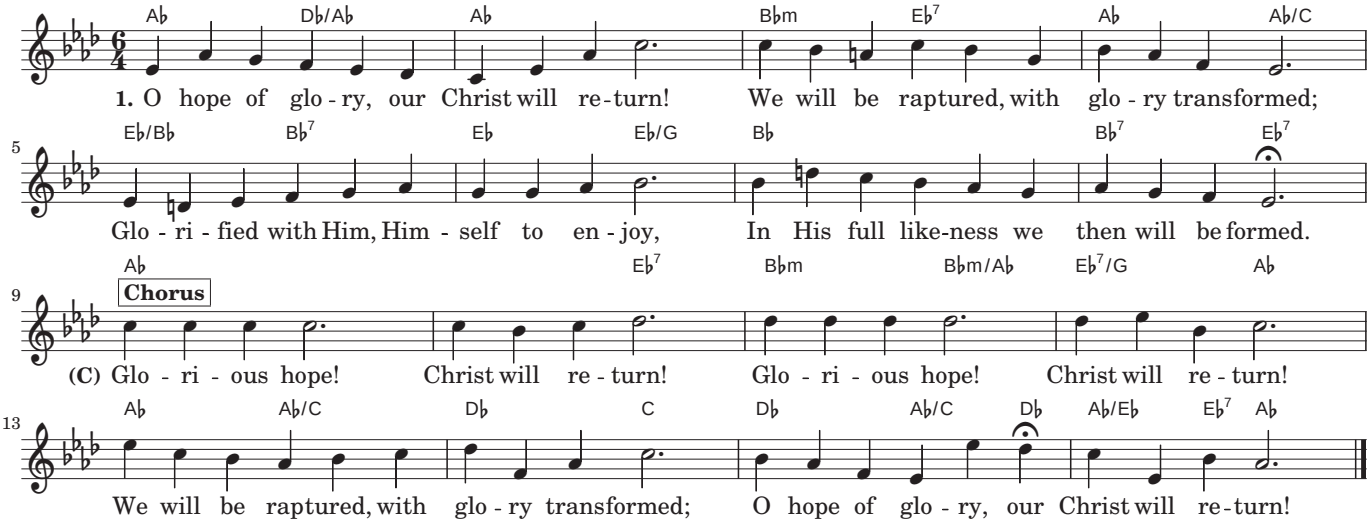
"The harvest [the believers]...is ripe" (Rev. 14:15).

The condition for the rapture of the majority of the believers is maturity in life. Like the unripened harvest that cannot be reaped, an immature believer cannot be raptured.

O hope of glory, our Christ will return

Hope of Glory — Salvation to the Uttermost

966



2. O hope of glory, our Christ will return!
The old creation will vanish away,
No more we'll groan, but have full liberty.
Enjoy salvation in its utmost way.

3. O hope of glory, our Christ will return!
Over the nations with Him we will reign,
Priests we will be in His presence to serve,
Thus His salvation in fulness we'll gain.

4. O hope of glory, our Christ will return!
Waiting and watching, we faithfully serve,
Running the race, pressing on toward the goal
That we the Kingdom's reward might deserve.

Life Lessons, Vol. 4

LESSON THIRTY-SEVEN

THE WAY TO ENJOY GOD'S SALVATION—INCLUDING THE FIRST STAGE OF SANCTIFICATION

In the previous three volumes we covered thirty topics concerning the matters between God and us, and between us and God. In this fourth volume, we still need to have an overall view of God's full salvation. We will first look into the way to enjoy God's full salvation; then we will consider the different aspects of God's full salvation. According to the divine revelation in the Bible, there are clearly three steps which constitute the way to enjoy God's full salvation.

I. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2).

The word here shows us how the Triune God causes His salvation to reach us: God the Father chose us according to His foreknowledge, and God the Spirit sanctifies us that we may receive God the Son's redemption, denoted here by the blood of Christ. According to our experience of God's full salvation, the sanctification of God the Spirit is the first step in our enjoyment of God's full salvation. God the Father chose us in eternity past according to His foreknowledge. Then, after we were born, God the Spirit came to sanctify us from the world, according to the Father's selection, that we might enjoy the redemption of God the Son. Therefore, the sanctification of God the Spirit becomes the first step in our enjoyment of God's full salvation. This step, however, is not taken by us. It is the work of God the Spirit.

The sanctification of God the Spirit separates us from the world that we may belong to God and enjoy God's full salvation. This sanctification in us is divided into three stages. The first is for our repentance, the second is for our

justification, and the third is for our transformation. Hence, God the Spirit's coming to separate us unto repentance according to God the Father's selection in eternity is the first stage of His complete sanctification in us. In this first stage of sanctification He enlightens us, causing us to be convicted concerning sin (John 16:8), to come to ourselves (Luke 15:17), and to repent and turn to God (Acts 26:20).

II. OUR REPENTANCE

A. "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

This word tells us that in order to enjoy God's full salvation, we must repent and believe in the gospel; that is, we must receive God's salvation. Therefore, our repentance is the second step in our enjoyment of God's full salvation.

B. "Light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek carefully...one sinner repenting...he came to himself" (Luke 15:8, 10, 17).

In these verses, lighting a lamp, sweeping the house, and seeking carefully signify that, at the time that we hear the gospel, God the Spirit (the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us) enlightens us from within and searches out our sins one by one, that we may know our sins and repent. Hence, this portion of the Bible shows us that it is because of such enlightening and searching of the Holy Spirit in us that we the sinners come to ourselves and repent. The Holy Spirit enlightens and searches us inwardly to sanctify us from the world and to cause us to turn to the Lord and receive God's full salvation. Thus, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit is the first step in our receiving salvation, and our repentance is the second step.

C. "Repent and turn to God" (Acts 26:20).

Repentance literally means a change in mind which produces regret and a consequent change in goal. We repent and believe in the Lord because, after we hear the gospel, our mind is sanctified by the Holy Spirit to become regretful and to have a change, a turn to God to take Him as our goal in everything.

D. "Preaching...repentance...Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every ravine shall be filled up, and every mountain

and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked places shall become straight, and the rough places smooth roads;...shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:3-6).

It is through much straightening and smoothing in our hearts that we see (that is, possess) the repentance in God's salvation. The ravine, the mountain, the crooked places, and the rough places are figures of speech describing the conditions of men's hearts toward God and toward each other and the relationships among men. When we repent and believe in the Lord, our repentance straightens all the crooked places and fills up all the rough places in our hearts, making our entire being straight and smooth for God to come in to carry out His full salvation.

III. OUR BELIEVING AND BEING BAPTIZED

A. Believing

1. "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

This word shows us that in order to enjoy God's salvation, we must repent and also believe. On the negative side, when we repent, we regret and confess our sins to clear up and straighten our condition, which is fallen and away from God. On the positive side, when we believe, we believe into Christ and receive God into us, that we may obtain Him and His eternal life.

2. "That everyone who believes in Him should... have eternal life" (John 3:16).

When we believe in the Lord, we believe into the Lord that we may be joined to Him in God's eternal life to enjoy the full salvation which is prepared by God in Him. Therefore, the fact that "to believe" is "to believe into" strongly conveys a sense of being joined and united.

3. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

To believe is not only to believe into but also to receive. To believe into equals to be joined to, referring to our being joined to Christ, into whom we have believed; to receive means to receive the Christ into whom we believe and who

has come into us to be joined to us. Our believing into Christ makes us those who are in Christ; our receiving Christ causes Him to be the One who is in us. "In Christ" is the beginning of our union with Him, which affords us the position and sphere to enjoy God's full salvation; "Christ in us" is the progress of this union, which further gives us the experience and the elements of the enjoyment of God's full salvation. If we allow our experience of these two—our being in Christ and Christ's being in us—to continue without hindrance or distraction, we will richly and unceasingly enjoy God's full salvation in Christ.

4. "Those who have been allotted like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ"(2 Pet. 1:1).

The faith through which we believe into Christ and receive Christ, and by which we are saved (Eph. 2:8), is the like precious faith allotted to us. "Allotted" indicates that we do not have this faith in ourselves; rather, it is obtained by us from God. Moreover, this faith is "like," that is, it is of the same one whole. "Like faith" indicates that the faith possessed by us, who have believed into Christ and have received Christ, is of the same one whole, out of which we all have been given an allotment. It is like the whole of the good land of Canaan, which was allotted to the Israelites in the Old Testament (Josh. 14:1-5). The good land of Canaan in the Old Testament typifies the all-inclusive Christ in the New Testament. In the New Testament, God gives this rich Christ as an allotted inheritance to all those who were chosen by Him. This inheritance is included in the faith, and through this faith we were allotted and have received the inheritance. Hence, this faith of ours is the inheritance which we have received from God. It is also the faith through which we were allotted and have received this inheritance from God. Therefore, the inheritance allotted by God and the faith through which we were allotted and have received God's inheritance are one and the same, that is, Christ Himself given to us by God. On the one hand, the Christ given to us by God is our inheritance from God; on the other hand, He is also the faith through which we were allotted and have received God's inheritance. Both are Christ. When we hear and believe in the gospel, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us and causes us to repent brings Christ into us, on the one

hand, to be our inheritance from God and, on the other hand, to be the faith through which we are allotted and receive God's inheritance. Both are the portion which God gives to us, that is, the portion of the saints from God (Col. 1:12). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, who brings Christ into us, is the ultimate expression of the Triune God reaching us and entering into us to bring Christ into us as our eternal portion from God. Thus, the Triune God enters into His chosen people to be their faith, causing them to enter into Him to be joined to Him as one in His divine life. This is the ultimate significance of the very faith by which we enter into Christ.

B. Being Baptized

1. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

This simple and definite word further reveals to us that in order to enjoy God's full salvation, we must not only believe but also be baptized. To believe and be baptized are not two steps; they are one step that requires both feet. Both are needed to complete one step. To believe is the inward reality of our entering into Christ, and to be baptized is the outward confession, testimony, sign, and declaration of our entering into Christ.

2. "For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Just as our inward believing is our entering into Christ, so also is our outward baptism. Only when these two are combined is there a complete and substantial entering. Through faith and baptism we enter into Christ completely and substantially, putting on Christ as the righteousness that we obtain by believing into Him. Thus we become heirs of God (Luke 15:21-23) to inherit the Christ of God as our inheritance (Gal. 3:29).

3. "As many as have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death" (Rom. 6:3); "...buried together with Him [Christ] in baptism, in whom also you were raised together" (Col. 2:12).

When we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into His death. By

being immersed into Him, we have a union with Him, and whatever He experienced becomes our experience. Since He experienced death and resurrection, by being baptized into Him to be joined to Him, we participate in the death and resurrection which He experienced. We died with Him in His death and were thus delivered from everything of the old creation. We were also resurrected with Him in His resurrection to enter into everything of the new creation.

4. **"Which figure [of the water] also now saves you, baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).**

As the flood rescued Noah's family from that corrupted generation (Gen. 6:11, 17), baptism rescues us from the corrupted world. This baptism is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience toward God. It is an appeal to God for a good conscience towards Him by those who are being baptized, that they may be able to testify before men that all their problems with God have been solved, that there is no more accusation in their conscience, that instead they are full of peace and faith, and that they have been baptized into the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). Furthermore, through the resurrection of Christ, that is, through Christ becoming the Spirit of life in resurrection, they are organically united with Him.

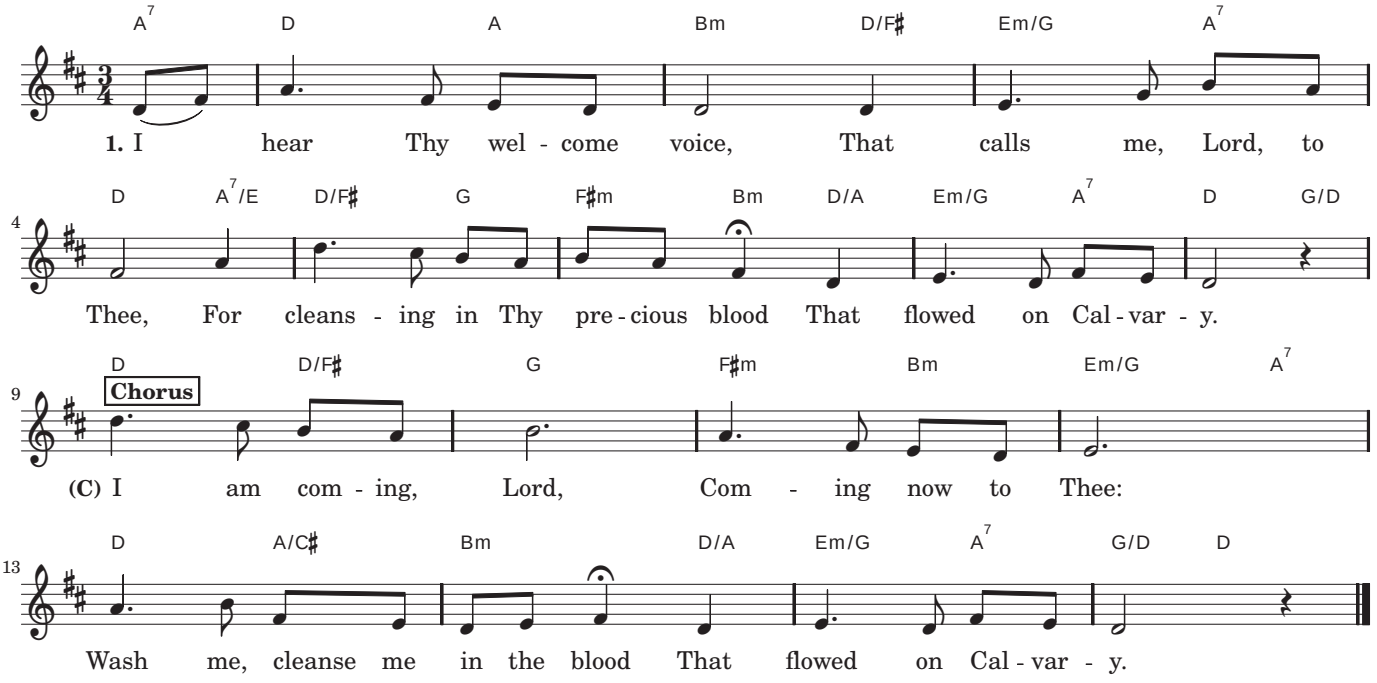
The sanctification of the Holy Spirit, our repentance, our believing and being baptized, which we have now seen, are the three necessary steps for us to enjoy God's full salvation in Christ. Moreover, in us who are experiencing God's full salvation, the experience of the reality of these three steps should be repeated as a cycle again and again.

I hear Thy welcome voice

Gospel—Coming to the Lord

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2. Though coming weak and vile,
Thou dost my strength assure;
Thou dost my vileness fully cleanse,
Till spotless all, and pure.

3. 'Tis Jesus who confirms
The blessed work within,
By adding grace to welcomed grace,
Where reigned the power of sin.

4. And He the witness gives
To loyal hearts and free,
That every promise is fulfilled,
If faith but brings the plea.

5. All hail, redeeming blood!
All hail, life-giving grace!
All hail, the gift of Christ our Lord,
Our strength and righteousness.

LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

AND THE CLEANSING AWAY OF SINS

In His full salvation, God first forgives us of our sins and cleanses us of our sins. When we receive God's full salvation, the first items we enjoy are God's forgiveness of our sins and His cleansing away of our sins.

I. FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"Everyone who believes into Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

Forgiveness of sins is the first part of our redemption, and it is received by us at the moment we believe. Our first problem before God is that there is a record of sin because of our sinful deeds. Only when our record is cleared can the righteousness of God release us. Unless our sinful deeds before Him are eliminated, the righteous God cannot grant us the remaining items of His redemption. Therefore, we first need to have God's forgiveness of our sins.

A. The Significance of Forgiveness of Sins

1. **Being delivered from the penalty of God's righteousness—"He who believes into Him is not judged" (John 3:18).**

First, forgiveness of sins means the elimination of our record of sin before God that we may be delivered from the penalty of God's righteousness. Because we had a record of sin before God and were condemned, we should have suffered God's righteous punishment. But when God forgave us, He delivered us from His righteous penalty and condemned us no longer.

2. **Causing the sins to leave the forgiven ones— "Give...forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31); "The Lord hath laid on him [Christ] the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6); "Himself [Christ] carried up our sins in His body onto the tree [the cross]" (1 Pet. 2:24).**

In the New Testament the Greek word for forgiveness means "causing (it) to leave" and "sending away." When God forgives us of our sins, He not only eliminates our record of sin before Him but also causes the sins which we have committed to depart from us. This is because, when God made the Lord Jesus our offering for sin on the cross, He laid all our sins on Him that He might carry them for us. Furthermore, when God caused the Lord Jesus to carry our sins on the cross to suffer God's judgment and punishment in our place, He also caused all our sins to be laid on Satan that he should bear them forever. This is revealed in type in the atonement recorded in Leviticus 16. Sin came from Satan and was passed on to us, resulting in our having a record of sin before God. God put all our sins on the Lord Jesus that He might carry them all to suffer God's punishment for us and cancel our record of sin before God. Having done this, God gave all our sins back to Satan that he might bear them himself. In this way, God is able to forgive the sins of the forgiven ones and cause their sins to leave them. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12).

3. Forgetting the sins of the forgiven ones—"I [God] will be propitious to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins I will by no means remember anymore" (Heb. 8:12).

When God forgives the forgiven ones of their sins, He also forgets their sins. When God forgives our sins, He not only cancels our record of sin and causes our sins to depart from us, but in Himself He also forgets our sins. Once He forgives us, He erases our sins from His memory and will by no means remember them anymore.

B. The Basis for Forgiveness of Sins

"Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).

God's forgiveness of sins is based on the shedding of blood for redemption. Because He is righteous, God cannot forgive men's sins without a cause. His righteousness requires that all who sin must die (Ezek. 18:4). Unless His righteous requirement is satisfied, His righteousness cannot allow Him to forgive

sinners of their sins. But since the Lord Jesus died and shed His blood on the cross according to the righteousness of God, thus satisfying God's righteous requirement, God can legally forgive men of their sins according to His righteousness. The Lord Jesus said, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Since the blood of the Lord Jesus was shed for men according to God's righteousness, thus fulfilling God's righteous requirement, it has become the basis upon which the sins of those who believe in Him may be forgiven.

C. The Way to Receive Forgiveness of Sins

1. Repentance—

"Repentance for forgiveness of sins" (Luke 24:47).

Repenting unto God is the first step for sinners to receive God's forgiveness of sins.

2. Faith—

"Everyone who believes into Him [Christ] receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

On the negative side, to repent is to turn away from sins, while on the positive side, to believe is to believe into Christ. To believe into Christ is to enter into Him and to be joined to Him. This is the second step for us to receive God's forgiveness of sins. This step immediately follows repentance.

D. The Results of Forgiveness of Sins

1. Fearing God—

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130:4).

God's forgiveness of sins causes us to fear Him. The more we enjoy God's forgiveness of sins, the more we fear God.

2. Loving God—

"Her sins which are many have been forgiven, because she [the sinful woman] loved much" (Luke 7:47).

This was the word spoken by the Lord regarding the sinful woman whose sins He had forgiven. The clause "because she loved much" does not refer to the reason for which the Lord forgave her. Rather, it refers to the testimony of her being forgiven by the Lord. Her loving the Lord much testified that she was forgiven by the Lord much. The more we are forgiven by the Lord, the more we love the Lord. Therefore, loving the Lord is an issue of being forgiven by the Lord.

II. THE CLEANSING AWAY OF SINS

"He [God] may forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

This word here shows us that God's cleansing us from our sins closely follows His forgiving us of our sins. When He forgives us of our sins, at the same time He cleanses us from our sins.

A. The Significance of the Cleansing Away of Sins

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa. 51:7); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

When God forgives us of our sins, He exempts us from the penalty of sins; when God cleanses us from our sins, He erases the traces of our sins. If there were only the forgiveness of sins and not the cleansing away of sins, although our sins might be forgiven, the traces of our sins would still remain. Forgiveness is a legal procedure, whereas cleansing is an actual clearance. Concerning God's righteous law, our sins need to be forgiven. Concerning the traces of sins in us, our sins need to be washed away. Thus, in God's full salvation, He not only removes our record of sin before Him according to the righteousness of His law, but He also cleanses away the traces of sins in us. His cleansing away of our sins makes us as white as snow and as wool. The cleansing that makes us as white as snow is a positional cleansing from without; the cleansing that makes us white as wool is a cleansing of our nature from within.

B. The Two Aspects of the Cleansing Away of Sins

1. The Cleansing Away of Sins by the Blood

“The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

God’s cleansing us from our sins is of two aspects. One is in our outward position, while the other is in our inward nature. God’s outward and positional cleansing from our sins is through the blood of the Lord Jesus. The blood of the Lord Jesus, the God-man, outwardly and positionally cleanses us from all sin.

a. Before God

“Who [Christ]…having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

This refers to the Lord Jesus who purified us from our sins before God once for all by the shedding of His blood on the cross, thus making us positionally pure before God and before His law.

b. In the Conscience of the Believers

“The blood of Christ…purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14).

The blood of the Lord does not purify our heart but our conscience within. Since the Lord’s blood cleanses us from our sins before God and His law, it also purifies our conscience before itself, thus enabling us to serve our living God with boldness.

2. The Cleansing Away of Sins by Life

“The washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5); “But you were washed…in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

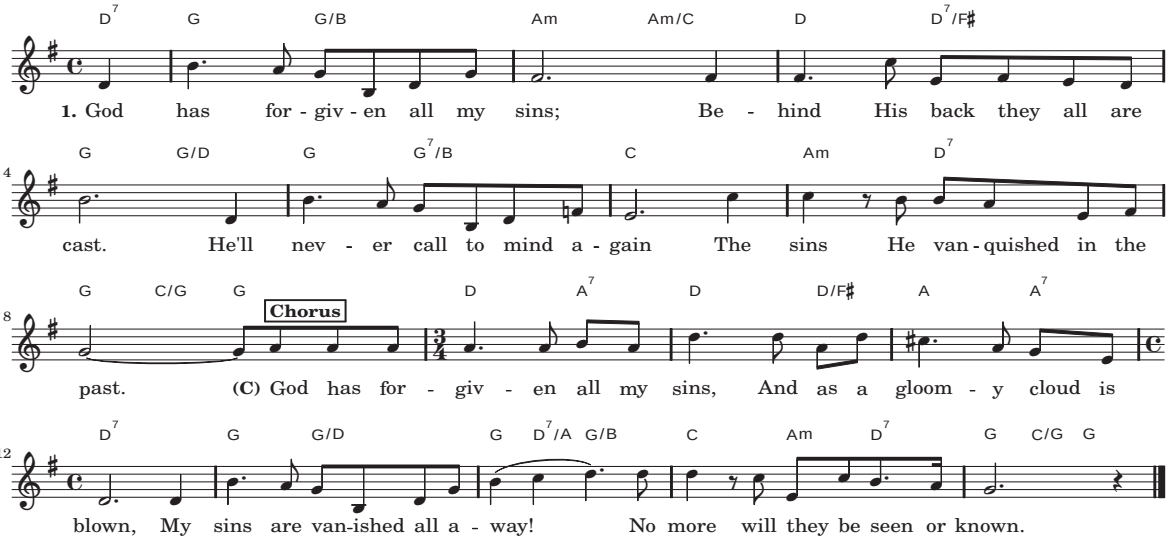
These two verses show us the life of God that regenerates us and our being cleansed by His Spirit. This is an inward cleansing in our nature by His life and by His Spirit. When we are regenerated, we receive God’s life and we have God’s Spirit dwelling in us. When God’s life grows in us and His Spirit moves in us, a metabolic function takes place which removes and washes away the uncleanness in our nature, in our disposition. Thus, we enjoy the cleansing away of sins in God’s full salvation both in our outward position and in our inward disposition.

God has forgiven all my sins

Assurance and Joy of Salvation—Forgiven by God

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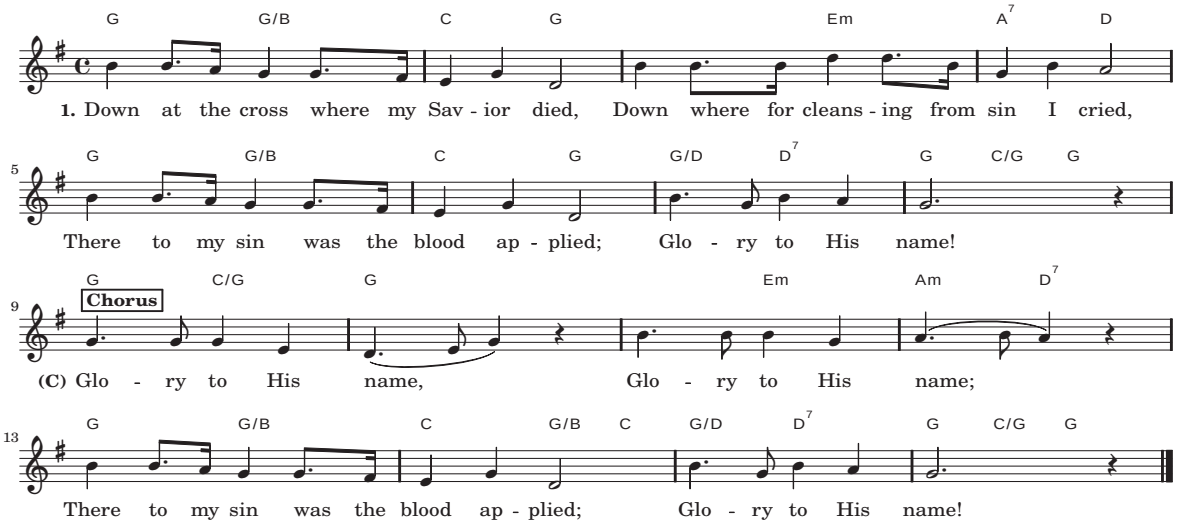
2. My sins were like a heavy stone
God cast and buried in the sea.
As east so far from west is thrown,
My sins have been removed from me!

Down at the cross

Gospel—Testimony

C739 Cb1066 K739 P465 R179 S488 Tg1066

1066



2. I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within;
There at the cross where He took me in;
Glory to His name.

3. Oh, precious fountain that saves from sin,
I am so glad I have entered in;
There Jesus saves me and keeps me clean;
Glory to His name.

4. Come to this fountain so rich and sweet;
Cast thy poor soul at the Savior's feet;
Plunge in today, and be made complete;
Glory to His name.

LESSON THIRTY-NINE

PROPITIATION AND RECONCILIATION

In God's full salvation, there are the items of propitiation and reconciliation; that is, God propitiates for us who once had a problem with Him, and God reconciles to Himself us who were His enemies. When we believe into the Lord and are saved, we gain and enjoy these two items.

I. PROPITIATION

"...His [God's] Son a propitiation concerning our sins" (1 John 4:10).

When we sinned against God, we became sinful before Him. This caused a problem to develop between God and us. For this reason, the Lord Jesus not only offered Himself as our sin offering on the cross (Isa. 53:10) to redeem us from our sins before God, but He also became our propitiation to appease the problem which we had with God.

A. The Significance of Propitiation

"He [Christ] is a propitiation concerning our sins" (1 John 2:2).

The word propitiation literally means a mediation between two parties in order to make them one. When party A develops a problem with party B, either offending party B or owing something to party B, then party B will make some demand on party A. If the demand is not met, the problem between the two parties will not be resolved, and the two will not be able to be reconciled. Thus, there is the need for propitiation. Our sins separate us from God and inhibit our fellowship with Him. They cause us to have a problem with God. Therefore, we need the Lord Jesus to be our propitiatory sacrifice to satisfy God's demand.

B. The Accomplishment of Propitiation

"He might...make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

When the Lord Jesus accomplished redemption for us on the cross, He also accomplished propitiation for us. Since His suffering of death and shedding of

blood dealt with the sins that caused our problem with God, they appeased the problem that was caused by sins. This enables God and us, us and God, to be mutually at peace.

C. The Application of Propitiation

"Whom [the redeeming Christ] God set forth a propitiation-cover [the lid of the ark] through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness" (Rom. 3:25).

On the cross Christ accomplished propitiation for us through His redemption. He Himself became our propitiation, which is typified in the Old Testament by the lid of the ark in the Holy of Holies, the place where God showed mercy to man. Upon Christ as the propitiation-cover, God is able to apply the very propitiation accomplished by Christ to those who believe in Christ and draw near to God. This appeases the problem between Him and them which is caused by sin.

II. RECONCILIATION

A. "God...reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Reconciliation to God closely follows propitiation and is brought to us by propitiation. The propitiation accomplished by the Lord Jesus through His redemption reconciles us to God.

1. The Significance of Reconciliation

To be reconciled to God literally means to have a thorough change toward God. In man's fall, man rebelled against God, developed a problem with God, opposed God (Col. 1:21), and became God's enemy (Rom. 5:10). Therefore, man needs a thorough change toward God; that is, he needs to be reconciled to God through the redemption of Christ. It is not that God is reconciled to us, but that we are reconciled to God. Since God has never caused any problem with us, He does not need to be reconciled to us. Rather, it is we who have developed a problem with God and therefore need to be reconciled to Him.

2. The Accomplishment of Reconciliation

a. "But all things are of God, who [God] has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

It is of God that we are reconciled to Him. God reconciles us to Himself through Christ and in Christ. Therefore, reconciliation is all God's doing.

b. God "through Him [Christ] to reconcile all things to Him, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20).

Since God wants to reconcile us to Himself, He made peace for us through the blood shed by Christ on the cross, and then through Christ He reconciled us to Himself. Therefore, this sweet matter of our being reconciled to God was accomplished by God. It was accomplished by God through Christ shedding His blood on the cross. By shedding His blood on the cross, on the one hand, Christ made peace on our behalf to reconcile us to God, and on the other hand, He accomplished the same on God's behalf, since it is God who made peace for us through Christ.

3. The Issue of Reconciliation

a. Having peace toward God—

"We have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

To have peace is to be at peace. We were once sinners, those who had problems with God. We had no peace with God and were not at peace with God. But now since we have been reconciled to God through the redemption and propitiation of Christ, we have peace toward God and enjoy peace together with Him.

b. Boasting in God—

"We also are boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11).

Literally, the word "boasting" here includes the meaning of rejoicing, exulting, extolling, and being filled with pride. Since we have been reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ and have gained God, God Himself has become

our eternal portion. We can enjoy Him, boasting, rejoicing, exulting, extolling, and being filled with pride in Him; that is, "we also boast in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3), and we "boast in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

c. Being saved in life—

"Having been reconciled, we shall be saved in His life" (Rom. 5:10).

By being reconciled to God, we are brought into the life of Christ. As a result, we can be saved in the life of Christ, that is, saved by the life of Christ from many negative things, to be delivered from our entangling sins, from the world and its usurpation, from our flesh, our temper, and our disposition, and from our self and our natural man.

The above three items are the issues of our being reconciled to God.

4. The Second Step of Reconciliation

"We beseech you [believers] on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

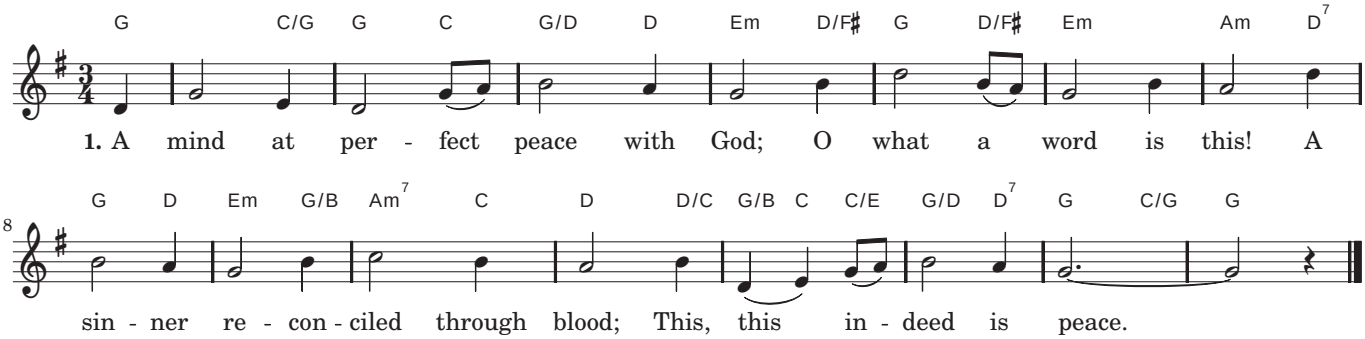
In the preceding text of this verse, it says that God reconciled the world to Himself. We have seen this matter previously. In this verse, God tells the believers, who are already reconciled, to be further reconciled to Him. This indicates that there are two steps in our being fully reconciled to God. The first is that when we were sinners, we were reconciled to God, being delivered from sins and being justified by God. The second is that, while we are still living in the natural life after we are saved, we are reconciled to God, being delivered from the flesh to become the righteousness of God. For the first step of our reconciliation to God, Christ died on the cross to bear our sins (1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:3), so that our sins may be forgiven by God and that God may justify us because of Him. For the second step of our reconciliation to God, Christ was made sin and crucified for us on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21), that we may be delivered from the flesh and that God might make us His righteousness in Christ.

A mind at perfect peace with God

Assurance and Joy of Salvation—Reconciled to God

C240* K240* R61 S143 Tg299

299



2. By nature and by practice far,
How very far from God;
Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him,
Through faith in Jesus' blood.

3. So nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.

4. So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me.

5. Why should I ever anxious be,
Since such a God is mine?
He watches o'er me night and day,
And tells me "Mine is thine."

LESSON FORTY

SANCTIFICATION—THE SECOND STAGE

Sanctification is another important aspect of God's full salvation, and it becomes a facet of our experience in the enjoyment of God's full salvation.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SANCTIFICATION

"...ye may put difference between holy and unholy" (Lev. 10:10).

The meaning of Sanctification, whether in the Hebrew of the Old Testament or in the Greek of the New Testament, is mainly separation. Thus, to be sanctified (to be made holy) in the Bible means to be separated from the ordinary and common things. Holiness is the state of God's nature, which is not only sinless and without evil, but also different from all and distinct from the common. Hence, whenever the Bible mentions God and the things concerning God or belonging to God, it describes them as holy. Any person, thing, or matter that is not rendered unto God or does not belong to God is common. Once it is rendered unto God and belongs to God, it is sanctified, separated.

II. THE SECOND STAGE OF SANCTIFICATION

"But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified" (1 Cor. 6:11).

It has already been mentioned in Lesson Thirty-seven that, according to the revelation in the Bible, Sanctification in God's salvation is divided into three stages in us: the first is for our repentance, the second is for our justification, and the third is for our transformation. The verse quoted here refers to the second stage, after washing and before justification. Hence, this stage of sanctification follows the cleansing away of sins covered in Lesson Thirty-eight and ushers in justification, to be discussed in the next lesson. Before we can be sanctified, we must first be cleansed from our sins; likewise, before we can be justified, we must first be sanctified.

III. POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

"Receive forgiveness of sins...among those who have been sanctified" (Acts 26:18).

In the second stage, the sanctification which we receive in God's full salvation is both positional and dispositional. Positional sanctification is a fact, a sanctified position, which we receive in Christ when we believe. The sanctification spoken of in this verse is such a positional sanctification.

A. Through the One Offering of Christ

"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

This positional sanctification is accomplished through the offering of the body of Christ once for all, as a sin offering, to set us apart.

B. Through the Blood of Jesus

"...Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood" (Heb. 13:12).

This positional sanctification is obtained by us through Christ's redeeming blood shed on the cross. Once we are bought back by the Lord's blood, we are separated from the world, receiving a sanctified position and being made holy unto Him.

C. By Being Called

"Who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2).

This positional sanctification is obtained by us as a result of our being called by God. When we are saved and called by God, we are separated by God to be saints. This is a matter of position. Of course, we also received God's holy life when we were saved and regenerated, but this holy life was not yet lived out to become our experience of sanctification.

IV. DISPOSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

Dispositional sanctification is the sanctification lived out from within us as a result of the growth of the life that we received by believing into Christ.

A. Through the Sanctifier

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all out of one" (Heb. 2:11, lit.).

Christ is holy, and He is also the One who sanctifies us. Both He and we are out of God the Father. "Out of" indicates that this sanctification is out of the divine life of God the Father, which is both in His Son and in us. Christ and we have the same life (Col. 3:4) and the same nature. God in Christ dispenses His divine life and nature into us that we may be the partakers of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), thus living out a sanctified life by His divine life with His holy nature in us. Therefore, this sanctification is the sanctification of God's life and the sanctification we experience; it is mainly dispositional, not positional.

B. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ

"You were sanctified...in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 6:11).

The sanctification mentioned here is not the sanctification which we obtained objectively in our position through the Lord's blood. Rather, it is experienced subjectively in our disposition in the Lord's name. To be in the Lord's name is to be in His person, that is, to be in the organic union with Him through faith. In reality, this is to be in Himself. When we were saved, calling on the Lord Jesus, we were immediately in His name, in His living person. We entered into an organic union with Him, partook of His divine life and nature, and were sanctified dispositionally.

C. In the Spirit of God—the Spirit

"You were sanctified...in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

We are sanctified dispositionally by being in the Spirit of God. This verse says that we were sanctified not only in the name of the Lord Jesus but also in the Spirit of God. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ is just His person, and His person is the Spirit. The Lord's name and His Spirit are inseparable. When we call on the Lord's name, the Lord reaches us with the Spirit. Since the Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), when we are joined to the Lord, we experience the

sanctifying work of the Spirit and are sanctified subjectively and dispositionally.

V. THE WAY TO BE SANCTIFIED

A. By faith in Christ—

"...among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me [Christ]" (Acts 26:18).

To be sanctified and thus set apart unto God, we must first believe into Christ. Christ shed His blood for our redemption to purchase us (1 Cor. 6:20) that He may sanctify us (Heb. 13:12). If we desire to partake of this fact, we must believe into Him and be joined to Him. Once we believe into Him and are joined to Him, we are sanctified by His redemption, having the fact of sanctification and obtaining the position of sanctification.

B. By being in Christ—

"...have been sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2).

Upon believing into Christ, we enter into Him to be joined to Him. Since He Himself is holy (Luke 1:35), once we are in Him and are joined to Him, we are set apart to be holy. Christ is the element and sphere in which we are separated, sanctified unto God.

The above two items are the ways for us to be sanctified.

VI. THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

A. Life—Christ—

"Who [Christ] became...to us from God...sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30).

This verse points out that sanctification is simply Christ. Upon our believing into Him, Christ comes into us to be our life. This life is holy and can cause us to live out a holy life and be sanctified.

B. Light—the holy Word—

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

In order to make us holy, God gives us life within and the holy Word without. The holy Word is the truth which is able to sanctify us. The life of God within us, with its holy nature, requires us to be holy; the holy Word of God, as our

sanctifying light and guidance without, teaches us to be holy. These two correspond from within and without to sanctify us.

C. Power—the Holy Spirit—

"...having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

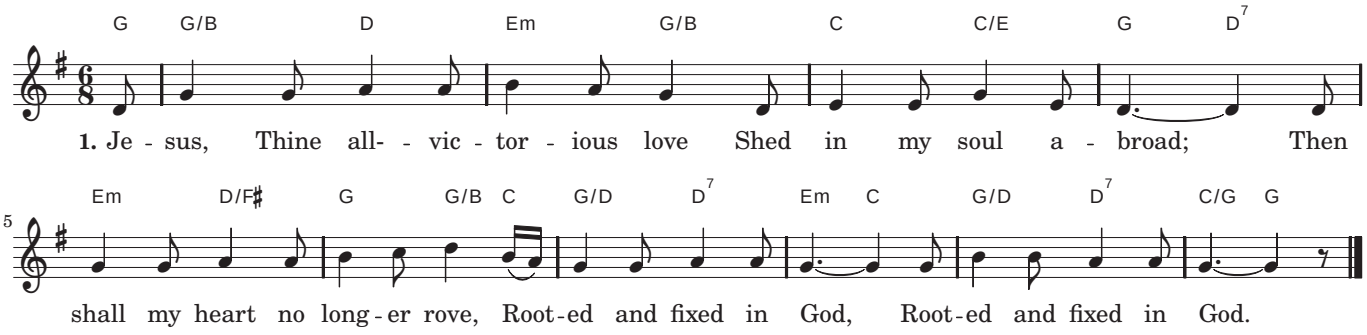
In order to make us holy, God also gives us the Holy Spirit to be our sanctifying power. These three—the life of Christ, the light of the holy Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit—work together to sanctify us.

Jesus, Thine all-victorious love

Fulness of the Spirit—As the Fire

C209 K209 P137 R51 Tg264

264



2. Oh, that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow;
Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow,
And make the mountains flow.

3. He, who at Pentecost didst fall,
May He my sins consume;
Thy Holy Ghost, for Him I call;
Thy burning Spirit, come,
Thy burning Spirit, come.

4. Refining fire, go through my heart,
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter Thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole,
And sanctify the whole.

5. My steadfast soul, from falling free,
Shall then no longer move,
While Christ is all the world to me,
And all my heart is love,
And all my heart is love.

LESSON FORTY-ONE

JUSTIFICATION

Justification is a key item in God's full salvation. After obtaining the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing away of sins, and after being sanctified, we have no further problems before God. God then has the position and the ground to justify us. This is another crucial link in our enjoyment of God's full salvation.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUSTIFICATION

"For the showing forth of His righteousness... that He should be just and justify the one who is of the faith of Jesus"(Rom. 3:26).

In the Bible, justification means that God, according to His righteousness, declares man righteous. In other words, God justifies man according to the standard of His righteousness.

II. OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

"...shall be justified before Him [God]" (Rom. 3:20).

God's justification is in two aspects, the objective and the subjective. Objective justification is our being justified positionally according to the righteousness which we received from God (Phil. 3:9); it is our being justified by having Christ as our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). We obtain this justification by reason of the following four items:

A. By the Grace of God

"Being justified freely by His [God's] grace" (Rom. 3:24).

Man's being justified by God is, first, by God's grace. God's justifying us by His grace is His freely fulfilling all His righteous requirements for us. This justification can be accepted and received by everyone without human effort and without price; therefore, it is grace.

B. Through the Redemption of Christ Jesus

"Being justified...through the redemption in Christ Jesus" (Rom.

3:24).

God can justify us by His grace through the redemption of Christ Jesus. Apart from the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross to accomplish redemption for us and to satisfy God's righteous requirement, there is no ground and no way for God to justify us by His grace, even if He desires to do so. However, because on the cross the Lord Jesus shed His precious blood, paid the price, and satisfied all the requirements of God's righteousness upon us (Rom. 5:9), God is able to justify us by His grace according to His righteousness.

C. Through Our Faith in Christ

"Yet knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but through the faith of Christ Jesus" (Gal. 2:16).

Man is justified by God not only by God's grace and through the redemption of Christ Jesus, but also through his faith in Christ. Both the grace of God and the redemption of Christ Jesus are on God's side, whereas the faith in Jesus Christ is on our side. By His grace, and through the redemption of Christ Jesus, God would justify us and can justify us; yet for us to be justified by God, there is still the need of our faith in Jesus Christ.

D. Proven by the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

1. "Who [Jesus]...was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

The resurrection of Christ is a proof of our justification. The death of Christ satisfied God's righteous requirements that God may justify us. Christ's resurrection is God's justification and approval of His work; hence, it is also a proof of His work.

2. "...concerning righteousness, because I [Christ] go to the Father" (John 16:10).

Christ's ascension to the Father in heaven after He was resurrected is also a proof of our justification, even as the third stanza of Hymns, #20 says:

Father God, Thou hast accepted Jesus as our Substitute;
Judged the Just One for the unjust, Couldst Thou change Thy attitude?
As a proof of perfect justice, At Thine own right hand He sits;

He, as Thy full satisfaction, Righteously Thy need befits.

Christ's resurrection, ascension, and being seated at the right hand of God are a proof of our justification by God, confirming that God has justified us because of Christ's death, which satisfied God's righteous requirements.

III. SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

"...so also through one righteous act unto justification of life to all men" (Rom. 5:18).

We have obtained the objective and positional justification by God's grace, through the redemption of Christ Jesus, and through our faith. This affords us the position to receive God's life, as stated in this verse, "...unto justification of life."

A. By the Life of God

"Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11).

When we live by God's life, which we received in our positional justification, we bear the fruit of righteousness through the Lord Jesus. This fruit is Christ as our righteousness, whom we live out by God's life, that we may be subjectively justified. This justification, which is of life, is not obtained outwardly but is lived out from within. Hence, it is subjective.

B. Through the Resurrected Christ

"Who [Jesus]...was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

We are subjectively justified also through the resurrected Christ. The resurrection of Christ mentioned in this verse is not only an outward proof of our objective justification; it is also for Christ to enter into us to be our life (Col. 1:27; 3:4), that we may live Him out as our subjective righteousness and thus be subjectively justified. We obtain objective justification because we believe into Christ and gain Him as our objective righteousness; we obtain subjective justification because we live by Christ and live Him out as our subjective righteousness. Objective justification causes us to have life; subjective justification enables us to grow in life and be transformed unto maturity.

C. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ

"...you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 6:11).

To be in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to be in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This speaks of our organic union with the Lord, our partaking of His divine life and nature, and our becoming subjectively righteous. That is, it speaks of our being joined to Christ in Christ to become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21b).

D. In the Spirit of God

"You were justified...in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

We experience subjective justification also in the Spirit of God. When we were saved, the Spirit of God entered into us to bring to us the life of God, that we may be justified subjectively by God in life. Therefore, we obtain subjective justification in life by God's life, through the resurrected Christ, in His person, and in the Spirit of God.

IV. THE CYCLE WITH RESPECT TO REDEMPTION
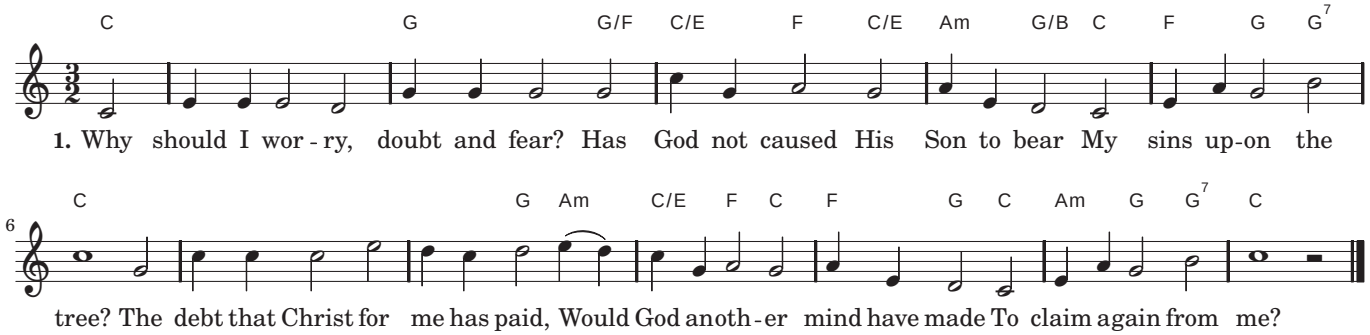
The six steps of experience from forgiveness to justification are all in the redemptive aspect of God's full salvation. These six steps constitute a perpetual cycle in the believers' experience of the spiritual life, until the redemption of their bodies, that is, until their glorification. At the same time, repentance, which is the way to enjoy salvation, also accompanies this cycle according to the need of these six steps of experience. Before the redemption of our body, it is inevitable that we fail or become defiled. Whenever we fail or are defiled, we need to repent that we may again be forgiven, cleansed, propitiated, reconciled, sanctified, and justified, in order to thus maintain our fellowship with God and to continue to live before God. Whenever we trespass and are again defiled, we must repent once more in order to again be forgiven, cleansed, propitiated, reconciled, sanctified, and justified. This then becomes a cycle of experience repeated again and again in our spiritual life, that we may continue in the enjoyment of God's full salvation.

Why should I worry, doubt and fear

Gospel—Redemption

C235 Cb1003 K235 P443 R164 S466 Tg1003

1003



2. Redemption full the Lord has made,
And all my debts has fully paid,
From law to set me free.
I fear not for the wrath of God,
For I've been sprinkled with His blood,
It wholly covers me.

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

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

LESSON FORTY-TWO

REGENERATION

In God's full salvation, when we believe into Christ and thereby experience the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing away of sins, propitiation and reconciliation, and sanctification and justification, we immediately receive God's regeneration. The six steps of experience spoken of previously belong to the redemptive aspect of God's full salvation. Regeneration (the new birth) belongs to the life aspect of God's full salvation, and it is the beginning of this aspect. It is therefore a most crucial matter pertaining to our enjoyment of God's full salvation, having to do with our living and work in the present age after we believe into Christ and are saved, as well as with our destiny in the coming age and in eternity.

I. THE NEED FOR REGENERATION

"I [the Lord Jesus] said to you [Nicodemus, who sought to do good], You must be born anew" (John 3:7).

Every man is willing and ready to do good, thinking that he needs simply good deeds and morality, never realizing that he needs to be born anew, to receive another life. Thus, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, who sought good works, "You must be born anew." Nicodemus represents all those who desire to do good without knowing man's need. Only God and the Lord Jesus know man's need. This need is regeneration.

A. Man Being of the Flesh

Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6).

Man needs to be regenerated because man is born of the flesh and is of the flesh. That which is born of the flesh and is of the flesh is flesh. The flesh is not and cannot be subject to the law of God, and it cannot please God (Rom. 8:7-8). The fleshly man is brought forth in iniquity (Psa. 51:5, ASV) and is out of sin. He

is sold under sin (Rom. 7:14) and belongs to sin, and he is estranged from the life of God (Eph. 4:18) and has nothing to do with God. Whether it is good or bad in man's eyes, that which the fleshly man has is merely a human life of the flesh, not the life of God. Therefore, man needs to be regenerated to obtain the life of God.

B. For Entering into the Kingdom of God

"Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God...unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5).

Man also needs to be regenerated in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Unless a man is regenerated, he cannot see the kingdom of God, nor can he enter into it. The kingdom of God is spiritual, and to see this spiritual kingdom of God is to enter into it. Regeneration is the unique entrance through which man enters into God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is the realm of what God is, just as the plant kingdom is the realm of what plants are, and the animal kingdom is the realm of what animals are. Without plants there is no plant kingdom, and without animals there is no animal kingdom. What man is and what God is are basically different, being in two different realms and in two different kingdoms. In order to enter into the human kingdom, one must be born of man to have the human life; likewise, in order to enter into God's kingdom, one must be born of God to have God's life. Therefore, man must be born of God, that is, he must be regenerated that he may have God's life and may enter into the kingdom of God.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REGENERATION

"Nicodemus said to Him [the Lord Jesus], How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" (John 3:4).

The meaning of the words "born anew" is "born again". Thus, Nicodemus thought that he needed to enter again into his mother's womb to be born a second time. Although he understood correctly the literal meaning of "born anew," he misunderstood the significance of the new birth. Although to be

regenerated literally means to be born again, the significance of regeneration is not to enter into the mother's womb and be born a second time.

A. Regeneration—to Be Born of God

"Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

To be regenerated is not to be born of blood (the fleshly life of man), nor of the will of the flesh (the will of the fallen, fleshly man), nor of the will of man (the will of the God-created man), but of God, that man may obtain the spiritual life of God. Therefore, we who are regenerated have obtained the life of God in addition to the human life which we already possess.

B. Regeneration—to Be Born from Above

"Unless a man is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

In the original language the word "anew" here is the same word as "from above" in John 3:31. Therefore, to be regenerated also means to be born from above. When we were born the first time, of our parents, we were born from the earth, from below, and the human life of the flesh which we obtained is from the earth and of the earth. When we are born the second time, of God, that is, when we are regenerated, we are born from above, from heaven, and the spiritual life of God which we receive is from heaven and of heaven. Hence, to be regenerated is to be born from above that man may have this heavenly life of God.

C. Regeneration—to Be Born of Water and the Spirit

"Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The matter of being born of water and the Spirit spoken of by the Lord Jesus refers to regeneration through the water of the baptism preached by John the Baptist and through the Holy Spirit given by the Lord Jesus. The water of baptism indicates death and burial, symbolizing Christ's death and burial for the termination of the repenting and believing ones. The Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life and resurrection, causes the believing ones to participate

in Christ's resurrection in order that the terminated ones may experience the germination of a new life. By being baptized into this water and into this Spirit, those who believe into Christ are regenerated and are delivered from all the old things of men to enter into the kingdom of God, which is the realm of the divine life and the divine ruling. This enables them to live by God's eternal life in God's eternal kingdom.

D. Spirit Begetting Spirit

"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Regeneration is also God's Spirit begetting our spirit, that is, the Spirit of God regenerating our human spirit with God's life. When we believe into Christ and are regenerated, the Spirit of God dispenses God's life, God's element, into our spirit, enlivening our spirit and making it a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26).

III. THE MEANS OF REGENERATION

A. Through the resurrection of Christ—God the Father "has regenerated us...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3).

The first means by which God regenerates us is the resurrection of Christ. When Christ was resurrected, we who believe into Him were all included in Him and were raised up together with Him (Eph. 2:6). His resurrection dispenses God's life into us and enlivens us with God's life, that we may have the life of God and be joined to God organically. Hence, God regenerates us through Christ's resurrection.

B. Through the work of the Holy Spirit—"And having come, He [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment" (John 16:8); "...born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

The second means by which God regenerates us is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit first convicts us concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment, causing us to repent and to believe. After we repent and believe, He brings God's life into our spirit that we may obtain God's life and

may be regenerated.

C. Through the word of God—"Having been regenerated, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23).

The third means by which God regenerates us is His living word, which is the word of God in the Bible. God's word in the Bible contains His life. When we believe the gospel, we believe God's word of life (John 5:24). Once we receive through faith God's word of the gospel, this word sows the life of God as the seed of life into us (1 John 3:9). Thus, God regenerates us through His word of truth (James 1:18).

D. By man's faith—"Those who believe into His name...were born...of God" (John 1:12-13).

The last means by which God regenerates us is our faith. The resurrection of Christ accomplished for us the fact of regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit applies this fact to us, and the word of God coordinates with the Holy Spirit to put this fact before us. However, there is still the need for us to receive this fact by faith. Therefore, in order to be regenerated, we must believe into Christ according to God's word.

IV. THE ISSUES OF REGENERATION

A. Obtaining the eternal life of God—

"Everyone who believes in Him [Christ] should...have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Eternal life is God's own life, that is, God Himself as life. Both God's nature and the functions within Him are in this life. When we are regenerated, we obtain God's eternal life with all the elements and functions in this life.

B. Becoming the children of God—

"To them He [Christ] gave authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name: who were born...of God" (John 1:12, 13).

Since regeneration causes us to obtain God's life, it also makes us the

children of God. God's life is the authority for us to become God's children.

C. Becoming the firstfruit of God's new creation—

"He [God] brought us forth...that we should be a certain firstfruit of His creatures" (James 1:18).

Regeneration also makes us the firstfruit of God's new creation among God's creatures, possessing His life that matures first for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose.

D. Having a living hope—

"...regenerated us unto a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3).

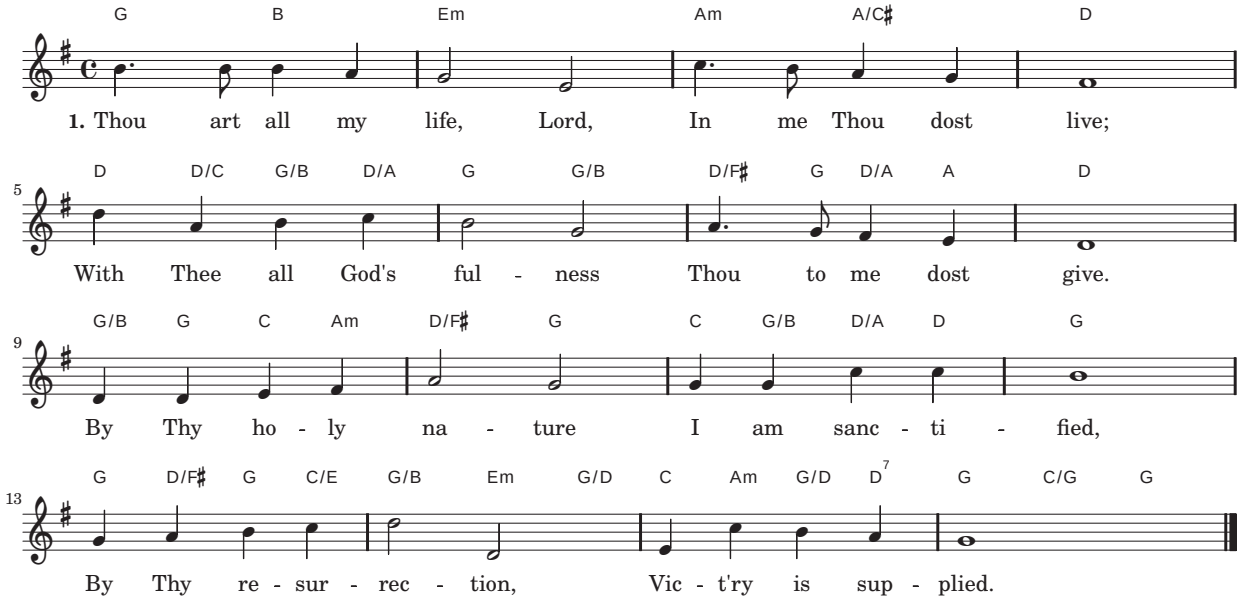
Since regeneration causes us to have God's life, it gives us a living hope, including such things as the growth in life, the manifestation of gifts, the ability to function, transformation, and glorification. This is like the life of a newborn babe, which brings with it the hope that belongs to that life, including such matters as growth, maturity, a career, and marriage.

Thou art all my life, Lord

The Church—Her Building

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2. Now Thy flowing life, Lord,
Doth enlighten me,
Bringing in the spirit
Fellowship with Thee;
All my need supplying,
Making Thy demand,
Leading me to cleansing
And in Thee to stand.

3. Thy anointing Spirit
Me shall permeate,
All my soul and spirit
Thou wouldst saturate;
Every part transforming
Till conformed to Thee,
Till Thy life shall bring me
To maturity.

4. Lord, Thy life abundant,
Flowing, rich and free,
Constantly refreshes
And empowers me.
Death by life is swallowed,
Weakness is made strong,
All my bonds are broken,
Gloom is turned to song.

5. I would give myself, Lord,
Fully unto Thee,
That Thy heart's desire
Be fulfilled in me.
I no more would struggle
To myself reform,
Thus in me to hinder
What Thou wouldst perform.

6. I would cease completely
From my efforts vain,
Let Thy life transform me,
Full release to gain;
Build me up with others
Till in us Thou see
Thy complete expression
Glorifying Thee.

LESSON FORTY-THREE

RENEWING

In the life aspect of God's full salvation, after we experience regeneration, the experience that follows immediately is renewing.

I. THE NEED FOR RENEWING

"Put off...the old man" (Eph. 4:22).

Not long after man was created, he sinned and became fallen. In the fall of man, Satan injected his evil nature of sin into man, poisoning man completely, making man corrupt and evil, and eventually making him an old man mixed with satanic evil (Eph. 4:22). This transmuted and corrupted old man needs to be put off (Col. 3:9). Therefore, in His full salvation, God prepared this item, renewing, for us to experience and enjoy.

II. THE TRUE MEANING OF RENEWING

"He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Here it says that God saved us through two things, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This speaks of the aspect of salvation by life in God's full salvation, and it differs from the aspect of redemption by the blood. Salvation by life is accomplished through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. On the negative side, the washing of regeneration is a washing that washes away our old man and everything of the old man; on the positive side, the renewing of the Holy Spirit is a renewing that brings to us God's life as the new element for us to become the new man. Although regeneration is accomplished once for all, the effectiveness of its washing continues along with the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The renewing of the Holy Spirit is constant, beginning with our regeneration and continuing until the transfiguration of our body and our entrance into God's

glory. Therefore, after we are regenerated, we are saved at every time by continuing daily, even hourly, in the ceaseless renewing of the Holy Spirit. This is to be saved in the life of Christ (Rom. 5:10).

III. THE MEANS OF RENEWING

A. The Life of God

"We also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

The newness of life proves that this life, the life of God, is a new life. Because of the fall, our created life became an old life. The life of God received in regeneration, which begins the renewing, is a new life. After regeneration, this life of God is the basic means of our continuous renewing. If we walk by this renewing life of God, we will manifest the newness of this life.

B. A New Heart and a New Spirit

"A new heart also will I [God] give you, and a new spirit will I [God] put within you" (Ezek. 36:26).

When we are regenerated, God not only imparts to us His life, but He also gives us a new heart and a new spirit. The new heart produces in us a new desire, a new love, and a new inclination toward God. The new spirit renders us a new ability to receive God as the satisfaction of our new man. When we desire God and love God according to this new heart and receive God by this new spirit, we are constantly renewed.

C. The Spirit of the Mind

"Have put off...the old man...are being renewed in the spirit of your mind...have put on the new man" (Eph. 4:22-24).

At the time of our regeneration, we enter into the fact of the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man through the Lord's death and resurrection. Nevertheless, after being regenerated, we still need the experience of putting off the old man and putting on the new man moment by moment in our living. This is accomplished through the spirit which is in our renewed mind (Rom. 12:2). The spirit of our renewed mind is our regenerated spirit mingled

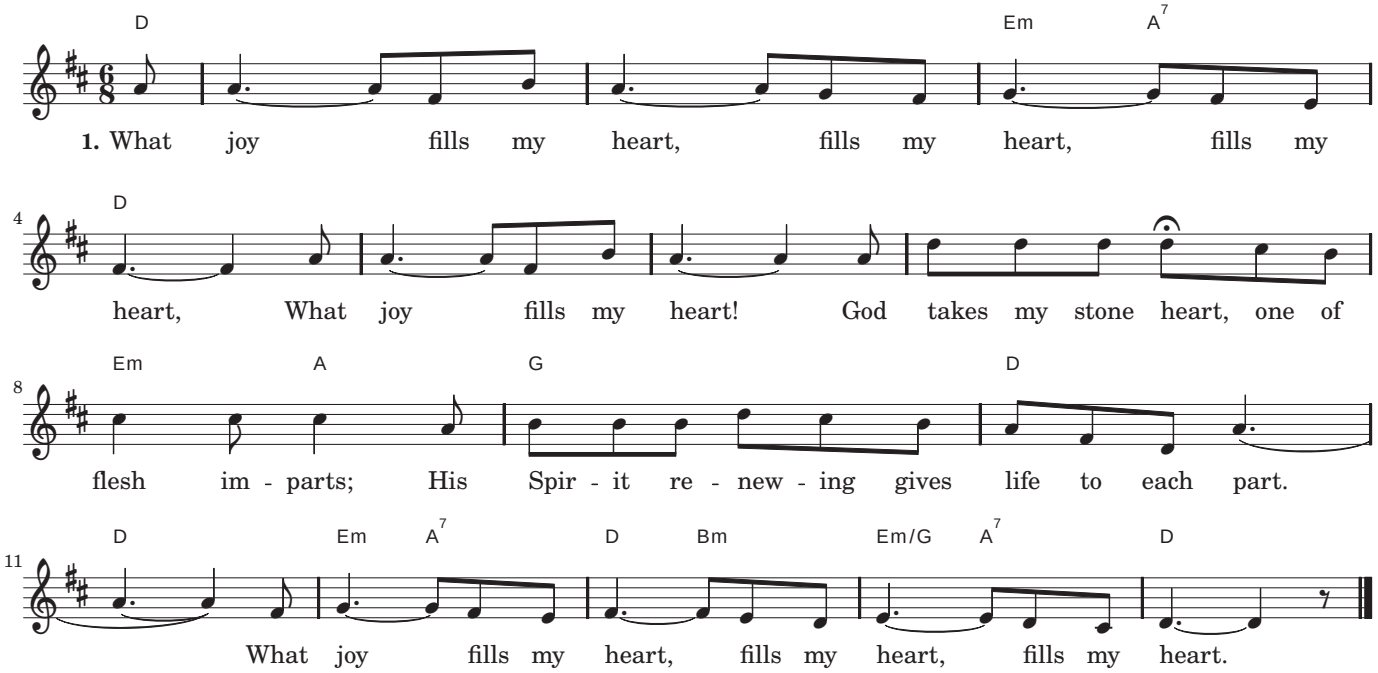
with God's Spirit, spreading into our mind to do the work of renewing in our mind. It is in this renewing spirit that we put off the old man and put on the new man. Thus, we are renewed, and we become a new man in the new creation in reality. With this new man, old things have passed away, and they have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Our Christian life is not a matter of religion or self-improvement, but of being a new man of the new creation (Gal. 6:15). The ultimate aggregate of this new man of the new creation is the coming New Jerusalem, which in eternity will show forth in a particular way the renewing aspect of God's full salvation.

What joy fills my heart

Assurance and Joy of Salvation—Changed in Life

C242 P171 R213 S163 Tg1357

1357



2. Oh, His Spirit fills, fills me now, fills me now!
Oh, His Spirit fills!
He drives out my sin, weakness, death, within,
To bear fruits of righteousness, holy to Him.
Oh, His Spirit fills, fills me now, fills me now!

LESSON FORTY-FOUR

SANCTIFICATION—THE THIRD STAGE

We have seen that in God's full salvation, when sanctification is applied to us, it is divided into three stages. The first stage is for our repentance, the second stage is for our justification, and the third stage is for our transformation. We saw the first stage in Lesson Thirty-seven and the second stage in Lesson Forty. Now we will go on to see the third stage, the sanctification that is for our transformation. This is the very sanctification stressed in Romans 6:19 and 22.

I. THE POWER OF THIS SANCTIFICATION—THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT

"...might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

According to the way in which this verse is written, sanctification is accomplished gradually. This agrees with what we saw before, that God's sanctification in us is divided into three stages and is accomplished gradually. Thus, the sanctification spoken of here surely includes the third and ultimate stage of sanctification, that is, to make us acceptable to God through this sanctifying transformation. This third stage is accomplished in the sanctifying Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is the sanctifying Spirit, is the sanctifying power in this ultimate stage. We must live in this sanctifying Spirit, living and walking by Him and acting and working according to Him, in order to enjoy the sanctification of this ultimate stage.

II. THE LIFE OF THIS SANCTIFICATION—THE SANCTIFYING CHRIST

"Christ Jesus, who became...to us from God... sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Christ is holy (Luke 1:35), and He is the One who sanctifies us (Heb. 2:11).

He has become the sanctification to us from God, because He is the sanctifying life within us, infusing the elements of His divine life into our entire being to sanctify us gradually. This sanctification is not obtained at one time, outwardly in position; rather, it grows in a gradual way, inwardly in our disposition. If we desire to experience the ultimate sanctification in God's full salvation, we must take Christ as life and live by Him in the organic union.

III. THE REALITY OF THIS SANCTIFICATION— THE SANCTIFYING NATURE OF GOD

"Sanctify them in the truth [reality]; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

God's nature is holy, and the word of God brings the reality of such a nature to us that we may obtain it as the reality of our sanctification. This is to be sanctified in reality. When we live by the holy life of Christ in the sanctifying Spirit, the reality of the holy nature of God will become the reality which sanctifies us.

IV. THE PERFECTION OF THIS SANCTIFICATION— THE DISCIPLINE OF THE FATHER OF SPIRITS

"The Father of spirits...disciplined us...that we might partake of His holiness" (Heb. 12:9-10).

The Father of spirits, our Father who regenerates us in our spirit, desires that we may enjoy the holiness of His nature. If we do not cooperate with Him, He disciplines us, forcing us to be willing to pursue His holiness, that He may perfect us in His holiness. This is even more so in the ultimate stage of His sanctification. Therefore, we should not make light of His discipline (Heb. 12:5). If we make light of it or refuse it, we will surely lose the opportunity to enjoy His holiness in God's sanctification, and especially in the ultimate stage of His sanctification.

V. THE PURSUIT OF THIS SANCTIFICATION— OUR ENDEAVORING IN LIFE

"Pursue...holiness without which no one shall see the Lord" (Heb.

12:14).

Literally, to pursue holiness is to press toward holiness. This, of course, refers to our constant pursuit of holiness, after we are saved and are positionally sanctified unto God, until we are mature and glorified. We should especially strive to press toward holiness in God's ultimate stage of sanctification. This is the endeavoring in life which we should have.

VI. THE PERFECTION OF THIS SANCTIFICATION—OUR SELF-CLEANSING

"Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

God perfects us in His sanctification, and He also wants us to perfect ourselves in His sanctification. God perfects us through discipline; we perfect ourselves through self-cleansing, removing all defilement of flesh and spirit, and by being in the fear of God. Often, because we do not cleanse ourselves according to God's enlightening nor follow the Holy Spirit to remove all defilement of flesh and spirit, we even do not fear God. At that time, the Father of spirits, who is our Father in our spirit, has no alternative but to exercise His discipline on us to perfect us in His holiness. This is so that we may fear Him, be willing to cooperate with Him, and cleanse ourselves, putting away all defilement within and without, in order to perfect that which He desires us to obtain, the holiness in His nature.

VII. OUR WHOLE BEING ENJOYING THIS SANCTIFICATION—THE SPIRIT, THE SOUL, AND THE BODY BEING WHOLLY SANCTIFIED

"And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23).

In God's full salvation, we must enjoy God's sanctification to such an extent that our entire being is in this enjoyment. Our spirit, soul, and body must be

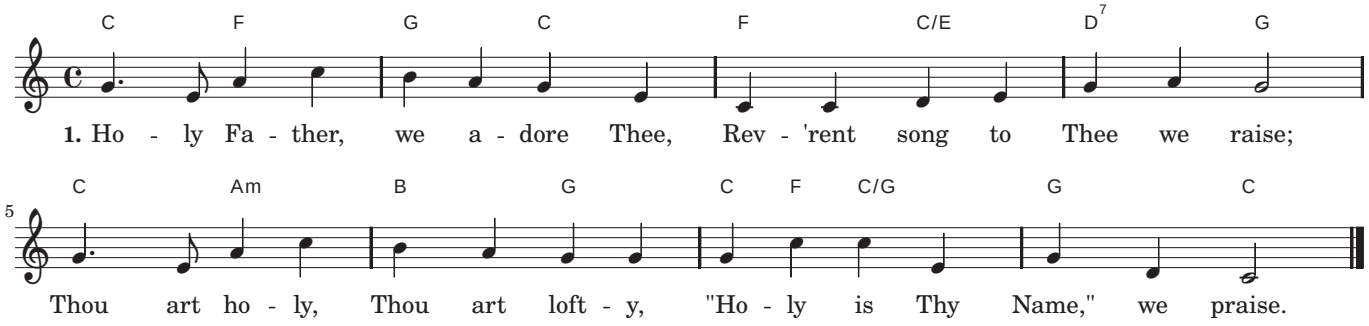
wholly sanctified with God's holy nature, that we may be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus. This is the ultimate completion of the sanctification we enjoy in God's full salvation.

Holy Father, we adore Thee

Worship of the Father—His Holiness

C19 Cb22 K19 P17 R8 S15 Tg22

22



2. Loving is Thy heart, dear Father,
Righteous ever are Thy ways;
But how holy is Thy nature,
Yet, to us Christ it conveys.

3. Thou hast ever sanctified us
With the blood of Christ our Lord;
Thou hast separated sinners
Thru the truth which is Thy Word.

4. Thou hast, by Thy Holy Spirit,
Made us holy unto Thee;
And our spirit, soul, and body
Wholly sanctified will be.

5. Oh! the holy life of Jesus
Thru Thy grace we now possess;
Thou wilt make us e'en partakers
Of Thy very holiness.

6. When within that holy city,
Thy full holiness we'll share,
To the uttermost forever,
"Thou art holy," we'll declare.

LESSON FORTY-FIVE

TRANSFORMATION

In the life aspect of God's full salvation, every step, from regeneration to glorification, gradually progresses forward and upward. Regeneration leads to renewing; renewing leads to ultimate sanctification; ultimate sanctification leads to transformation; and transformation is followed by maturity, conformation, and glorification. We will now consider the matter of transformation.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSFORMATION

"Being transformed into the same image [of the Lord]" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In the original Greek the word "transformation" is a compound word composed of two parts. The first part means "change," while the second part means "the inward form," which implies "element" and "essence." Thus, in the New Testament, transformation refers to a change of essence in our inward form. This reveals that the transformation of life which we enjoy in our experience of God's full salvation is the transformation of our inward essence. It is the adding of the element of the divine life of Christ to our human element, producing a metabolic effect, which causes a change of essence, a transformation of our inward being into the image of the Lord.

II. THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

A. Removing the Veil

"But whenever it [the heart] turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2 Cor. 3:16).

The veil refers to the covering on those who are under the law and who intend to keep the law. Being under the law and desiring to keep the law turn a man away from the Lord to take the law as his goal. These things cover him like a veil so that he is unable to see the Lord face to face. Self-improvement and trying to do good, apart from the Lord, have the same effect. They cause a man to turn

away from the Lord and to aim at good deeds; hence, being covered by good deeds, like a person with a veil, he cannot see the Lord face to face. Since we have believed in the Lord and have turned to the Lord from things such as the law and good deeds, our heart should turn from our former aims to the Lord, that the veils which cover us may be removed and that we may see the Lord face to face.

B. Being Freed

"The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17).

When we turn to the Lord from all other goals, such as the law and good deeds, the Lord, who is the Spirit, immediately frees us. If we aim at any matter other than the Lord, we will be occupied and bound by it, so that the Lord Spirit will be unable to do anything for us. Once we turn to the Lord from that goal, the Lord immediately has the ground in us to free us.

C. Beholding and Reflecting the Lord as a Mirror

"We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Since we have turned to the Lord to take Him as our goal, the veil has been removed from our face, and with an unveiled face we are able to behold and reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord. At this moment, our face is open to the Lord, and as an unveiled mirror we are able, on the one hand, to behold His glory and, on the other hand, to reflect His glory.

D. Being Transformed into the Lord's Image

"...beholding and reflecting...the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3:18).

When we behold and reflect the glory of the Lord with an open and unveiled face, we are gradually transformed into the Lord's image, and as a mirror we reflect the Lord for others to see. This is the glorious result of our beholding the Lord face to face without any veil.

E. From Glory to Glory

"...transformed into the same image [of the Lord] from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Our beholding the Lord face to face to reflect the Lord and our being transformed into the same image of the Lord are progressive, advancing from one degree of glory to another higher degree of glory.

F. Being Transformed from the Lord Spirit

"...transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In the process of His death and resurrection, Christ, who died, resurrected, and accomplished redemption for us, was transfigured to become a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Lord Spirit spoken of here is Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit. After we receive the redemption accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection and are regenerated, this life-giving Spirit works in us, from our spirit through our soul, continually transforming us into the image of the Lord from glory to glory, progressing from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory. This is the metabolic transformation that is being accomplished in us by the Lord, who is the Spirit of life, continually infusing the essence of His life into us, until we are raptured and our body is transfigured to be the same as His glorious body.

G. Being Transformed by the Renewing of the Mind

"...transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2).

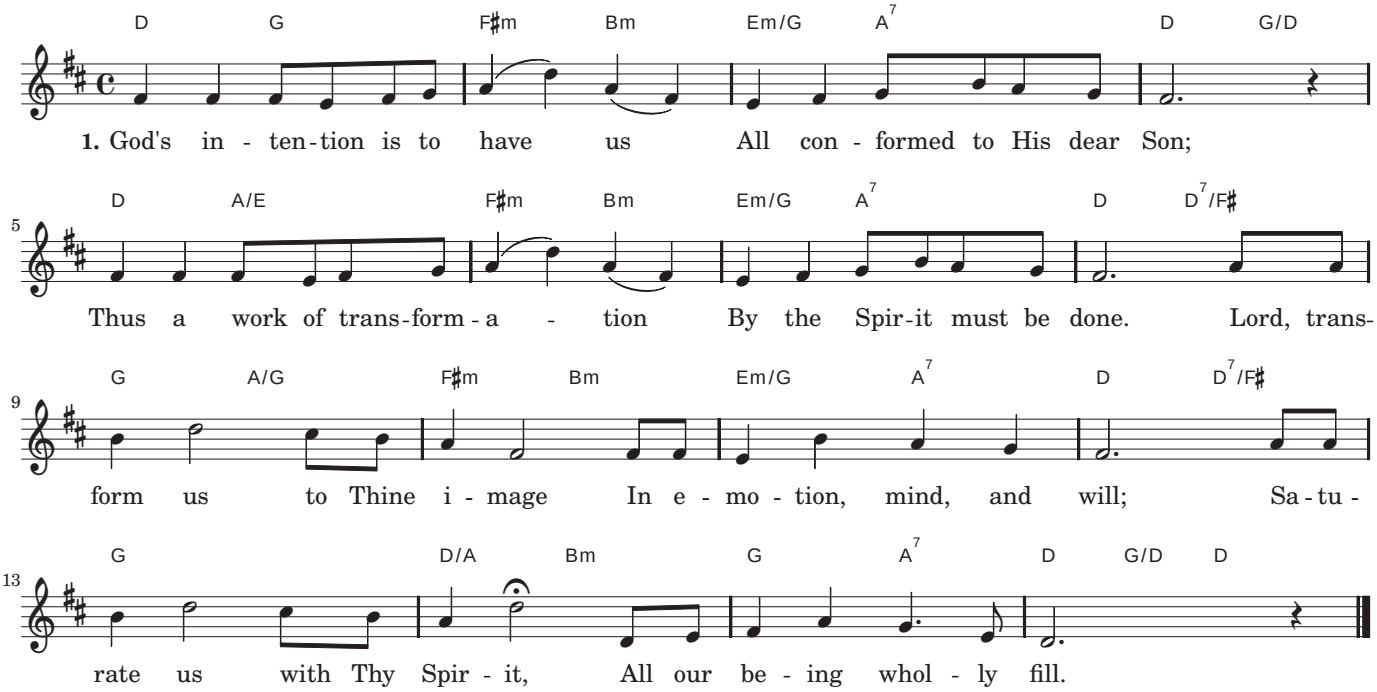
The glorious transformation mentioned previously takes place also by the renewing of our mind. Our mind is the entrance of our heart. Whatever enters into us must first pass through our mind before it enters into our heart. The Lord Spirit transforms us inwardly by passing through this entrance of the mind, bringing the divine essence of the Lord's life into us through the understanding and receiving of the mind in our heart, the desire of the emotion in our heart, and the approving of the will in our heart, in order to transform our whole being from within into the image of the Lord.

God's intention is to have us

Various Aspects of the Inner Life—Transformation

C546 Cb750 K546 P350 R126 S323 Tg750

750



2. God hath us regenerated
In our spirit with His life;
But He must transform us further—
In our soul by His own life.

3. Spreading outward from our spirit
Doth the Lord transform our soul,
By the inward parts renewing,
Till within His full control.

4. By the power of His Spirit
In His pattern He transforms;
From His glory to His glory
To His image He conforms.

5. He transforms, all sanctifying,
Till like Him we are matured;
He transforms, our soul possessing,
Till His stature is secured.

LESSON FORTY-SIX

MATURITY

In the life aspect of the full salvation prepared by God for us, the transformation in life which we experience spontaneously causes us to grow in the spiritual life unto maturity. Thus, our experience also enters into the aspect of maturity in the growth of life.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATURITY

The meaning of the word "mature" in Greek is "at the end point." When the word is used to describe organisms, it denotes completion, full growth, and maturity. This word is used many times in the New Testament, referring to the believers' being full-grown, mature, and perfected in the life of God, which they receive at the time of regeneration. It indicates that although we receive the life of God when we are regenerated, after regeneration we still need to grow and mature unto perfection in this life.

II. THE NEED FOR MATURITY

A. "...have become those who have need of milk and not of solid food. For everyone who partakes of milk...he is a babe; but solid food is for the mature" (Heb. 5:12-14).

These verses show us our need to grow and mature in the spiritual life. If we do not grow and mature, we will remain in the childish stage, unable to comprehend God's word of righteousness, which is like solid food. Hence, like the Hebrew believers in the early days, we will be unable to comprehend the revelation of God's deeper word and thus be unable to participate in God's New Testament economy. The wisdom in God's economy can be spoken only to the full-grown (1 Cor. 2:6). To enter into God's New Testament economy, into God's eternal plan, requires that we grow and mature in the life of God.

B. "At a full-grown man...that we may be no longer babes tossed by

waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error" (Eph. 4:13-14).

After our regeneration as believers, although we may no longer be newborns in the life of God, we still may be babes, easily tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, deceived and led in craftiness with a view to a system of error, being tricked by Satan. We need to grow and mature in order, on the positive side, to comprehend the revelation of God and to know His economy and plan, and on the negative side, to not be deceived or tricked by Satan.

III. THE GOAL OF THE APOSTLES

"Whom [Christ] we [the apostles] announce, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man full-grown in Christ" (Col. 1:28); "Who [a co-worker of the apostle]... always struggling on your behalf in prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12).

In the Greek text, the word "stand" in the second verse is in the passive voice, meaning "placed," or "presented and displayed," which corresponds to the word "present" in the first verse. These two verses in the book of Colossians show us that the laboring of the apostles in Christ for the believers and their struggling in prayers for them are all for the believers' growth and maturity, that they may be presented and displayed full-grown and mature before Christ.

IV. THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD

"You, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

The word "therefore" at the beginning of this verse indicates that this word is the conclusion of the law of the new life in the kingdom's constitution, which the Lord decreed in the preceding text, verses 17-47. In this conclusion, the Lord commands us to be perfect (in life) as our heavenly Father is perfect. To be perfect in life is to grow and mature in life. The Lord commands us in this way in the conclusion of the law of the new life in the kingdom of the heavens because

we are children born of our Father with our Father's life. This life is able to make us perfect in the life of our Father, as our Father is perfect. Therefore, this commandment of the Lord is based upon the divine life of the Father. It is also fulfilled by the divine life of the Father. The divine life of the Father is able to make us perfect in life as He is perfect. This is not only the Lord's commandment to us but also the Lord's expectation concerning us. We should care for the Lord's heart's desire, keep His commandment, and grow and mature by the Father's life within us, thus accomplishing the will of the Triune God.

V. THE PURSUIT WE SHOULD HAVE

A. "Wherefore, leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us be brought on to maturity" (Heb. 6:1).

"The word of the beginning of the Christ" refers to the word in the gospel concerning Christ's saving us and regenerating us, that is, the word in God's salvation which initiates us in the spiritual life. This verse exhorts us to leave the word of the beginning, that is, to leave the beginning of our spiritual life, and to be brought on to perfection in the spiritual life. This is to grow and mature in the spiritual life.

B. "Not that I...am already perfected [full-grown in life], but I pursue, if also I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus [for me to gain Him]...I do not yet reckon myself to have laid hold [of Christ], but one thing—forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal [Christ] for the prize [Christ] of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown [in life], have this mind" (Phil. 3:12-15).

The Apostle Paul tells us in this passage how he pursued growth and maturity in the life of Christ. In this matter, he was never contented with himself but always pursued, forgetting the things which were behind and stretching forward to the things which were before, pressing toward Christ, who is the goal and the mark. This he did in order to gain Christ that he might grow and mature in His life. With his own pursuit as the pattern, he exhorted the believers whom

he was leading and caring for to be like him, to pursue in the life of Christ, and to gain Christ fully in order that they might grow and mature. Finally, Paul said that as many of us as are (relatively) full-grown should have this mind and set this as the goal.

VI. THE PREREQUISITE FOR MATURITY

A. "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).

The prerequisite for maturity in the spiritual life is to grow continually in this life. As soon as a believer is regenerated and becomes a newborn babe spiritually, he should long for God's word in the Bible as the guileless milk that he may grow in his spiritual life.

B. "I [Paul] planted, Apollos watered, but God made to grow" (1 Cor. 3:6).

In the spiritual life, a believer is, on the one hand, a person with the spiritual life and, on the other hand, like a plant cultivated on God's farm (1 Cor. 3:5-9). Whether as a person or like a plant, a believer needs to grow that he may become mature. Therefore, continuing growth is a prerequisite for becoming full-grown and mature.

C. "But holding to truth [Christ] in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

We grow in the spiritual life by holding in love to Christ as the truth and growing up into Christ as the Head in all things. This kind of growth, which takes Christ as the truth and which grows into Christ, is a further prerequisite for our becoming full-grown and mature.

D. "...holding the Head [Christ], out from whom all the Body, by means of the joints and bands being supplied and knit together, grows with the growth of God" (Col. 2:19).

This verse indicates that the church as the Body of Christ grows with the growth of God by holding Christ as the Head, by receiving the rich supply from Him, the Head, through the joints of His Body, and by being knit together by the

bands of His Body. This growth in the Body of Christ is also a prerequisite for our growth and maturity in the life of Christ. This prerequisite consummates in the growth of this Body of Christ.

VII. THE ISSUE OF MATURITY

"Until we all arrive...at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).
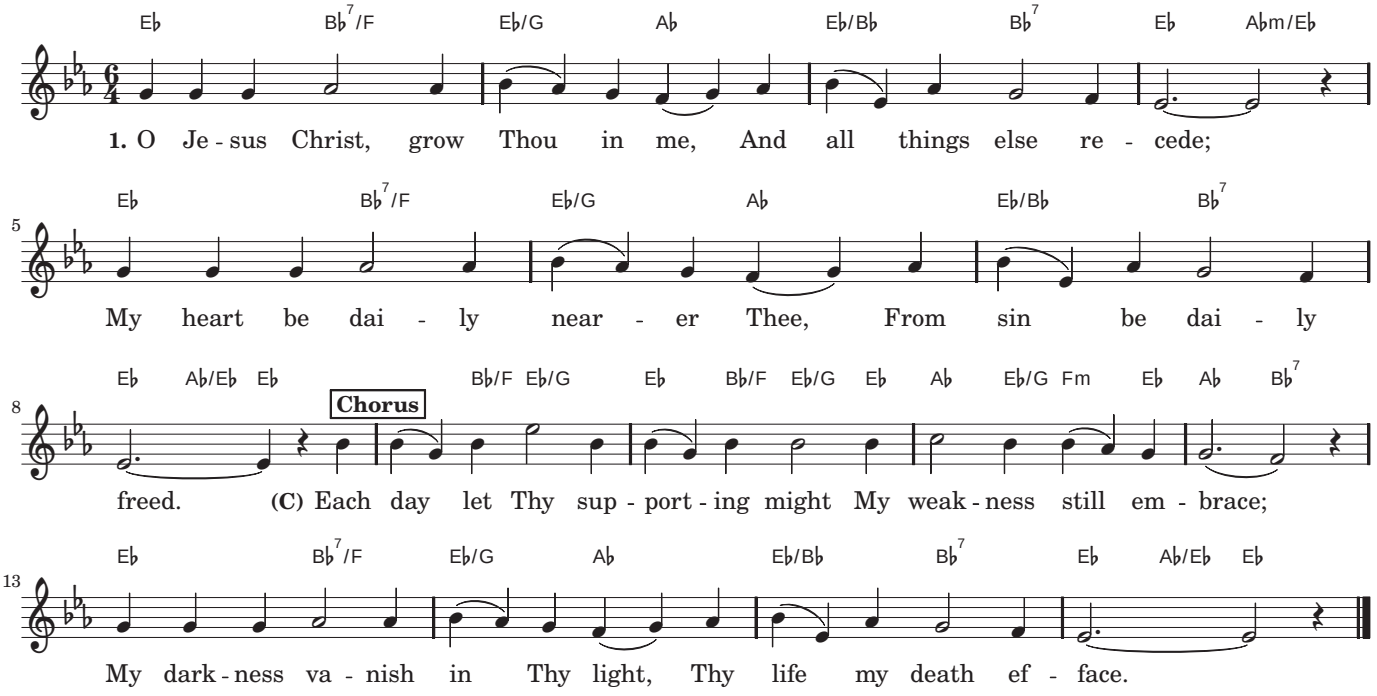
The full-grown man here refers to the church as the Body of Christ growing into a mature man. The fullness of Christ indicates the Body of Christ becoming His expression. In brief, the measure of the stature is just the stature. This stature is the church as the Body of Christ growing into the stature of Christ. This is the ultimate and full issue of the believers' growth and maturity by the life of Christ in His Body. Our transformation in the life of Christ makes us like Him in the image of His essence; our maturity in the life of Christ makes us like Him in the measure of His stature. Thus, on the one hand, we have His image, and, on the other hand, we have His stature.

O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me

Longings—For Growth in Christ

C298 Cb395 K298 P191 R78 S173 Tg395

395



2. In Thy bright beams which on me fall,
Fade every evil thought;
That I am nothing, Thou art all,
I would be daily taught.

3. More of Thy glory let me see,
Thou Holy, Wise, and True;
I would Thy living image be,
In joy and sorrow too.

4. Fill me with gladness from above,
Hold me by strength divine;
Lord, let the glow of Thy great love
Through all my being shine.

5. Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be Thou my life and aim;
Oh, make me daily through Thy grace
More meet to bear Thy name.

LESSON FORTY-SEVEN

CONFORMATION

In God's full salvation, after we have enjoyed the growth and maturity in the life of Christ, the next step is conformation. This conformation is not accomplished by our outward following of some model; rather, it is worked out by the growth of Christ's life from within us. Therefore, conformation comes from the life of Christ within us, and this conformation in turn becomes our experience and enjoyment in His life.

I. WE BEING CREATED ACCORDING TO GOD'S IMAGE

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

Image is inward, whereas likeness is outward. This reveals to us that when God created us in the beginning, He purposed that we should be like Him, having His inward image—love, light, holiness, righteousness, and so on—and having His outward likeness.

II. CHRIST BEING THE IMAGE OF GOD

"...Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4); "Who [Christ] is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

Christ, the Son of God's love, is the image of God. He declared God that man may see God (John 1:18). We were created in God's image, that is, according to Christ. Thus Adam, who was created in God's image, is a type of the Christ who was to come (Rom. 5:14).

III. CHRIST TAKING THE FORM OF MAN

"Who [Christ Jesus] subsisting in the form of God...equality with God...taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7).

This verse tells us that Christ, who is the image of God, subsisted in the form

of God. He then took the form of a slave (a man) and became in the likeness of men. In this way He became a God-man, having both the image of God and the form of man. On the one hand, He is like God, and on the other hand, He is like man.

IV. CHRIST IN HUMAN FORM BEING BORN AS GOD'S FIRSTBORN SON

"God...raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second psalm, You are My Son [firstborn Son]; today [the day of Christ's resurrection] I have begotten You" (Acts 13:33).

In eternity Christ was God's only begotten Son (John 1:18; 3:16). Later, He took the form of man and the likeness of man to become a son of man. This Christ, who became a son of man, after passing through His death and resurrection, was begotten to be God's firstborn Son. This firstborn Son of God possesses both divinity and humanity, being both the complete God and the perfect man. This is different from His being the only begotten Son of God in eternity, having only divinity and not humanity, being only God and not yet man. Since the firstborn Son of God, who already had divinity, now possesses humanity, He can be like us.

V. THE BELIEVERS BEING REGENERATED TO BE GOD'S MANY SONS

"God...has regenerated us...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3); "He should be the Firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29).

These verses show us that not only Christ, who became man and took the form of man, was born to be God's firstborn Son in His resurrection, but also we, His believers through the centuries, have been born together with Him as God's many sons in His resurrection, that He may be the Firstborn among many brothers, and that we the believers may be like Him. He was the Son of God, having only the nature and image of God, who became the Son of Man, taking the human nature and form; we were the sons of men, having only the human nature

and form, who were later born to be God's many sons in His resurrection, having God's nature and image. Now, He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, having God's nature and image as well as the human nature and form; and we are both the sons of men and the sons of God, having the human nature and form as well as God's nature and image. Therefore, we and He are completely alike in God's nature and form as well as in the human nature and form.

VI. THE BELIEVERS BEING TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE AS CHRIST'S

"We all [the believers]...are being transformed into the same image...even as from the Lord Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

In the resurrection of Christ, the believers are first regenerated to be God's many sons, who have the likeness of Christ, the firstborn Son of God. They then are gradually transformed into the same image as Christ's in the Lord Spirit to become more like Him.

VII. THE MANY SONS BEING CONSTITUTED INTO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRSTBORN SON OF GOD

"Whom [God's many sons] He [God] foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He should be the Firstborn among many brothers" (Rom. 8:29).

This verse says that in eternity God predestinated us, the many sons of God, to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, Christ. This will be accomplished when the firstborn Son of God comes again to the inhabited earth (Heb. 1:6) to rapture us and to transfigure our body. We were regenerated in the resurrection of Christ to be the sons of God, who are like Him, the firstborn Son of God. Following this, we are being transformed daily in the Lord Spirit into the same image as Christ's, who is the firstborn Son of God. When the Lord comes again, our body will be redeemed, transfigured, and conformed to the body of His glory (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21). By that time, we shall be completely conformed to His image, to be fully like Him even in our body (1 John 3:2), enjoying with Him the eternal divine glory. Such a glorification is the ultimate peak of our

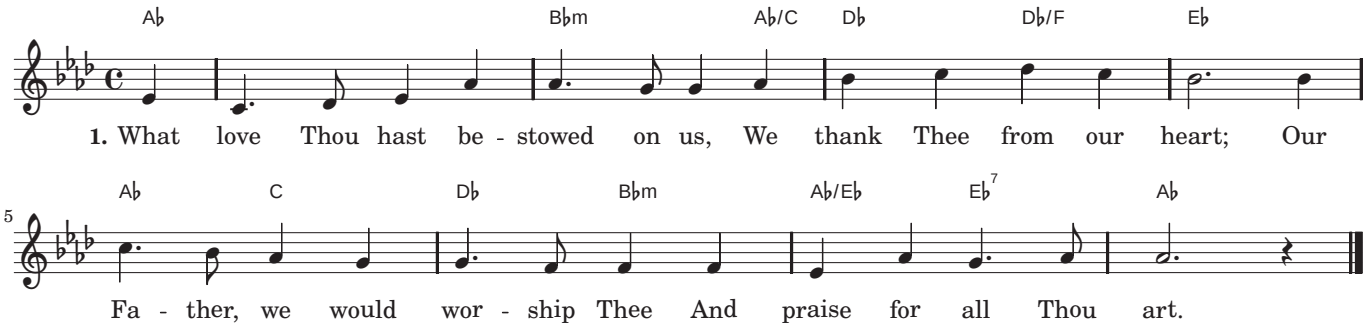
conformation in the life of Christ.

What love Thou hast bestowed on us

Worship of the Father—His Love

C25 Cb30 K25 P12 R13 S21 Tg30

30



2. Thy heart Thou hast revealed to us,
Made known th' eternal will;
Within the Son Thou hast come forth,
Thy purpose to fulfill.

3. Thou gavest Thy beloved Son
In love to come and die,
That we may be Thy many sons,
As heirs with Him, made nigh.

4. Through Him we have Thy very life
And Thou our Father art;
Thy very nature, all Thyself,
Thou dost to us impart.

5. Thy Spirit into ours has come
That we may "Abba" cry;
Of Spirit born, with Spirit sealed,
To be transformed thereby.

6. The many sons to glory brought
Is Thine eternal goal,
And to Thy Son's own image wrought,
Thou wilt conform the whole.

7. Throughout Thy transformation work
Thou dost direct each one,
From glory unto glory bring
Until the work is done.

8. What love Thou, Father, hast bestowed;
We'll ever grateful be;
We'll worship Thee forevermore
And praise unceasingly.

LESSON FORTY-EIGHT

GLORIFICATION

In God's full salvation, we begin with regeneration and continue to experience and enjoy the rich life of Christ through renewing, sanctification, transformation, maturity, and conformation, and ultimately, unto glorification. To be glorified is to enter into God's glory, to experience and enjoy, without measure and without limit, the infinite and eternal life of God in Christ.

I. GOD'S PURPOSE

"...the God of all grace, who called you into His eternal glory in Christ" (1 Pet. 5:10).

Here we are told that God's purpose in calling us in Christ Jesus and in giving us all grace is that we may enjoy His eternal glory. In eternity past He predestinated us according to His foreknowledge, and in time He called us and justified us that we may be glorified (Rom. 8:29-30). This will be fulfilled when the Lord comes again. At that time we shall "be manifested...in glory" (Col. 3:4) together with Christ, who is our life today, and shall enjoy "the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Our sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with "the coming glory to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18), that is, God's own glory (1 Thes. 2:12).

II. GOD'S LEADING

"...Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory" (Heb. 2:10).

Since God predestined that we should enjoy His own eternal glory, beginning from the day of our salvation, He leads us into His glory. As the Creator of all things, He orders and arranges all things, causing them to work for us (Rom. 8:28-30), that through them He may lead us into His glory.

III. GOD'S PERFECTING

"Our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Here we see that the affliction which we suffer today for being Christians, for following the Lord, and for witnessing for Him is momentary and light. Our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory. The working out of this affliction is God's perfecting work. Through affliction, God perfects us to enjoy the coming weight of glory. We suffer together with Him that we also may be glorified together with Him. Through all the things created and ordered by Him, God leads us into His glory; through afflictions, or sufferings, God perfects us to enjoy His incomparable glory.

IV. OUR ENJOYMENT

A. "What are the riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Although we who believe into Christ have not yet entered into the glory which God predestined for us, we do have Christ in us as the hope of glory. This is a mysterious glory with tremendous riches.

B. "When Christ our life is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

Today we enjoy Christ as our life. When He is manifested, we will be manifested with Him in His glory to enjoy His divine glory. That glory will free us from the slavery which the corrupted creation is under today. It is not only a glory which we desire to enjoy, but also a glory that the whole creation is eagerly expecting (Rom. 8:19-21). Today, that glory is the Christ who is in us, growing in us continually. When Christ comes, on the one hand, it is God who will lead us into that glory, and on the other hand, it is Christ who will permeate through us as the glory into which we will enter. This is Christ being glorified and marveled at in His saints (2 Thes. 1:10), that is Christ being manifested from within His believers and upon His believers as glory and as their enjoyment. In the future, our bodies will be permeated by the glory of Christ to manifest His glory; that is,
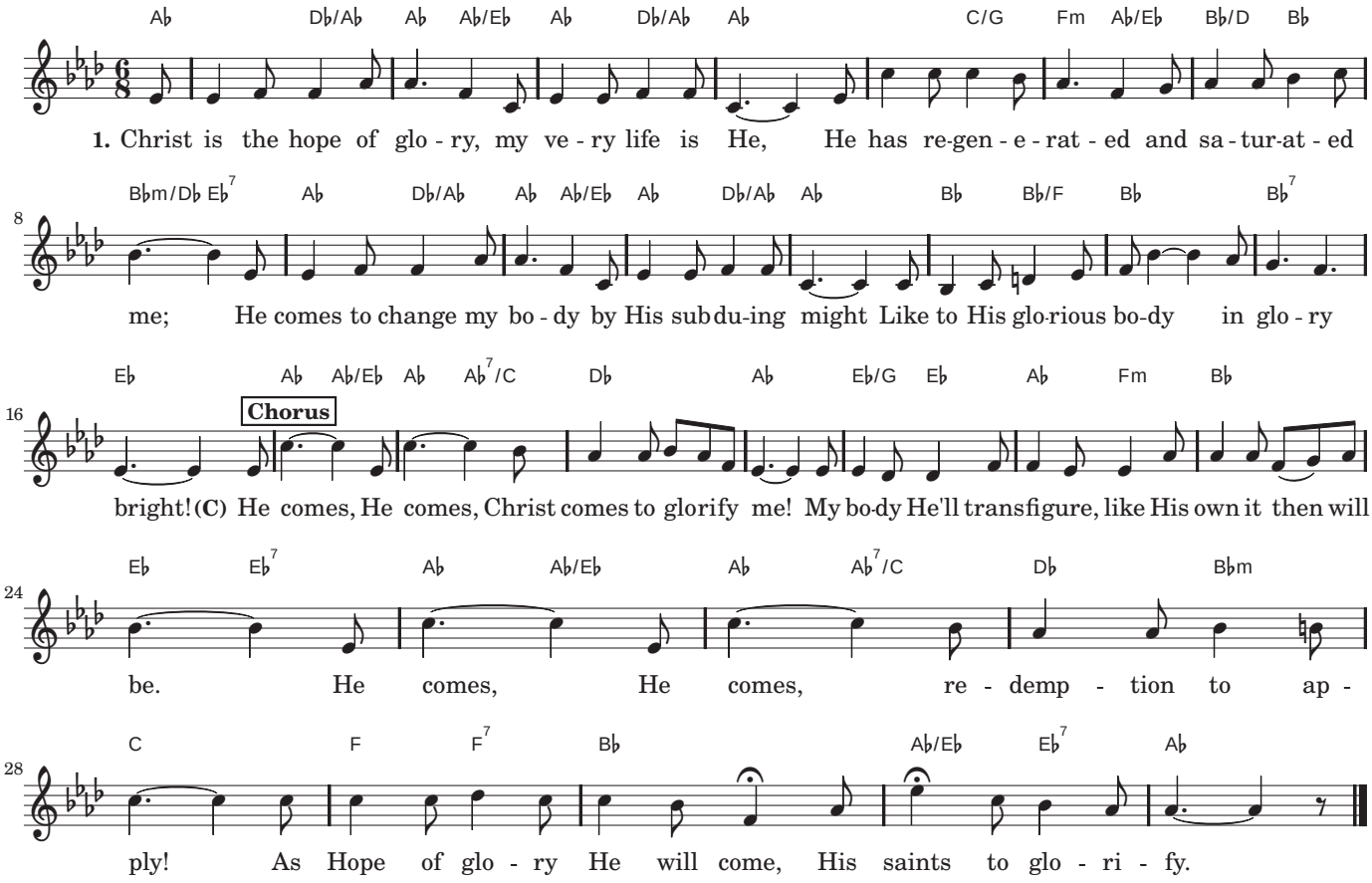
our bodies will be redeemed in the life of Christ and conformed to His glorious body. We will then put off our bodies of the old creation and be freed from the slavery which both we and the corrupted creation are under, that we may enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God to enjoy God's eternal glory.

Christ is the hope of glory, my very life is He

Hope of Glory—Christ as the Glorification

C763 Cb949 K763 P480 R155 S434 Tg949

949



2. Christ is the hope of glory, He is God's mystery;
He shares with me God's fulness and brings God into me.
He comes to make me blended with God in every way,
That I may share His glory with Him for aye.

3. Christ is the hope of glory, redemption full is He:,
Redemption to my body, from death to set it free,
He comes to make my body a glorious one to be
And swallow death forever in victory.

4. Christ is the hope of glory, He is my history:
His life is my experience, for He is one with me;
He comes to bring me into His glorious liberty,
That one with Him completely I'll ever be.