

MESSAGES TO THE

TRAINEES

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WITNESS LEE



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Witness Lee

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concerning the Experience of Christ as Life

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in the full-time training in Anaheim, California, on August 14 through December 21, 1990.

PART ONE:

FURTHER TALKS CONCERNING

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST AS LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

DEALING WITH OUR PECULIARITY, OUR SELF, AND OUR SOUL

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:17,
22-24; Titus 3:5

In this chapter we want to fellowship about the need to deal with our peculiarity, our self, and our soul. Every man is full of peculiar traits, peculiarities. Peculiarities are the characteristics of our personality. We may be persons who are quiet, nice, gentle, and kind. These are the characteristics, the peculiarities, of our personality. Personality is what we are, and its characteristics are peculiarities expressed from our personality.

Peculiarity always comes out of our self. Actually, peculiarity is the real self. For this reason there is no way that we can hide our peculiarity. We should not think that we can conceal our peculiarity. The more we try to conceal our peculiarity, the more peculiar we become. There is no way to conceal our peculiarity because that is our self. How can we be saved from our self, from our peculiarity? We need to see that God's salvation is a renewing. Titus 3:5 speaks of God saving us "through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." To be saved is to be renewed. God's salvation is altogether a renewing.

BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR MIND

Ephesians 4:22-24 says, "That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality." We can say that Christ is the new man since Colossians 3:10 and 11 say that in the new man Christ is all and in all. Christ is all the members and in all the members of the new man. The constitution of the new man is Christ. We can also say, according to Ephesians 4:22-24, that our old man is our former manner of life, and our former manner of life is our peculiarity. Our old man is our peculiarity; the peculiarity is the expression, the exhibition, of

the self; and the self is the expression of the soul. The new man, however, was created according to God. Based on this we can say that peculiarity is in contrast to God. It is God's enemy. Peculiarity is opposing God.

Now we need to ask how we can be rescued out of the old man and into the new man. How can we be delivered out of our peculiarity and into God? Ephesians 4:23 reveals that it is by being renewed in the spirit of our mind. This is the regenerated spirit of the believers, mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Such a mingled spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. It is in such a spirit that we are renewed for our transformation. The Spirit is with our spirit (Rom. 8:16), and our mind is the main part of our soul. But our spirit needs to "invade" our soul and take over the main part of our soul, our mind. Our mind needs to be invaded by the spirit.

According to God's creation and ordination, He has preserved the central part of our being, our spirit, for Himself. This can be proved by two things. First, when all the unbelievers are in trouble, the innermost part, the deepest part, of their being will remind them of God. Second, a fallen man responds to the preaching of the gospel because of his spirit, the part of him that has been preserved by God. When we preach the gospel, we must learn how to touch man's spirit. Specifically, we must touch the conscience, which is the main part of our spirit (9:1; cf. 8:16).

Confucius referred to the conscience as the "bright virtue." He said that the highest learning is to develop our bright virtue. This means that if we develop our conscience, we become the most ethical persons. This shows that God has preserved something in fallen man for Himself. Every man has a human spirit, which is the God-preserved part of his being. We Christians also have our spirit regenerated. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6b). The first Spirit here is the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, and the second spirit is the human spirit, the regenerated spirit of man. Regeneration transpires in the human spirit by the Holy Spirit of God with God's life, the uncreated life. A regenerated spirit is a renewed spirit. This renewed spirit must be strengthened (Eph. 3:16) to invade, subdue, and occupy every part of our soul. This is God's salvation.

The parts of our soul need to be invaded by our spirit. Sometimes our spirit will invade our soul and later "be forced to withdraw." Whenever our spirit

invades our soul, the whole world rises up to put pressure on the invading spirit to withdraw. Our spirit is forced to withdraw many times by our spouse, our children, our roommates, and others who are close to us. Often the invasion by our spirit into our soul is persecuted by us. We persecute this invasion and force our spirit to withdraw from our mind, from our soul.

In our time with the Lord in the morning, the spirit may have invaded and strongly entered into our mind, which became subdued and occupied by the spirit. At that time we were under the renewing of the spirit. But maybe after two hours, something exercised pressure on our spirit, forcing our spirit to withdraw from our mind. God indwells our spirit, so our spirit is His habitation (2:22). But because we have been living by our soul for many years, our soul is always attempting to conquer our spirit. Because we still live in our former manner of life, we need another invasion of the spirit into our mind, another morning watch, another portion of the Word for morning revival. This renews us and saves us from our peculiarity.

The overcomers are those who overcome their peculiarity. Some of the older saints may feel that they need to be sympathized with and given the freedom to live as they are. But to live what we are is to live peculiarity. We may not want to change. We may excuse ourselves by saying that living in our peculiarity is not living in sin. But if we remain in our peculiarity, we are defeated ones remaining in our former manner of life. We are defeated because our spirit has been forced by our way of living to withdraw from our mind, emotion, and will. First Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Do not quench the Spirit.” What is it to quench the Spirit? To quench the Spirit is to let the parts of our soul—the mind, emotion, and will—subdue our spirit. Instead of the spirit invading our soul, the soul subdues the spirit and causes the spirit to withdraw. Then the Spirit is quenched, and we are defeated. An overcomer is one who is always allowing his spirit to spread into the inner parts of his being day by day. Then his spirit becomes the spirit of his mind. This means that his spirit is an expanding spirit. I am concerned that some of us may have a withdrawing spirit instead of an expanding spirit. Our outward activity may be the same, but inwardly our spirit may be greatly limited. At such a time our peculiarity, our former manner of life, has become very strong. Perhaps we put off our former manner of life for a time, but now it has come back and still remains.

DEALING WITH THE SELF BY THE CROSS

At this point we need to consider what the Lord Jesus said in the Gospels concerning the soul and the self. Matthew 16:24-26 says, “If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?” The best way for us to save our soul-life, is to let our soul be invaded by our spirit. Luke 9:23-25 says, “He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?” In Matthew, the Lord spoke of a person forfeiting “his soul-life,” whereas in Luke, He spoke of a person forfeiting “himself.” This indicates that our soul is our self. The soul is the source, the root, of the self, and the self is our former manner of life, our peculiarity.

The way to deal with our peculiarity is to deal with our self, our soul, by the cross. Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20a). The “I” in this verse is the natural person, the soul. When Christ was crucified, we were included in Him according to God’s economy. This is an accomplished fact. Now we need to take up our cross daily and follow Him. Christ first bore the cross and then was crucified. We, His believers, have first been crucified with Him and then bear the cross today. To us, bearing the cross is to remain under the killing of the death of Christ for the terminating of our self, our natural life, and our old man. In so doing we deny our self that we may follow the Lord. To deal with the self in this way is to deal with our peculiarity.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: I still do not understand what you mean by dealing with our peculiarity. Can you share more about this?

Answer: We need to be renewed by the Lord, but our person is the aggregate of peculiarity. We need to be renewed, to be saved from living our former manner of life, to living God Himself. Ephesians 4:22-24 reveals this. God does not care so much for the way we do things but for who is doing them.

If we do anything by our self, in our self, and with our self, we are doing it in our peculiarity and apart from God. We have to remember that we are the totality of peculiarity. Our peculiarity needs to be dealt with. Actually, it was dealt with already by the Lord Jesus when He was crucified on the cross because we were crucified with Him. When we believed in the Lord Jesus for our salvation, we took Christ with His cross for our regeneration. But in our daily experience after salvation, the cross needs to be applied to us daily. From day to day we still live in ourselves, by ourselves, and with ourselves. We may not sin, but we are still full of peculiarity, full of ourselves. Now we must learn to stay on the cross of Christ. This means that we bear the cross and deny the self. This also means that we lose our soul-life. We allow our soul to be invaded by the spirit, to be conquered by the spirit, to be taken over by the spirit, and to be occupied and subdued by the spirit. Are we living as a new man according to God or as an old man in our former manner of life? In a sense we have been saved from sin. In another sense we have not been renewed to be saved from our self, from our former manner of life.

Question: When you go through a period of time in which specific peculiarities are exposed, and you feel overwhelmed by them and disgusted with yourself, how do you get through at that time? Do you confess specific things? How do we deal with this before the Lord?

Answer: My advice is for us to return to the cross, to remain in the death of Christ. Let the cross kill you. Let the killing of the death of Christ remain on you and in you. In 2 Corinthians 4:10 Paul says that he was “always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus.” This was the killing, the working of death, the working of the cross. This was Paul’s practical cross in his daily life. We have been crucified with Christ, but day by day we need to remain in the death of Christ. Whenever we are active in our peculiarity, we need to go back to the cross. When we go back to the cross, we admit that we have already been killed. This is a deeper lesson that we all have to learn. In Romans 6:6 Paul says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. In Galatians 2:20 he says that he is crucified with Christ. Then in 2 Corinthians 4:10 he says that he was always bearing about in his body the putting to death of Jesus. This all means that Paul did not live by himself. He lived Christ (Phil. 1:21a).

On the one hand, we have been crucified with Christ. On the other hand, we are still living. What shall we do? We need to go back to the cross. To go back

to the cross means to remain on the side of our having been crucified with Christ. To remain there is to take the cross. To take the cross is to remain in the cross, to let the cross be applied to our being. If we remain in the death of Christ, we are greatly blessed. Death always ushers in resurrection. As long as we take care of remaining in His death, we will spontaneously be living in His resurrection.

CHAPTER TWO

DEALING WITH OUR PECULIARITIES

BY WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Gal. 2:20a; Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:4b

In the past we have spoken much with the saints in many places about peculiarities. There has been much teaching about peculiarities, but there have been few results in our experience. Regardless of how much we talk about dealing with our peculiarity, it seems that people remain the same. The only improvement that can be seen is a certain correction of our behavior. However, no amount of correction is spiritually meaningful. Schools help people to correct their behavior and improve their character. Likewise, the military service helps young men to be adjusted and corrected, but that is not life. What we are teaching in these messages is not correction but the experience of life. The experience of life issues in correction, but this correction comes from living Christ.

The four verses in the Scripture Reading above are very crucial for our living of Christ, and the experience of these verses cannot be exhausted. Galatians 2:20a says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” Romans 6:4 says, “We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.” After being baptized and rising up from the water, we should walk in newness of life. This newness is not of our natural life but of the divine life, which we have received of God. The realm of the divine life is new, and our walk and being should be in the realm of the newness of the divine life. To walk in newness we do not need to wait for the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, “So then if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, they have become new.” The New Jerusalem will simply be the ultimate consummation of the realm of newness, which is Christ.

Christ is the realm and element of newness. In the New Testament the phrases *in Christ*, *in Christ Jesus*, *in the Lord*, and *in Him* are used many

times. To be in Christ is to be in the element and realm of newness, living Christ. Accordingly, the church should be the real New Jerusalem today. However, very few Christians are living in the realm and element of Christ. Instead, we may be trying to live in a “newness” carried out in our natural life. Confucius taught concerning being renewed, and according to his teaching, many learned Chinese consider that they are being renewed. In the Western world also, people who feel that they are old desire to be renewed, yet without Christ. This is not walking in the newness of the divine life.

EXERCISING TO LIVE CHRIST

As long as we do not live in the realm of Christ as our newness, whatever we do is our peculiarity, and even we ourselves are peculiarity. When we live, do things, talk to people, and visit people, we should not go too fast. We have to learn to hesitate and ask, “Is this me, or is this Christ?” When we are about to make a phone call or converse with a brother or sister, we should hesitate and check whether it is only we who are about to do it. It should be “no longer I who live, but...Christ who lives in me.” We should practice and build up a habit of hesitating before we speak. If we learn this lesson, many times we will “swallow” our words and not release them. This does not mean that what we were about to say was wrong; it is simply that it was only we who were about to speak.

If we do not live Christ, if it is not Christ who lives, speaks, and acts through us, whatever we do is a peculiarity. Often our talking on the telephone is a peculiarity. Apparently, talking too much on the telephone is a habit. Actually, it is our peculiar trait. Many times making fewer telephone calls and speaking only briefly on the telephone may help us to be overcomers. However, certain saints make talking on the telephone their amusement and entertainment. This is their peculiarity. Whatever we do or say that is not in the realm of the newness of life is a peculiarity.

We are too strong in our habit. All day we must hesitate and check whether it is we or Christ who is speaking or acting. We must even hesitate when we speak with our husband or wife. We should not think that we can be loose or quick with our spouse. Actually, no one can expose our peculiarity as much as our spouse. We may be very careful with the brothers or our parents, but we may be too free and not hesitate with our husband or wife. This is the reason that there are many separations and divorces. This shows that without living

in the realm of newness, which is Christ Himself, we are altogether nothing but peculiarity. If we are going to deal with our peculiarity, we have to deal with our living that is not in the realm of Christ. If we hesitate and check ourselves, our intuition, the inner knowledge in our spirit, will tell us that it is we and not Christ who is living. Then we will stop our doing and speaking. Whenever we check, our spirit will tell us to stop, and all day long we will be “jobless.” I have experienced being jobless in this way. When I started to do something, I would hesitate and realize that it was merely I, and I would stop. This kind of inward exercise gives the Lord a way to live through us. Then “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20a).

BEING RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR MIND

Paul says, “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Since he could declare this, he could also say, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20a), and he could say, “Walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4), in the realm of the newness of the divine life. In Ephesians 4:23 Paul says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” To be renewed in the spirit of our mind is inward and intrinsic. If we learn to be renewed in this way, we will have a deeper perception with which to understand persons and matters. To understand a person requires that we have a deeper sight, a perception that goes farther and deeper. Often our knowing of people is shallow. We lack the perception that penetrates the barriers and coverings because we do not practice being daily renewed in the spirit of our mind. The renewing in the spirit of our mind always revolutionizes our logic, philosophy, thought, concept, and psychology. As a result, our perception in all things is different, and we have a deeper understanding of the people we meet. Even by the way they ask questions, we can know people’s condition. A natural man is a very shallow man, but if we are spiritual, we will be deep. If we are deep, we will know others, even though they will not be able to know us (1 Cor. 2:15).

WALKING ACCORDING TO SPIRIT

Romans 8:4b says, “Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.” “To walk” in this verse implies everything in our daily life. It implies our speaking and even the way we look at people. Sometimes the way we look at others, speak to them, or shake their hand is peculiar. As long as

we do not walk according to the spirit, whatever we do or say is our peculiarity. We must learn to walk according to the spirit.

APPLYING THE CROSS

We must always apply the cross to ourselves and to everything that we do. The reason we are peculiar in everything, in every way, and in every aspect is that we do not take the cross. The Lord Jesus told us to take our cross (Matt. 10:38) and carry our own cross (Luke 14:27). The cross has to remain with us to exercise its killing. When we are under the killing of the cross, our speaking and our talking on the telephone will be stopped. If we go to visit people for the gospel after talking too much on the telephone, we will not have the power or impact. On the other hand, if we check and are stopped when we are about to make a phone call, we will have an impact when we go out. If we take the cross and apply the cross to our being, the Spirit will fill us.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: How can I know if I am merely performing or practicing a behavior when I apply the cross to my living and hesitate before I say or do something?

Answer: As long as we simply walk according to the spirit, our hesitating is life. If we do not walk according to the spirit, whatever we do will not be life. To walk according to the spirit first implies the killing of the cross. If we are not under the killing of the cross, we cannot walk according to the spirit. To make a phone call whenever we want to is of ourselves; it is not according to the spirit. If we hesitate and say, "Lord, is this I or You?" the answer will come: "It is you." If we then stop, we are under the killing of the cross. The cross is applied to us and kills us. Then spontaneously the spirit follows the cross, and whatever we do and however we walk is life. If we do not practice this, however, whatever we do is a performance and mere outward behavior.

After speaking much about spiritual matters in the book of Romans, a book on the Christian life, Paul concludes in chapter 8 with walking according to our spirit. We are a tripartite man. Accordingly, we may walk according to our flesh or according to our soul, that is, according to our mind, will, or emotion. We should not walk according to these, however, but according to our spirit.

If we practice this, we will be helped in attaining to all the spiritual requirements.

Question: When a brother's peculiarity comes out in a certain situation, is it right to speak to him to expose his peculiarity?

Answer: As long as we sense others' peculiarity, our sensing is also a peculiarity. If we react in this situation, our reaction is in our self. We should not react. If we are under the killing of the cross, we will not have any reaction. We should not have a negative sensation about the brothers and sisters. We must be "blind" and "deaf." We should not see anything, hear anything, or sense anything, because we are walking according to the spirit and are under the killing of the cross. When we have a negative consideration about someone, this indicates that we are not walking according to our spirit. However, we may have a responsibility to help a brother or sister. Therefore, we must be led by the Lord in order that we can speak to them what the Lord wants to speak.

Question: Sometimes I have been offended by someone's peculiarity, but after speaking to them about it, I feel better. Is this right?

Answer: If we are offended, our being offended is a peculiarity. As proper Christians, we should not have a feeling or sensation that anyone has offended us. In this sense, we should be like a piece of stone. If someone kicks or beats a stone, it will have no feeling because it is lifeless. We, however, are very "living." Therefore, we must be killed by the cross. If we are killed by the cross, no one will be able to offend us.

If we all practice to walk according to the spirit, our church life will become the New Jerusalem in our experience. However, if we are too sensitive and become offended with each other, the church life will be in turmoil. We need to experience the killing of the cross.

Question: Since asking whether we are in the spirit or in the mind may cause us to fall into our mind, how should we practice hesitating before we do anything?

Answer: We must practice not to analyze but simply to act, walk, and have our being according to the spirit. To analyze is to turn back and stay in our

peculiarity. Before we do something, we should hesitate and check with the Lord: “Am I doing this, or are You doing it with me?” Then if we feel that He is doing it with us, we should go ahead; but if we feel that it is only we, we should stop. We must be simple.

Question: When I do not know what to do in a situation, often I pray very much. Is this the way to remain in the spirit?

Answer: We must learn to practice walking according to the spirit. Whether or not we pray is another matter. If we do pray, we have to pray according to our spirit. Sometimes the Lord wants us to stop our prayer. We may pray much, but the prayer may not be according to the spirit. Walking according to the spirit is a very thorough practice. It implies behaving, acting, speaking, going places, and having our being according to the spirit. The key to living the Christian life is to walk according to the spirit.

Question: Does walking according to the spirit mean that before we do or say anything, we hesitate and ask the Lord, “Is this You?”

Answer: In order to walk according to the spirit, we should not do things too fast. We should hesitate a little. We cannot say that to hesitate is to walk according to the spirit, but to hesitate helps us to walk according to the spirit.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BY FAITH

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:17; John 14:19

The experience of Christ as life revealed in the Bible is not easily understood. Often our concept of this matter is absolutely different from what the Bible reveals. Because God is so great and holy and we are so small and common, we may hold the concept that the experience of Christ as life must be something spectacular. In actuality, however, it is not extraordinary but very normal.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

In the universe there are two worlds: the physical world and the spiritual world. The physical world is easily realized by everyone. But unless one has revelation, he will not be able to realize the spiritual world. In order to realize something of these two worlds, we need to look into the books of Daniel and Isaiah.

The book of Daniel reveals that each of the nations has a “prince.” The princes of Persia and Javan (10:13, 20) are the fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion (Rev. 12:4). Ultimately, these angels along with Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for them (Matt. 25:41).

Both Daniel and Isaiah reveal that in the spiritual world there are two sides: God’s side and Satan’s side. These two sides were in existence long before the creation of Adam. The relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds is clearly seen in Isaiah 14. This chapter describes the king of Babylon, but the description of him is also a description of Satan. This one description represents two persons—the king of Babylon and Satan. Eventually, these two persons were one. Satan was the power behind the king of Babylon. There is an angelic power behind every human government. At Daniel’s time the prince of Persia, an angel who followed Satan in his rebellion, withstood Michael the archangel. There is a prince behind every worldly power. Today there are angels behind the warring countries of the Middle East. The

archangel Michael is the power behind the nation of Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21). This invisible power behind the visible world power illustrates that the situation on earth always has two aspects: the outward, physical aspect and the inward, spiritual aspect.

Genesis 3 is another illustration of the outward and inward aspects of things on this earth. In Genesis 3:1 apparently there was only a serpent. Actually, a serpent was there outwardly, but Satan was there inwardly. The serpent was visible; Satan was invisible. The serpent and Satan had become one. Revelation 12:9 calls Satan “the ancient serpent.” In Genesis there was a physical serpent, but in Revelation that physical serpent has become a spiritual serpent, even a dragon (12:9). While there is the talk about the dragon physically, a great dragon does exist spiritually. In the garden of Eden, Satan was just a little serpent, but in Revelation 12 he becomes a great and powerful dragon (vv. 3-4, 7, 9).

Today the entire world is under the authority of Satan, the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), but no one can see him because he is invisible. He operates in man and through man, but he remains invisible. Satan operated in Judas Iscariot. In John 6 the Lord Jesus said that Judas, the one who betrayed Him, was a devil (vv. 70-71). Satan entered into Judas (13:2, 26-27). This made him a devil. Apparently, Judas as a man was the betrayer. Actually, the real betrayer was the devil.

In this universe God enters into man to be one with man, and Satan, God's enemy, enters into man to be one with man. From Genesis to Revelation these two different activities are going on: God's mingling with man and Satan's mingling with man. Finally, at the end of the age, Satan will fully give himself to the man called Antichrist. Antichrist and Satan, the dragon, will become one. Their oneness is indicated by the fact that both the dragon and Antichrist have seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 12:3; 13:1). In contrast to the oneness of Satan and Antichrist is the oneness of God and man in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the blending of God with man.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST BY FAITH

I would like to say again that the physical aspect is very evident and easily realized, but the spiritual aspect is altogether invisible and difficult to apprehend. This is also true regarding our experience of Christ. We have

Christ in us, but none of us can say that we have physically seen Christ. Though we have never seen Him, we still acknowledge that He lives in us. Some Christians, however, make the great mistake of trying to make the invisible things visible. They may pray for outward miracles, but the result is that they are often cheated. Miracles are taking place all the time in the invisible realm. But some of these miracles are performed by Satan, and others are performed by God. Visible miracles may be something of Satan, so it is easy to be deceived by them.

A great miracle will be performed by the false prophet at the end of this age. Antichrist, the dragon, and the false prophet will all become one. They will exercise miraculous power by making an image of Antichrist speak (v. 15). Throughout human history, idols have never spoken (Psa. 115:5). But in the book of Revelation, the false prophet will make an image of Antichrist speak. By this great miracle, which will be very visible, many will be deceived. Antichrist will be the last of the “false Christs” (Matt. 24:24) and will work signs and wonders of a lie with the power of Satan to deceive the perishing (2 Thes. 2:3, 9-10). We should not put our trust in outward, visible signs and miracles.

Our experience of Christ is by faith. We sometimes think that because Christ lives in us, we should be strong. When we feel that we are weak, we question whether or not Christ is really living in us. Christ is great, immense, and vast, but His living in us is invisible and so abstract that we may doubt at times whether or not He is in us. In my own experience I have found that the more the Lord is with me, the more I do not have the sense that He is with me. Our sense is very untrustworthy. For this reason the Christian life in the New Testament is altogether a matter of faith. Faith is the substantiation of the invisible things (Heb. 11:1).

The real experience of Christ is invisible. It is altogether a matter of faith. In Ephesians 3:17 Paul says, “That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith.” The phrase *through faith* is very important because we often do not have any sensation that Christ is making His home in our hearts. When Christ came into us, our likes and dislikes changed to a certain degree. But it seems that in many things we remain the same. Often we do not feel anything inside of us. Praise the Lord that Paul added *through faith* to his word concerning Christ making His home in our hearts.

In 2 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, “For we walk by faith, not by appearance,” and in 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul says, “Having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak.” Our speaking for the Lord depends upon faith. Furthermore, whether or not a certain thing becomes our experience depends upon our speaking. If we are full of doubt because of our lack of sensation, our experience of Christ making His home in our hearts will seem to vanish. We must learn to say yes to the fact of Christ making His home in our hearts. Christ making His home in our hearts is the revelation of the Bible. We need to say Amen to whatever is revealed in the Bible.

The word of the Bible is the word of faith (Rom. 10:8). This word is Christ Himself. In Romans 10:6-8, a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, Paul reveals that the word is Christ. He says that the word is not far away from us; rather, the word is in our mouth and in our heart. In Deuteronomy 8:3 Moses said that man should live by “everything that proceeds out from the mouth of Jehovah.” In Matthew 4:4 the Lord Jesus changed *everything* to *every word*, indicating that the words Moses wrote were the things that came out from God’s mouth. The word of the Bible proceeds out from the mouth of God; it is God’s breath, God’s substance, our food. It is also the word of faith.

Why does the New Testament stress the matter of faith? The phrase *the faith of Jesus Christ* used by Paul in Romans 3:22 has caused translators a great deal of trouble. It is difficult to understand its meaning. Based upon my experience I have found that the faith of Jesus Christ is just Jesus Christ Himself. We believe in Jesus Christ by the faith of Jesus Christ. We were saved by the faith of Christ. The faith of Christ is just Christ Himself. All the positive things in the spiritual realm are God Himself. Although we cannot sense or see them, they are nevertheless real. What is needed on our side is to say yes to every word of the Bible. When we say yes to the words of the Bible, we believe. But if we say no, at the very least, we doubt. We must learn to say yes to whatever the Bible says. When the Bible tells us that the devil, Satan, is the ancient serpent, we have to say yes. When the Bible says that we all can prophesy one by one (1 Cor. 14:31), we must say yes. When the Bible says that Jesus is God (John 1:1, 14) or that Jesus died for us (Rom. 5:8), we must say yes. Then Jesus is God to us, and His death is for us. When the Bible says that Jesus as the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) and that He is indwelling us (Rom. 8:9-11), we must say yes. We should not go any further

by asking the Lord to show us something in a physical and visible way. The way of faith is to read the Word and believe it without seeing anything.

Inspiration alone is untrustworthy. It is like the wind. You may feel it for a time, but it does not last. When we have a time with the Lord in the morning in His Word, we should not expect to have a spectacular feeling. At the same time, I cannot say that when we read the Word of God, there will be no feeling. We may have some feeling, and we may call it inspiration, but we should not expect a spectacular or extraordinary feeling. We must be careful because an extraordinary experience may be very deceiving. We should not put our trust in anything extraordinary or spectacular. Instead, we must learn to have faith in whatever the Bible says.

To live Christ is always by faith. Christ is with us and within us. He is living within us, and we should live by Him. Under this kind of realization, we say yes to whatever the Bible says. When we say yes to the word of the Bible, we are brought into the experience of Christ. In this way we will become very normal spiritually. Our spirituality will be regular and normal without anything spectacular. Day by day we need to live in this way. In John 14:19 the Lord Jesus said, "Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live." The Lord lives in us that we may live Him. His living in us is not visible, but it is a fact. We behold the Lord Jesus and we see Him today, not by our physical eyes but by faith in the fact that He lives in us and we live Him. We must take the fact revealed in the Lord's trustworthy Word and reject our untrustworthy feelings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOING ALL THINGS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

Scripture Reading: John 5:43; 10:25; 14:26; 15:26; 14:13-14; 15:16; Eph.
5:20; Col. 3:17

In this chapter we want to see that in our Christian life and service we need to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Ephesians 5:20 says that we need to give thanks at all times in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Colossians 3:17 says that we need to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus.

THE SON COMING IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND THE FATHER SENDING THE SPIRIT IN THE NAME OF THE SON

In John 5:43 the Son comes in the name of the Father, and in 14:26 the Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son. In these two short sentences, the Divine Trinity is revealed. When the New Testament says that the Son came in the name of the Father, this indicates that the Son and the Father are one. When the New Testament says that the Father sent the Spirit in the name of the Son, this indicates that the Father is one with the Son. The Father and the Son do two things—the Son comes in the Father's name, and the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name. Each one does something in the other's name. This means that They are one.

THE FATHER SENDING THE SPIRIT IN THE SON'S NAME, AND THE SON SENDING THE SPIRIT FROM THE FATHER

John 14:26 says, "The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things which I have said to you." John 15:26 says, "When the Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of reality, who proceeds

from the Father, He will testify concerning Me.” In reading these verses, a question may immediately be raised: Does the Father send the Spirit, or does the Son send the Spirit? According to John 14:26, the Father sends the Spirit in the Son’s name. The Spirit being sent by the Father in the Son’s name implies that both the Father and the Son are the Sender of the Spirit. Then in John 15:26 the Son sends the Spirit from the Father. The Son sending the Spirit from the Father and the Father sending the Spirit in the Son’s name refer to the same thing. The Father sending the Spirit in the Son’s name means that the Son sends the Spirit from the Father. Both the Father and the Son send the Spirit. This indicates that the Father and the Son are one. Furthermore, when the Spirit comes, the Father and the Son also come. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three, but They are one—three-one.

PRAYING TO THE FATHER IN THE SON’S NAME

Based upon the above verses in John 14 and 15, we can be helped to understand what it means to pray to the Father in the name of the Son. In John 15:16 and 16:23-24 the Lord Jesus charged the disciples to pray in His name. We must pray in the Lord’s name. When I was young, I was taught that we should pray in the name of the Lord Jesus rather than in our own name, because we are unworthy to ask anything of God. Later, I found out that the Lord Jesus came not in His own name but in the name of the Father. Yet His coming in the name of the Father was not a matter of worthiness. From this I realized that the former teaching concerning praying in the Lord’s name was not completely accurate. After many years of study and experience, I have found that to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus is not a matter of being worthy; rather, it is a matter of being one with Christ. In God’s economy, through Christ’s redemption, death, and resurrection, God has made us one with Christ.

DOING EVERYTHING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

In Ephesians 5:20 Paul says, “Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father,” and in Colossians 3:17 Paul says, “Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” These verses indicate, first of all, that we have been put into a oneness with the Lord. Because we are one with Him, we can use His name. If a person who is an employee of a company goes to a bank to do something for his company, he

goes representing that company, and the bank recognizes his oneness with his company. If someone at the bank asks him his identity, he should respond with the name of his company, because the bank only recognizes his company's name, not his name. This illustration conveys some of the meaning concerning being in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Our experience of the Lord Jesus involves three things: His name, His person, and His reality. The Lord's name is Jesus Christ, His person is His reality, and His reality is the Spirit. The Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit. The Spirit is the reality of Jesus Christ, and this reality is His person. This is demonstrated whenever we call on the Lord's name. When we call on the Lord's name, the person comes. When we call, "O Lord Jesus," the person who comes is the Spirit. Thus, the name is very important. The second stanza of *Hymns*, #73 written by M. E. Barber says, "Just to breathe the Name of Jesus, / Is to drink of Life indeed." To call on the name of the Lord Jesus is to drink of the Spirit.

Whenever you mention the name of the Lord Jesus, you refer to Him and touch the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you and you are one with Him. If you go to visit a brother and say, "Brother, I come to see you in the name of the Lord Jesus," this means a great deal. You must realize that whenever you say such a thing, the Lord's presence is with you. This is because to mention His name is to have the Spirit with you. His Spirit is His person, His presence. The more you mention the Lord's name, the better it is. To speak the Lord Jesus' name a thousand times a day will help us to overcome.

The New Testament says that we have to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17). To do things in the name, to call on the name, to mention the name, reminds us that we are one with the Lord Jesus. To do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus should always remind us that He is one with us, that we are in Him and He in us, that He lives in us, and that we should live in Him. Though we may forget these items, the facts still remain. We have been put into Christ.

To baptize people is to baptize them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). First Corinthians 1:30 says that God has put the believers into Christ. This happened at baptism. We were baptized into Christ and into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). Now Christ is living in us. This is such a marvelous fact! Once we have believed and have been baptized,

it is impossible to get rid of this fact. Now to mention the name of Jesus Christ is so full of meaning.

When we mention the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it cuts off all sinful things. The name makes the fact of being one with the Lord Jesus so real, living, and convincing. To say the name of Jesus chases away all the demons and all kinds of opposing factors. When you say the name of Jesus, you are comforted and enlightened. Whether you feel that Jesus is with you or not, He is with you in fact.

When we are in the name of the Lord Jesus, we are in Christ, Christ is in us, and we are one with Christ. When we say that we are doing things in the name of the Lord Jesus, the entire universe is reminded that there are people who are absolutely one with Christ. The angels honor this and all the demons are afraid of this. The demons are afraid of any mention of the name of the Lord Jesus. We not only mention the name but also mention the fact that we are in the name of the Lord Jesus. To make such a declaration means a great deal. If we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, we are victorious. If we do not do things in His name, we are defeated. We should be able to say that we do the ordinary things of our daily life, such as going to the barber shop or going shopping, in the name of the Lord Jesus. If we cannot say this, we must realize that we have been defeated. When we come to the meetings, we say and do things in the name of the Lord Jesus. But do we do things in our home and daily affairs in the name of the Lord Jesus? It may be that the practice of being in the name of the Lord Jesus is just a religious formality with us. Colossians 3:17 says that we must do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Matthew 7:21-23 says, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power? And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.” How does this portion of the Word relate to saying that we are in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Answer: To know the meaning of any portion of the Bible, we must first know its context. Matthew 7:21 is part of the conclusion of the Lord's teaching concerning the kingdom's constitution given on the mountain (chs. 5—7). The Lord concluded His teaching on the mountain by reminding us that as His believers we have His name and that we may use His name. Yet He warned us that in using His name, we must be regulated by the Word of God, by the will of God. Matthew 7:24-27, as a continuation of verses 21 through 23, reveals that the kingdom people's living and work must be founded on the word of Christ as the new King for the accomplishment of the will of the heavenly Father. We cannot use His name wildly and without restriction. To say that we cannot exchange words with our wives and be in the name of the Lord is easy to realize because exchanging words is evil. But to cast out demons in the name of the Lord is something good. Yet whether or not we do such a good thing still must be regulated. Many preachers of the gospel may be rebuked by the Lord because their preaching may have been done in the name of the Lord but without any restriction.

There are many aspects to our Christian life. We have been baptized into Christ and have been made one with Christ. This is a fact whether we feel it or not. Whenever we mention the name of the Lord Jesus, we are reminded of the fact that we are in Christ. This is one aspect. Another aspect is that we not only need to do things in the name of the Lord Jesus, but we must also be regulated by God's Word, by God's will. To do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus is the basic aspect of our Christian life. There is also an aspect of regulation. Even within the realm of the Lord Jesus' name, there are regulations. We should be regulated by God's Word.

Question: How do we deal with our children in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Answer: First, if you could tell your children when you are about to discipline them that you are doing it in the name of the Lord Jesus, this would be quite good. I have been a father for many years. I have found out that in dealing with children, the hardest thing to overcome is anger. Paul says, "Fathers, do not vex your children, that they may not be disheartened" (Col. 3:21). If in dealing with children, you are able to not vex them, you are an outstanding brother or sister. So for this reason, I encourage you to say to your children that you are dealing with them in the name of the Lord Jesus. To say this will reduce and even stop your anger. When you are angry, do not deal with your children. When you are angry, you lose your qualification and

position to deal with them. You must deal with your children at a time when you are really in Christ.

Second, when you deal with your children, what you should say and what points you should take care of depend upon your understanding of the Word. Paul says, “Nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This means that you must know the Lord’s Word. Otherwise, you have no way to nurture your children according to the Lord’s discipline and admonition.

In dealing with our children, the hardest thing we parents must deal with is anger. When our anger rises up, we say things that are not according to the Lord’s Word. So we must learn to say to our children, “I am going to discipline you in the name of the Lord, not in my anger. I am not going to teach you according to what I like but according to what the Lord likes or does not like.”

Question: Can you share more concerning how we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Answer: First, we always should be reminded that we are in the Lord. Second, we have to build up ourselves by learning the Word in a gradual way. We also have to realize to what degree we know the Word. If in deciding to do a certain thing, we realize that we do not have an adequate knowledge of the Word, we should check with other more mature saints as to whether or not we should do a certain thing. This is for our seeking of the Lord’s will. We should not be so quick to say that whatever we do is of the Lord. We need to know the Word.

Question: What does it mean to ask in the name of the Lord?

Answer: To ask or pray in the Lord’s name means to pray as one who is really one with the Lord. To be in the Lord’s name means to be one with the Lord, to live by the Lord, and to let the Lord live in us. To be in the Lord’s name requires us to abide in the Lord and let Him and His words abide in us so that we may actually be one with Him. Then our asking will be His asking in ours. Thus, we will be restricted in our prayer from praying too freely.

Question: It seems that this matter of being in the name of the Lord requires some amount of realization that comes through growth. How can we prevent the matter of being in the name of the Lord from becoming a religious formality with the new ones? How can we properly bring new ones into this kind of practice?

Answer: I am not speaking this word to new ones but to believers who have some amount of growth in life. You should not copy my fellowship and give it to the new ones. That would be premature. You have to feed the new ones according to their age. To lead the new ones into calling upon the Lord's name is okay, but the content of this chapter may be too advanced. You have to realize that the Lord taught the disciples concerning praying in His name after three and a half years of teaching. You have to learn how to feed and perfect the new ones.

Question: In the past I had an experience of praying for someone. In that prayer I had the sense of the Lord's flow, and the result of the prayer was close to spectacular. Afterward, I thought that this may have been an experience of praying in the Lord's name. During the prayer I felt that the Lord was praying with me in a strong way. But I have not had such an experience again. What do you think about this kind of experience?

Answer: We need the teachings from the Bible, but we should not apply the teachings of the Bible to our feelings. We should apply the teachings to ourselves but not to our feelings. The Bible says to pray in the name. We should just pray. Do not try to analyze, while you are praying, whether or not your prayer is in the name. If you do, this will frustrate you to the uttermost.

Our feelings are always undependable. When we pray, we may feel that only we are praying and that the Lord is absent. Yet the Lord may actually be in our prayer. On the contrary, we may feel that as we are praying, the Lord is really praying with us. Yet this may not be the case at all. I have a great deal of experiences like this. Sometimes, according to my feeling in prayer, I consider that a spectacular result will happen, such as giving an outstanding message. Eventually, the message I give is very poor, but everyone is helped by it. I have found that my feelings are always undependable. We should apply all the teachings of the Bible to ourselves, but we should forget about our feelings.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE DIVINE DISPENSING
OF THE DIVINE TRINITY TO CARRY OUT
THE DIVINE ECONOMY FOR THE FULFILLMENT
OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:18-19; Phil. 2:6-8; John 5:19, 30b; Heb. 10:7;
John 15:26

In these days I have been considering the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity to carry out the divine economy for the fulfillment of the Divine purpose. These four divine items—the divine dispensing, the Divine Trinity, the divine economy, and the divine purpose—can be seen in the Gospel of John. They are not explicitly mentioned in John, but the reality and fact of these items are there.

Our God is one but three. He is one God, yet He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If the thought and the structure of the Divine Trinity were taken away from the New Testament—especially from John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians—it would become an empty book. Just as a building has a steel frame, the Divine Trinity is the intrinsic frame of the divine revelation in the Scriptures.

THE DIVINE TRINITY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John is probably the top book that speaks of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Then verse 14 says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” This shows that the Word, who was God, became flesh. In 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul says that God was manifested in the flesh. No doubt, this refers to the incarnation. Paul says that the incarnation was God’s incarnation. But in Romans 8:3 Paul says that God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. On the one hand, Paul tells us that God was incarnated, manifested in the flesh. On the other

hand, he says that the incarnation was God sending His own Son. John 3:16 is a definite verse telling us that God gave His only begotten Son to us.

In John 14 Philip asked Jesus, the Son, to show them the Father. The Son responded, “Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father...The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.” (vv. 9-10). In the same chapter the Son told His disciples that He would pray to the Father, and the Father would send them another Comforter, the Spirit of reality (vv. 16-17). The Son is one with the Father, but He said that He would pray to the Father, asking the Father to send a third one, the Spirit of reality. The Spirit of reality is one with the Son, because the Son said that the Spirit’s being in the disciples would be His being in them (vv. 17, 20). John 14 unveils a very clear structure of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This portion of the Word reveals that the Son is the embodiment of the Father, so the Father and the Son are one. Then the Comforter, the Spirit of reality sent by the Father, is the reality of the Son. Thus, the Father is embodied in the Son, and the Son is realized as the Spirit.

THE DIVINE TRINITY FOR THE DIVINE DISPENSING

The Divine Trinity is for His divine dispensing. John 1:14 says that the Word who became flesh was full of grace and reality. Verse 16 says, “Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” The incarnated One was full of grace and reality. Thus, the fullness is the totality of grace and reality. God came through incarnation full of grace and reality for the purpose of dispensing. When we have a love feast in the church, many sisters come full of all different types of food for the purpose of distributing, dispensing, this food for feeding others. Feeding is dispensing.

The incarnation of the Triune God was for dispensing. We know this because John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh, full of grace and reality. His incarnation was for distributing Himself as grace and reality to His chosen people. Incarnation was the first step of God’s dispensing. God came down from the heavens to the earth in a particular way. He entered into the womb of a virgin, being incarnated, for the purpose of dispensing Himself to His chosen people as grace and reality.

Furthermore, we have received of His fullness, that is, grace upon grace. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says, "I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me." Grace in 1 Corinthians 15 is the very resurrected Christ becoming the life-giving Spirit (v. 45) to bring the processed God in resurrection into us to be our life and life supply so that we may live in resurrection. The resurrected, pneumatic Christ as the life-giving Spirit living in Paul was the grace with which Paul labored more abundantly than all the apostles. Grace is a person for dispensing.

John 3:16 says that God gave His only begotten Son for the dispensing of His Son to His believers as eternal life. The incarnation in 1:14 was for the dispensing of God Himself as grace and reality; this was the first step. The giving of the Son in 3:16 was for the dispensing of the Son to His believers as the eternal life; this was the second step.

The third step was the Son's passing through death to release the divine life within Him. As the one grain of wheat, He became many grains through the dispensing of His divine life into His believers (12:24). Then in the fourth step He resurrected from the dead. In His wonderful resurrection He was transfigured into another form. First, He was God becoming a man. Then as the last Adam, He became a life-giving Spirit through resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45b). Soon after that resurrection, on the evening of the same day, He came back to His disciples. He had left them through death and entered into resurrection. He appeared to the disciples in His resurrection and breathed Himself into them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit," the Holy Pneuma, the Holy Breath (John 20:22).

The Word passed through these four steps: the step of incarnation, the step of the giving of the Son, the step of death, and the step of resurrection. After passing through these four steps, the Word mentioned in John 1:1 became a life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit is the consummation, the totality, the aggregate, of the above four steps. The very God who was the Word in the beginning, the God who became a man in the flesh, the Son of God given to His believers, the crucified One who took away sin and released the divine life, the resurrected One, is now the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. He was incarnated in the form of a man and resurrected in another form, the form of the Spirit. All the elements of His person, process, and work are compounded in the Spirit. He is the Word who is God, the incarnated God, the Savior, the Redeemer, the crucified One, and the resurrected One. Now He is the

life-giving Spirit. Life giving is life dispensing. This Spirit, the consummation of the Triune God, is the totality of the Triune God being life to us. He dispenses Himself as grace, as reality, and as eternal life, and all these are compounded in the consummated Spirit.

THE SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE DIVINE DISPENSING

What we have fellowshiped so far shows the line of the dispensing from God's side in the Gospel of John, but there is the subjective experience of the dispensing on our side. God dispenses, and we have to enjoy. Now we need to see the aspect of the dispensing on our side.

First, we were regenerated. Regeneration is the consummated Triune God as the Spirit entering into our spirit. Regeneration is the processed Triune God as the consummated Spirit coming to touch our spirit, to bring the divine life into our spirit to regenerate our spirit. That which is born of the divine Spirit is the human spirit (3:6b). Now the very God who was altogether objective to us has become one with us. He is now inside of us, becoming the very intrinsic element of our being.

After a baby is born, it first begins to breathe, to enjoy the air as its life supply. Once we receive the divine life to become God's children, the first thing we need to do is breathe. When we call, "O Lord Jesus," we are breathing the Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, as our breath. We also need to drink to maintain our life. As believers in Christ, we need to drink the living water from Christ. John 4 shows that Christ gives us the living water. This water becomes in us a fountain of water springing up into eternal life (v. 14). In order to survive, we also need to eat. John 6 reveals that we need to eat Christ as the daily manna, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, the bread of God, and the living bread. In John 6:57 the Lord said, "As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." We live by eating Jesus, just as we live physically by the food that we take in. Thus, in John we see the crucial matters of breathing, drinking, and eating the Lord. After our birth, we need to breathe, drink, and eat for our life supply. In John 15 the Lord said that we also need to abide in Him. Abiding helps us to grow in the Lord. This is the subjective experience of the divine dispensing.

THE PURPOSE OF THE DIVINE DISPENSING

The purpose of the divine dispensing is first that we would have rivers of living water flowing out of our innermost being (7:38). Second, our enjoyment of the divine dispensing is for us to bring forth the remaining fruit of life (15:16). Third, the divine dispensing is for us to feed the Lord's lambs and His sheep (21:15, 17). Ultimately, the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity is for the producing of the bride of Christ. The believers who are regenerated, who breathe in Christ, drink Christ, eat Christ, and grow with Christ become the bride of the Bridegroom, Christ (3:29). This is the church as the corporate increase of Christ, His wife, His Body. John the Baptist predicted that Christ would increase and that he would decrease (v. 30). Christ will be the Bridegroom to take the bride as His increase, which is the church. In the Gospel of John the Divine Trinity is for the divine dispensing, the divine dispensing is for the divine economy, and the divine economy is for the divine purpose to have the bride for Christ. The entire Bible consummates with this bride, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2). The New Jerusalem as the bride is the consummation of the church as the corporate increase of Christ. The Divine Trinity with the divine dispensing is for the divine economy, resulting in the divine purpose, which is the increase of the processed Triune God to be consummated in the New Jerusalem.

THE ORGANISM OF THE PROCESSED AND DISPENSED TRIUNE GOD

The divine revelation in the Gospel of John, concerning the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity for the divine purpose and goal in the divine economy, goes further to its highest degree in chapter 15. According to what is revealed in John 15, the bride of Christ, who is His Body, eventually becomes the organism of the processed and dispensed Triune God, to express such a Triune God in a corporate way, until it reaches its peak in expressing and manifesting the processed and dispensed Triune God, as what will be consummated in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth.

THE DIVINE MINGLING

We all have to realize that the real Christian life, the real life of the believers in Christ, is not an exchanged life but a mingled life. The divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity into our being is a matter of being mingled with Him. Regeneration is the initiation of the divine mingling, the mingling of the divine Spirit with our human spirit (Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). Breathing,

drinking, eating, and growing are the continual dispensing of the Divine Trinity into us as a continuation of this divine mingling.

THE “ROOT HAIRS” OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

According to my consideration, breathing, drinking, eating, and growing are the “root hairs” of our Christian life to keep us in the continual dispensing. The Triune God has passed through all the process to become the wonderful life-giving Spirit. Now we need to enjoy the continual dispensing of this One into our being. This is why we need the root hairs. A tree grows by its root hairs. Because we have been regenerated, we have the life and nature of the Triune God. But in order to survive and to live, we need to breathe all the time. Every breath is a root hair. We also need to drink and eat the Lord. The breathing, eating, drinking, and growing in the Lord are the root hairs.

We believe in the processed, dispensing Triune God and realize that we have been regenerated, yet we may not breathe, drink, eat, or grow in a regular way. The root hairs of our Christian life should be like the countless root hairs of a tree. All day long we need to breathe in the Lord. Some saints may not call on the Lord for three days or even a month. As a result, there is no growth in the Lord with them because there are no root hairs. We need to call on the Lord all the time. This is why Paul tells us to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). To pray is both to breathe and to drink. M. E. Barber said in a hymn that “to breathe the Name of Jesus is to drink of Life indeed” (*Hymns*, #73). We have to call, to pray, to breathe, to drink. Then we have to eat the Lord. We also need to abide in the Lord so that we may grow. If we take care of these life matters, we will be people who are in the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity to carry out the divine economy for the fulfillment of the divine purpose.

CHAPTER SIX

LIVING A MINGLED LIFE WITH THE DIVINE TRINITY

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:19; Phil. 2:6-8; John 5:19, 30b; Heb. 10:7; John 15:26

THE ONENESS OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

In a previous chapter we saw that the Son came in the Father's name (John 5:43a) and that the Son did things in the name of the Father (10:25). John 14:26 says that the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name. The first (the Father) sends the third (the Spirit) in the second's (the Son's) name. The Father does not do things by Himself alone. He does things in the Son's name.

To do things in the name of another one is not only to be one with another person but also to be that other person. The Father sent the Spirit in the Son's name. This is like writing a check but signing the name of another person instead of your own name. Usually, the person who writes the check signs his own name. But if I write a check and sign another brother's name, it indicates, at least in part, that the other brother wrote the check. The Father "wrote the check" by sending the Spirit, but He "signed" the name of the Son by sending the Spirit in the name of the Son. The Father, as the Son, sent the Spirit.

In John 14:26 the Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son, but in John 15:26, the Son sends the Spirit from the Father. When these two portions are put together, you can see that when the Father sends the Spirit, He does so with the Son. In the same manner, the Son sends the Spirit with the Father. Neither the Father nor the Son would do anything without the other. When the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name, He does it as the Son. When the Son sends the Spirit from the Father, He does it as one with the Father. Then when the Spirit comes, He testifies concerning the Son (v. 26). This shows the oneness of the wonderful Divine Trinity.

The Son was made the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15) and the Firstborn in resurrection (v. 18). In making the Son the Firstborn of the two creations, the Father gave the preeminence, the first place, to the Son. Colossians 1:19

says, “In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell.” The fullness mentioned in this verse is the fullness of the Godhead (2:9). This means that all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ, who is God’s embodiment. The Father, Son, and Spirit were pleased to dwell in Christ. As the embodiment of the divine Trinity, the Son did not “consider being equal with God a treasure to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6-7). The Son lowered Himself to be a slave, taking the form of man. He was happy to obey God even to the point of death—not an ordinary death but the death of the cross (v. 8). The Son was willing to be lowered and to obey the Father to such an extent. The Father honored the Son, the Son lowered Himself to obey the Father, and the Spirit, being sent by the Father and the Son, came to testify concerning the Son. While He was on earth, the Son did nothing from Himself (John 5:19, 30). Rather, He did everything by the Father according to the Father’s will. The three persons of the Godhead are mingled as one. The church’s oneness should be a duplication of the Divine Trinity’s oneness.

THE DIVINE TRINITY

BEING THE MODEL OF OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Because man is a tripartite being—having a body, a soul, and a spirit—he may be considered as a “human trinity.” Unlike the Divine Trinity, within the “human trinity” there is always fighting. The Bible says that the flesh, our body, lusts or fights against our spirit, which is mingled with the divine Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Our flesh also fights with our mind (Rom. 7:23). The flesh fights against the logical soul, which desires to do the right thing. The soul desires to do good, but the flesh does not allow it. Whenever our soul desires to do good, the sin in our evil flesh rises up to fight against our soul (vv. 18-21). We also have the Lord Jesus within us, dwelling in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). This causes us further trouble because He says no to the flesh, and most of the time He says no to the soul.

Due to the warfare within us, we must learn to cooperate with the Divine Trinity. The Divine Trinity is the model of our Christian life. Among the Divine Trinity there is no warfare. The Father is happy to exalt the Son, the Son is very willing to subject Himself to the Father, and the Spirit is willing to testify concerning the Son. Our “human trinity” is not like this. Therefore, we need a Savior. This Savior is the Divine Trinity, who has come into our spirit.

After we are saved, our “human trinity” needs to follow the indwelling Divine Trinity. In our salvation we should cooperate with the Savior who is indwelling us. Eventually, our entire being—spirit, soul, and body—will glorify the Divine Trinity. This cooperation with the indwelling Trinity will result in His glorification, His expression, and His manifestation.

We do things mainly through our soul. We make choices and decisions by our soul. Yet even though we make choices and decisions with our soul, we still cannot act with our soul alone. When the Son did things, He did not do them according to His own will but according to the Father’s will. In the same way, our soul should do things not according to its own will but according to the spirit’s will. This is our life after we are saved. After we were saved, the Divine Trinity was added to our tripartite being. Instead of exchanging lives with the Divine Trinity, we have been and are being mingled together with Him.

The Bible reveals that as Christians we have two persons: the outer man and the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16). If we were just one person, there would be no problem or struggle. But since we are now two persons, we have difficulties. The outer man is our body as its organ with our soul as its life and person. The inner man is our regenerated spirit as its life and person with our renewed soul as its organ. Because our soul is fallen, we must deny our soul. The life of the soul must be denied (Matt. 16:24-25). However, the functions of the soul—the mind, the will, and the emotion—must be renewed and uplifted by being subdued to be used by the spirit as the person of the inner man. Our soul should be submissive and obedient to the spirit, even becoming one with the spirit. Furthermore, when the divine life is imparted into our body, it becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). In this way all three parts of our being cooperate with the indwelling Divine Trinity. The Christian life is the “human trinity”—the body, the soul, and the spirit—mingled together with the Divine Trinity. These two “trinities” are mingled together as one.

THE DIVINE PROVISIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christian life is a life of our being mingled with the Divine Trinity. In our Christian life, God uses four instruments to mingle us with the Divine Trinity: the divine life, the cross, the Spirit, and the Word. These are the Lord’s divine provisions. We are mingled with the Lord by His divine life, by

His Spirit, by the cross of Christ, and by the Word. Therefore, we must always have fellowship with the Spirit in the divine life through the cross and through the Word. For this reason we must join ourselves to the holy Word every day, accept the dealing of the cross, and be one with the Spirit so that we may participate in the divine life.

PART TWO:
FURTHER TALKS
CONCERNING THE EXPERIENCE
OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT
AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DIVINE SPIRIT AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:2; 6:3; John 4:24; 7:38-39; Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6; 22:17; Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20; Zech. 12:1; Prov. 20:27; Matt. 28:19; John 3:6b; Rom. 8:16; Rev. 1:10

THE DIVINE SPIRIT

The verses in the Scripture Reading above span the entire Bible regarding the divine Spirit and the human spirit from the first chapter to the last chapter. In the first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1:2 says, “The Spirit of God was brooding upon the surface of the waters.” Then in the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22:17 says, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come!” At the beginning of the Bible, the Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of God. However, at the end of the Bible, the title of the Spirit of God is simplified. It is simply *the Spirit*. As the Spirit of God, He has become “the Spirit.” God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. After all His processes, the Triune God, the three-one God, was consummated as the Spirit. Now the Spirit is not only the embodiment of the Father and the Son but also the consummation, the totality, and the aggregate of the consummated, processed Triune God. When the Spirit is mentioned, the entire Triune God, comprising the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is implied.

In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit of God did not have a companion. He was alone as a “bachelor.” However, in the last chapter of the Bible, the Triune God has a counterpart, a bride. The Spirit as the Husband and His wife together say, “Come!” This indicates that His work in both the old creation and the new creation has been completed. Everything is finished, prepared, and ready. Now we are invited to come and enjoy Him by drinking the living water. The living water is the consummated Triune God as the Spirit. The consummated Triune God is both the Caller and the very drink we are called to drink. In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit of God was moving in the old creation. In the New Testament He works in the new creation. In the last book of the Bible, God’s work has been completed and consummated. Now He Himself becomes the consummated Triune God to be the Caller with His counterpart. The Spirit and the bride are now calling us to come to the feast, to drink of the river of

water of life, and to eat of the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2, 17). This is to take the consummated Triune God as our drink and our food. The consummated Triune God is the river of water of life, and He is also the tree of life.

WORSHIPPING THE DIVINE SPIRIT WITH THE HUMAN SPIRIT

As we have seen, the Spirit of God is first mentioned in Genesis 1:2 in relation to His creation. The Spirit of God is next mentioned in Genesis 6:3 as the Spirit of Jehovah in His relationship with man. These two verses refer to the divine Spirit. Zechariah 12:1 and Proverbs 20:27, however, refer to the human spirit. Zechariah 12:1 says, “Jehovah...stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.” Proverbs 20:27 says, “The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, / Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.”

In John 4:24 both the divine Spirit and the human spirit are mentioned. Verse 24 says, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.” This verse connects the divine Spirit revealed in Genesis 1:2 to the human spirit revealed in Zechariah and Proverbs. God is Spirit to be worshipped in the human spirit. The means of uniting the two spirits is worship. The human spirit worships the divine Spirit, and this worship joins the two spirits together. The proper meaning of worship is revealed in John 4:9-14. The central point of John 4 is the drinking of the living water. However, the immoral Samaritan woman with whom the Lord spoke was subtle, and she turned the conversation to her religious concept about worshipping God. The Lord was wiser than she, and He went on to say that the real worship that the Father is seeking is the worship of the divine Spirit in and with the human spirit. To worship in this way is to drink the living water. The real worship we render to God today is to drink Him as our living water. The more we drink Him, the more we worship Him. The New Testament never requires us to worship the Father by bowing down to Him. The New Testament requirement for our worship to God is that we drink Him. Even now we are drinking Him, and our drinking is the real worship to Him.

John 7:38-39 also shows how the divine Spirit and the human spirit are joined by drinking. These verses say, “He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were

about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

THE SPIRIT IN REVELATION

Revelation 1:4 says, “John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.” The seven Spirits in verse 4 indicate that, at the end of the Bible, the drinking of the living water is intensified. Revelation 4:5 says, “Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” In this verse the Spirit whom we drink becomes the burning Spirit. Revelation 5:6 says, “I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” The living water becomes the burning Spirit, and the burning Spirit becomes the seeing Spirit. The Spirit as the seven eyes of the Lamb is for observing and infusing.

As we have seen, the last mention of the Spirit in Revelation is in 22:17. According to the context of the book of Revelation, the Spirit in Revelation 22:17 is the consummated, sevenfold Spirit.

ENJOYING THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT BY REMAINING IN OUR SPIRIT

Just as in the Old Testament, the Spirit is mentioned at the beginning of the New Testament. Luke 1:35 says, “The angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God.” Matthew 1:20 says, “While he pondered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.” In Genesis 1 the Spirit was brooding upon the death waters, but in the New Testament He came again to visit a human virgin to produce Jesus as the tree of life. Just as Genesis 1:2 shows us the beginning of God’s work in the old creation, Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:20 show us the beginning of God’s work in the new creation. The first work of creation

produced the living things. The Spirit's work in the new creation produced Jesus Christ among the human race as the tree of life for us to take and enjoy.

After He passed through death and resurrection, Christ became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This life-giving Spirit is also the tree of life. After the Lord's ascension the gospel was preached so that we could receive Christ as the life-giving Spirit and be baptized into the Father, the Son, and the consummation of the Triune God, the Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Now we are in the consummated Spirit, and this consummated Spirit is in our spirit.

John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." Revelation 1:10 says, "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day." We saved ones, the regenerated sons of God, must be in our human spirit in order to enjoy the consummated, life-giving Spirit. We should always be in spirit. Sometimes when I am talking with a brother or I am about to complain about something, I am reminded to consider whether or not I am in my spirit. We need to be reminded of our spirit again and again. As long as we are in our spirit, we are in a right condition.

We have been made with three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The highest standard for the human life is to always remain in our human spirit. If a man lives in his body, he will be wild, rough, and full of lusts. If a man lives in his soul, he will be better, but he will be a natural man—logical, considerate, careful, and thoughtful. To live in the soul is not as bad as living in the body. However, when a man comes back to his spirit and remains in his spirit, he is living by the highest standard. Every time we come back to our spirit and remain there, we are right with our wife or husband, parents, children, neighbors, classmates, colleagues, and the brothers and sisters in the church life. We are right in every way, in every matter, and with every person, and we are living by the highest standard.

The New Testament speaks much about love, but we cannot love properly if we are not in our spirit. When we remain in the spirit, we can love properly and will also be gentle, godly, and spiritual. When we remain in our spirit, we have all the virtues. The virtues of humility, patience, endurance, love, and kindness flow from the one fountain of our human spirit. A believer in Christ is one who is living and remaining in his spirit all day long. All day long he is a person in his spirit.

We who are believers should live neither in our soul nor in our body. We should be those who always live in our spirit. When we live in the spirit, we may be happy and laugh, but we will not laugh too much. Likewise, we will not be easily offended or angered. In the human spirit there is no ground for anything negative. The Chinese ethical teachers such as Confucius taught that within human beings there is a part that they called the “bright virtue.” The part to which they referred is the conscience. Regardless of how fallen man is, within him there is still a preserved part. This is the reason that people respond when we preach the gospel to them. Even within an evil person there is still a part that responds to God. In man’s fall God drew a line that Satan could not cross. God has preserved a part of our being for Himself. Proverbs 20:27 says, “The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, / Searching all the innermost parts of the inner being.” God created a spirit in man as His lamp, and where the lamp is, there is light. We are not like the wild beasts. The beasts do not have a bright part in their being, but men, even the unbelievers, do have such a part. Before we were saved, we sometimes were bad. However, there was a part of our being that was not bad. Sometimes it would tell us that what we were doing was wrong. This was our spirit as the lamp of the Lord, observing us and enlightening us within for God.

To be saved is to be brought back from our lustful body and our thoughtful soul to the right part of our being, our spirit. We should always try our best to remain in our spirit. In the Lord’s recovery there has been a turmoil for several years. The source of the turmoil was the failure to remain in the spirit. Arguments and accusations have their source both in the soul and in the flesh. It is possible even to talk about the things concerning the Lord and the church with hatred in our being. Such talk is too much in the mind, the soul, and even in the body (flesh). If we would all come back to our spirit, there would be no problems.

Exchanging of words among married couples is common. This exchange happens because we are in the flesh and the soul. In such a situation both parties have to turn back to their spirit. If both persons come back to their spirit, there will be no further exchange of words. When we are going to lose our temper, we must always be reminded to turn to our spirit. The Christian life is a life absolutely in our spirit.

We have seen the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, who is also the Holy Spirit, in the work of the old creation and the work of the new creation. This

Spirit eventually was consummated as the consummation of the Triune God, and He desires to enter into man's spirit and remain there. Now that we have received the Spirit, He is in our spirit. As long as we remain in our spirit, everything is right. God is satisfied, and to be sure, we are satisfied. Revelation 1:10 says, "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day." Many times I have tried doing nothing, saying nothing, and thinking nothing but simply remaining in my spirit. This brings a restful feeling, and in this restful feeling we receive light and the supply of the inner life as grace. Often I receive the messages for the ministry while in this restful spirit. When we are talking too much, we should simply be quiet and turn back to our spirit to meet with the divine Spirit in our human spirit and enjoy His presence, His anointing, and His supplying in every way.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JOINED TO THE LORD AS ONE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 6:17, 19; 3:16; 7:40b; 15:45b; 2:10-13

Many Christians today emphasize the importance of the Word of God, but they neglect the Spirit. They trust in the Word of God, but they do not emphasize the teaching concerning the Spirit. They feel that speaking about the Spirit brings in confusion. However, the New Testament speaks about the Spirit as well as about the Word of God. According to the New Testament teaching, we must emphasize both the Spirit and the Word. We cannot neglect the Spirit.

THE DIVINE SPIRIT AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT BEING ABSTRACT AND MYSTERIOUS

The truth of the Spirit of God and the spirit of man is very abstract. Not only is the Spirit of God abstract to us, but also our own spirit is abstract. Sometimes we may even doubt that we really have a human spirit. Billions of people do not realize that they have a spirit. Even many Christians do not believe that they have a human spirit. They hold the concept that man is of two parts—the physical part, the body, which can be seen and touched, and the psychological part, the soul, which is invisible and cannot be touched. They feel that the soul, the spirit, and even the heart refer to the same thing. A missionary attended a conference I held in Hong Kong in 1954. He told me that he could not agree that there was a difference between the spirit and the soul. I referred him to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, which says, “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.” Between the three nouns—*spirit*, *soul*, and *body*—is the Greek conjunction *kai*, meaning “and.” This shows that the spirit and the soul are two entities. The Chinese translation of the Bible is one of the best translations. However, even this translation makes the soul, the spirit, and the heart the same.

Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 7 shows how abstract the Spirit is. In 1 Corinthians 7:40 Paul says, “She is more blessed if she so remains, according

to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God.” In this verse Paul uses the phrases *according to my opinion* and *I think that I also have the Spirit of God*. In 1 Corinthians 6:17 Paul says definitely, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” and again in 3:16 he says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” But in expressing his opinion Paul only says, “I think that I also have the Spirit of God.” This demonstrates that in our experience the matters of the Spirit are difficult and abstract. We may say that we walk according to spirit, but we need the assurance that within us there is a separate and definite part called the human spirit, which is indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Because the Spirit is abstract, some people say that there is no God. However, the Bible says that God is Spirit (John 4:24). In Greek the word for *Spirit* is *pneuma*, and in Hebrew it is *ruach*. Both *pneuma* and *ruach* can mean “breath,” “air,” “wind,” and “spirit.” In Ezekiel 37 *ruach* is translated as “breath” (vv. 5-6, 8-9), “wind” (v. 9), and “Spirit” (vv. 1, 14). In John 3 *pneuma* is translated as “Spirit” (vv. 5-6, 8) and “wind” (v. 8). John 3:8 says, “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Whether *pneuma* means “wind” or “Spirit” depends upon the context. The context in verse 8 says that the sound of it can be heard. This indicates that it is the wind. A regenerated person is like the wind, which can be realized but which is beyond understanding. This again shows that the things of the Spirit are difficult and abstract.

APPREHENDING THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT BY FAITH

The things of the Spirit are apprehended by faith. Ephesians 3:17 says, “That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith.” First Timothy 1:4 speaks of “God’s economy, which is in faith.” We know that Christ is making His home in our hearts through faith. Likewise, through faith we realize that God has an economy, and without faith we cannot realize God’s economy. God’s requirement for us related to everything in the New Testament is faith. If we do not believe, we cannot apprehend anything spiritual. We know there is a God, Christ, and the Spirit through faith. By faith we know that Christ is in the heavens and also in our spirit. By faith we know that the Bible is the Word of God, and by faith we know that we have been saved, regenerated, and forgiven by God. By faith we are sanctified,

transformed, renewed, and eventually glorified. By faith we also are overcomers. Everything spiritual is apprehended by faith.

Anything that is apprehended by faith is a mystery. For this reason the present age is the age of faith and the age of mystery. Furthermore, anything that is a mystery is of grace. The things of the law are visible and physical, but whatever is of grace is invisible and mysterious. God is mysterious, and the Spirit of God is mysterious. Christ in us is mysterious, and our salvation, regeneration, justification, and sanctification are mysterious. The Body of Christ is also a mystery. It is by faith that we know that the church is not merely a gathering or a congregation but the Body of Christ, and it is by faith that we know that we are brothers. If we do not have faith, our apprehension of everything spiritual collapses. Therefore, we should not trust in our feelings concerning the divine Spirit and the human spirit. According to our feelings, there may be no divine Spirit and no human spirit. When we come to the matter of the two spirits, we must be in faith. Paul declares, “Having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, ‘I believed, therefore I spoke,’ we also believe, therefore we also speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Paul spoke not in the spirit of knowledge, feeling, or sensation but in the spirit of faith.

Today God’s mysteries are known by faith. The age of mystery began at the time of the Lord’s incarnation, but when He appears again, the age of mystery will be over. All the mysteries will be completed at the trumpeting of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 10:7). Those who do not believe in Jesus today will see Him at that time. However, today everything spiritual is a mystery. The Spirit and our spirit both are mysteries. Therefore, we must exercise our God-given faith. Every Christian has something within him called faith. We cannot explain it, but we have it. The more we believe in God, Christ, and the Bible, the happier we are. The more we believe that Christ is in us and is making His home in us, the happier we are and the more living we are, but the less we believe, the deader we are. The more we believe that the divine Spirit indwells, works, moves, and operates in our spirit, the happier we are. We should not question the truth of the two spirits. We must have a complete faith and full assurance that we have a spirit and that the Spirit of God indwells us.

JOINED TO THE LORD AS ONE SPIRIT

First Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” This is a strong word. Paul not merely says that the Spirit mingles with our spirit

or that these two spirits become one spirit. He says that we, the complete and entire person, and the Lord are one spirit. We have stressed very much that the Spirit indwells our spirit. Although this is correct, we need to see something further. First Corinthians 3:16 says that we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in us, the whole persons. We are composed of spirit, soul, and body. Since we are the temple of God, the Spirit is in our body, our soul, and our spirit. To say that the Spirit is in our spirit is correct. However, to say that the Spirit is only in our spirit and not in our body or mind is not right in every sense. The Spirit is not only in our spirit but also in our body. First Corinthians 6:13-20 speaks of the sanctification of the body. The subject of this portion of the Word is the body. In this section Paul says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (v. 19). Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible goes so far as to say that our entire being is one spirit with the Lord. Our faith has to go this far also. Whether or not we believe this, God considers it to be so. As long as one is a believer in Christ, he as a person and the Lord our Savior as a person are one spirit. Not only are our spirit and soul the temple of the Holy Spirit, but our body also is His temple. The more we believe this, the more we will experience it. If we speak negatively, our experience will be negative. If we say that there is no God, then to us there will be no God, but if we say that there is a God, then we will experience that there is a God. Likewise, if we say that our body is dirty, then our body will be dirty, but if we believe that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, our body will be holy. To speak indicates that we believe, and when we believe, we receive what we believe and even become what we believe. If we say that we are saved, then we are saved. If we say that we are sanctified, then we are what we believe. We all have to believe that there is a divine Spirit and a human spirit, and because there are these two spirits, God and we, we and God, can be one spirit. We should go so far as to say not only that the divine Spirit is in our spirit but also that we ourselves and God are one spirit.

Because we are one spirit with the Lord, we should not condemn ourselves or others too much. We should not say that we are poor or the sisters are poor. The Lord in heaven will say that we are wrong; we are not poor, and the sisters are not poor. In the eyes of God, we are holy. The Corinthian believers had many problems, but at the beginning of his first Epistle to them, Paul said, "To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified

in Christ Jesus” (1:2). We are sanctified. We should believe what the Bible says. If we do, we will gain what we believe.

Faith always has an object. The object of our faith is the Word of God. By faith we know that there is a God because the Bible tells us that there is a God. Likewise, by faith we know that God has an economy because 1 Timothy 1:4 says so. In speaking about the divine, spiritual facts we should avoid considering our experience. It is a fact that the Spirit is in our entire being. According to our experience and exercise, however, the Spirit sometimes seems to not even be in our spirit. We must be clear about what the Bible says. To depend solely upon our experience we do not need revelation, but to believe what the Bible says requires much revelation. This is why we all have to come to the Word often. The more we come to the Word and know what is in it, the more we spontaneously believe (cf. Rom. 10:17). We all have to believe that the divine Spirit dwells in our human spirit. We also need to exercise our faith to believe that the divine Spirit is not only in our spirit but also in our whole being. Our whole being is one with the Lord. If we have such an enlarged vision, this vision will keep us sanctified, transformed, victorious, and even overcoming.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:17; 2:22; 3:5; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18; Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25; 2 Tim. 4:22

Throughout the past centuries the light concerning the mingled spirit has not been as clear as it is today. The early church had the teaching concerning the mingling of God with man. Eventually, however, some taught heresy by saying that the mingling of the human nature and the divine nature would produce a third nature. This heretical teaching was strongly condemned, but because of this, the truth concerning the mingling of divinity with humanity was avoided.

In dealing with the truth of the mingling of divinity with humanity, we must consider the mingling of the divine Spirit with our human spirit. Certain authors in the past have written concerning the two spirits, saying that it is often difficult to tell whether the word *spirit* in some verses in the New Testament refers to the divine Spirit or the human spirit. Concerning *spirit of faith* in 2 Corinthians 4:13, Dean Alford says, “Not distinctly the Holy Spirit,—but still not merely a human disposition: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man.” Vincent follows Alford on this point and says, “Not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both.” There is such a fact that the divine Spirit, who is God Himself, is mingled with our human spirit, and there is a clear record of this mingling in the New Testament.

OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

Romans 1:9 says, “God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit.” The possessive pronoun *my* denotes that the spirit here is not God’s Spirit but the human spirit. Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit,” using the possessive pronoun *your*. These two verses say “my spirit” and “your spirit,” denoting undeniably that we, the God-created human beings, do have a spirit. Even the Old Testament speaks of the human spirit. Zechariah 12:1 says, “Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.” Zechariah does not

mention the human spirit in a meaningless way. To God, in His divine, eternal economy, the heavens, the earth, and the human spirit are equally important. The heavens, the earth, and the human spirit are the three marvelous, excellent, and crucial elements of the universe. Therefore, we must know our spirit.

Proverbs 20:27 says, “The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, / Searching all the innermost parts of his inner being.” Proverbs was written after the fall of man. Even after the fall, man still has a part within him that is God’s lamp. Within man there is a small part that God reserves for Himself. An embassy in a foreign country is considered as part of the territory of the country that establishes it. In the same way, our spirit is God’s “territory,” God’s “embassy,” within us.

Even after the fall, the human spirit is the lamp of Jehovah. This is very crucial. The Chinese philosophical scholars realized that within man there is something that is enlightening and shining, which they called the “bright virtue,” and Confucius taught that to develop the “bright virtue” is the highest learning. All men have a conscience, a part of their spirit, telling them what is right and wrong. God created this faculty within them. However, man fell because he neglected his spirit and went along with his soul or his body, his flesh. A person who lives by his body, that is, his flesh, is considered as a low person, but a person who lives by his logical soul is not considered to be wrong. Not many people care for their human spirit.

THE MINGLED SPIRIT IN EPHESIANS

The Bible, however, has much to say about the human spirit. Each chapter in Ephesians has at least one phrase related to the human spirit. Ephesians 1:17 says, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him.” *Spirit* here does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the regenerated human spirit indwelt by the Spirit of God. Ephesians 2:22 says, “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit,” and 3:5 says that God’s New Testament economy was “revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit.” Ephesians 4:23 says, “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Ephesians 5:18 says, “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.” Many versions, including the King James Version, interpret *spirit* in Ephesians 5:18 as the Holy Spirit. This is

not correct, since the first part of this verse serves as a modifier for the second. The first clause says “Do not be drunk with wine,” implying a part of our being, our body. Therefore, the second clause should read, “But be filled in spirit,” in another part of our being. Finally, Ephesians 6:18 says, “By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit.” It is impossible to understand the book of Ephesians without knowing the human spirit.

EXPERIENCING THE MINGLED SPIRIT BY FAITH

We all must realize that the most crucial part of our being is our spirit. Many times our fellowship and contact with the saints help us to realize that we are still in our flesh and our soul—our mind, emotion, and will. We have to learn to always live not in our flesh or in our soul but in our spirit. When we are angry with someone, we are often in our flesh. Then when we realize that we should be nice to them, we act like gentlemen and talk very thoughtfully with much logic. This is to talk, live, and behave ourselves in the soul. Neither living in the flesh nor living in the soul count before God. The book of 1 Corinthians reveals three kinds of persons: the fleshly man, the soulish man, and the spiritual man. In 1 Corinthians 1—3 Paul condemns division because division is in the flesh (1:10-11; 3:3). Paul further tells us that we should not walk in the soul (2:14). We should be neither fleshly men nor soulish men. Rather, we should be spiritual, walking in our spirit (vv. 11-13, 15). To be proper Christians, we must know that the Lord Jesus today as the embodiment of the Triune God is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17) indwelling our spirit and mingled with our spirit as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17).

A number of those among us who have been saved for a short time realize that they have a human spirit and that the divine Spirit indwells their human spirit. However, some may begin to wonder how the great Lord as the Spirit can dwell in their human spirit. If it were not for the word of the Bible, they might even doubt that they have such a spirit. However, even though they believe the Bible, they may wonder why they never feel that they have a spirit or that the Lord Jesus as the Spirit indwells their spirit. We should not try to prove that we have a spirit and that Christ as the Spirit indwells our spirit. These two spirits can only be realized by faith. The more we believe, the more we experience the two spirits.

Many of us have learned that we have the indwelling Spirit and the outpoured Spirit. We realize that when we go to preach the gospel, we need

the outpoured Spirit as the power from on high. Therefore, we often pray to receive this power because we think that the more we pray, the more we have the power. It is true that the more we pray before we go to preach the gospel, the more power we will have. However, the more we try to feel that we have the Spirit, the more the Spirit eludes us.

Some may ask, “If the divine Spirit and the human spirit are substantial, how can it be that I do not have any feeling that they are within me?” There are many invisible parts to our being, such as our psychological heart. Our mind, emotion, will, and conscience are all invisible, but we believe that we have them. Likewise, we have a human life within us, but we cannot see it. We can see so many parts of our body, but we cannot see our life. If one does not examine himself, he still has the human life, but if he opens himself up to find his human life, he will lose it. Life is a substance; it is substantial, but it is not visible. In the same way, the divine Spirit and our human spirit are invisible, but we believe that we have them.

God Himself, Christ, and even we human beings are mysterious. We do not even know ourselves. We must simply believe that God created us with a human spirit. Moreover, God is Spirit, and He became incarnated, putting on flesh and blood. Then He died, was buried, and in His resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit. When we believed in Him, He entered into our spirit as the life-giving Spirit. Now the Spirit works together with our spirit, and the two spirits have become one to such an extent that it is difficult to discern which is which. If we do not know our spirit, we cannot live a proper Christian life. The Christian life is altogether a life in our mingled spirit.

We must not analyze, convince ourselves, or try to convince others that we have these two spirits. We must exercise our faith based upon what is written in the Holy Bible. In expressing his opinion concerning marriage, Paul says, “I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 7:40). He may not have felt the Spirit, and he had no way to prove that he had the Spirit, but he thought that he had the Spirit of God. We must not be influenced by the teaching that we must pray and do many things before we can receive the Spirit. We should simply take the Word and exercise our spirit to believe what the Word says. We must forget about whether or not we have a certain feeling that we have the Spirit.

We must have the assurance that we are acting, are behaving, and even have our being in our spirit, but it is hard to tell if we are in the spirit. It is easier to know when we are not in the spirit. If we lose our temper, we know that is in the flesh. If we are so logical and philosophical, we know that is in the soul. When we are not in the spirit, we know it, but when we are in the spirit, we do not know it. This may be illustrated by the organs of our body. When there is no problem with our stomach, we are not aware of it, but when our stomach has a problem, we are aware of it. Not to know is a great blessing. If we are certain that we know something in our spirit, this may indicate that we are not in the spirit. To say of a certainty that we are in the spirit is not a good sign. The apostle John did say, "I was in spirit on the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10), but he said it by faith, not by feeling. When John was in exile on the island of Patmos, his entire being was concentrated on the Lord. Surely he was in the spirit, but this does not mean that he had the feeling that he was in spirit. He had the fact, and he told us the fact. We also can say that we are in our spirit, not because we feel it but because we believe it.

We must learn not to trust in our feelings. Rather, it is better to believe more. Paul says, "That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). We know that Christ is making His home in our hearts not by feeling but through faith. It is altogether a matter of faith. As believers in Christ, we must believe that we have a human spirit and that it has been regenerated. We also have the Lord Jesus as the life-giving Spirit in our spirit, and the two spirits are one. For this reason, in many verses in the New Testament, we cannot discern whether *spirit* denotes the divine Spirit or the human spirit. It simply denotes the wonderful mingled spirit in us. This wonderful spirit consists of our spirit and the divine Spirit. In experience we must be blind and simply exercise our faith. The Bible says it is so, so we say it is so. Hallelujah! We have a spirit, and the divine Spirit mingles with our human spirit and is one spirit with our human spirit. We cannot analyze this; we can only believe it. We simply must do our duty to live, act, move, do things, and have our being in our spirit.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT INTO OUR TRIPARTITE BEING

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:23; 1 Cor. 6:19, 17

The Bible speaks about our relationship with the Spirit of God in a detailed way. This relationship involves all the parts of our being. We are persons created by God in His image inwardly and according to His likeness outwardly (Gen. 1:26). According to Genesis 1, each living thing was created according to its own kind (vv. 12, 21, 24). Man, however, was created according to God's kind. The human life and the divine life are two different lives, but they are lives of the same kind.

Outwardly, we were created in the likeness of God. Darwin taught wrongly that man evolved from the apes. The apes are according to their own kind, but man is directly related to God. Inwardly, we are in the image of God. Our human life is not in our physical body alone. Our physical body was formed of the dust of the ground, but there was no life in it until the Creator breathed His breath into it. When God breathed into man, man began to have life (2:7). The real human life came from the breath of God. God's breath in Genesis 2:7 was not the same as the breath breathed out by the Lord Jesus in John 20:22. The breath in John 20:22 was the Spirit Himself. The Hebrew word for *breath* in Genesis 2:7 is *neshamah*, the same word translated as "spirit" in Proverbs 20:27, which says, "The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah." However, even though the breath of God in Genesis 2:7 was not the Spirit of God or the life of God, it was still very closely related to God's Spirit and God's life. The inward human life is related to the breath of God, and the breath of God is the source of our life.

THE DISPENSING OF THE SPIRIT INTO OUR BEING

The New Testament speaks much about God as the Spirit dispensing Himself into our being. God dispenses Himself into us in three steps. The first step is His dispensing into our human spirit. John 3:6b says, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit"; Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses

with our spirit that we are children of God”; and 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” The divine Spirit comes into our spirit, and these two spirits become mingled as one spirit. Then He spreads from, through, and with our spirit into our mind (Eph. 4:23), the main part of our soul. Romans 8:6 says, “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.” If we set our mind on our flesh, we will suffer death, but if we set our mind on the spirit, we will enjoy life and peace. Eventually, the Spirit even gives life to our mortal body (v. 11).

Paul says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19). The Spirit of God comes to dwell even in our body. Our body is for our human existence, but it bothers us very much. Many of our troubles come from our body. But sometimes we are too influenced by our fallen situation, and we do not consider our body in a positive way. In 1 Thessalonians 4:4 Paul charges us to possess our own vessel, our body, in sanctification and honor. We have to consider our body in a positive way because it is the Spirit’s holy habitation. The divine Spirit enters our spirit, spreads into our soul, and even indwells our body. We should be persons touched by the divine Spirit in the three parts of our being.

The Spirit’s coming into the three parts of our being is His dispensing. First, God was incarnated. This was the first step in His dispensing. Then God died in the flesh on the cross, not only to take away sins but also to release the divine life. That releasing of the divine life was also a part of His dispensing. Then His resurrection imparted His divine life into us. Christ’s death released His divine life, and His resurrection imparted His life into us. This impartation was also part of His dispensing. Then the Spirit, who is the very pneumatic Christ, entered into us to regenerate us. That was a further, very intimate step in His dispensing of the Spirit into our being. Incarnation was wonderful, but it had nothing to do with us directly. Likewise, His precious death and resurrection did not reach us until the Divine Trinity regenerated us. Regeneration was a very intimate step to dispense the Triune God into our being.

EXPERIENCING GOD’S DISPENSING IN A FINER WAY

Incarnation, death, resurrection, and regeneration are all clearly unveiled in the Gospel of John. However, this Gospel goes on to show us that Christ

gives us Himself as the living water (4:10, 14), that He is the bread of life, good for eating (6:35), and that He has breathed Himself into us as the holy breath (20:22). From the time of our regeneration we need to always eat, drink, and breathe the Lord. Eating, drinking, and breathing the Lord are finer steps in His dispensing. Trees need their roots, but without the root hairs, a tree will not be able to grow. The root hairs are the finer means for the tree to absorb all the riches from the soil for its growth. Regeneration has planted Christ as the “root” in our spirit, but we also need the “root hairs” of eating, drinking, and breathing the Lord. These are the finer means for God’s dispensing. We may say, “Hallelujah! God was incarnated for me, He died for me, He resurrected for me, and I have been regenerated!” However, we may still be superficial. Day by day we may not be breathing, drinking, and eating the Lord. *Hymns*, #255 speaks of our need to breathe in the Lord. We may sing this hymn, but do we breathe in the Lord day by day? Breathing in the Lord will make us another kind of person. Many Christians today are spiritually dead because they do not have the root hairs. All Christians know that God was incarnated and that Jesus died for us and our sins and was resurrected. However, many do not know what it is to eat and drink the Lord. Many of us in the Lord’s recovery do know how to eat, drink, and breathe the Lord, but we may not be practicing this in our daily life. We may not know the practicality of the Spirit spreading Himself with our spirit into our soul and saturating our body. We have the teachings of these matters, but we may not have the reality in our tripartite being.

KNOWING THE WORD AS THE BASIS FOR OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE DISPENSING

Our experience of eating, drinking, and breathing the Lord should be built upon the foundation of the deposit of the holy Word. This is why Paul says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). We need a good deposit of the word of Christ dwelling in us. In 2 Timothy 1:14 Paul told Timothy, “Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” Among the many who followed the apostles, Timothy was one of the most faithful. This was because he had a good deposit of the holy Word. We should not think that we know so much. Several thousand messages of this ministry have been published, but we are still discovering new light from the Word.

We all need to know more of the Word. For this purpose we must redeem our time. To redeem means to recover by paying something. We have to purchase back the time. We should not let our time be consumed so easily. Every day we should gain something of the Lord. We must eat well and rest well, and we should have the proper bodily exercise. After this, however, we should redeem our time from all meaningless waste. Telephone calls can be a meaningless waste of time for us. Likewise, we may need to read the newspaper for a certain time every day to know the world situation, but lingering in the many pages of the paper is also a waste of time. We should save our time for breathing, drinking, and eating the Lord and getting the Word into us. Any book or page of the written ministry among us will help us to gain something of the Lord. On every page there is light, life supply, and truth.

To eat the Lord is to spend more time in the Word in a proper way. There is no other way to eat the Lord but through the Word. John 6 stresses that the Lord is the bread of life. At the end of this chapter Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life” (v. 68). If we are going to enjoy the Lord as our food, we must enjoy the word of life. The Lord said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (v. 63). The words of the Lord are the life supply. Both the Spirit and the Lord Christ are embodied in the word. Therefore, the word is the living word, the word of life.

EXPERIENCING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

Based upon the accumulation of the good deposit of the holy Word, we have to breathe, drink, and eat the Lord. The more we practice this as the root hairs of our experience, the more we will have the dispensing of the Divine Trinity. To breathe the Lord is to pray in our spirit, and eventually it is to drink the Lord. *Hymns*, #73 (written by M. E. Barber) says, “Just to breathe the Name of Jesus, / Is to drink of Life indeed.” Just to mention the name Lord Jesus is to drink of the divine life. Paul tells us to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). We cannot cease breathing for even three minutes without dying. In the same way, we have to pray all the time. This is very basic.

Breathing, drinking, and eating the Lord can only take place in our spirit. We breathe, drink, and eat the Lord with, by, and in our spirit. We must not

exercise our mind or emotions too much. Rather, we should exercise our spirit to control our mind and emotions. If our mind and emotions are not properly controlled and applied, they can deceive and mislead us. Therefore, we must not treasure them. Rather, we should learn to hate them, which is to hate our own soul-life and follow the Lord (Luke 14:26). If we hate our independent mind and emotion, our will also will not rise up. Then we will be persons who always remain in our spirit. As we remain in our spirit, we will call on the name of the Lord, pray, and praise the Lord, and the divine dispensing will constantly supply us with the riches of the Divine Trinity.

There are many aspects to the divine dispensing. Eating, drinking, and breathing are all a dispensing. The sealing of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) is also a dispensing. The anointing (1 John 2:20, 27) is one of the aspects of the divine dispensing. Every day we should be under the anointing. The good Samaritan's pouring of the oil and wine upon the wounded man in Luke 10 was a dispensing in type. Even the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19) is a bountiful dispensing. We should constantly experience all these aspects of the dispensing. All day long we should experience the anointing, sealing, moving, operating, satisfying, thirst quenching, and watering of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity. These are the growth of the root hairs. Many of us are short of the "root-hair dispensing." We only take care of the big roots. However, the more root hairs a tree has, the stronger the tree is.

We need to have more and more root hairs. Every day we must be under the anointing, sealing, supplying, and watering of the Spirit. Then all the divine attributes will become our human virtues. This is the process of the root-hair dispensing. When we are under the dispensing of God's love, we have the virtue of loving. When we are enjoying the dispensing of the endurance of the Lord Jesus, we express His patience. We need more and more experience like this. Many times we are too light, shallow, and rough. We are not fine or grave. However, this dispensing will make us very deep, fine, and weighty Christian brothers and sisters.

We do not merely need messages as lessons on the spiritual truths. Our real and practical situation needs to be touched. To render help in an outward way does not mean anything if the person being helped does not have root hairs. We need more root hairs for the fine dispensing. If we have many root hairs and grow by our root hairs, all the small defects in our behavior will be

swallowed up. Life really changes us. The Spirit today is in our spirit spreading into our mind, and He will even take over our body. Then we will be persons who are fully joined to the Lord, not only in our spirit but also in our entire being.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BECOMING SPIRITUAL PERSONS

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 14:32, 37; Rom. 8:14

In order to live a proper Christian life, we must know the Spirit of God and our human spirit. First Corinthians 14:32 says, “The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.” However, Romans 8:14 says, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Romans 8:14 indicates that we should be led by the Spirit, but 1 Corinthians 14:32 indicates that the one who prophesies should direct his own spirit. Although the Bible speaks clearly about the divine Spirit and our human spirit, it is still difficult to discern from the Bible who should lead our being, the Spirit or we ourselves.

Paul’s direction in 1 Corinthians 14:32 is in the context of the Christian meetings. While one person is prophesying and something is revealed to another sitting by, the first person should be silent (vv. 29-30). The prophets must give direction to their spirit; they must tell their spirit to stop for the other speakers. Sometimes, when we are speaking or singing in the meeting, we may feel that we are very much in the spirit. At that time if a leading one says that it is time to stop, we may consider that he is not as spiritual as we are. But the spirits of prophets are under their direction. Thus, they can determine when to prophesy and when to cease, to maintain good order in the church meeting.

In His economy God desires to have man. Before He created man, He already had many angels as the created spirits (Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:14). But He created Adam not as a spirit but as a man. We have been created by God with a human spirit, and God wants us to do everything according to our spirit mingled with the divine Spirit, but He does not want us to be spirits. However, He does not want a man who is merely human, but a spiritual man, a man who is humanly spiritual. Within the believers there are two persons. Christ is the spiritual, divine person within us, and we ourselves are the human person. On the one hand, we are a human being. On the other hand, we have another being, the Divine Being, within us. Naturally speaking, our person is neither in our spirit nor our body but in our soul. When the Bible refers to persons, it often uses the term *souls* (Gen. 46:26; Exo. 1:5). However, we were

regenerated not in our body or our soul but in our spirit (John 3:6b). Regeneration brought Jesus Christ into our spirit, making Him our new person. Now we have two persons within us. The first person, our self, is in our soul, and the second person, Christ, is in our spirit.

LIVING AS SPIRITUAL PERSONS

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Even though Christ is our person, we still live, not the old life but a life in faith (v. 20b). We must live as spiritual persons (1 Cor. 14:37; 2:15; 3:1). A spiritual person is one who lives, walks, and has his being according to his spirit, which is mingled with God’s Spirit, and who is able to discern all the spiritual things.

The Christian life is not an exchanged life, in which our life is exchanged for Christ’s life. The Christian life is a mingled life. To be spiritual involves us, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. Our spirit is needed to receive Christ as the Spirit to be our person so that we may live, walk, and have our being in Him. In Matthew 16:24-25 and Luke 9:23-24 the Lord said that we must deny our self and lose our soul-life. However, our soul is also needed for us to be spiritual persons. Paul says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). Our entire being should be spiritual, including our spirit, soul, and body (v. 19).

We should not lightly say that we have been led by the Spirit to do certain things. We must do things in our spirit, which is mingled with the Spirit. We should move and act as spiritual persons. This is very crucial. Some may feel that the proper way to make a decision is to consider all the factors related to our situation and the persons around us. Others may consider that the way to make decisions is to pray with fasting until the Holy Spirit suddenly enlightens us. However, the proper way to do things is to do them as spiritual persons. Such persons are dominated, governed, directed, moved, and led by their mingled spirit.

THE WAY TO BECOME SPIRITUAL PERSONS

We must not live in ourselves. We should live in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, and be spiritual in our whole being, including our mind, emotion, and will. For this reason the New Testament charges us to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). To pray is to be “spiritualized.” The more we pray, the more we become spiritual. The New Testament also charges us to have fellowship with the Lord and with the church. The fellowship with the Lord and with the church always makes us spiritual. We are also charged to set our mind on the spirit (Rom. 8:6). This is mostly accomplished by reading and pray-reading the Word. Prayer, fellowship, and getting into the Word are crucial and vital for our becoming spiritual persons. Without these practices, we can never be spiritual. Our mind has to be renewed (Eph. 4:23), and our whole soul has to be transformed (Rom. 12:2). By our constant prayer, fellowship, and reading and pray-reading of the Word, our mind will spontaneously and unconsciously be renewed from being natural to being spiritual, from being earthly to being heavenly. In Romans 12:2 Paul says, “Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind.” When our mind is renewed, our soul will be transformed. To be transformed by the renewing of the mind is to be made spiritual. How proper our living is depends upon how much we have been made spiritual.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: In Romans 8, are minding the things of the Spirit (v. 5), setting the mind on the spirit (v. 6), and being in the spirit (v. 9) the same experience?

Answer: Romans 8 is not a chapter of doctrine but of experience. Verses 9, 5, and 6 refer to our experience in three stages. Verse 9 refers to our experience after regeneration. If the Spirit of God is in us, we are not in the flesh but in the spirit. In verse 5 is the experience of practicing to be spiritual, but the experience of verse 6 comes after we have had further practice. At that point, we not only have life through regeneration, but we also have peace subjectively. After we are regenerated, we have Christ in our spirit. Then we have to learn to mind the things of the Spirit. Eventually, our mind will be on the spirit, and we will have life and peace.

Question: At what point do we know that we have become spiritual persons?

Answer: It is better not to know or to seek to know when we have become spiritual. We should simply be what we are. If we feel that we are sufficiently spiritual, we are really not spiritual.

Question: Romans 8:13 says, “If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” If our putting to death the practices of the body relates to our self-control, how is it “by the Spirit”?

Answer: Verses 13 and 14 are joined by the word *for* and should be read together. Verse 14 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Both verses refer to the same practice of putting to death the practices of our body. If we are led by the Spirit, we can put to death the practices of our body.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NOT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 5:19

First Thessalonians 5:19 says, “Do not quench the Spirit.” In Romans 12:11 Paul says, “Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.” We may be cold, but the Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, within us is not cold or idle. Rather, He is burning within us. Second Timothy 1:6 says, “For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” The divine Spirit is burning within us, but this burning may not be strong. Therefore, Paul tells us not to quench the burning but to fan it into flame.

NOT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

BY STANDING WITH THE DIVINE FACTS

As genuine Christians, we have several divine facts before us. First, we have repented and believed in the Lord, and we have received Him. Even if we neglect or forget this, it is still a fact that cannot be denied. It is also a fact that our human spirit has been regenerated and that the Lord Jesus as the divine Spirit is now in our spirit (John 3:6; 2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22). We should count on these divine facts. We are not trustworthy, but we do have One within us who is altogether trustworthy. We may be cold, but He is never cold. He is burning and working in us. There is never a time when the Lord is not working in us. We should not think that as Christians who love the Lord we are hot, while the Lord Himself is cold and needs to be stirred up by us. The Lord does not need to be stirred up by us. Rather, He is already burning. We simply should not quench Him.

We may consider that to be filled with the Spirit involves an ecstatic, exciting feeling. This is not correct. We do not need to pray in an extraordinary way to be stirred up and filled with the Spirit. The disciples in the early church were living, worshipping, attending the meetings, and working in a normal way, being filled with the Spirit. In our Lord's Day morning meetings everyone may not be excited, but many function in a normal way. This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

We should not seek an ecstatic feeling or anything spectacular. To do so will quench the burning within. The New Testament does not charge us to seek an ecstatic experience. Rather, it charges us to be of a sober mind (Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5-6). Seeking a spectacular experience may be compared to starting a fire with too much fuel. When lighting a fire, it is best to start with a small burning and then feed it with some fuel as it is needed. We should simply learn not to quench the burning within our spirit, but to fan it and feed it. Some among us have been ecstatic in their experience of the Lord. At a later time, however, they may not have experienced the Lord for a long period of time. This is not proper. We must stand with the fact that we have a mingled spirit and that we have the Lord Jesus within us. We should not be excited but rather fan the flame in our spirit. For this we need to pray, call on the name of the Lord, read the Word, and pray-read a few verses. Then we will grow and be consistent in all things. We should not be too “hot” or stir other people up. Stirring people up may be compared to making artificial flowers. Many artificial flowers can be made in a short time, but they are not real, living plants. As the saved believers, we have the Spirit of life within us, and we must grow in the divine life. However, patience is needed for the growth in life.

GROWING IN THE DIVINE LIFE WITHOUT FLUCTUATION

We should go on in the Christian life in a very sober way. When things are going well, we may be tempted to be excited. However, we must tell ourselves to cool down. In the same way, when things are not going well, we must tell ourselves not to be bothered. We should not be affected by the environment or the conditions around us. We should simply be genuine and not quench the Spirit. There should be no fluctuation in our living. To us, a day of sorrow should not be different from a day of joy. We should care only for the divine facts. We have a regenerated spirit, and the divine Spirit is living in us. If we consider our past experience, we will realize that we have not been consistent. On the one hand, we have made some mistakes due to our being too excited. On the other hand, when we have been cold, we have stayed cold for too long a time. This is not the proper Christian experience.

The real growth, the real advance, in the Christian life is evidenced by our always remaining the same with no fluctuation. Many encouraging and

discouraging things may happen to us, but we still should remain the same. In the portrait of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels we cannot see a fluctuation in His living. When a good report came, He was not excited, and when a bad report came, He was not discouraged. Fluctuation is a sign that we are childish. Babies fluctuate all the time, but the more one grows, the more consistent he becomes. Neither good news nor bad news affects a mature person. In the church life and in the Lord's work, we need persons who do not fluctuate. For this we need the growth in the divine life.

We have been talking about the new way for the church life for several years, but some among us are not taking the new way. This is because it is not exciting. To take the new way should be like doing our duty to go to work every day. Not many people would prefer to work at a regular job if they had a choice. However, most people do have a job because they must make a living. Whether we are happy or sorrowful, we have to work at our job every day. Our going on in the church life should be in the same principle.

If we grow in life, this growth will cause us to be consistent. Every day we will pray and contact people, and we will become trustworthy and reliable. Most of our problems stem from our inconsistency and untrustworthiness. However, the very Triune God is within us. We fluctuate too much, but He is trustworthy. The more we grow in life, the more we will match the indwelling Lord. The indwelling Spirit within us is always the same. Therefore, we must learn not to quench the Spirit but to stand with the spiritual facts and live a life according to these facts. The more we grow in life, the more we will live this way, and the Lord will be able to use us to accomplish many things.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: If we are always consistent, will we have expressions such as those of the Lord when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple (John 2:14-15) or of Paul when he dealt with the Corinthians in tears (2 Cor. 2:4) and in boldness (1 Cor. 4:21)?

Answer: Even when the Lord and Paul had such expressions, they still remained consistent. After driving out the moneychangers, the Lord returned again to the temple to minister (Matt. 21:12, 23). He remained consistent.

We must simply not quench the Spirit. Instead, we must follow the Spirit. When we are excited or sorrowful, we have to check whether we are following the Spirit. If we are sorrowful when the Spirit is not sorrowful, our sorrow is a quenching to the Spirit. Quite often, burdens come to us from many directions, and the burdens do affect us. We may be sensitive to the situations, but we should not follow our sensitivity. We must follow the Spirit. If we do not quench the Spirit, we will not be excited or made sorrowful by our environment.

To quench the Spirit is to go our own way. When we go our own way, we are not caring that we have the Spirit within us. We are forgetting that we have been “married” to the Spirit. We must not quench Him. He is always right. If we quench Him, we will make mistakes. To grow in the divine life is to be decreased while the Spirit is being increased in us. This takes place by our following Him. God wants us to be one with the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit as the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). We should not be affected by the outward environment. Rather, we should follow the Spirit and not quench the Spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SPIRIT BEING THE PRESENCE OF THE TRIUNE GOD WITHIN US

Scripture Reading: Matt. 1:23; 18:20; 28:20; John 14:17; Acts 9:31; Rom. 8:14, 16; 9:1; 2 Tim. 4:22; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5a

First Timothy 1:4 speaks of “God’s economy, which is in faith.” God’s New Testament economy is altogether in faith. The divine facts in God’s economy are great and real, but they require our faith. God has accomplished everything necessary for the dispensing of the Divine Trinity into His chosen people. The only requirement now is that we exercise our faith to enjoy this dispensing. The dispensing of the Divine Trinity may be illustrated by the flow of water in the water pipes in our homes. The water is always there, but how much the water flows depends on how much we turn on the faucets. The dispensing of the Divine Trinity is a fact and a reality, but we must exercise our faith to say Amen to this fact. We need to “turn on the faucet” by saying Amen to the divine fact and enjoying the divine dispensing.

God’s New Testament economy is by faith, not by appearance, and this faith is based upon the divine facts that have been accomplished. However, many of the facts in the Bible are not presented in a plain and simple way, and there are many items, especially in the New Testament, that are difficult to explain. As a result, many times we do not stand with the divine facts but prefer to exercise our feeling and natural concepts. Nevertheless, what we preach as the glad tidings, the good news, is that God has accomplished everything needed for His economy. In the Gospels the Lord said, “All things are ready. Come to the wedding feast” (Matt. 22:4; Luke 14:17). The feast of God’s economy is already “cooked.” We should simply come and enjoy it.

RECEIVING WHAT GOD HAS ACCOMPLISHED ACCORDING TO HIS TESTAMENT

God has accomplished everything for His economy, and we have God’s accomplishment. In the book of Revelation, John speaks in the past tense. This indicates that in God’s eyes everything has been done. We also have the

Bible. God has recorded what He has accomplished in a book. Moreover, this book is a covenant and a testament. A covenant is an agreement with some promises to accomplish certain things for the covenanted people, whereas a testament is a will with certain accomplished things bequeathed to the inheritor. Every page of the Bible is an item of the bequeathed inheritance. A testament is a contract of bequeathed items, not of requirements for us to accomplish. It is a statement that tells us that whatever is written within it has been accomplished and is ours. Therefore, we have to take what is in it and receive it by faith.

The first main item in the New Testament is that God was incarnated. Second, He lived a human life on the earth. Then He went to the cross and died an all-inclusive death as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the bronze serpent (3:14), and the grain of wheat (12:24). When He accomplished such an all-inclusive death, He solved the problem of our sins, sin, the flesh, the old man, and our worldliness, and He terminated Satan and death (Heb. 2:14). Then He resurrected and ascended. After He accomplished all these things, He recorded what He had accomplished in His testament and passed this testament on to us. Many readers of the Bible think that they must accomplish what is written in it. However, we do not need to do anything. Everything has been done already; it is finished. However, we may not have this realization. The Lord's ministry today is not teaching the saints something we need to carry out. It is showing us that all the things that have been accomplished and consummated by God are ours. We should simply see the facts, take them, stand with them, and praise the Lord. We must believe that we have been filled with the Spirit within and without. We must also believe that we have the authority of Christ. When we go out to visit people for the gospel by knocking on their doors, we should not tremble. We should not expect some outward evidence or experience to prove that we have Christ's authority. If we question whether or not we have the authority of Christ, this indicates that we do not have the habit of faith.

**ENJOYING THE PRESENCE OF THE TRIUNE GOD
IN GATHERING TOGETHER
AND IN THE TEACHING OF THE WORD**

Christ died on the cross, and He resurrected. In His resurrection He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), and in His resurrection He

resurrected us (Eph. 2:6) and regenerated us (1 Pet. 1:3). Before we were born, we were regenerated. We believe this because we have the will, the New Testament. The New Testament also tells us that Christ as the Spirit is now in us, and the Spirit who is in us is the very presence of the Triune God. In the Divine Trinity, God the Father is the source, God the Son is the course, and God the Spirit is the flow. The flow of the Triune God is the reaching of God to us, and this reaching is the presence of the Triune God. From beginning to end, the New Testament speaks about the presence of the Triune God. Matthew 1:23 says, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel’ (which is translated, God with us).” Incarnation issued in the presence of the Triune God with men. The first way to enjoy the Triune God’s presence is to be gathered into His name. Matthew 18:20 says, “Where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.” If we want to enjoy the Lord’s presence, we must come together. If we are scattered, it is difficult to have the presence of the Triune God. Whenever we are gathered into His wonderful name, His wonderful person is here. The Christian gatherings bring in the Triune God’s presence.

The second way to enjoy His presence is to be taught and to teach His Word. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said, “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the consummation of the age.” Every day is a day for us to enjoy the presence of the Triune God, but the means for our enjoyment of His presence is His teaching. To be taught by others and to teach others His Word in a continual, mutual way brings in His presence. The gatherings and the teaching of the holy Word bring in the presence of the Triune God. When we put the Bible aside, we do not have His presence, but when we gather around His Word, we have His presence.

John 14:16-17 says, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you.” The other Comforter is actually the same One who spoke with them. When He went away and came back to them, He came as another One. The Lord was with the disciples in the flesh, but He came back as the Spirit. Now this Spirit is with us and in us (v. 20). His being with us is not only an outward reality but also an inward presence. Verse 20 says, “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” The first appearance of the returning

One to the same group of disciples was in John 20:19-25, when they were gathered together. The gathering of the disciples brought in the presence of the consummated Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God. From then on He was with them all the time, day by day. Whenever we are gathered together, we have the presence of the Triune God, and the presence of the Triune God is the Spirit, who is always with us.

ENJOYING GRACE AND PEACE THROUGH THE SPIRIT AS THE PRESENCE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Acts 9:31 says, “So then the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.” The comfort rendered to the church by the Holy Spirit was the Spirit’s presence. If the Spirit were not with the church, the church could not enjoy His comfort. Comfort is an indication of the Spirit’s presence. When we stay at home and worry about our problems, we cannot enjoy peace and grace, but when we come to the gatherings of the church, all our concerns are overcome. We have peace and comfort in these gatherings because the comforting Spirit, who is our very peace, rest, and comfort, is there.

The writers of the Epistles often began and ended their Epistles with a greeting related to grace and peace (1 Cor. 1:3; 16:23; Eph. 1:2; 6:23-24). Grace and peace being to us implies the Spirit as the presence of the Triune God. In Revelation 1:4-5 John says, “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.” John’s greeting with grace and peace was from the three of the Trinity. Our grace and our peace come from the Father as the source, through the Son as the course, and by the Spirit as the flow reaching us. The reaching of the Divine Trinity becomes grace and peace to us.

THE SPIRIT’S LEADING AND WITNESSING BEING HIS PRESENCE

Romans 8:14 says, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” The leading of the Spirit is His presence. It is the presence of the

Spirit as His leading that designates us as the sons of God. Verse 16 says, “The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God.” The Spirit’s witnessing is also His presence. Romans 9:1 says, “I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit.” *In the Holy Spirit* again indicates the presence of the Spirit.

ENJOYING THE DISPENSING OF THE TRIUNE GOD THROUGH HIS PRESENCE AS THE SPIRIT

The Lord Jesus became the Spirit in His resurrection, and this Spirit, who is the consummation of the Triune God, is always with us. We do not need to pray and fast for the Spirit’s coming to us. He is already here. Moreover, we are filled with the Spirit. Christ is the wonderful Savior, and we have the wonderful Spirit always within us. Before the incarnation God was objective to us. However, He was incarnated, lived on the earth, died on the cross, resurrected, and became a life-giving Spirit. Now all things have been accomplished for the dispensing of the Divine Trinity. We are now in His dispensing, and the basic factor of His dispensing is His presence as the Spirit. If water did not have a presence in our homes through the water pipes, we could not enjoy the water. However, since the water has been installed in our homes, we can enjoy it at any time by turning on the faucets. In the same way, God’s dispensing today is in His presence, and the presence of the Triune God is the Spirit.

The Triune God’s presence is all-inclusive. Many times we fail and make mistakes, but His redeeming blood is His provision for us. Moreover, this provision is found in His presence. He is the very consummated Spirit, and He is the totality of the Triune God, compounded with all the divine attributes, the human virtues, His redeeming death, and His life-giving resurrection. As such a One, He is in us as His presence. We are under His presence, so we must exercise our faith to “turn on the faucet” and enjoy His presence. We must not take the natural way, considering our feelings and seeking to have outward evidence of the divine facts. We should reject our feelings. Our feelings mean nothing, and we should not trust them. We should rather treasure what the New Testament says. Some among us should compose poems and songs about the items of the New Testament that we have enjoyed. When we sing such songs, we will be victorious, holy, spiritual, divine, and

heavenly. This is to enjoy the fullness of the Spirit within us essentially and upon us economically.

PART THREE:
FURTHER TALKS CONCERNING
THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LABORING AND STRUGGLING

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:27-29; 1 Cor. 15:58

THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY ANNULING THE FAÇADE OF THE TRADITIONAL WAY

Since October 1984 we have been speaking about the God-ordained way. But I have discovered that some of the saints who are absolute for this new way have been disappointed because they expected to see a great façade. These saints have said that every message which has come out from the ministry concerning the God-ordained way is scriptural. But after practicing the God-ordained way for a while, they say that very little has been accomplished. They do not oppose; rather, they agree with the God-ordained way. Yet they say that they have not seen the working out of this way.

My answer to such consideration is this: God created man, Adam and Eve, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Man has multiplied and filled the earth in a gradual way by means of small families. Our God is a God of patience. To Him one thousand years are like one day (2 Pet. 3:8). From the creation of Adam until today is about six thousand years. Man’s multiplying and filling the earth has taken six thousand years but according to God’s counting, these six thousand years are only six days. During these six thousand years man has multiplied gradually. It seems that the speed is slow, but actually it is not.

If you say that nothing has happened or that nothing has been accomplished in our practice of the new way within the past three and a half years, this is altogether not true. First, there has been a success in Taipei. When I went to Taipei in October 1984, the regular attendance at the Lord’s table was about three thousand. After practicing the God-ordained way in only a partial way, there are now five thousand saints attending the Lord’s table in Taipei. Statistics are subduing and convincing. In the past the elders in Taipei had the hard task of getting one speaker to speak in each of their twenty-one halls. The hardest thing for an elder in a local church to take care of was the Lord’s Day morning message. Before October 1984 there were only

twenty-one speakers every Lord's Day morning among about three thousand attendants meeting in twenty-one halls. But now in Taipei they are practicing the biblical way revealed in 1 Corinthians 14, the way of all speaking in mutuality for the building up of the church, and there are about one thousand saints speaking in the Lord's Day morning meeting among about five thousand attendants every Lord's Day morning.

I recently received a wonderful report concerning a conference in the southeastern part of the United States. In that conference approximately one hundred fifty saints gathered together without a designated speaker. The speakers in this conference were all the saints, all the attendants. Of the more than one hundred saints who were meeting together, about sixty of the attendants spoke. To have a conference without a main speaker is a significant event in Christian history. The content of the conference was the outlines used for the additional meetings after the 1990 summer training (contained in the book entitled *A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*). They used these outlines to read, pray-read, fellowship, and share with one another. The saints enjoyed each point so much and were so eager to speak that it was difficult for them to go on from one point to the next. Some of the twelve to fifteen churches that came together in that conference were raised up in the past two or three years in the God-ordained way.

The God-ordained way never builds up a façade. A Christian group built up in the traditional way may start out as a small denominational church with a congregation of twenty-five people. This congregation then hires a young graduate from a seminary or Bible institute. At the beginning, the young graduate is very new and fresh and may not have the confidence that he can do the job because his talent has not yet been developed. But through practice, his talent becomes manifest. He may be a good speaker who is eloquent and very knowledgeable concerning the Bible. In addition, he may be able to relate a lot of stories. Within two years the congregation increases from twenty-five to five hundred, filling up their meeting place. As a result, there is the need for a bigger meeting place. They begin to make this need known, and soon the money comes in to build a meeting place that can seat three thousand. In another three or four years, even the new meeting place is filled. This big congregation has become a big façade, and this young man has achieved a great deal and has established a very successful career in terms of service in Christianity. There are a number of examples of this in the United States today.

Although this is a common way in today's Christianity, this is not the way shown in the Bible. The biblical way is to spread life. Human multiplication is an example of this. Human multiplication goes on year after year, and by this multiplication human life spreads. It is not by any method but by life. God's ordained way is not the way of a great façade or of great achievement. It is the way of life spreading.

The new way annuls the way of façade in Christianity. We must give up the thought of having a big congregation. We must forget about this kind of thing. As long as we still have this thought within us, we are in the tradition of Christianity. Today in the United States there are approximately sixty-five million Protestants. But some of the leaders of these major denominations have said that they are short of workers. The reason for this is that nearly all the people are considered as "laymen." They have never been developed and trained; therefore, they do not know how to speak or preach and often do not even know how to pray. When there is a need for prayer, they may ask a pastor to come and take care of this matter for them. This has been the result of the way of Christianity in keeping a façade. But in the recovery, though the number is small, nearly everyone can pray. Some pastors in Christianity who have come among us have been surprised that most of the attendants in our meetings can pray.

There is a big difference between the God-ordained way and the traditional way. The God-ordained way absolutely annuls the façade of the traditional way. In saying this I do not mean that we should not have any big meetings. In Acts 20 Paul passed through Troas and stayed there for seven days. On the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, Paul held a big meeting and spoke for the whole night. This is an example of a special meeting for a gifted person such as the apostle Paul to function for the perfecting of the saints. Such meetings are needed, but we cannot make the regular meetings of the church like this. The regular meetings of the church should be for the universal prophesying.

The traditional way of meeting, in which one speaks and the rest listen, has drugged us. An indication of our having been drugged by the traditional way can be seen in the way we enter into the meeting hall. When entering the meeting hall, often everyone becomes very silent and remains silent throughout the meeting. We should enter into the meeting hall in a different way. We could enter by saying, "Praise the Lord! Amen! Lord Jesus, I am here,

and I know that You are here, too. Hallelujah! Amen! Lord, bless us. Bless this building, and fill this hall with Yourself, with Your presence, with Your grace, with Your love, with Your kindness, with Your light, and with Your life.” If everyone would come into the meeting in this exercised way, the meeting would be in the heavens. A meeting in which we all speak Christ to one another will be living, rich, uplifted, strengthening, and glorifying. This is a proper Christian meeting.

We mentioned that in a recent conference in the Southeast, the saints used outlines for their speaking. But the practice of using outlines is like using a “cane.” The use of such a cane is needed because we still cannot walk very well. After a while, we will not need the cane. Eventually, when everyone is regularly contacting the Lord and having enjoyment in the Word, they will gain an accumulation of the experiences of Christ and a living storage of the living word of Christ. Thus, everyone will be rich. When we come together in this state, everyone will have something to present from the storehouse in their being.

The God-ordained way, negatively speaking, kills and annuls the traditional way. But positively, the God-ordained way develops each one’s life gift, life function, and life capacity. As long as you are a Christian, you have the eternal life, and this life has the highest capacity, ability, gift, talent, and function. But we need to see that the growth and spreading of life is gradual. For example, the grass in our yard grows and spreads gradually. If we sow grass seeds in our yard today and go back to see it the next day, it seems that the yard is about the same. Every day for many days it seems the same. But eventually, after a number of months, a beautiful lawn full of green grass will cover our yard.

The spreading of life needs a certain amount of time and labor. If you do not till the ground, sow the seed, water, and add fertilizer, the seeds may not grow well. You cannot just sow the seed, go home to sleep, and expect that the seeds will grow properly. In a sense the seeds grow on their own, but in another sense there is still the need of proper care, fertilizing, and watering. Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). Thus, there is the need of proper, adequate labor with a sufficient amount of patience.

LABORING AND STRUGGLING

In Colossians 1:28 Paul says, “Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.” We must announce Christ to the sinners. Then we must present them as matured believers to Christ. We sow the seed and take care of the seed until it grows unto maturity. Paul continues by saying, “For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power” (v. 29). In this verse the word *struggling* means to fight, to wrestle. It is a word used in the sense of the Olympic games in which the participants had to struggle in competition. Paul uses this word to describe our labor in the gospel. We in the Lord’s recovery should be laborers and strugglers. Anything that needs labor or struggling will not go very fast or grow very fast.

Before we go out to visit people with the gospel, we should rise up early in the morning to have a time with the Lord. Then we should pray desperately, “Lord, I desire to go out to spread Your salvation with the dispensing of Yourself as life to these people in need of You. Lord, I cry out to You, and I touch Your throne. Lord, I call on You. Lord, I remind You that You have given the commandment to me. Go with me.” After such prayer we should go and labor. Then whether or not we are able to reap someone is in the hands of the Lord. If we labor in this way, we will surely gain some new ones for the Lord’s interests. Our rate of increase should be left to the Lord. The Lord desires us to be faithful by laboring and struggling, without expecting that much. We do not need to baptize the whole world because the whole world has not been chosen by God. We should just bear the burden to faithfully labor and struggle for the gospel.

Perhaps those of us who have tried to practice visiting people with the gospel have been disappointed because we wanted quick results. But we need to labor consistently for forty-five weeks out of the year. If we would be consistent and patient to go out once or twice a week for at least three hours each time, we will gain two as remaining fruit within a year. We do not need to expect that much. We should just labor. Expectation is something in the air; laboring and struggling is real. Whether or not we see the fruit, we should just go out year-round. We should dedicate ourselves and give ourselves to the Lord.

We surely need to take care of our family and household affairs. This is something ordained by the Lord. But at the same time, we must give the Lord a tithe of our time. At least three hours on one day of the week can be spared

for the Lord. These three hours should be given to the Lord to announce Christ to people. Once we have two or three new ones through our visiting of people, we do not need to go out to get more. We should just take care of these two or three. We should consider them as our babes, feeding them, nourishing them, and cherishing them continuously, persistently, and constantly week after week. Some will grow, and others will withdraw. Some will go away, but we still can go out to gain some other new ones. By again going out to visit people, we can bring a few others under our care. Once we gain a few others, we should feed them patiently, regularly, and constantly. This is not an overnight work. We must dedicate our entire life with at least three hours a week separated to the Lord. These three hours are not for the regular church meetings; rather, they are for announcing Christ to sinners, feeding them, and perfecting them until we present them matured to the Lord. The God-ordained way requires us to work in this way for our whole life.

If you labor and struggle consistently, two remaining fruit will be added to the church life each year from your labor. If today you are thirty years old, you could have as many as eighty spiritual children by the time you are seventy years old. Your spiritual children will also have children. Thus, you could also have many spiritual grandchildren. This depends upon your faithfulness, your labor, and your struggle for the long run. The God-ordained way is not just for you to become excited and burning for a short time of three months. It is a way of constant and persistent laboring and struggling.

The God-ordained way is to go to visit people in order to sow Christ into them. But you have to do it constantly, patiently, and faithfully in the way of fulfilling your vow to the Lord for your whole life. Be assured that the church you attend will get the increase. The God-ordained way works if you work in a proper way. It works if you work constantly, laboring and struggling. It is an exhausting labor. We all need to labor and struggle in the God-ordained way so that the recovery of Christ and the church can spread all over the earth.

In order to practice the God-ordained way, we must first give up hope in the traditional way of Christianity. Second, we must be full of faith with full assurance that the Lord's ordained way works. Third, we must make a vow with the Lord, promising Him that we will separate at least three hours every week particularly for the purpose of visiting people with the gospel, feeding the young ones, and perfecting the saints. If we will do these three things

year-round for forty-five weeks, three hours each week for our entire life, there will be a marvelous and glorious result.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY—A WAY OF LABOR

The God-ordained way is a way of labor, but the traditional way does not require labor. Christianity today mainly depends upon the clergy, but the majority of the people in the denominations do not labor. We ourselves have to admit that we are greatly lacking in our practice of the God-ordained way. The Lord has shown us the details of His ordained way, but we have not yet come up to His standard in our labor.

In traditional Christianity, not only has the labor become the labor of a few, but also many of the matters of the Lord's interests have been replaced by natural and worldly things. Hence, the service and worship of traditional Christianity has become a mixture. In the appearance of the kingdom in Matthew 13, tares were sown among the wheat (vv. 24-30), leaven was mixed with the fine flour (v. 33), and the mustard seed grew out of proportion into a great tree (vv. 31-32). In these parables the Lord Jesus prophesied concerning the religious system we see today. Many of the Lord's chosen people who love the Lord have been misled. They do not realize that the situation in Christianity is wrong. We do need Christ, but we do not need the unscriptural system of Christianity.

The God-ordained way is carried out by labor. The Lord Jesus labored strenuously during the last three and a half years of His life on this earth. He labored to overcome two great obstacles. These obstacles were the Jewish religion and the misuse of the Word of God. The misuse of the Old Testament became a big obstacle to the work of the Lord Jesus. Religion and the misuse of the holy Word were not only a frustration to the Lord Jesus in the beginning of the New Testament but also a frustration to the apostles' work. Peter and John confronted these two obstacles in the beginning of Acts, and the frustration of these two obstacles intensified with Paul. Wherever Paul went, the religious Jews persecuted him. Some even made an oath that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:12). The obstacles of religion and the misuse of the Bible are still with us today. In order to take the God-ordained way, we have to labor as the Lord Jesus and the apostles did. If we do not labor like this, we will not have a way.

The new way, which includes preaching the gospel, feeding new ones in their homes, perfecting the saints in the group meetings, and prophesying for the building up of the Body of Christ, was initiated in 1984. At the present time, six years later, the majority of the saints in the recovery are convinced that the new way, the God-ordained way, is right and scriptural, but the practical outworking of the new way is still lacking. The reason for this lack is that we are short of labor. In this matter we should not consider others; we should consider ourselves.

BEING IN ONE ACCORD TO FIGHT FOR THE INTEREST OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

In an urgent elders' meeting in February 1986, I spoke concerning the one accord. At that time I told the elders that I could no longer tolerate the situation among us and that I had received a burden from the Lord to have a new start. I also said that I was sounding the trumpet like Gideon (Judg. 7:16-18) for anyone willing to be absolutely in one accord to fight for the interest of the Body of Christ. I did not mean that all the brothers had to follow me, nor did I say that those who did not follow me were no longer churches in the Lord's recovery. But I did ask those who did not follow the trumpeting not to criticize or oppose. I also warned the brothers that those who criticized and opposed would make trouble and might even cause division. Eventually, what I spoke as a warning has become a prophecy. In 1986 I did not ask all the saints in the recovery to be absolutely one with me. Today I say the same thing. I have anticipated that not all the saints will practice the new way. At the time of the Lord Jesus, not all the disciples followed the Lord absolutely. The Lord appeared to over five hundred brothers at one time (1 Cor. 15:6), but in the upper room in Jerusalem only one hundred twenty disciples remained, including the sisters. These ones persevered with one accord in prayer (Acts 1:14-15). The Lord Jesus did not expect that all His believers would follow His way absolutely. Today I do not expect that all the saints will take the new way. I surely hope, however, that at least one-third of the saints will practice this way.

BUDGETING OUR TIME FOR THE PRACTICE OF THE NEW WAY

In order to practice the new way in a practical way, we must first budget our time. Budgeting our time is the same as budgeting our expenses. We must budget our money; otherwise, we will have trouble. In the same way, we have to budget our time. First, we need to budget our time for the church life. We do not realize how much help we have received from the church life, even from a church that we may consider to be poor. As long as we go along with the church, we receive help unconsciously. If we were to stop the church life for as little as three months, we would realize how much help the apparently “poor” church is to us. Without the church life we would become miserable. Therefore, we have to budget our time for the church life, and we should not change this. In addition to this, we should budget time for preaching the gospel in order to get sinners saved, for feeding the new ones, and for carrying out the group meetings. Then we can easily join ourselves to the church for the practice of prophesying in the larger meetings of the church.

In going out to visit people to get them baptized, I would propose that you go out only once a week for about three hours. You have to budget three hours every week for gospel preaching and carry it out each week. You do not necessarily need to knock on “cold” doors; rather, you can ask the brothers and sisters around you to make a list of their direct relatives who have not been saved. Such a list could also include in-laws, friends, neighbors, colleagues, schoolmates, and so forth. Each brother and sister may have at least twenty acquaintances who have not yet been saved. In a locality of fifty saints there may be as many as one thousand acquaintances who have not been saved.

Our experience has shown us that it is rather hard for us to get our own relatives saved. We may have preached the gospel for several years with little or no effect among our own relatives, but it is easier when another saint goes with us to help in preaching the gospel. We may have no way with our relatives, but if we would introduce our relatives to the saints, they may have a way to get them to believe and be baptized. Once we get one of these relatives saved and baptized, they may also have twenty or more acquaintances to whom we can bring the gospel. We should endeavor to practice this way.

In our preaching of the gospel, we may desire to gain the higher-class professional people or at least those of the middle class. We must realize, however, that in the four Gospels not many high-class people cared for the

Lord Jesus. It was mostly the lower-class people, those in the roads and in the hedges and the idle people on the streets, who responded to the Lord Jesus (Luke 14:21, 23). In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul tells us clearly that “not many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many wellborn” are called (v. 26). The church of God is composed not mainly of the upper class but of the lowborn of the world and the despised. To appreciate the upper class is against God’s mind and a shame to the church. Many of us would like to gain the middle- and upper-class people, the professionals. But many of these people who have good jobs would care only for their enjoyment and weekend amusement; they have no heart for Jesus. Often the ones who take Jesus are those who have lost their jobs, who have nothing to do, or who are expecting help from others. We must realize that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). We must go to the lanes and hedges, to those who are idle, as well as to those for whom we have a particular burden.

We must budget at least three hours of our time each week for the purpose of preaching the gospel. Seven weeks a year, we may be unable to go out. But forty-five weeks out of the year, we should take care of our duty, our responsibility, in preaching the gospel. If one-third of the saints in each locality go out regularly to preach the gospel and each of them gains one new one a year, we will have an increase of over thirty percent a year. This would be a great thing.

If you go out to preach the gospel three hours every week, after six weeks you may get three baptized. After you have three new ones, you should not go out to gain any more. You should begin to spend your time to feed these new ones. When you come to the stage of feeding new ones, you have to add a few more hours to your budget of time for your labor in the God-ordained way. You should feed them at least twice a week for a period of at least two and a half months. Because you have to spend more time feeding new ones, you will have to reduce some of your time in visiting sinners.

If you will practice according to my proposal presented above, I assure you that you will get the result of at least two remaining fruit in the church life yearly. This remaining fruit will come through a great deal of sifting. Out of perhaps fifteen baptized, two will remain. If one-third of the saints in a church of one hundred saints go out and each one has two remaining fruit, sixty new people will be brought into the church life yearly. This rate of

increase will be sixty percent a year. Each church needs some who will endeavor to practice the new way.

The primary thing in practicing the new way is to be definite with a budget of our time. In the publication work I have a definite schedule and budget; otherwise, I would be unable to complete the various messages and outlines for the trainings and publications. You must have a definite budget of your time. Do not leave everything to chance. You should not accept the new way in a general way. I have no trust in this. I have seen a number of saints who have been excited and enthusiastic about the new way, but they have not budgeted their time to practice the new way in a very practical way. You must not practice the new way according to the tide of your emotions. To take the new way you must labor definitely and regularly in a practical way. Then eventually you will see the fruitful result. This result is not a matter of fortune; it is a matter of laboring day and night.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PRACTICING THE GROUP MEETINGS

Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:24-25; Eph. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:2

The matter of Christian service has been a big problem among Christians for many years. Most Christians have a desire, intention, and aspiration to serve the Lord. Once genuine believers begin to seek the Lord, they immediately consider how to serve the Lord. Through my own experience I have discovered that nearly every Christian worker has his own concept concerning Christian service. It is unusual to see two or three Christian workers who agree concerning the way to serve the Lord. They usually have different views and concepts. This is the reason that there have been many divisions among Christians throughout the centuries. These divisions have come about not only because of different views and concepts but also because of improper motives and intentions. These differences in view mixed together with improper motives and intentions result in confusion. In order to be rescued from this confusion and mixture, we must come back to the Bible. The Bible must be our standard.

The New Testament strongly charges us to go out to reach people for the gospel (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). Once we preach the gospel and people are saved and baptized, the question that must be answered immediately is, “How should we take care of the new believers?” To find out what we should do with the new believers once they are saved and baptized, we must come back to the Word. We should not leave the new believers as orphans. Our conscience would not allow us to do this. We must take care of them. In the past, however, we mainly trusted in the church to take care of the new ones. We may have felt that as long as we brought the new ones to the church meeting and baptized them in the church meeting hall, the church would bear the burden for their care. Yet the church, broadly speaking, was unable to bear the burden of caring for the new believers. We may have baptized many over the past ten to fifteen years, but not many were cared for after their baptism. As a result, many had no way to go on with the Lord in the growth in life.

Many years ago, Brother Nee initiated a new beginners’ meeting in the church in Shanghai in order to meet the need of the new believers. He

prepared a series of fifty-two lessons for new believers, and I was the first one to teach these lessons in Shanghai. But eventually, these new believers' meetings ended in failure. The subjects that Brother Nee prepared were marvelous, and the teachers who taught the lessons were also good. However, not many of the new believers came to those meetings. Eventually, the new beginners' meetings were filled with older believers. The need to help the new believers has remained over the years, but the way to meet this need was not uncovered until recently.

THE GROUP MEETINGS BEING THE BEST WAY TO CARE FOR NEW BELIEVERS

From October 1984 until today, I have considered the matter of our Christian service continually. The conclusion of my study and experience is what I have presented to you as the new way. This new way includes preaching the gospel by visiting people, feeding the new ones in their own homes, perfecting the believers in the group meetings, and prophesying in the larger meetings of the church. The group meeting is the proper way to take care of the new believers, but your understanding of the group meeting may be very different from mine. We may have the same terms or terminology, but our understanding of these terms may be completely different. It is also possible to have the same understanding, but our practice may be very different. Some have considered that the group meetings should be formed by the leading ones in the church, who then charge the saints to care for the meetings. This, however, does not work. This is like someone who forms a family by adopting a few children, and then asks another person to be the father of the family. The proper way to form a family is by a man and woman getting married and having children. These children will be born of, through, to, with, and for the parents. The parents with the children form a real family.

It is the same in the group meetings. The groups should be formed by the saints coming together with those whom they have baptized. A group of saints may have been working together in the gospel for a period of time. Since they have been working together, spontaneously, they will have the burden to come together to have a group meeting with the new ones they have gained. Thus, the group meeting is not formed by anyone in an organizational way; it is composed of the saints with their spiritual children in Christ. A group meeting formed in this way has a great possibility of success, but the success

of the group meeting does not depend upon only one item. There are many other items in the group meetings. Therefore, do not expect to have a quick success. There are many things to learn.

To learn is one thing, but to practice is another thing. We may have been taught certain things, yet if we do not practice them, we are unable to realize the full benefit. A person may be taught how to play the piano, but if he does not have the patience to practice, he will not be able to play the piano properly. We must learn in the group meetings, and we must also practice. To practice we need to learn, and to practice requires patience.

OPENING TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE GROUP MEETINGS

I have mentioned many points concerning the group meetings, but few have put them into practice. I have mentioned that we need to come to the group meetings in a living way, either by singing, praising, or praying. We also need to open to one another in the group meetings. If we come together without singing, praying, or praising and without a willingness to open to one another, the group meeting will suffer. Many of us will not open ourselves up to others. We do not like to let others know the things that have happened to us in our ordinary daily life. We may like others to tell their stories, but we do not like to tell our own story. Some object to opening to others they do not know, but even those who have known each other for a long time do not like to open to one another. We must learn to open to one another. In saying this, I do not mean that we should open everything to others without restriction. Such a practice would be foolish. But we do need to learn to open our ordinary, daily matters to our fellow believers.

Without the proper opening of ourselves to one another, it is difficult to practice the group meetings. Without this proper opening, there is no possibility to have the mutual intercession, mutual care, or mutual shepherding. Furthermore, if we do not have these things, it is difficult to have the mutual teaching through asking and answering questions. Thus, the group meeting depends upon our opening to one another.

MUTUAL TEACHING ACCORDING TO OUR CAPACITY IN THE GROUP MEETINGS

The teaching in the group meetings is carried out through asking and answering questions in a mutual way. In this matter we must realize that we have all been reborn with God's life and nature and that there is a certain capacity in the divine life. The divine life is greater than our natural life, so the capacity in the divine life is also greater and richer than our natural life. But the degree to which each of us is able to function still differs. Some are very capable, whereas others are not so capable. There is a big difference between a person who has been saved many years and one who has been saved for a few days. In every group there will be some capable ones who have been in the church life for a number of years and who are more knowledgeable than others in the group. These saints should bear more responsibility in the meetings, yet they should not be assigned to do this in an official way. To make anything official would kill the situation. These saints should function voluntarily out of a willingness to pick up the burden.

In a group of four brothers and sisters who have come together with their spiritual children, two of them may be able to render more help in teaching than the other two. Although we all should try to teach, those who are more capable in teaching should spontaneously pick up more burden in teaching. Those who are less capable in teaching should learn more. In order to teach, we all have to learn. If you are not rich in knowing the Bible or rich in experiencing Christ, you will not have much to teach others. Therefore, in attending the group meetings, you should always have an attitude of learning.

TEACHING AND PERFECTING IN THE GROUP MEETINGS

Second Timothy 2:2 says, "The things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also." Paul charged Timothy—a gifted co-worker—to commit what he had heard to faithful men, who would be competent to teach others. How should Timothy have carried out this word? According to Acts 20:20, Paul's way was to teach publicly and from house to house. The way to practice teaching from house to house is revealed in Hebrews 10:24-25: "Let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." Verse 24 says that we must "consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works." We must incite one another to love and to good works. Verse 25 mentions "not abandoning our

own assembling together.” This assembling, according to the context, must be some kind of group meeting.

This meeting should not be too large or too small. If it is too large, it is difficult for you to consider one another or to incite one another. If it is too small, you may lose your interest in meeting together. If only three or four come together in a regular way, it is hard to stir up the interest of the attendants. According to our experience, it is better to have at least twelve members in the group meeting in order to keep the interest of those meeting together. The best number for the group meeting is between fifteen to twenty. With fifteen to twenty it is easy to hold the interest of all the attendants.

The best way to carry out Paul’s charge to Timothy of teaching others is by the regular group meetings. If a church is large, a number of regular group meetings could be established. If I am a person like Timothy who is able to teach and apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), I should visit the group meetings. In a certain group of fifteen meeting together, there may be seven who are very promising. I should spend more time with that group meeting. I should not go to be the teacher of that meeting, but I should function as one of the attendants in the meeting. In a meeting that lasts an hour and a half, there may be fifteen to twenty minutes in which I can take the opportunity to say something. No matter what the subject is or what question is raised, I should have something to say according to the subject or question. In this way I am very flexible, living, fresh, and new.

This kind of practice depends upon our capacity, and our capacity depends upon our learning. If our learning is limited, we will not have the ability to be flexible in asking and answering questions in the group meetings. If someone were to ask a question in the group meeting concerning the meaning of the divine dispensing, our ability to answer such a question would depend upon our learning. In order to give a proper answer, we need to learn. If we practice to be living, to be open to one another in fellowship, to have the mutual care, mutual intercession, and mutual shepherding, but do not have the capacity to perfect the saints through the mutual teaching, our group meetings will not reach the goal. The group meetings do not just depend upon the new ones alone. Many times the new ones are wonderful but not all of the time. We need those who are capable in teaching. If we bring several new ones together in a group meeting and no one is there who is capable in teaching, the result will not be very promising.

In the practice of the group meetings, perfecting others through teaching requires the most learning. This perfecting is mentioned in Ephesians 4:12. This perfecting by the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers can be carried out thoroughly only in the group meetings. I believe that the proper meeting that gives us the way to carry out the perfecting is the group meeting. The proper church life needs the group meetings. Without a proper group meeting we cannot live a proper church life. Eighty percent of the proper church life depends upon the group meetings. The condition of the group meeting is entirely up to each member of the group. If each member does well, the group meeting will be very good. If the members do not do well, the group meeting will collapse.

BEING WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE FOR THE PRACTICE OF THE GROUP MEETINGS

We all have to pay the price to learn many things concerning the group meetings. According to my observation, both in Taipei and in this country, the biggest shortcoming among us is our unwillingness to learn. Even if we are willing to learn, there is the need to pay the price. To do anything, a price must be paid. We must have a heart full of willingness to learn and to practice the group meetings. As Christians, we need to love the Lord and live a life of morning revival and daily victory. We also need to preach the gospel to get sinners saved and baptized. Then we need to care for these new believers. We also need to live the normal church life in our locality. In order to take care of these matters, we need a willingness in our heart to pay the price. Without such willingness it is impossible to practice the above things.

The more we go back to the Bible to study the Christian life and Christian service, the more we see that God's ordained way will make us very busy. No one can be idle and take God's ordained way. The Lord has shown us His way, but the practice is lacking. To enter into the practice we must have the willingness and the paying of the price. I do not expect that all the saints will practice the God-ordained way, but I do expect that at least one-third of the saints will practice the Lord's way. If just one-third of the saints practice the Lord's way honestly and faithfully with a pure motive and heart, the Lord will see the success. In order to fully enter into the God-ordained way, we must learn a lot. We must learn to get out of our natural habit and learn to be living and open. We have to learn the Word and experience the truth, accumulating

a good deposit within us. We must also learn how to take the opportunity to practice what we have learned. Then we will receive the benefit, and the church will be built up.

PART FOUR:
CRUCIAL POINTS
CONCERNING THE PRACTICE
OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE ONENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:1-6, 13; Acts 8:1a, 13a; Rev. 1:11; John 17:6-24;
Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; Rom. 15:6; Gal. 5:20b-21a; 1 Cor.
1:10-13a; 3:3-4; 11:17-20; 1 John 2:22; 4:2-4; 2 John 7, 9-11; 2 Pet. 2:1;
Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10

In this series of messages we want to see the crucial points in the practice of the Lord's recovery. Many of us have been brought into the Lord's recovery, but we may not have an adequate realization of the Lord's recovery. This is why I am burdened to cover all the crucial points in the practical working out of the Lord's recovery, which I call the practice in the Lord's recovery. The first basic item we need to know is the oneness of the Body of Christ. I hope that we can spend some time to dive into all the basic points covered in this chapter with the accompanying outline and Scripture references. If we do this, we will have a thorough realization of the crucial need of the oneness of the Body of Christ in the practice of the Lord's recovery.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

One Body in the Universe

The Body of Christ is unique. In the whole universe there is just one Body of Christ (Eph. 4:4a). The church as the Body of Christ is also God's family, God's house (2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). As God's family, as the house of God, the church is uniquely one. Furthermore, the church as the Body of Christ is the wife of Christ (Eph. 5:23-25). For a man to have two wives or two families is a shame. Our Lord has only one Body, one family, one household, which is His home, and one wife.

There is one Body in the universe, and this Body is the new man (2:15). This truth abolishes all the differences among us, making us one in Christ. In Christ and in the Body life there are no racial differences. Instead, Christ is all the members and in all the members (Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:12).

One Church in One City

The oneness of the Body of Christ is kept and expressed by each local church in its locality. In the practice of the church life there is only one church in one city (Acts 8:1a; 13:1a; Rev. 1:11). The local churches are the local expressions of the one Body of Christ in the universe. There should not be more than one local expression of the one Body of Christ in a locality.

THE BASE OF THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

Now we need to see the base of the oneness of the church. This base is of four items: the seven factors of our Christian faith, the oneness of the Spirit, the oneness of the Divine Trinity, and the oneness for which the Lord prayed.

The Seven Factors of Our Christian Faith

The base of the oneness of the church is the seven factors of our Christian faith (Eph. 4:4-6, 13). In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul presents these seven factors, which are seven “ones.” Then in verse 13 he says that we believers need to be perfected until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith. This shows that the seven “ones” listed in verses 4 through 6 are the seven factors of our Christian faith.

One Body for the Corporate Expression of Christ as the Embodiment of the Triune God

The first factor of our Christian faith is the one Body for the corporate expression of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God.

One Spirit as the Essence of the Body of Christ

The second factor is the one Spirit as the essence of the Body of Christ. This Spirit is the consummated, all-inclusive, compound Spirit. Such a Spirit today is the essence of the Body of Christ.

One Hope of Glory for the Redemption of Our Body

The third factor is the one hope of glory for the redemption of our body. Ephesians 2 tells us that the unbelievers do not have any hope (v. 12), but we believers are equipped with a hope. Our unique hope is the hope of glory.

Christ is in us as our life today, and He is full of glory. This glory will be manifested to its fullest extent when Christ returns to glorify His saints (Rom. 8:30).

Today Christ is our life for us to live. In the future He will be manifested through us as glory when our body is redeemed. That means that our entire being will enter into the divine glory. We are going to be glorified. This is our hope. Today in the church life we are in “school,” learning the lessons and passing through the process of glory. When we “graduate,” this process will be consummated with the glorification of our body. Eventually, we all will be glorified, and this is our hope, the one hope of glory for the redemption of our body.

One Lord as the Element of the Body of Christ

The fourth factor of our Christian faith is the one Lord as the element of the Body of Christ. The one Spirit is the essence, and the one Lord is the element of the Body of Christ.

One Faith, Uniting Us to Christ

The one faith unites us to Christ. Before we believed in the Lord, we had nothing to do with Christ. We were alienated from Him, but through faith we were united to Him. Faith gives us an organic union with Him. When we believe, we believe *into* Christ. This word *into* indicates a strong organic union. We were outside of Christ, but through our believing we believed into Christ. This faith united us to Christ.

One Baptism, Separating Us from Adam and the Adamic World

Faith unites us to Christ and His Body, and baptism separates us from Adam and the adamic world. In God's eyes there are only two races on this earth. One is the race of Christ, and the other is the race of Adam. We were born into the race of Adam, but through faith we have been transferred. We have moved out of the race of Adam and into the race of Christ. Baptism separates us from the adamic race and the adamic world.

We may say that with Christ there is also a “world.” The Body of Christ, the church of God, is the world of Christ. What world are we living in today? We need to be living in the world of Christ, the Body of Christ. This is why Paul tells us to put off the old man, our former manner of life (Eph. 4:22). The former manner of life is the adamic world. Now we put on the new man (v. 24). We have a new community, a new world. That new world is the church. Some people may think that we are crazy because our entire life is involved with the meetings and service of the church. Actually, however, we are very sober because the church is our world in which we live. Today we are in Christ and in the church, which is the world of Christ and the kingdom of God.

One God and Father, Overshadowing Us, Taking Care of Us, and Being with Us

The seventh factor of our Christian faith is the one God and Father, who is overshadowing us, taking care of us, and is always with us. With the Body of Christ, the Father is the source, the Son is the element, and the Spirit is the essence. The one God and Father is over all to overshadow us. He is also through all to take care of us. Finally, He is in us all to be with us. The Father is our source. As those who are in Him, we are under His overshadowing, under His care, and under His presence to enjoy the Son as our element with the Spirit as our essence. When we have the Father, we have the Son and the Spirit. These three are one. The essence is one with the element, and the element is one with the source.

Now we can see that our Christian faith is not of minor doctrines, such as foot-washing or head covering. Our Christian faith is of seven factors: one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. These seven factors of our Christian faith are the first base of the oneness of the church.

The Oneness of the Spirit

The second base of the oneness of the church is the oneness of the Spirit (v. 3b). *The oneness of the Spirit* simply means that the oneness is the Spirit. The Spirit Himself, who is the essence of the Body, is the oneness. Therefore, we Christians should not be divided. How can we divide the indwelling Spirit? This is impossible. How can we divide the inner essence of the church? This is impossible.

The Oneness of the Divine Trinity

The third base of the oneness of the church is the oneness of the Divine Trinity. In John 17:21 the Lord said, “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us.” The oneness the Lord was speaking of here is the oneness among the Divine Trinity. The Lord prayed that we would be one just as the Triune God is one.

The three of the Triune God are one. The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Father, and both the Father and the Son are in the Spirit. Now we are in the Triune God, in the divine “Us.” Eventually, we all are in this One. We are in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This does not make us God, but we must declare the fact that we are one with our God. Eventually, we must have the boldness and the full assurance to say that we are one with God because we are in God and God is in us.

In John 17:22 the Lord prayed, “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one.” We Christians, we believers, should be one just as the three persons of the Godhead are one. The glory which was given to the Son by the Father was given by the Son to us so that we might be one in this glory to express God. God wants all His believers to be one in the divine glory. The oneness of the Divine Trinity is the base of our oneness today.

The Oneness That the Lord Prayed For

The fourth base of the oneness of the church is the oneness that the Lord prayed for. This shows us the contents of the oneness of the Divine Trinity.

In the Father’s Name by the Eternal Life

The oneness for which the Lord prayed is the oneness in the Father’s name by the eternal life (vv. 6-13). This is the first factor of the divine oneness. In John 17:11 the Lord asked the Father to keep us in the Father’s name. To be kept in the Father’s name is to be kept by His life, because only those who are born of the Father and have the Father’s life can participate in the Father’s name. We cannot realize the Father’s name without the Father’s life. It may be difficult for a brother to call his father-in-law “father” because he is not his father according to life. When a little boy calls his father “daddy,” there is a

sense of sweetness. He can address his father in this way because his father's life is in him. As those who have been born of God the Father, we have His life, and our oneness is in the Father's name by the Father's life. When we say "Abba, Father" to our God (Gal. 4:6), there is a feeling of sweetness within us. Such an affectionate term implies an intimate relationship in life between a genuine son and a begetting father.

The oneness that we have in the church is due to our having the same life, the Father's life. In the church life we have people of all races gathered together in oneness. The nations of this world are not the united nations but the divided nations. However, we are united in oneness because we have one Father with His one life. Despite the differences in our ages, we call each other "brother" and "sister" because we are all born of the same Father and have the same life. This is the base of our oneness, so there is no reason for us to be divided.

***In the Triune God
through Sanctification by the Holy Word***

We are also one in the Triune God through sanctification by the holy word (John 17:14-21). The Triune God has been consolidated, realized, and embodied in the holy word. Whenever we touch the Bible, we touch the consolidated, realized, and embodied Triune God. The Father's living word always sanctifies us, separates us, from the world and its occupation unto God and His purpose not only positionally (Matt. 23:17, 19) but also dispositionally (Rom. 6:19, 22). The holy word sanctifies us from anything that is not of the Father or that does not belong to the Father.

***In the Divine Glory
for the Expression of the Triune God***

The third stage of our oneness is the oneness in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God (John 17:22-24). In this aspect of oneness, the believers, having their self fully denied, enjoy the glory of the Father as the factor of their perfected oneness to express God in a corporate, built-up way.

We are the Father's children, having Him as our life and enjoying Him in the sanctifying word, which separates us from anything that is other than the Father. Now we are here in His divine glory. This is why we are one. When we

quarrel, we have to realize that we are outside of the Father's life, not in the Father's sanctifying word, and not in the Father's divine glory. We need to remain in the Father's life, in His word, and in His glory. The oneness is here. As long as we remain in the Father's life, word, and glory, we are one. When we are in the meetings of the church and of the ministry, we have the sense that we are one, but in our relationships with one another outside the meetings, this oneness may disappear. When are we really one? We are really one when we are in the Father's life, in His word, and in His glory.

Now we have seen the base of the oneness of the church in its four aspects: the seven factors of our Christian faith; the oneness of the Spirit, who is the essence of the Body; the oneness of the Divine Trinity, and the oneness for which the Lord prayed, which is constituted with the Father's life, His word, and His glory. This is the base of the oneness. If we have this as the base of our oneness, we will never be, can never be, and should never be divided.

THE PRACTICE OF THE ONENESS—WITH ONE ACCORD

Now we need to see the practice of the oneness, which is with one accord (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; Rom. 15:6). In the Gospel of John the Lord stressed the oneness, but in the book of Acts He stressed the one accord. Acts is not a book of teaching but a book of practice. When the apostles and the believers practiced the church life, they practiced it in one accord. To be in one accord is to be in harmony. When we practice the church life, we must practice being in harmony. To say Amen to one another in our speaking for the Lord and in our pursuit of the Lord is to be in harmony.

THE APOSTLE'S EXHORTATION OF KEEPING THE ONENESS OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:1-3 shows us the apostle's exhortation of keeping the oneness of the Spirit.

By Walking Worthily of Our Calling

Paul exhorts us to keep the oneness by telling us that we have to walk worthily of our calling (v. 1). The Lord called us into the fellowship of Christ in His Body. He called us into one Body, so we have to walk according to the oneness of this Body. The highest virtue of our Christian walk is to keep the

oneness. In the teaching of the New Testament, the apostles cared for this to the uttermost. The keeping of the oneness is the primary virtue of our Christian walk.

By Bearing One Another in Love

In order to keep the oneness of the Spirit, we need to bear one another in love with all lowliness and meekness and with long-suffering (Eph. 4:2). Lowliness is to remain in a low estate, and meekness is not to fight for oneself. We should have these virtues in dealing with ourselves. Long-suffering is to endure mistreatment. We should have this virtue in dealing with others. By these virtues we bear (not forbear) one another; that is, we do not forsake but bear the troublesome ones in love. This is the expression of life.

By Being Bound in the Uniting Bond of Peace

We also keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (v. 3). Christ has abolished on the cross all the differences due to ordinances. In so doing He has made peace for His Body. This peace should bind all believers together, thus becoming the uniting bond.

DIVISION BEING HERETICAL, SECTARIAN

Division is versus oneness. In order for us to practice the oneness of the Body of Christ, we need to realize that division is heretical, sectarian (Gal. 5:20b-21a). We need to see the real meaning of the word *heresy* in the Scriptures. Some of us may feel that heresy is anything against the truth revealed in the holy Word. Many Christians teach and practice differently in things such as foot-washing, baptism, and head covering. But the word *heresy* is used to refer to only two things. First, any teaching that denies the person of Christ in His divinity as God or in His humanity as man is heretical. Christ is the complete God and the perfect man. Second, the word *heresy* also refers to division. Galatians 5:19-21a says, “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are such things as fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, divisions, sects, envyings, bouts of drunkenness, carousings...” In Galatians 5:20 the Greek word for *sects*, *hairesis*, is literally “heresies,” which refers to schools of opinion (Darby’s New Translation). A sect is a party, and a party is a division. Divisions and sects are works of the flesh, and “those who

practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 21b). Second Peter 2:1 uses the word *hairesis* in referring to false teachers, who secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying the Master who bought them. Titus 3:10 uses the same Greek word for *heresy* in its adjectival form, *hairetikon*, in referring to a factious man. This is a heretical, sectarian man who causes divisions by forming parties in the church according to his own opinions.

Denying the person of Christ in His divinity and humanity and division are the only two items that can be considered as heretical. Wrong teachings apart from division and heresy cannot be considered heretical. A wrong teaching, such as baptism by sprinkling instead of immersion, cannot be considered heretical. This is because such wrong teachings do not affect the seven factors of our Christian faith. Some who practice baptism in a different way than immersion still have God as their Father and Jesus Christ as their Lord. They still have the Spirit. They have the same hope and the genuine faith. They also believe that baptism separates people, so they have the significance of the one baptism. The forms that we practice may differ, but the significance remains the same.

Denying the person of Christ and division are the only two items that can be considered as heretical because they are damaging to the uttermost. Denying the person of Christ insults Christ as the Head and denies Him as the Head. Division dismembers the Body of Christ. One heresy damages the Head, and the other heresy damages the Body. These heresies are intolerable in the eyes of God and should be utterly rejected by us. Second John says that if anyone denies the Lord’s person in His divinity or humanity, we should not receive him into our home or even greet him (vv. 7, 9-11). If we either receive him into our home or greet him, we share in his evil works. Regarding the divisive ones, Paul strongly charges us to “turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17).

Dismembering the Body of Christ

As we have seen, division is so serious, condemned as being heretical, because it dismembers the Body of Christ.

Repulsive in the Eyes of the Apostles

Division was also repulsive in the eyes of the apostles (1 Cor. 1:10-13a; 3:3-4; 11:17-20). In 1 Corinthians 11:17-20 Paul condemned the Corinthians for

coming together for the worse, because there were divisions and parties among them. Paul even said that because some were partaking of the Lord's table in division and with a divisive spirit, they were weak and sick, and some had even died (vv. 27-30). This was God's discipline and the Lord's judgment upon them for meeting in division.

As Heresies Denying the Person of Christ in His Divinity or in His Humanity

The apostles were also strong in condemning the heresies denying the person of Christ in His divinity or in His humanity (1 John 2:22; 4:2-4; 2 John 7, 9-11; 2 Pet. 2:1). In 1 John 2:22 John was fighting against the heresy of Cerinthus, who denied the divinity of Christ. Then in 1 John 4:2-4 he was warning against the heresy of the Docetists, who denied the Lord's humanity.

THE APOSTLE'S CHARGE CONCERNING THE DEALING WITH THE DIVISIVE, SECTARIAN ONES

Now we need to see the apostle's charge concerning the dealing with the divisive, sectarian ones. There are two strong verses in the New Testament concerning this matter—Romans 16:17 and Titus 3:10.

Marking Those Who Make Divisions and Causes of Stumbling Contrary to the Teaching Which You Have Learned, and Turning Away from Them

In Romans 16:17 Paul said, "Mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them." Some saints may feel that there are certain divisive ones in the church but that since they are still brothers, we should continue to receive them. But Paul tells us to mark them, and then he charges us to turn away from them.

Romans is a book that covers the Christian life and the church life. Chapters 14 through 16 of Romans are on the practice of the church life. In Romans 14 Paul says that we have to receive all kinds of different, genuine believers, whether they eat vegetables or meat, whether they observe certain days or do not observe certain days. Seventh-day Adventists still observe the

Sabbath, and there are some Christians today who will not eat meat. But neither of these teachings and practices are heretical. They are only wrong teachings. In the Old Testament there is the matter of dispensation. In the old dispensation God established the Sabbath, which was a type of Christ as the rest for His people (Matt. 11:28-30). The observance of the Sabbath was abolished by the Lord Jesus in His ministry (12:1-12). Furthermore, in the Old Testament a holy diet was established. This diet actually symbolizes persons clean or unclean whom God's holy people should or should not contact (Acts 10:11-16, 34-35). This holy diet was annulled by the Spirit in Peter's ministry (vv. 9-20). But we must practice to receive all believers regardless of our doctrinal differences, which do not damage our basic Christian faith.

Paul is so generous and broad-minded in Romans 14 and 15 in his teaching of our receiving all genuine believers, saying that we need to receive one another in the principle of love (14:13-15). Furthermore, he tells us that we need to receive the believers in light of the judgment seat of God (vv. 10-12). Paul is so general, saying that we have to accept and receive the believers because God and Christ have received them (v. 3; 15:7). We have to deal with them according to Christ, not according to eating, the keeping of days, the practice of baptism, or other doctrinal concepts.

But when he comes to the last chapter, Romans 16, he becomes very strong in his charge concerning how to deal with divisive ones. Romans 16 is a chapter of greetings in love with grace. But after these greetings Paul tells the saints to mark those who are making divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which we have learned. Surely we all should love one another, but our love is not without regulation. Love should be practiced in full knowledge and all discernment (Phil. 1:9). Someone may have been a dear brother for years among us, but all of a sudden, he may now be making divisions. We still love him, but what should we do? What is the priority in our love? In such a matter our love has to be ultimately for the church, the Body of Christ. This is why Paul tells us strongly to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling. If you contact such ones, you will be poisoned and cooled down in your love for the Lord and for His recovery. You will begin to doubt. We have to look at the result of the work of these factious and sectarian ones. The Lord said that we can know a tree by its fruit (Matt. 7:19-20).

Refusing a Factious (Heretical, Sectarian) Man after a First and Second Admonition

Titus 3:10 says, “A factious [heretical, sectarian] man, after a first and second admonition, refuse.” In order to maintain good order in the church, a factious, divisive person, after a first and second admonition, should be refused, rejected. This is to stop contact with a contagiously divisive person for the church’s profit.

The Lord is burdened to recover the oneness of the Body of Christ, which has been lost among His children. This fellowship should show us that there is no reason for any division in the Body of Christ. The Lord’s recovery is for the purpose of testifying that the Body of Christ should be one. The practice of this oneness has been lost throughout the centuries, but we are a relatively small number of saints who wish to satisfy the Lord’s heart to recover this oneness. We accept all the believers in Christ, but we must turn away from the divisive, sectarian, ones to preserve us and keep us in the oneness of the Body of Christ.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:18b-19; 2:9; 1:15b; Acts 2:33a; Eph. 1:22b; Phil. 2:9b; Col. 1:18a, 12; 1 Cor. 1:2b; Col. 3:4a; Gal. 2:20a; Phil. 1:21a, 20b; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:15b; Col. 2:19b; 1:28b; Eph. 4:13b; Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:18b; 4:4b; John 8:12; 6:51, 57b; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 20:22; Gal. 3:27b; John 15:7a; Col. 2:16-17; Matt. 11:28; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; 12:12; 3:11; Eph. 2:20; Col. 3:11; Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; John 21:15; Eph. 4:12; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor. 14:3-5

In this chapter we will cover another crucial point in the practice of the Lord's recovery. This point that we want to cover is the truth concerning Christ. Christ is more crucial than any item.

First, I hope we can see the preeminence of Christ. Colossians 1:18 says, "That He Himself might have the first place in all things." Actually, the first place is the preeminence. The second thing we want to see is what Christ is to us, the believers. This is very subjective. Then we have to see what Christ is to the church. We also want to see the centrality and universality of Christ. Christ is the hub, the spokes, and the rim in the big universal wheel of God's economy. Ezekiel 1 refers to this wheel (v. 15). God's move in accomplishing His eternal economy is likened in the Bible to a great wheel. In order for man to move adequately, he cannot keep himself away from the wheel. Without the wheel, man would be limited to only walking or running. God uses the wheel to illustrate His move in His economy on the earth.

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

In the Triune Godhead

Our God is triune. He is one yet three, and He is three but still one. *Triune* means "three-one." He is the three-one God. Among the three in the Godhead, the preeminence always goes to the second, the Son. The first, the Father, always exalts the Son (Phil. 2:9); and the third, the Spirit, always testifies concerning the Son (John 15:26).

Having the First Place in All Things

Christ has the first place in all things; for in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell (Col. 1:18b-19). The fullness was pleased. This indicates that the fullness must be a person. He felt happy to dwell in Jesus the Nazarene. *All the fullness* refers to all the matters, all the things, and all the persons involved in and with the Godhead. The Godhead is not so simple. Acts 2:23, for example, indicates that before the foundation of the world there was a council held by the three of the Godhead concerning the Lord's crucifixion (see footnote 1 on verse 23, Recovery Version). Our God is very wonderful. He is one God, yet His Godhead is in three. All the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9).

This fullness was involved with creation and with Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Genesis 1:1 says that in the beginning God created. Then verse 2 says that the Spirit of God was brooding over the death waters. Furthermore, in verse 26 God used the pronouns *Us* and *Our*—"Let Us make man in Our image." *Us* and *Our* are used to denote the divine person. First, the old creation came into existence. Then in God's resurrection the new creation came into existence. In both the old creation and the new creation God's fullness was involved. In His resurrection and ascension Christ was made preeminent. He has the first place in the old creation and the new creation. This One in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell has the preeminence. He has the first place in everything.

All the Fullness of the Godhead

Dwelling in Him Bodily

In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). Before His incarnation, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him as the eternal Word, but not bodily. From the time that Christ became incarnate, clothed with a human body, the fullness of the Godhead began to dwell in a bodily way; and in His glorified body (Phil. 3:21) now and forever it dwells.

In God's Old Creation—

Being the Firstborn of All Creation

In God's old creation Christ is the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15b). He is the first item of God's creation. Christ as God is the Creator. However, as

man, sharing the created blood and flesh (Heb. 2:14a), He is part of the creation, having the preeminence in all creation.

In God's New Creation in Resurrection— Being the Firstborn from the Dead

In God's new creation in resurrection, Christ is the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18b). Christ is the first in resurrection as the Head of the Body, having the first place in the church. Some may argue that we cannot say that Jesus was the first in resurrection because others in both the Old and New Testaments were resurrected before Him (2 Kings 4:32-37; John 11:41-44). But all these other resurrections were not something that involved divinity. Those resurrected people, such as Lazarus, died again. But Jesus, once resurrected, will live forever; He will never die again. Therefore, He has the preeminence. Christ as the firstfruits of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20) is the Firstborn from the dead to be the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29) and the Head of the Body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23).

In God's Exaltation

We can also see the preeminence of Christ in God's exaltation.

Having Been Exalted to the Right Hand of God

Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God in the third heaven (Acts 2:33a). It took a tremendous amount of power to land a man on the moon, but that was very insignificant compared to the power it took to raise Christ from the dead and seat Him at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:19-20).

Having Been Given to Be Head over All Things

In God's exaltation of Christ, He has been given to be Head over all things (v. 22b). Jesus today has been ordained and appointed by God to be the Head of the entire universe.

Having Been Given the Name above Every Name

God has also given Him the name above every name (Phil. 2:9b). Since the Lord's ascension there has never been a name on this earth above the name of Jesus. Even the entire human race is under the calendar of Jesus. According

to history, the one whose calendar you use is the one to whom you are in subjection. If anyone used the calendar of a certain king, he would have to be under the rule of that king. People today refer to our calendar as an international calendar, but actually it is the calendar of Christ. In this way they unconsciously admit that He is their Ruler. He is the One whose name is above every name.

**In the Church—
Being the Head of the Body, the Church**

Christ has the preeminence in the church, being the Head of the Body, the church (Col. 1:18a). Christ is the unique Head, and the preeminence belongs to Him only.

CHRIST TO THE BELIEVERS

God's Allotted Portion to the Saints

Christ is the God-allotted portion to the saints. In the Bible Christ is likened to the good land. When the children of Israel entered into the good land, they allotted the land to the twelve tribes, so every tribe received a lot. Today every saint has received a "lot," a portion, of Christ. Christ is our allotted portion from God. Christ is not only our life and our Savior but also our lot, our portion.

***The Father Having Qualified Us
for a Share of the Allotted Portion of the Saints***

Colossians 1:12 says that the Father has qualified us for a share of the allotted portion of the saints. The allotted portion of the saints is the all-inclusive Christ for our enjoyment.

***All Those Who Call Upon
the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ
in Every Place, Who Is Theirs and Ours***

First Corinthians 1:2 speaks of "all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours." The phrase *theirs*

and ours indicates that Christ as the all-inclusive One belongs to all believers. He is their portion and our portion. Paul indicates that whoever calls upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will enjoy Christ as his portion. Then in verse 9 Paul says that the faithful God has called us into the fellowship of this portion. Now we all are in the fellowship, in the participation, in the enjoyment, of this portion. Paul went on to show the Corinthians so many items of Christ as our portion. This portion is the divine power from God to us (v. 24a). This portion is the divine wisdom from God to us (vv. 24b, 30a). This portion is the divine righteousness, the divine sanctification, and eventually the divine redemption from God to us (v. 30b). These five items are wonderful!

Life

Christ Our Life

As the God-allotted portion to us, Christ is our life (Col. 3:4a). Life is the top enjoyment. If our life is gone, all our enjoyment is finished. Today Christ is our life. It is a fact that we have Christ as our life, but some may wonder how we can prove this fact. All of us have our physical life, but this life is not something that we can show others. Life is unseen; it is invisible. Life cannot be seen, but the activities of life are strong proofs that someone has life. Can we show others that we have Christ as life? We cannot show them, because this life is invisible, but there are the activities of this life, which show that we possess it. Our being so living, so active, and so aggressive for the Lord is a proof that we have His life. His life within energizes us. Many times I feel tired, but when I am ministering the word, the Lord supplies me with His life, and I am full of the energy of His life. Our being so active in Christ and for Christ shows that we have Christ as our life.

Christ Living in Me

In Galatians 2:20a Paul says, “Christ...lives in me.” Not only is Christ our life, but He also lives in us. We have died in Christ through His death, but now He lives in us through His resurrection.

To Me to Live Is Christ

In Philippians 1:21a Paul says, “To me, to live is Christ.” We may know the doctrine that Christ lives in us and that for us to live is Christ, but most of the

time, in actuality, He does not live, but we live. In many formal wedding ceremonies around the world, the bride has her head covered to indicate her submission to her husband. At the wedding there are two persons but only one head. According to the Bible, the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). If a wife has Christ as her life, she has to admit that her head is her husband. While I am saying this, though, I feel very sorry. We have this teaching, but in many of our families we do not have this reality. In many families the wife is acting as the head, not the husband. We need to realize that two lives can never live together. They have to be combined to be one life. Christ is our life, and Christ lives in us. Now we have to live in His living. Outside of His living, we do not have any living. We live Christ. Christ was not only Paul's life within but his living without. He and Christ lived together as one person.

Christ Being Magnified in Our Body

Christ should also be magnified in our body (Phil. 1:20b). This should even affect the way that we dress and comb our hair. Does the way that we dress and comb our hair magnify Christ? Christ needs to be magnified, exalted, and extolled in us in every way and in every circumstance.

Christ Being Formed in Us

Christ has to be formed in us (Gal. 4:19). This means that we have to let Christ occupy every part of our being. Christ should occupy our mind, our thinking, our consideration. Christ should occupy our emotion, our love, our hatred, our happiness, our sorrow. Christ has to occupy our will. He should be in all the decisions that we make. He also needs to fully occupy our conscience in everything. For Christ to occupy us in this way means that He is making His home in us. In Ephesians Paul prayed that Christ may make His home in our hearts (3:17). Then in Galatians 4:19 he expressed his desire for Christ to be formed in us. To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ grown in us in full.

Christ is invading our mind, our emotion, our will, and our conscience. He is invading our entire inward being. Eventually, through our soul He will even invade our body, saturating us with Himself and dispensing Himself into our entire being. His invading is His saturating, and His saturating is His

dispensing. Eventually, we will be fully and thoroughly permeated with Him. He will be formed in us, and we will be conformed to His image.

***Growing Up into Christ, the Head,
in All Things with the Growth of God***

We also need to grow up into Christ, the Head, in all things with the growth of God (Eph. 4:15b; Col. 2:19b). Maybe the way that we cut or style our hair is still outside of Christ. This means that we have to grow. When we grow further, we will grow up into Christ in the way that we cut our hair.

To grow we need some element added into us. We need to grow up into Christ in all things with the growth of God, which is the increase of God, the addition of God. This is revealed in Colossians 2:19. Christ is spreading Himself into us. When He is spreading in us, He grows in us, and He is adding Himself into us. With this element of God, we grow. This is not a matter of following ethical teachings in an outward way. This is altogether something organic. We have the organic God within us as our life. He is growing in us, adding Himself to us, and invading us.

In order to grow up into Christ in everything, we must be very careful and considerate. Since we realize that we have Christ living in us as our life, we have to walk carefully with much consideration. Before some of us were married, we lived in whatever way we pleased. But now that we are married, we have to be careful. We need to walk carefully with much consideration of the one with whom we live. We have to apply this principle to Christ. Before we were saved, we may have been wild or quick. Now that we have Christ living in us, we should not be that wild or that quick.

Because we fail so much by not living Christ, I am so thankful that Christ is our washing, cleansing fountain (Zech. 13:1). This is why we need to confess our sins throughout the day to enjoy the cleansing of the Lord's blood. We should confess that we are still in the flesh, still in the old creation, and still in the natural man. Because we are so rough, we do not consider Christ much of the time. We do not walk carefully and slowly, with much consideration of Christ. We must learn to walk and have our being in Christ slowly, carefully, and with much consideration. We need to live Christ in such a way. We need to live carefully all the time, with much consideration of Christ.

To Be Presented to God Full-grown in Christ

Eventually, we have to grow to such an extent that we can be presented to God full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:28b; Eph. 4:13b). We have to mature with Christ in full growth.

The Hope of Glory

Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

Christ is in us as the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Christ is not only life to us today but also our glory in the future. Our hope is for our body to be saturated with Christ's glorious, splendid element. This will be the redemption of our body, the transfiguration of our body.

The Hope of Our Calling

The hope of our calling (Eph. 1:18b; 4:4b) is the hope of glory, which is the transfiguration of our body and the revelation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19, 23-25). The Lord did not give us or allow us to have any other hope on this earth. Our hope is that we will be transfigured in our body, redeemed to the uttermost.

Every Necessity and All the Enjoyment

Christ is every necessity and all the enjoyment.

Our Light

Christ is our light. John 8:12 says that He is the light of the world and that everyone who follows Him shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

Our Food

Christ is also our food. In John 6 He told us that He is the living bread and that if we eat Him, we shall live because of Him (vv. 51, 57b).

Our Drink

According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, Christ is our spiritual drink. In the Christian race, we should not drink anything other than the all-inclusive Christ as our all-inclusive drink.

Our Breath

Christ is our very breath. John 20:22 shows that Christ breathed Himself into the disciples. We need to breathe Him in moment by moment by calling on His name.

Our Clothing

Christ is even our clothing. Galatians 3:27 says, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” To put on Christ is to wear Christ as our clothing.

Our Dwelling Place

Christ is also our dwelling place, our abode (John 15:7a).

Our Enjoyment and Rest

Christ is our enjoyment and rest (Col. 2:16-17; Matt. 11:28). According to Colossians 2:16-17, He is our food, our drink, our feast, our new moon, and our Sabbath. He is the body of all the shadows, the reality of every positive thing in the universe for our enjoyment.

The Divine Provision

Power

As the divine provision, Christ is God’s power to us (1 Cor. 1:24a) for carrying out and accomplishing what He has planned and purposed.

Wisdom

Christ is also wisdom to us from God (vv. 24b, 30b). Day by day we need Christ to be wisdom to us. Christ as wisdom should unceasingly flow from God to us to be our present and practical wisdom in our experience.

Righteousness

Christ is our righteousness (v. 30b). He is the righteousness by which we have been justified by God so that we may be reborn in our spirit to receive the divine life. Furthermore, as our subjective righteousness, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and that is always acceptable to God.

Sanctification

Christ Himself is our sanctification (v. 30b). This means that Christ is the element that produces transformation. Apart from Him we cannot have the element that, when added to our being, produces a metabolic change.

Redemption

According to 1 Corinthians 1:30, Christ is even our redemption, that is, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). As the One who is our redemption, Christ “will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to be conformed to the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21).

CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

Now we want to point out five items of Christ’s being to the church.

The Head of the Body, the Church

We have already seen that, according to Colossians 1:18, Christ is the Head of the Body, the church.

The Body of the Head

Christ is not only the Head of the Body but also the Body of the Head (1 Cor. 12:12). Because He is the all-inclusive One, He is the Head and He is the Body.

The Foundation of the Church

Christ is the foundation of the church (3:11). As the church's living foundation, He holds, supports, and dispenses Himself into every part of God's building.

The Cornerstone of the House of God, the Church

Christ is also the cornerstone of the house of God, the church (Eph. 2:20). As the cornerstone of God's building, He joins together the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers.

All the Members of the New Man

According to Colossians 3:10-11, in the new man Christ is all and in all. This means that He is all the members of the new man and in all the members.

We may wonder how the church as the Body of Christ can be Christ and how Christ can be all the members of the new man. In our experience, this depends upon who lives. If we live alone by ourselves, we are not Christ. If we live Christ, letting Christ live in us, then we live in Him, and we are Christ. I have seen some wives who really lived their husbands. They did things according to the index of their husbands' eyes. When they lived in such a way, they were their husbands because they lived their husbands. If the church lives Christ, the church is Christ. If we all live Christ, we are Christ. The Christian life should be like this.

GOD'S NEW TESTAMENT ECONOMY BEING LIKE A GREAT WHEEL, HAVING CHRIST AS ITS EVERY PART

We pointed out that according to the picture presented in Ezekiel 1, God's New Testament economy is like a great wheel, having Christ as its every part.

The Hub—the Center

Christ is the hub, the center, of God's New Testament economy. Colossians 1:17 says that "all things cohere in Him," which means to exist together by Christ as the holding center, just as the spokes of a wheel hold together by the hub at their center.

The Spokes—the Support

Christ is also the spokes, the support, of the great wheel of God's New Testament economy.

The Rim—the Circumference

Furthermore, He is the rim, the circumference. This means that God's entire New Testament economy and His move in His economy are just Christ.

CHRIST BEING THE REALITY OF EVERY SECTION OF THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

Christ is also the reality of every section of the God-ordained way.

In the Fulfilling of the New Testament Priesthood of the Gospel

Christ is the reality in the fulfilling of the New Testament priesthood of the gospel (Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). In whatever way we preach the gospel by reaching people where they are, we must be filled with Christ and minister Christ to people. Christ is the content and the reality of our gospel preaching.

In the Feeding of the New Believers in Their Homes

Christ is also the reality in the feeding of the new believers in their homes (John 21:15). When we go to the new ones' homes to feed them, that must be Christ's going. It is not just that we go with Christ but that Christ Himself is going in our going. Furthermore, we feed the new ones with Christ. Christ is the food that we serve to the new ones. After every feeding, Christ is added into the new ones.

In the Perfecting of the Saints in the Group Meetings

Christ is the reality of the perfecting of the saints in the group meetings (Eph. 4:12; Heb. 10:24-25). Our fellowship, our prayer, our care, our shepherding, our help, and our mutuality in the group meetings must be Christ. This can take place only when we live Christ.

In the Building Up of the Church, the Body of Christ, by Prophesying in the Bigger Meetings

Finally, Christ is the reality in the building up of the church, the Body of Christ, by prophesying in the bigger meetings of the church (1 Cor. 14:3-5). In our prophesying, the content must be Christ. To prophesy is not only to speak for the Lord but also to speak forth the Lord and to speak the Lord, to speak Christ, for the building up of the Body of Christ.

In the Lord's recovery, everything should be Christ, every matter should be Christ, and every person should be Christ. All our activities must be full of Christ. Otherwise, we are just empty. I am burdened to present the crucial points in the practice of the Lord's recovery. We have to know the oneness of the Body of Christ and keep it, and we have to learn that we should care only for Christ, forgetting all other things and cleaving unto Him.

If we live a life full of Christ, we will make demands only on ourselves, not on others. We should not put demands on others but only on ourselves. Suppose some saints love the recovery, yet they are bothered about being immersed, and they do not want to be immersed. If we cannot receive them with full harmony, we do not know what it means to keep the oneness. According to Romans 14, we need to receive all the believers according to God's receiving and not according to doctrinal concepts.

We saw in the previous chapter that only two things are considered as heresy—the denial of Christ's person and the making of divisions. Besides these two things, we have to learn to tolerate, to embrace, all the things with which we may not agree. There is no excuse for anyone to make a division. We must learn to keep the oneness and learn to live Christ. Again I say that we should not put demands upon others. We should put demands only upon ourselves. We have to be so strict to live Christ all the time in everything.

PART FIVE:
GENERAL MESSAGES

CHAPTER NINETEEN
GOD'S ECONOMY AND DISPENSING
IN RELATION TO
THE PRACTICAL LIVING OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:10; 3:8-9, 11; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; John 1:14a; 3:16;
Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 12:7; Acts 13:52; Eph. 1:23; 3:19; Heb. 5:12-14; Col. 2:19b;
John 15:16; 21:15; 3:28-30

All the accomplishments and inventions in the past six thousand years of human history have brought about continual improvement and development among mankind. This has resulted in today's comfortable living. But according to my experience, the most precious thing on the earth today is not the advance of man's civilization but the Bible, which God has given us. The Bible is precious because it not only shows us clearly the mystery of the universe but also puts before us the unique treasure in the universe.

The Bible speaks of the deep things of God, but in God's wisdom He uses simple and understandable words to unveil the mysteries hidden within Him. On the one hand, the Bible seems to be quite simple and understandable. But on the other hand, the Bible is extremely mysterious and unfathomable. Therefore, we must have a proper heart when we read it, not holding on to any opinion, and we must be diligent in searching and studying it. In this way we will not only see the outward shell of the Bible but also apprehend and enter into the heart of the Bible. After I was saved, I began to love and study the Bible. After more than sixty-six years of studying the Bible, I have ultimately seen that the center of the Bible is God's economy and dispensing.

GOD'S ECONOMY

The word *economy* is rarely used among Christians today. Therefore, in the Chinese translation of the Bible, the Greek word for *economy* is translated as "arrangement" (Eph. 1:10) or "bylaws" (1 Tim. 1:3-4). In the original language, the word *economy* means "household management." It is the arrangement, plan, or administration within a household. Hence, it is a household administration. This word is also translated as "dispensation" in

English. *Dispensation* means the arrangement or the way by which God deals with people in different ages. In every age God has a certain way of dealing with man. For example, in the age of the law, God dealt with man according to the standard of the law. Whoever kept the law would be a blessed person, but whoever disobeyed the law would be cursed. The condition by which God dealt with man in the Old Testament was the law. In the New Testament the condition by which God deals with man is faith, not the law.

God's economy, His arrangement and plan, is to dispense Himself into His chosen ones. God chose, predestinated, redeemed, saved, and regenerated us for the purpose of dispensing and working Himself into us. For the fulfillment of His economy God created man, but He first had to create the earth to support man so that man could live. Furthermore, in order for the earth to exist, there must be the heavens. Zechariah 12:1 says that God stretched forth the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man is for God. The sun, the air, and the rain come from the heavens so that the living things on the earth may grow. All the things on the earth are for man to exist and live on the earth. God also formed a spirit in man that man might receive God and contain Him. God's creation of man with a spirit was so that he might contact God and receive God by his spirit.

After God created the heavens, the earth, and all the things on the earth in Genesis 1, He came to the last step of His creation. On the sixth day God created man. After His creation of man God's creating work was finished. Genesis 1:26 says that God created man in His own image and according to His likeness. What is God's image? According to the revelation in the Bible, God is love, light, holiness, and righteousness. This love, light, holiness, and righteousness are just what God is. These are God's attributes. When God created man, He created him according to the image of these attributes. Furthermore, God is triune. In God's creation of man He made him with three parts: spirit, soul, and body. God is the Divine Trinity, and man is a human tripartition. Thus, man was created in God's image and according to God's likeness, having the attributes of love, light, holiness, and righteousness and the three parts of spirit, soul, and body. In this way man is very much like God.

The creation of man was the first step in God's economy. God created man for the purpose of working Himself completely and wholly into man to be

man's life so that man may be His living. In this way God and man, man and God, are not only joined but also mingled together. Some Bible teachers say that the Christian life is an exchanged life—Christ comes in, and we go out. This is an erroneous teaching. The Christian life should be a life mingled with God. We and Christ have the same life and the same living.

GOD'S DISPENSING

God's economy is God's plan and purpose. In order for God to attain His plan and purpose, a process is needed. This process is God's dispensing. To dispense is to distribute or to give out. This matter of dispensing is revealed in Ephesians 3:2 and Colossians 1:25-27. In these verses the word *stewardship*, which is another translation of the Greek word *oikonomia*, implies dispensing. A stewardship is for distributing and supplying the foodstuff as well as all the daily necessities to the household members.

The first step taken by God to dispense Himself into man was His becoming flesh, His becoming a man (John 1:14a). God's becoming flesh was for dispensing. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality." Grace and reality are for dispensing. First, God dispenses; then man receives. John 1:16 continues by saying, "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." God became flesh so that He could come in His fullness to dispense grace and reality to us that we might receive His dispensing in full.

John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." God's giving of His Son was His dispensing, which causes all those who believe into the Son to have eternal life. We who have believed in the Lord have the Lord Jesus within us. God so loved us that He gave His Son to us that we may have eternal life. The eternal life that we have received is God's Son, whom He has dispensed into us. The Son whom God has dispensed into us spoke the words of God, dispensing the Spirit not by measure (v. 34). To speak the words of God is to dispense. Christ not only spoke the words of God but also dispensed God into us, dispensing the Spirit of God not by measure. This Spirit who has been dispensed into us not by measure is the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). The Spirit of Jesus Christ is the compound,

all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit of the Triune God becoming our bountiful supply.

Acts 13:52 says, “The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” This filling is the inward filling of the Holy Spirit for life, not for power; it is related to God’s dispensing. From God’s side He gives us the Spirit not by measure; on our side we receive the dispensing of the Holy Spirit in full so that we may be inwardly filled with the Holy Spirit. Through the divine dispensing we are filled with the Holy Spirit to become the fullness of Christ, the Body of Christ, the church, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23; 3:19). The ultimate result of the divine dispensing is the church, which is the ultimate consummation of the aggregate of God’s dispensing. This is the great and unlimited Body of Christ as God’s unlimited enlargement.

GOD’S ECONOMY AND DISPENSING

IN RELATION TO THE PRACTICAL LIVING OF THE CHURCH

The church is produced out of God’s dispensing. This dispensing of God is according to His economy, plan, arrangement, rule, and ordination. As those who have been redeemed and regenerated, we are in the church life today. The reality of the church life depends upon our daily enjoyment of God’s dispensing. Whenever we enjoy His dispensing in our spirit, we have the rich supply from Him. This supply is the rich dispensing of the Spirit of life. The way to enjoy His dispensing is to eat and drink Him.

Through regeneration we receive God as life. We then need the nourishment of the milk conveyed in God’s word that we may grow in and by this life (1 Pet. 2:2). We also need to eat the solid food (Heb. 5:12-14). The milk is primarily for babes, and solid food is primarily for those who are more mature. Both the milk and the solid food are God’s word, which is actually God Himself. After we are regenerated, we daily need to drink the spiritual milk and eat the spiritual food in order to receive God’s dispensing continually. In this way we enjoy all of God’s riches so that we may live the proper church life. The proper church life is the result of God’s growth within us.

The Gospel of John is a book on God’s dispensing. It emphasizes eating, drinking, and breathing the Lord. Every time we eat, drink, and breathe the Lord, we absorb the Lord as food, drink, and air into us. Through this means

He is dispensed into every part of our inward being to be the essence by which we grow. The result of this dispensing is that we have the rich supply from Him and grow with the increase of God (Col. 2:19b). As we are eating the Lord, drinking the Lord, and growing, we are abiding in Him and He in us. This is like branches abiding in a tree so that the rich essence of the tree may be transmitted into them. Eventually, the branches grow, and in time there is a spontaneous overflow of the rich life of the tree. This overflow is fruit-bearing (John 15:16).

Today to practice the new way is to apply God's economy and dispensing in the church life in a practical way. Preaching the gospel by visiting and contacting people, baptizing people, nourishing the new ones in their homes, perfecting the saints in the group meetings, and prophesying to build up the church must be based on our enjoyment of Christ's dispensing. A fruit tree can blossom and bring forth fruit because it has received the supply of nutrients from the sun, air, water, and soil. If we do not eat, drink, or breathe the Lord, we will be like a tree without roots. In such a condition we will soon wither and have no result.

When we preach the gospel, we not only get people saved but also dispense the Lord into them. The Lord has gone through the process of death and resurrection, and He has become the life-giving Spirit. He has received all authority in heaven and on earth and has commanded us to preach the gospel to all the nations. The preaching of the gospel is not a matter of how much doctrine we preach; it is a matter of spiritual reality and authority. When we baptize people into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, we baptize them into all that the Triune God is, so that they may share in the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. This also is a matter of spiritual reality and authority.

When we bring people to believe in the Lord and continue to nourish and perfect them, we bring people to Christ that Christ may be enlarged. We do not bring people to ourselves, because we must decrease daily. We bring people to Christ and nourish them so that they will begin to eat the Lord, drink the Lord, and absorb the Lord. They will then grow with the increase of God. As we all grow in this way, we are constituted to be the enlargement of Christ. This enlargement is the corporate bride of Christ to match Him (John 3:29-30).

The enlarged Christ—Christ Himself and all those who believe in Him—is the vine tree in John 15, which is the organism of the Triune God in His divine economy to be God's corporate expression in the universe for eternity. This vine tree is the reality of the church life. The church life is altogether a matter of God's economy and dispensing. Today as we practice the new way, we must first be persons who enjoy Christ and receive His dispensing. Then through preaching the gospel, practicing the group meetings, and prophesying, we dispense the Christ we enjoy to others. The result will be that we have the divine dispensing within and the practical church life without. Then we will be organic both in our church life and in the practice of the new way, having Christ as the content and reality.

CHAPTER TWENTY
THE GOD-ORDAINED PRINCIPLES
IN THE SCRIPTURES
AND THE INSTANT LEADING
OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Psa. 103:7; Rom. 8:14

In this chapter we want to fellowship about the God-ordained principles in the Scriptures and the instant leading of the indwelling Spirit.

THREE CATEGORIES OF GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

God created an orderly universe. This order is maintained by certain governing principles. The first category of principles is physical. Science is mainly a study of these principles. Scientists have discovered many of the governing principles that maintain the physical order in the universe. Our own solar system is governed by these physical principles. If one of these principles were violated, our solar system would be damaged or destroyed. The whole universe is preserved and kept in order by God-ordained principles in the physical universe.

The second category of principles is ethical. Within the universe created by God, certain ethical principles exist among mankind in order to preserve mankind on the earth. For six thousand years mankind has been preserved by both physical and ethical principles. History shows that the situation of mankind is always deteriorating. When I came to the United States thirty years ago, the ethical and moral standard here was much better than it is today. The trend of mankind is downward. Yet due to the ethical principles that exist among human beings, some amount of order is being kept so that mankind can continue to exist.

The third category of principles is spiritual. As believers, we are a particular people. We are not merely involved with physical and ethical principles; we are also involved with the spiritual principles that exist in the universe. We are not only physical and ethical; we are also spiritual. We are God's new

creation (2 Cor. 5:17) because God has been wrought into our being. The physical and ethical principles that govern the physical and ethical realms are needed for man's existence, but man's existence alone is not God's eternal goal. God's final goal according to His eternal economy is to have a spiritual realm, a realm in which His believers are His new creation.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE TO HAVE THE NEW CREATION

God's eternal purpose is to have the new creation. The difference between the old creation and the new creation is the element of God Himself. In the old creation, nothing of God Himself was wrought into man. Man was made by God, but nothing of God Himself entered into man. Man without God is what the Bible calls the old man (Rom. 6:6). The new creation, however, is the old creation with God Himself wrought into it. In the new creation God worked Himself into man in order to make man a partner with Himself and to make Himself a partner with man. Now as Christians, we and God are partners (Heb. 3:14). We are in a divine partnership because He is one with us, and we are one with Him. He is in us, and we are in Him.

Hymns, #1 is very simple and short but deep in its thought concerning God's purpose:

Glory be to God the Father,
And to Christ the Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit—
Ever One.

As we view the vast creation,
Planned with wondrous skill,
So our hearts [spirits] would move to worship,
And be still.

But, our God, how great Thy yearning
To have sons who love
In the Son e'en now to praise Thee,
Love to prove!

'Twas Thy thought in revelation,
To present to men
Secrets of Thine own affections,
Theirs to win.

So in Christ, through His redemption
(Vanquished evil powers!)
Thou hast brought, in new creation,
Worshippers!

Glory be to God the Father,
And to Christ the Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit—
Ever One.

According to my knowledge, of all the hymns chosen by us to be included in our hymnal, apart from those written by us, no other hymn covers the New Testament economy of God in such a good way. The first and last verses cover the thought of the Triune God receiving glory. He receives glory because, first, He created the universe, and second, He will gain a group of sons. Stanzas 2 and 3 trace God's economy from creation to His sons, and stanzas 3 and 4 show how God unveils His love and affection to His many sons so that they may love Him with His love. Stanza 5 shows that Christ in His redemption conquered all His enemies in order to gain worshippers in the new creation. In summary, this hymn has the following main points: the old creation, God's desire to have a group of sons, His desire being according to His love, and Christ's redemption gaining worshippers in the new creation. What a wonderful hymn this is!

**THE GOD-ORDAINED PRINCIPLES
IN THE SCRIPTURES AND THE INSTANT LEADING
OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT**

Today we are in the new creation. As people in the new creation, we must learn two things: the God-ordained principles in the Scriptures (Psa. 103:7) and the instant leading of the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:14). Psalm 103:7 says, "He [God] made His ways known to Moses; / His acts, to the children of Israel." In this verse the word ways means principles. God showed His

ordained principles to Moses, but the children of Israel knew only His acts. The children of Israel understood that God could do certain things, but they never understood the principles or the reasons why God did what He did. Moses understood these principles.

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Today we have two great gifts—God’s written Word and God Himself as the life-giving, indwelling Spirit. In our hands we have the written Word; in our spirit we have the Spirit (Rom. 8:16; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:17). In order to worship and serve God we need to know what God wants us to do. In order to know this, we need the Word and the Spirit. In the Word, that is, in the Scriptures, the God-ordained principles are unveiled for us to keep. Because we have the Spirit, the instant leading is always with us, coming to us at any time in our spirit. To know the God-ordained principles in the Scriptures requires skill. Without the skill we may read the Scriptures but understand them only according to our opinion. This is why there is the need of training. It is the same with the instant leading of the Spirit. With the Spirit everything is organic and living, yet there is still the need of training to learn to know the Spirit’s instant leading.

To have the God-ordained principles in the written Word alone is inadequate. All the God-ordained principles in the written Word must become an instant, organic leading to us. In our practice of being revived every morning, we first take the written Word, in which are the God-ordained principles. But these God-ordained principles must become an instant, organic leading to us. This is the reason that the Lord has given us the Bible and the Spirit. The Spirit comes to make every ordained principle organic to us.

AN EXAMPLE OF A GOD-ORDAINED PRINCIPLE BECOMING AN INSTANT LEADING IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Isaiah 6 gives an example of a God-ordained principle becoming an instant leading. In verse 1 Isaiah received the vision of Christ sitting on the throne, and in verse 3 the seraphim called to one another, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Jehovah of hosts; / The whole earth is filled with His glory.” This praise of the

seraphim reminded Isaiah that the Triune God desires His people to be holy. Many times in the Old Testament the Lord said that His people should be holy as He is holy (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). This is an ordained principle. God's people must be holy.

In the first five chapters of the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah prophesied a great deal about Israel's degradation, showing how God's elect had become altogether unholy. As Isaiah prophesied, he may have felt that he was better than the children of Israel, but in chapter 6 the Lord came in to give Isaiah a vision. Isaiah surely knew that God's people must be holy, but this vision reminded him of that God-ordained principle. At this time the vision he received was not just a written principle; it became an instant, organic leading of the living Lord. Actually, this leading was a person. Isaiah saw a person—Christ in His holiness. Upon seeing this vision, Isaiah also saw himself. In verse 5 Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am finished! / For I am a man of unclean lips, / And in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell." The God-ordained principle of holiness had become an instant leading to Isaiah. Merely to have the written Bible with all the ordained principles is inadequate. All the ordained principles in the Bible should become an instant leading to us organically.