THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

Witness Lee

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER ONE

JUBILEE (1)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:8-13, 23-24, 28, 39-41

In 4:14-30 we see that the Man-Savior began His ministry by proclaiming the jubilee of grace. On the Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth, He read from the book of Isaiah and proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord (4:16-21). This acceptable year is the New Testament age of grace typified by the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:8-17), the fiftieth year in which all the slaves were liberated and every man's inheritance was restored to him. In this message and in the message following we shall give a definition of the jubilee.

THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S REDEMPTION

The word "jubilee" is anglicized from the Hebrew word *yobel*. This Hebrew word denotes the blast of a horn, specifically the signal of a silver trumpet. Hence, the word came to signify the instrument itself and the festival thus introduced. Concerning this, Leviticus 25:9 says, "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land."

We have seen that *yobel* refers specifically to the blasting of a silver trumpet. In typology silver signifies redemption. Hence, the blasting of a silver trumpet indicates the trumpeting of God's redemption. The Hebrew word *yobel*, anglicized jubilee, refers to the blast of a horn, the instrument itself, and finally to the festival introduced by the blasting of a silver trumpet.

The basic thought concerning the jubilee is that it is the sounding out of God's redemption. The blasting of the silver trumpet was a proclamation of redemption. It was a proclamation based on God's redemption and also a sounding out of this redemption.

THE RELEASE OF PEOPLE AND POSSESSIONS

This sounding out, this proclamation, of God's redemption was not the proclaiming of any commandment or requirement. On the contrary, it was a

proclamation of freedom, of release. Leviticus 25:10 says, “And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” Here we see that the proclamation of release or liberty was related to people and to their possessions. Regarding every human being we need to consider the person himself and his possessions. Therefore, the release proclaimed for the jubilee affected the Israelites and their possessions.

Man’s Economic Needs

The study of political methods has been going on for thousands of years. Those who study politics know that if someone is to rule others, the first thing he must do is take care of feeding them. In other words, a ruler must manage the economy well. If the people do not have food, they will rise up against those ruling them.

An important issue in the election of any president of the United Sates is whether a particular candidate can provide jobs and insure a proper standard of living. A good president must be able to meet this need. For example, Roosevelt became president during the great depression. Because he changed the economic situation of the country, he is regarded by many as a great president. Some claim that Roosevelt was great not merely in political affairs but in uplifting the living standard of the American people.

The point we are making here is that if any politician or statesman is to be successful he must find a way to improve the living of the people. The more successful a political leader is in this, the longer he will be able to remain in office. The political leaders who are respected most by the people are those who have the ability to improve the level of daily life.

Because of man’s economic needs, especially the need for food, certain “isms” have developed. These “isms” include communism, capitalism, and socialism. According to communism, economic resources should be held in common, land should not belong to certain property owners, and social wealth should not belong to the capitalists. Communism teaches that something should be done to balance the wealth. In some countries taxation is used as a means of balancing wealth. In these countries a person may earn a great deal of money, but much of it must be given to the government in

taxes. Socialism is also concerned with man's economic needs. Statesmen and philosophers have tried their best to find ways to meet man's need for food. However, the more "isms" they have invented, the more the people have suffered.

The Basic Concern in the Jubilee

In the jubilee portrayed in Leviticus 25 the main thought is how to take care of people's living. In other words, the basic concern is man's enjoyment. The primary enjoyment in human life is to be filled with good food. A person whose stomach is empty will not appreciate money or material riches. He would rather have food to fill his stomach. Suppose a rich man who owns a luxury car is starving. Do you think he will be able to enjoy his car? No, he would gladly trade his car for food. Humanly speaking, the jubilee is concerned with taking care of our eating, with filling our stomach.

Although God is very different from worldly politicians and has not taught man any "isms," we may say that He is a "great statesman." The jubilee was ordained by God as the divine statesman.

God ordained that His people be given the good land of Canaan. This land was allotted to the twelve tribes of Israel. Eventually, each family received an allotment of land as a possession. The land was not mainly to be for their living or their lodging; the land was primarily for their eating.

The need for food is greater than the need for lodging. One may live in the wilderness for a long time without a house, but he could not live very long without eating. The good land, therefore, was given to God's people for their eating. This is the reason the Bible refers to this land as "a land flowing with milk and honey."

The good land was not called a land of gold. What good would it be to have a land that could provide gold but could not provide food? God created the land not for man to have gold but for man to have food. The land is for food.

Milk and honey signify that the good land is rich in food. Some countries may have wheat and corn but no milk and honey. The good land is a land flowing with milk and honey. Both milk and honey are produced by the

mingling of two lives—the vegetable life and the animal life. This mingling of the animal life with the vegetable life signifies the riches of the land.

The Loss and Return of the Land

Because God brought His people into the good land and allotted a portion of the land to every family, each family was rich in its possession of the land. But suppose the members of a particular family did not labor on the land. Because they did not work on the land, they became very poor. Little by little they sold the land until their entire allotment was sold. In this way they lost their portion of the good land.

When land was sold in a country other than Israel, the land was sold forever. But God's ordination did not allow the land in Israel to be sold permanently. At most, the land could be sold only for fifty years. Leviticus 25:23 and 24 say, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land." Here we see that the land was not sold forever; land that had been sold could be redeemed. The one who bought the land did not have the right to keep it indefinitely. After fifty years at the latest, the land could be redeemed.

In Leviticus 25 we are told not that the land was returned to its original owner, but that the person returned to the land. Concerning this, verse 28 says, "In the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession." Actually, one did not sell the land—he sold himself. Eventually, it was not the land that was returned to the seller; it was the seller that returned to the land, to his possession.

After the children of Israel received their portions of the land, some became poor and sold their allotment of the land, and others became landlords. Was there the need of some kind of "ism" in order for the land to be redistributed? No, God's ordination concerning the land allowed that in the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, those who lost their possession of land could return to it. This means that in the fiftieth year every family could become rich again. Here we see that the principle of balancing the amount of land among the people was written in the Bible thirty-five centuries ago. What we find in Leviticus 25 is much better than the theories of statesmen, politicians, and philosophers.

The Release of Those Who Sold Themselves

We have seen that with every human being the most important matters are the person himself and his possession. From Leviticus 25 we see that it was possible for an Israelite to sell his possession and thereby lose his portion of the land. Now we need to see that some became so poor that they even sold themselves: "And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: but as a hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return" (vv. 39-41). These verses indicate that in the year of jubilee one who had sold himself to serve another would be released. Therefore, in the fiftieth year there was no one without land and no one in slavery. Everyone had his freedom and his own possession. This means that both the land and those who had sold themselves were released. The proclamation of the jubilee was a proclamation of the release of people's possessions and of the people themselves. This is the jubilee.

If all the Israelites had been diligent to labor on the land, no one would have been in poverty, and no one would have had to sell his land or himself. However, many lost both their possessions and themselves. They had no way to return to their possessions or to their families. But when the year of jubilee came, there was release both of the possession and of the people. Those who had lost their land could return to it, and those who had sold themselves could go back to their families.

FALLEN MAN'S NEED OF THE JUBILEE

Before we consider further the definition of the jubilee, I would like to apply what we have already covered to today's situation. When man was created, he received a possession. Man's possession by creation was actually God Himself. God created man to be His vessel for His expression. Thus, God intended to give Himself to man as his possession. But man became fallen, and in the fall man lost God as his possession.

Through the fall man also sold himself. In Romans 7:14 Paul says, "I am fleshly, sold under sin." To be sold in this way is to be held in slavery. Anyone who sells himself to be a slave enters into a condition of slavery. Today all of

mankind is in slavery, mainly the slavery of sin. Man has sold himself into the slavery of sin, Satan, and the world. Therefore, fallen man has lost both God and himself.

Before we were saved, we were those who had lost God as our possession and who had also lost ourselves. Ephesians 2:12 indicates that fallen man is without God. Instead of God as his possession, man has sin and has sold himself into the slavery of sin.

Apart from God's preserving grace, even Christians may lose God as their possession in a practical way and may also sell themselves into the slavery of sin. In their daily living some Christians have sin instead of God. Like unbelievers, they have lost God as their possession, and they have sold themselves to sin, pleasures, and worldly amusements. All such believers, as well as all unbelievers, need a jubilee.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, the entire human race had lost God as their possession and had sold themselves into the slavery of sin. This was true of Jews as well as Gentiles. The Lord Jesus did not live in the Gentile world; He lived in the Jewish land among God's chosen people. According to the four Gospels, not even those in the Jewish land, the so-called holy land, had God as their possession. Who among the people in the Jewish land had God as his possession? In the record of the Gospels we see that even Israel had lost God. Furthermore, all the Jews, including the Pharisees and rabbis, had sold themselves into sin. This was the reason the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees so strongly in Matthew 23. Because they were in the slavery of sin, He pronounced woes upon them. He seemed to be saying, "You Pharisees, scribes, elders, and high priests have sold yourselves to sin. You have lost God as your possession, and you have lost yourselves."

A WONDERFUL RELEASE

In Luke 4 the Lord Jesus read a portion from Isaiah that was a prophecy not of the jubilee in type, but of the actual jubilee: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (vv. 18-19). Then He declared, "Today this Scripture has

been fulfilled in your ears" (v. 21). By reading that portion of the Scripture the Lord sounded the trumpet; He proclaimed the jubilee.

Do you know what the preaching of the gospel is? The preaching of the gospel is the sounding of the jubilee, the trumpeting of the jubilee. The preaching of the gospel is the proclamation of our release. Actually, this release is not the release of our possession to us; it is the release of us to our possession and to our family. Once we were in the wrong family, the family of slavery. The sounding of the jubilee tells us to return to our own family, to the family of God.

Now we can understand what the jubilee is. The jubilee is the proclaiming of a wonderful release—a release of our possession to us and the release of ourselves so that we may return to God, to our family, and to our possession.

CHAPTER TWO

JUBILEE (2)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:8-13, 23-24, 28, 39-41

In the foregoing message we began to consider the definition of the jubilee. We saw that the word "jubilee" is an anglicized form of the Hebrew word *yobel*. This Hebrew word signifies the blast of a horn, specifically the signal of a silver trumpet; hence, it came to signify the instrument itself and the festival thus introduced. In this message we shall consider further the definition of the jubilee.

THE SOUNDING OF THE TRUMPET ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

In understanding the jubilee, we need to carefully read Leviticus 25:8-10. The blast of the trumpet proclaimed the jubilee. But in what year and on what day of the year was the trumpet of the jubilee sounded? Some may answer this question by saying, "Since the jubilee was the fiftieth year, the trumpet of the jubilee must have been sounded on the first day of the fiftieth year." This answer may be reasonable, but it is according to the natural concept. We should not bring our natural thought into our reading of the Bible.

If we read the book of Leviticus carefully, we shall see that every seventh year was to be a sabbatical year. In a sabbatical year there was to be no sowing, reaping, or harvesting. The people were not allowed to work, and neither was the land allowed to work. Both the people and the land were to enjoy rest. This rest, this sabbath, was to be every seven years. Concerning the sabbaths Leviticus 25:8 says, "And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years." Leviticus 25:9 says, "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." Notice that this verse begins with the word "then." It is difficult to explain the time indicated by this "then." When was "then"? Was it in the forty-ninth year or in the fiftieth year?

According to Leviticus 25:9, the jubilee was sounded on the day of atonement, which was on the tenth day of the seventh month. It was necessary for the trumpet of the jubilee to be sounded on the day of atonement because the jubilee is based on redemption. Without redemption there cannot be the jubilee. Therefore, the proclamation of the jubilee must be from the time of redemption. In typology, the day, or time, of redemption was signified by the day of atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month. The seventh month was the first month of the second half of the year. Concerning the sounding of the trumpet of jubilee, we need to ask if this was the seventh month of the forty-ninth year or of the fiftieth year.

Leviticus 25:10 tells us, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." To hallow the fiftieth year is to sanctify that year, and to proclaim liberty throughout the land is to proclaim release. Here we see that this liberty, this release, involves the returning of every man to his possession and of every man to his family. This verse does not speak of the return of a man's possession, but of the return of a man to his possession.

Now that we have read these important verses, let us study the relationship between the sounding of the trumpet of the jubilee on the tenth day of the seventh month and the sanctifying of the fiftieth year as the year of jubilee. Leviticus 25:9 indicates that the forty-ninth year is divided into two sections of six months each. In the middle of the forty-ninth year the trumpet of the jubilee was sounded on the day of atonement. The fiftieth year began six months later. If the trumpet of the jubilee was sounded in the fiftieth year and not in the forty-ninth year, then the jubilee would have begun six months after the start of the fiftieth year. That, however, was not the situation. Contrary to our natural concept, the trumpet of the jubilee was not sounded on the first day of the first month of the fiftieth year. Rather, it was sounded on the tenth day of the seventh month of the forty-ninth year. Verse 8 speaks of the forty-nine years; verse 9, of the sounding of the trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; and verse 10, of the hallowing of the fiftieth year. From this we see that the sounding was in the forty-ninth year, and the sanctifying, the hallowing, was not from the seventh month of the forty-ninth year, but from the beginning of the fiftieth year. This means that the sounding of the trumpet was a preparation, a preliminary step, for the jubilee.

We have pointed out that the day of atonement typifies the time of redemption. The fact that the trumpet of the jubilee was sounded on the day of atonement and that the fiftieth year was sanctified and liberty was proclaimed throughout the land indicates that it was necessary first for Christ to die and then for there to be the proclamation of the release of the people. In other words, first Christ died, and then there was the genuine preaching of the gospel. The gospel could not be preached unless Christ had already died. Therefore, the proclamation, the preaching, of the gospel is based on the death of Christ. The sounding out of the gospel depends on Christ's redemption. Without the redemption of Christ, there would be no basis for the proclamation of the jubilee.

According to Leviticus 25, the sounding of the trumpet of the jubilee took place six months before the actual beginning of the year of jubilee. The jubilee began from the first month of the fiftieth year, but the sounding of the trumpet of the jubilee was in the middle of the forty-ninth year, six months earlier. When applied to our spiritual experience, this indicates that the preaching of the gospel comes first and the jubilee follows. Many of us can testify that in our experience of salvation we heard the preaching of the gospel long before we were saved. The preaching of the gospel came to us a considerable time before we entered into the jubilee.

If we read carefully Leviticus 25:8-10, we shall see that the sounding of the trumpet always took place before the year of jubilee. This means that the sounding of the jubilee took place in the seventh month of the forty-ninth year as a preparation for the jubilee, which began at the start of the next year. Beginning with the first month of the year, the fiftieth year was hallowed, sanctified, as the year of jubilee.

I can testify that in my case the sounding of the gospel came to me at least eight years before I entered into the jubilee. When I was a child, I heard the preaching of the gospel. But I did not experience the jubilee until I was nineteen.

Many of us passed through a period of preparation for salvation before we actually received salvation. Did you go through such a period of preparation before you entered into the enjoyment of salvation, that is, before you entered into the jubilee? Some cases, however, are extraordinary. These are cases of saints who entered into the jubilee at the time they first heard the gospel and

learned of the Lord Jesus. But there are not many cases like this. Most Christians had a time of preparation first and experienced the jubilee sometime after they first heard the gospel.

Most of us first heard the gospel sounding of the jubilee. Then some time later we received God's salvation at a time that was hallowed, sanctified, and we entered into the jubilee. When we entered into the jubilee, we returned to our possession and to our family; we returned to God as our possession and to the family, the house, of God.

PROCLAIMING RELEASE

The Release of the Sold Land to Its Own Owner

If we would understand the definition of the jubilee, we need to see that the jubilee means the proclaiming of release and freedom. First, the jubilee was the proclamation of the release of sold land to its owner. Concerning this, Leviticus 25:13 says, "In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession." In this verse we see that actually the release is not that of the land to its owner, but of the owner to his land. According to the Lord's ordination, land was not to be sold forever but could be redeemed: "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land" (Lev. 25:23-24). Concerning the release of sold land, Leviticus 25:28 goes on to say, "But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession."

The Freedom of the Sold Slave from His Slavery

The year of jubilee was a proclamation not only of the release of sold land, but also of the freedom of one who had sold himself into slavery. Leviticus 25:39-41 speaks about this: "And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: but as a hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: and then shall he depart from

thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return."

ON THE FIFTIETH YEAR

After Seven Sabbaths of Years

The jubilee was, of course, on the fiftieth year. "A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you" (Lev. 25:11a). The fiftieth year was after seven sabbaths of years, that is, after seven times seven years. In typology the sabbath refers to rest. Hence, seven sabbaths of years signify seven times seven rests.

The year of jubilee was to be on the first of a new period of seven years, or on an eighth year. Just as the day of Pentecost was on the fiftieth day, the first day after seven weeks, so the jubilee was on the fiftieth year, the first year after seven weeks, or sabbaths, of years. In the Scriptures the eighth day signifies resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the eighth day, which was the first day of the week. The fact that the jubilee took place on the fiftieth year indicates rest upon rest ending in resurrection. Now in the New Testament jubilee we have entered into rest upon rest ending in resurrection.

Some may claim to be in the jubilee, but they do not have much rest, and they are not in resurrection. Instead of being in resurrection, they are in the natural life. As long as we still live in the natural life, we are not in the jubilee. The jubilee comes after seven sabbaths of years and in the fiftieth year. This means that the jubilee comes after rest and is in resurrection.

If we would enjoy the jubilee, we need to be in the fiftieth year. This requires that all the things of our human life, for example, our education, need to be regarded as items of the past seven sabbaths of years. Then when we are in the fiftieth year, we shall be in the jubilee.

In the forty-nine years before the jubilee, certain Israelites sold their land and sold themselves. In a similar way, in our experience during the past seven sabbaths of years, we sold our possessions and even ourselves. But when the fiftieth year comes, there is no longer any such selling; rather, everything is in resurrection. The old things are past, and everything is new. In Paul's words "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, they have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

On the Tenth Day of the Seventh Month

We have seen that, according to Leviticus 25:9, the proclamation of the jubilee was on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day of atonement. This indicates that the jubilee is based on God's full redemption in Christ.

No Sowing, Reaping, or Gathering, But Eating of the Increase of the Land

Concerning the year of jubilee, Leviticus 25:11b-12 says, "Ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field." Here we have the rather unusual requirement that in the year of jubilee the people were not to sow, reap, or gather, but eat the increase of the land. This does not mean that we should enjoy the riches of Christ without working at a job. Such an understanding is according to the natural thought. Here the word about not sowing, reaping, or gathering signifies that we should not labor on Christ in a natural way or by our natural strength.

In any religion people are encouraged to exercise their effort to behave themselves, to improve, and to do good. This is to "sow," to "reap," and to "gather." But according to God's ordination, in the New Testament jubilee we are to cease from our labor and not trust in it with respect to the enjoyment of Christ. Instead of laboring in a natural way by our own sowing, reaping, and gathering, we should simply enjoy the riches of Christ.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

Leviticus 25:10 speaks of hallowing the fiftieth year. Here we see that the jubilee was a holy year, a year hallowed to God and also to us. Elsewhere, the year of jubilee is called the acceptable year of the Lord. According to Luke 4:18 and 19, the Lord Jesus in the synagogue read from Isaiah 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." The acceptable year was the year in which the Lord accepted His people who were lost and who came back to

Him. Therefore, on the Lord's side the year of jubilee was the year of acceptance.

The year of jubilee was a holy year and also an acceptable year. It was a year of proclaiming freedom to all people, and it was a time of freedom, rest, enjoyment, and satisfaction.

We have pointed out in other messages in this Life-study that the proclamation of the jubilee by the Lord Jesus in Luke 4 governs the whole Gospel of Luke. Actually the entire New Testament age is the jubilee. The New Testament age is a time of proclaiming release to all those who have lost their possessions and who have sold themselves into slavery. Today the proclaiming of the gospel is to bring these people back to their possession and to their family—back to God and to the family, the house, of God.

In this message and in the foregoing message we have given a definition of the jubilee. The definition is based on the description given in Leviticus 25. In forthcoming messages we shall see the application of this jubilee in the New Testament.

CHAPTER THREE

JUBILEE (3)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:9-13, 39-41, 54; Psa. 16:5; 90:1; Eph. 2:12; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12; Luke 15:12-23; Rom. 7:14b; John 8:34, 36; Rom. 6:6-7; 8:2; Gal. 5:1

In this message we shall go on from the definition of the jubilee covered in the two previous messages to the blessings of the jubilee. For our understanding, it is good to have the definition of the jubilee. The blessings of the jubilee, however, are not for our understanding; the blessings are for our enjoyment. In addition to understanding the jubilee, we need to enjoy it. We surely need the blessings of the jubilee.

Actually, the preaching of the gospel is the sounding, the trumpeting, of the jubilee. In the preaching of the gospel, we proclaim glad tidings, good news. This good news is that we can be returned to our lost possession and that we can be freed from slavery, from bondage. In our gospel preaching, we need to trumpet the jubilee; we need to proclaim the return to the lost possession and the release from bondage.

According to the type in Leviticus 25, the jubilee has two main blessings. These blessings are the return to the lost possession and the release from slavery.

THE JUBILEE AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

In the foregoing messages we pointed out that although we are men created by God, we have lost God as our real possession. To be more exact, actually we did not lose our possession—we left it. The parable of the prodigal son illustrates this. When the prodigal son left the father's house, he also left his inheritance. Likewise, when we left God, we left our true possession. Therefore, in the jubilee it is not that our possession is returned to us; rather, we are returned to the possession which we left. The first blessing of the jubilee is the return to our possession.

In addition to losing our possession, we also lost ourselves by selling ourselves into slavery. Therefore, we need to be set free. This is the second blessing of the jubilee. If you read Leviticus 25 carefully, you will see that, on the one hand, there is the return to one's possession, and, on the other hand, the return to one's family.

We all once were prodigals who went away from the Father and from His household. As those who went away both from the Father and from His house, we certainly went away from our inheritance. Therefore, it was necessary for us to be returned to the Father and to His household. This is the jubilee as illustrated by the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

The New Testament jubilee was proclaimed by the Lord Jesus in Luke 4:18 and 19. He sounded out the trumpet of the New Testament jubilee when He declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." After this jubilee was proclaimed, it was experienced by many whose cases are recorded in the Gospel of Luke. All these cases, therefore, are illustrations of the New Testament jubilee.

Among the many illustrations of the jubilee in the Gospel of Luke, the best is the case of the prodigal son being returned to his father, to his father's household, and to his inheritance. After the prodigal had spent all, a severe famine occurred, and he began to be in want (Luke 15:14). He then "went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed hogs. And he was longing to be satisfied with the carob pods which the hogs were eating, and no one gave him anything" (vv. 15-16). When he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have an abundance of bread, but I am perishing here with famine! I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants" (vv. 17-19). Here we see that the prodigal wanted to be as those who sowed, reaped, and harvested (things which were forbidden in the year of jubilee) by exerting his own effort. His intention was to tell his father that since he was no longer worthy of being a son, he would like to labor as a hired one. But according to the type in Leviticus 25, during the year of jubilee there was to be no sowing, reaping, or harvesting. During that year there was

not to be any labor on the land. Hence, the prodigal son should not have come back to the father to be a laborer. He should be returned to the father as one being returned to enjoy his possession.

When the prodigal son was returned, he began to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (v. 21). The father, not having an ear to hear such nonsensical talk, interrupted him and said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (vv. 22-23). Do you know what the fattened calf signifies? The fattened calf signifies the rich Christ as our inheritance. In the words of Colossians 1:12, this is Christ as the portion of the saints. After the prodigal son was returned, he, the father, and those in the household began to enjoy the inheritance. Here in the case of the prodigal son we have a clear picture of the New Testament jubilee. A genuine conversion should be like that of the prodigal son portrayed in this parable.

We have pointed out that the first blessing of the jubilee is the return to our lost possession. In the jubilee those who have lost their inheritance were returned to their possession. This is typified in Leviticus 25:9-13.

The first main blessing of the New Testament jubilee is to return to the possession which we had left. This possession was not anything material—our possession was God Himself.

GOD'S INTENTION TO BE MAN'S POSSESSION

Man's true possession is God, and man was created as a vessel to contain God. Genesis 1:26 says that man was made in the image of God, and Romans 9 reveals that man was created to be a vessel. Man was created a vessel to contain God so that God might fill man and express Himself through man.

Consider a bottle, which is a vessel. In itself such a vessel is empty. What is the possession of a bottle? A bottle's possession is its content. The principle is the same with any kind of vessel: the possession of a vessel is the content of that vessel. If a vessel does not have its content, it does not have its possession. For a vessel to be without content, to be without its possession, is to be empty, and to be empty is to be poor.

Man was created as a vessel to contain God. If man does not contain God, this means that man does not have his possession. Without God as his content, man remains a poor, empty vessel. God's intention is to be man's content, his possession.

In the realm of material things, if we have the needed possessions, we shall have land for the producing of food, and we shall have a house for our lodging. Daily we need food to eat and a house in which to dwell. In brief, we need land and a house. These are the basic necessities in man's living.

The New Testament indicates that God is our real land. To His chosen people, the children of Israel, God gave a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. For what purpose did He give them the land? God gave the land to His people so that they would have food for eating. This good land is a type of God in Christ to be the supply for our eating. Eating is a spiritual necessity, and Christ is the supply to meet this need.

In Psalm 90:1 we see that God is also our dwelling place: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Have you ever realized that God is your dwelling place? Even in the Old Testament we are told that God was the dwelling place of His chosen people. Therefore, God is our land and also our house, our dwelling place.

Psalm 16:5 says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Here we see that the Lord is our portion for our inheritance and for our cup. He is our portion in two ways—as food for our eating and as a house for our dwelling. According to Psalm 90:1 and Psalm 16:5, God intends to be man's possession, to be man's land and lodging.

Our daily necessities in human life include four main items: clothing, food, housing, and transportation. Of these four, food and housing are the most important. We may be able to live without adequate clothing and transportation, but we cannot live without food and lodging. Even a bird needs food and a nest. The Bible reveals that Christ is our real clothing; Christ is the righteousness that covers us. Furthermore, we may say that Christ is also our real transportation. Elsewhere, we have pointed out that Christ is the real "jumbo jet" that brings us to God the Father. Christ is our clothing, transportation, food, and housing.

In the year of jubilee the concern was not with clothing or transportation; instead, the concern was with eating and housing. Therefore, a man could return to his provision, to his land for eating, and also to his family, that is, to his house. In a spiritual sense, our land is God Himself, and our house also is God. God's intention is to be our possession for food and lodging.

CHRIST AS OUR FOOD AND DWELLING PLACE

The Gospel of John reveals that the Lord Jesus is our food and our dwelling place. In John 6 we see that He is the real bread, the bread of life, the living bread that came down out of heaven (vv. 32-33, 35, 48, 50-51). Hence, He is our heavenly food. The fact that the Lord Jesus is also our dwelling place is implied by His word, "Abide in Me" (John 15:4). To abide in the Lord means to take Him as our abode, as our dwelling place. According to the Gospel of John, we should eat the Lord and also dwell in Him, for He is our food and our lodging.

The Bible is consistent. Although the Bible speaks of many things, when we get into the depths of the Word, we see that it reveals in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament that the Triune God is our food and our lodging. He is edible, and He is our real dwelling place.

Consider the situation of the priests in the Old Testament. Concerning the priesthood, there was the tabernacle for lodging and there were the sacrifices for eating. Those who served God as priests could eat the sacrifices and dwell in the tabernacle. Both the tabernacle and the sacrifices are types of Christ. As today's priests, we should eat Christ and dwell in Him.

Certain Christians who are not knowledgeable in the Scriptures may be troubled when they hear about eating Christ. They may say, "Do you intend to eat Christ? This is blasphemy! Christ is your Redeemer, Savior, Master, Lord, and God. How can you eat Him?" Yes, the Lord Jesus is our God, Lord, Master, Savior, and Redeemer. Nevertheless, He Himself told us that He is our food. He is food for us to eat, and He is also the abode in which we dwell.

Are you in the actual experience of the jubilee? Do you know what it really means to be in the jubilee? First, to be in the jubilee is to eat the Lord Jesus. If you do not eat Him, you are not in the jubilee. No one can be in the jubilee

with an empty stomach. A proclamation concerning the jubilee may be made, but if your stomach is empty, you will not care for that proclamation.

I can testify that I am truly in the jubilee because daily I eat the Lord Jesus. Through eating Him as my spiritual food, I enjoy the jubilee. To me, the jubilee is a feast, a time for eating the Lord Jesus.

If you are to be in the jubilee, you need to eat the Lord. You need to enjoy Him. When we come to Leviticus 25 in the Life-study Messages, we shall see that the main thing in the experience of the jubilee is eating.

Furthermore, in order to be in the jubilee, we need to have Christ as our lodging, as our dwelling place. When Christ is our home, we have true rest. We enjoy a real sabbath as we lodge ourselves in Christ. Hallelujah, Christ is our food and our dwelling place!

We have pointed out that God created man with the intention that man take God as his possession. After creating man, God placed him in a garden and in front of the tree of life. The garden is for lodging, and the tree of life is for eating. Here we see that the man created by God had two important needs: he needed God to be his food, and he needed God to be his garden, his dwelling place. Perhaps you have not heard before that God should be our garden. But where did Adam live? He did not live in a house or in a city; he lived in a garden. Both the garden and the tree of life are symbols of God being man's enjoyment.

MAN LOSING GOD BECAUSE OF MAN'S FALL

Adam lived for a while in the garden, but he did not go on to enjoy the tree of life. Instead of eating of the tree of life, Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thereby became fallen. Through the fall Adam lost God. It may be better to say that through the fall Adam left God. Instead of taking God in as his life, Adam left God. When he left God, he left his possession.

In the New Testament we are told clearly that fallen man is without God. Ephesians 2:12, a verse that describes the actual condition of fallen mankind, says that man is now "without God in the world." Today all of fallen mankind is without God because man has left God.

When Adam was in the garden, he could proclaim that he had God. Yes, he had God, but he did not take God as his life. Adam left God and lost God. Therefore, all his descendants live on earth without God. This certainly was our situation before we were saved; we lived on earth without God because we had left Him.

GOD'S JUBILEE BRINGING MAN BACK TO GOD AS MAN'S INHERITANCE

God's jubilee brings man back to God as man's inheritance. In the New Testament jubilee we all have been returned to God as our possession.

It is not easy to explain this biblical truth accurately. Actually, it is not the case that we returned to God; rather, God returned us to Himself as our possession. This is portrayed by the type in Leviticus 25. Verse 10 says, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Here we see not that a man's possession was returned to him, but that he was returned to his possession. The same thing is declared in Leviticus 25:13: "In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession." In the type of the jubilee, all those who had sold their possession were returned to their possession so, in the real New Testament jubilee we did not return to God; on the contrary, God returned us to our possession. This means that when we were saved, God returned us to our possession.

Let us consider once again the example of the prodigal son. Apparently it was the prodigal son who returned to the father. Actually, according to Luke 15 the Father sent the Son as the Shepherd to seek out the lost prodigal son. Furthermore, it was the Father who sent the Spirit to find the lost son. Therefore, the prodigal did not return to the Father on his own. The Father sent His Son and His Spirit to cause the prodigal son to return.

Do you think that you have returned to God? You may have this concept, but your coming back to God was God's doing to return you to Himself. God has caused us to return to Him as our possession. Praise Him that He has caused us to return!

Colossians 1:12 says that the Father has qualified us for a share of the portion of the saints in the light, and Ephesians 1:14 speaks of the pledge of our inheritance. Now that we have been returned to God as our portion, we have God in Christ as our inheritance. In Acts 26:18 Paul speaks of fallen people being brought back to God as their inheritance: "To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." The divine inheritance here is the Triune God Himself with all that He has, all He has done, and all He will do for His redeemed people. This Triune God is embodied in the all-inclusive Christ (Col. 2:9), who is the portion allotted to the saints as their inheritance. The Holy Spirit, who has been given to the saints, is the foretaste, the pledge, and the guarantee of this divine inheritance (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14), which we are sharing and enjoying today in God's New Testament jubilee as a foretaste and will share and enjoy in full in the coming age and for eternity. In the type of the jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-13 one of the main blessings was the return of every man to his own inheritance. In the fulfillment of the jubilee here in Acts 26:18, receiving the divine inheritance is also the primary blessing.

To believe in the Lord Jesus is to be returned to God as our inheritance. When a person repents to God, he will be returned to Him as his possession. To preach the gospel this way we need to have the adequate enjoyment of the New Testament jubilee. I hope that we all shall enjoy the jubilee adequately. Then as we go out to preach the gospel, we shall preach in the way of proclaiming the jubilee. We shall tell others that they have left God as their possession and that He wants them to be returned to Him. We may say to a certain one, "God is your real possession, but you have left Him and lost Him. Now He wants you to be returned to Him. Are you willing for Him to bring you back to Himself? God's way to bring you back is to put you into Christ. Christ is the 'jumbo jet' that brings us to God, and now is 'boarding time.' Are you willing to come aboard? Are you willing to believe in Christ so that He may bring you back to God? We can testify to you that as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus and enter into Him, you will be brought back to God as your possession."

We praise the Lord that we have been brought back to God as our possession! We have also been returned to our family. We all are like the prodigal son, who came back to the father and to his family and could then enjoy his portion, his inheritance. Now that we have been returned to God we

may enjoy Him as our possession, as our portion and inheritance, and we may also enjoy the real family life in the house of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

JUBILEE (4)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:9-13, 39-41, 54; Psa. 16:5; 90:1; Eph. 2:12; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12; Luke 15:12-23; Rom. 7:14b; John 8:34, 36; Rom. 6:6-7; 8:2; Gal. 5:1

In this message we shall continue to consider the blessings of the jubilee. We pointed out in the foregoing message that the first of the two main blessings of the jubilee is that those who have lost their inheritance may be returned to their possession (Lev. 25:9-13). God intended to be man's possession (Psa. 16:5; 90:1), but man lost God because of man's fall (Eph. 2:12). However, God's jubilee brings man back to God as his inheritance (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12; Luke 15:12-23). Let us now go on to see the second main blessing of the jubilee.

FREED FROM SLAVERY

The second blessing of the jubilee is that those who have sold themselves as slaves are freed from their slavery (Lev. 25:39-41, 54). According to the type in Leviticus 25, an Israelite may become so poor that he must sell his possession. Then he may go deeper into poverty and even sell himself. Having lost himself, he becomes a slave.

The one who had sold himself into slavery could try to redeem himself. However, if he could not redeem himself before the year of jubilee, he was to be released in that year. "If he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubilee, both he, and his children with him" (Lev. 25:54). This means that in the fiftieth year, in the year of jubilee, the one who had sold himself as a slave was freed from his slavery.

The picture in Leviticus 25 is very meaningful. This picture indicates that from the time of the fall man has sold himself as a slave, in particular as a slave of sin. Although man tried to redeem himself, he was not able to do so. In the dispensations of conscience, human government, promise, and law, man was not able to redeem himself. But then the dispensation of grace came,

a dispensation typified by the fiftieth year. In this dispensation fallen man can be released from bondage.

The New Testament reveals that fallen man has been sold to sin as its slave. In Romans 7:14 Paul declares, "I am fleshly, sold under sin." In John 8:34 the Lord Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin." God's jubilee frees fallen man from sin. For this reason, the Lord says, "If then the Son shall set you free, you shall be really free." Furthermore, in Romans 6:6 and 7 Paul tells us, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him that the body of sin might be made of none effect, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves; for he who has died is justified from sin." Then in Romans 8:2 Paul goes on to say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed me from the law of sin and of death." Furthermore, according to Galatians 5:1, God's jubilee also frees us from the bondage of law.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE YEAR OF JUBILEE BEING THE FIFTIETH YEAR

Let us consider once again the significance of the year of jubilee being the fiftieth year. Leviticus 25:8 says, "And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years." According to verse 10, the people were to "hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." We may say that the seven sabbaths of years in verse 8, the seven times seven years, are also seven "weeks" of years (see Dan. 9:24-26). In the Bible a week, a period of seven days, signifies a complete course. For example, in a course of seven days God created the universe and everything in it and then rested. Therefore, the seven days of a week indicate a complete course.

In the sense that a week signifies a complete course, our Christian life may also be regarded as a week. The week of our Christian life is signified by the feast of unleavened bread. In Exodus 12 we see that the feast of unleavened bread lasted seven days. In the Life-study of Exodus we pointed out that the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread signify the entire course of our Christian life from the time we are saved until the time our body is redeemed.

The jubilee did not come at the end of a single week of years, but after a course of seven weeks of seven years. The year after seven weeks of seven years was, of course, the fiftieth year, the first year of the eighth week of seven years.

In the Bible the number eight signifies resurrection. The Lord Jesus was resurrected on the eighth day, on the first day of the week. In keeping with this principle, the first year of each new week, or period, of seven years was an eighth year, and this eighth year may be considered a year of resurrection. The year of jubilee was the seventh "eighth year." This means that this eighth year, which is the fiftieth year, indicates seven times resurrection.

The principle of the jubilee being on the fiftieth year is the same as that of the day of Pentecost being on the fiftieth day. The day of Pentecost was on the seventh eighth day, just as the year of jubilee was on the seventh eighth year. After seven courses of days came the day of Pentecost, and after seven courses of years came the year of jubilee.

APPRECIATING THE JUBILEE

Let us now apply this to our experience of salvation. Just as the year of jubilee came after seven complete courses of years, so many of us experienced salvation only after we had passed through several "courses" in our human life. On the one hand, it is very good to be saved early in life, in our youth. But on the other hand, there is also a good point to being saved after passing through a number of lengthy courses in human life. For example, suppose a man is saved in his fifties. He has passed through a number of courses: youth, college, marriage, and advancement in his profession. Having passed through all these courses, he experiences a real jubilee when he is saved. For years, as indicated by the seven weeks of years before the year of jubilee, he may have tried to redeem himself, but without success. Then one day he hears the trumpeting of the jubilee through the preaching of the gospel, and he is saved. He had come to hate, to despise, all the courses in his life. Now he enjoys the release of the jubilee.

A person who is saved early in life, perhaps at the age of twelve, may not have much realization of the significance of the jubilee. To him, it may make little difference whether or not there is a jubilee, because he has not passed

through many courses in life. But one who has passed through many courses will surely appreciate the jubilee.

In one sense, the earlier a person is saved, the better. We certainly should not delay the preaching of the gospel to others. My point here is that when a person is saved later in life, he has a greater enjoyment of the jubilee than one who is saved as a child. Suppose a boy is saved at the age of six. Since he has not passed through even one or two courses in human life, he cannot have much appreciation of the jubilee. But one who has gone through many courses will have much appreciation of what it is to be saved.

Do not misunderstand me and think that I would encourage someone to wait to be saved. Those who are saved at an early age have the opportunity to learn more of the Bible and to experience and enjoy more of the Lord. From this point of view, it is better for a person to be saved at an early age. Nevertheless, those who are saved later in life have the opportunity to have a greater enjoyment of the jubilee.

Suppose a certain person has never sold his possession or sold himself into slavery. When such a person hears the sounding of the jubilee, he will not have any joy, because the jubilee does not mean anything to him. However, a person who has lost his possession and himself will rejoice in the year of jubilee. The more a person has lost, the more he will enjoy the sounding of the jubilee.

Years ago, I met a brother whose experience illustrates the point we are making concerning the enjoyment of the jubilee. This brother had been an opium smoker for over forty years before he was saved. One day he was saved and was released from smoking opium. That was a real jubilee to him.

This brother always carried two pictures of himself: a picture of himself as an opium smoker and a picture of himself as a Christian. The opium smoker was sickly and undernourished; the Christian was healthy and strong. In testifying he would display these two pictures and ask people which they liked better. Of course, they always preferred the picture of the Christian. Then this brother would explain the meaning of these two pictures, that the one was a picture of him before he was saved and that the other was a picture of him after he had become a Christian. He was happy in giving a real testimony of the jubilee.

Someone who is saved as a very young child cannot testify of the jubilee as did the brother who was once an opium smoker. Because a young child has not passed through complete courses in life during which he has tried to redeem himself, he does not have much to say about the joy of the jubilee. Therefore, being saved later in life does have a good point, and this point is the enjoyment of the jubilee.

The year of jubilee, the fiftieth year, can only come after seven weeks of years. It can only come after the completion of the courses of human life. This means that the jubilee has a blessing which no one can reach by his own effort. Someone may try in course after course to return to his possession and to redeem himself from slavery. But of himself he cannot return or be redeemed. The jubilee comes only from God. God returns us to our possession, and God releases us from bondage.

I was saved at the age of nineteen. Before I received the Lord Jesus, I tried to be good. I was raised in Christianity, and I had been taught the Bible. I knew I should be good, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not be good. I even tried to turn to God but I was not able to turn to Him. But one day I experienced the jubilee. God came in and brought me into the enjoyment of the jubilee. On that day I had a rich enjoyment of the jubilee. I was returned by God to Him as my possession, and I was freed from my slavery.

TWO GREAT BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

We have seen that the two main blessings of the jubilee are being returned to our possession and being released from slavery. In the New Testament these are two great blessings of the gospel. The gospel declares that God has returned us to Himself as our possession and that He has set us free from bondage, from slavery, especially from the slavery of sin. The bondage of sin is the worst kind of bondage. Those who live in sin are bound in many ways. But when a person is set free from sin, he is also set free from many things. When we were set free from sin, we were also set free from the slavery of the law.

By the Lord's mercy I can testify that I enjoy God as my possession, as my food, house, clothing, and transportation. I can also testify that I have been released from bondage. I am free from the slavery of sin and from the bondage of law and religion. Praise the Lord for the blessings of the jubilee!

We need to apply this understanding in our reading of the Gospel of Luke. If we read Luke with such an understanding, this Gospel will become a new book to us. In the parables and cases recorded in the Gospel of Luke we shall see the blessings of the jubilee. We shall realize that the jubilee proclaimed by the Man-Savior in chapter four of Luke is a principle that governs all the following chapters.

We all need to learn how to enjoy the jubilee. When we enjoy the jubilee, we shall be able to go out to proclaim the jubilee. We shall sound the trumpet of the gospel and tell others that now is the time for God to accept them, that now is the time for them to be returned to God as their possession and to be freed from every kind of slavery, bondage, and entanglement. Those who have been returned to God and who have been released from bondage are free to enjoy God. To proclaim this is to sound the trumpet of the jubilee, to announce the jubilee of God's New Testament economy. May we all enjoy the blessings of the jubilee and then sound forth the jubilee as the gospel.

CHAPTER FIVE

JUBILEE (5)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:10-12, 19-22; Matt. 11:28; Phil. 4:5-7, 9; Luke 15:23; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 12:9; 13:14

In the foregoing messages we have covered the definition of the jubilee and the blessings of the jubilee. Now we shall begin to consider the living of the jubilee. By the living of the jubilee we mean the kind of life that lives in the jubilee. As we shall see, this is a life of resting in the good land (Lev. 25:10-12; Matt. 11:28; Phil. 4:5-7, 9) and of enjoying the riches of the good land (Lev. 25:19-22; Luke 15:23; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 12:9; 13:14).

THE RESULT OF MAN'S FALL

Before we consider these two aspects of living in the jubilee, I would like to give a further word concerning man's fall. The Bible reveals clearly that man has become fallen. According to God's purpose, man was made to contain God and express Him. In order for man to fulfill this purpose, it was necessary for man to take God in as his life and then continue to enjoy God as his life supply. Only by taking God as life and enjoying God as his life supply can man live a life to express God. As we have often pointed out in other messages, this is the clear revelation in the Bible as a whole.

Instead of fulfilling God's purpose, the man created by God was seduced by God's enemy and carried away from God's purpose. Man sinned against God and became fallen.

Unbelievers, of course, do not have a clear understanding of man's fall and its result. Even many Christians who are clear about man's fall do not have an adequate understanding of the issue, or the result, of the fall. Therefore, we need to be impressed with the fact that the issue of man's fall involves two things: first, man's losing of God; second, man's falling into bondage, slavery, captivity. Throughout the history of mankind, man has been without God and has been in bondage. For thousands of years man has been in slavery, having lost God as his possession. This is true of every people, race, country, and nation.

The Sufferings in Human Life

Those, especially young people, who are struggling to enjoy life may dream that one day there will be heaven on earth, that a time is coming when there will be a Utopia. I once had this kind of dream, but I woke up from it and realized that human life is filled with all kinds of suffering. Those who are married have problems, but those who are not married may have just as many problems, if not more. As far as problems and sufferings are concerned, it is difficult to say whether it is better to be married or unmarried. Because believers are eager to learn how to have a happy married life, books on marriage are popular in Christian book stores. Surely any married person, knowing the problems of married life, would like to know how to have a happy marriage. The young people, however, do not know how many problems there can be in married life. I mention this to give one example of the sufferings in human life.

Another example is the problem caused by riches. Those who desire to be rich may not realize that riches can cause trouble. I know of a certain brother who has become quite rich in the past twenty years, but his riches have caused him great suffering. Because of the trouble and sufferings brought about by wealth, many rich people do not have a long life. They are exhausted and weakened by their riches.

Recently I read an article in the newspaper about a Chinese man who was once the president of a college in China. This man is now one hundred years of age. When he reached the age of one hundred, many of his former students held a feast in honor of his birthday. During the feast he said that he thanked God that he was not a rich man, because if he had been wealthy, he would never have lived to reach the age of one hundred. According to his understanding, the lack of riches was an important factor in his living to the age of one hundred.

The point we are making is that human life is a life of suffering. Both riches and poverty are causes of suffering. Those who are poor may have anxiety, but those who are rich may have even more anxiety.

Another kind of human suffering is that experienced by those who are the leaders of countries. The president or head of a country must bear a very heavy burden, a burden much greater than that borne by an ordinary person.

Anyone who is not in good health should not seek a high political office because the pressure on him will be great. This is another illustration of the fact that human life is a life of suffering.

Seeking Rest and Enjoyment

Do you know what it means to suffer? Do you know the significance of suffering? The real significance of suffering is twofold: to suffer is to have no rest, and to suffer is to have no enjoyment.

God created man with the appetite, the aspiration, for rest and enjoyment. God created man with such an aspiration because God's intention was that man would continually seek after Him. Therefore, every human being is seeking rest and enjoyment.

Rest requires satisfaction. If a person does not have satisfaction, he cannot have rest. From experience we know that we can rest only when we are satisfied. Furthermore, satisfaction comes from enjoyment. Hence, if we do not have enjoyment, we do not have satisfaction; and if we do not have satisfaction, we do not have rest. Everyone is hungering and thirsting for rest and enjoyment. To be without rest and enjoyment is to suffer.

The reason a brother desires to get married is that he is seeking rest and enjoyment. He thinks that he cannot find rest in anyone other than a wife. He regards marriage as something that will provide rest and enjoyment. Likewise, a sister desires a husband because she thinks that married life will be a "couch" on which she may rest.

Why do we need marriage? We need marriage because we want rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment. However, how much real rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment do you experience in your married life? Many can testify that in married life the suffering may be greater than the rest and satisfaction and that the troubles may be greater than the enjoyment. Suffering in married life may be caused even by the issue of whether the bedroom window should be open or closed. A husband and wife may argue over a matter such as this. Although people get married because they need rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment, the real rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment are not found in married life.

We have seen that the rich, as well as the poor, have their sufferings in life. For example, someone with a large savings account may worry about inflation. Even though he has thousands of dollars in the bank, he may still be anxious about money.

In every area of human life the "debit" side may be greater than the "credit" side. This means that whatever choice we make regarding a particular matter, the result may be more debit than credit. Whether we are married or unmarried, rich or poor, the debit may be larger than the credit.

The destiny of every unsaved person whether married or unmarried, rich or poor, is hell. This is why people need God's salvation; this is why they need the gospel. Without God's salvation, a person is going downward to hell, no matter what his situation may be. Those who are educated and cultured and those who are uneducated and uncultured are all going downward to hell. Because they are on this downward way, they cannot have any rest. How they need to hear the preaching of the gospel, the sounding out of the jubilee!

Fallen mankind has lost God and is in bondage. Consider the situation of the children of Israel in Egypt. All the Israelites were under bondage. It may seem that Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was superior, but he also was in bondage. Both the Israelites and the Egyptians had lost God and were in bondage. Likewise, today fallen mankind is in bondage. The rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the married and the unmarried—all are in bondage. Only when we have God are we no longer in bondage, for God is our release, our liberty, even our liberation.

Because fallen man has lost God and is in bondage, he does not have the real rest or enjoyment. This is the result, the issue, of man's fall.

A PICTURE OF HOW GOD SAVES MAN FROM THE ISSUE OF MAN'S FALL

Certain types in the Old Testament show how God saves man from the issue of the fall. The first of these types is the feast of the Passover.

The Feast of the Passover

When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they were in bondage. They had no rest, no satisfaction, and no enjoyment. But God came in to rescue them, to save them from their fallen situation. God saved His people by the Passover.

In the Bible the Passover is called a feast. The feast of the Passover was the first of the seven annual feasts observed by the children of Israel (Lev. 23). The word "feast" implies a holiday, a time of rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment. A holiday is a day without labor, a day of enjoyment. In all nations, when a holiday comes, people cease from work and have a time of rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment. The feast of Passover was such a time for the children of Israel. It was a time for God's chosen people to rest from their labor and to enjoy God as their satisfaction.

Life in the Wilderness

God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and into the wilderness. During the years in the wilderness, the people did not have any industry or employment. What, then, did they do for forty years? We may say that they had a very long holiday. For forty years, they did not labor; instead, they rested with God. They did not sow or reap but simply gathered the manna. Furthermore, what they gathered was not the result of their labor but was something of God's gift. Therefore, the children of Israel rested with God and enjoyed His gift. It is unique in history that a people numbering more than two million spent forty years without industry or farming. During these forty years, the children of Israel rested with God day by day.

As we consider the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness, we see that actually they did not know how to rest with God or enjoy His gifts. They still tried to labor, that is, to do something for themselves. This labor was offensive to God. After coming into the wilderness, the children of Israel should have done nothing except praise the Lord, enjoy Him, and rest with Him. However, they still struggled to do something for themselves. Whenever they labored in this way, they caused problems.

The Good Land

After the forty-year holiday in the wilderness, the children of Israel were brought into the good land. God gave a portion of the land to each family, and

the people rested on their portion of the land. They lived on that portion, enjoyed it, and received satisfaction from it.

The good land is a type of God as our portion. Concerning God being our portion, Psalm 16:5 says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Therefore, the real portion of the land on which we rest, which we enjoy, and with which we are satisfied is God Himself. God is the real land flowing with milk and honey. Of course, eventually this God is Jesus Christ and ultimately, the life-giving Spirit. The very God who is Jesus Christ and the life-giving Spirit is our good land flowing with milk and honey. I can testify that my Christ is flowing with milk and honey. Christ is our portion; He is our rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

The Need for the Jubilee as a Repetition of the Passover

However, many of the children of Israel did not live on the land in the way of rest and enjoyment. On the contrary, they lived in such a way that they became poor. First they sold their land; eventually they sold themselves. Once again they experienced the two results of man's fall: the loss of enjoyment, and bondage. This made it necessary for God to set up the year of jubilee, according to the type in Leviticus 25.

Actually the jubilee was a repetition of the Passover. By the Passover the children of Israel were delivered from bondage into rest and enjoyment. But some, after entering into the enjoyment of God, became poor again and lost everything. Hence, there was the need for the jubilee as the repetition of the Passover.

In the year of jubilee there was the proclamation of liberty: "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Lev. 25:10). This liberty was a release; it denoted freedom, liberation from bondage.

According to Leviticus 25:10, in the year of jubilee a person could be returned to his own possession and to his own family. What does this signify? This signifies a return to rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment, a return to the

condition and the state into which the people had been brought by the Passover. The Passover had brought them into a condition and state where they could possess God as their good land for their rest and enjoyment. But they lost this possession and fell into bondage again. Their condition became like that of the children of Israel in Egypt. Therefore, there was the need of the jubilee as the repetition of the Passover to proclaim liberty to all those who had lost their possession and who were in bondage. In the year of jubilee the people could be returned to their possession and to their family in order to have rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment. This is the picture portrayed in the type in Leviticus 25.

As we shall see more fully in the following message, this type is a picture of what the Christian life should be. The Christian life is a life of liberty, freedom, and release, a life full of rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

CHAPTER SIX

JUBILEE (6)

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:10-12, 19-22; Matt. 11:28; Phil. 4:6-7, 9; Luke 15:23; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 12:9; 13:14

Let us continue to consider the living of the jubilee, that is, the kind of life that lives in the jubilee. We pointed out in the foregoing message that this is a life of resting in the good land and of enjoying the riches of the good land. Our Christian life should be a life full of liberty, freedom, and release, a life full of rest, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

A LIFE OF ENJOYMENT

Luke 15:23 indicates that the Christian life should be a life of enjoyment: "And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry." The result of the prodigal son's coming back to his father's house was that he and all those in the house could eat, drink, and be merry. This indicates that we should eat Christ as the fattened calf, drink the life-giving Spirit, and be merry in the enjoyment of the Triune God and in the riches of the Father's house.

As we go on to 1 Corinthians 5:8 we see that the Christian life is a feast: "Let us therefore keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The feast here refers to the feast of unleavened bread as the continuation of the Passover (Exo. 12:15-20). This feast lasted for seven days, the period of a complete course, signifying the entire period of our Christian life, from the day of our conversion to the day of rapture. This is a long feast which we should keep with unleavened bread, which is Christ as our nourishment and enjoyment. Only He is the life supply of sincerity and truth, absolutely pure, without mixture, and full of reality. Such a feast is a time for enjoyment. The entire Christian life should be a feast and an enjoyment of Christ as the rich supply of life. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 5:8 Paul charges us to keep the feast with Christ as unleavened bread.

A feast is not a time for working; rather, it is a time for eating, enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest. In the Christian life Christ should be our food, enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says, “To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel.” Paul preached not the doctrines but the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are what He is to us, such as light, life, righteousness, and holiness, for our experience and enjoyment. These riches are unsearchable and untraceable. The Christian life is a life of enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In Philippians 1:19 Paul speaks of the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Christian life is a life of enjoying this bountiful supply.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9 we see that Paul experienced and enjoyed the grace of Christ: “And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.” Then in 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul goes on to say, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” To be sure, the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are for our enjoyment. The grace of the Lord is the Lord Himself as life to us for our enjoyment, the love of God is God Himself as the source of the grace of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the grace of the Lord with the love of God for our participation. The result of the enjoyment of the grace of the Lord, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit is satisfaction, and the issue of this enjoyment and satisfaction is rest. All Christians should have this enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

However, only a small minority of Christians daily are enjoying the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit. Where are we with respect to this enjoyment? Many of us are laboring and are full of anxiety and worry. Furthermore, we have many expectations or dreams. Eventually, because these dreams are not fulfilled, we are disappointed and have suffering. Many among us daily are laboring, worrying, dreaming, and suffering. Someone may dream of becoming rich, but this dream leads to disappointment and suffering. Human life is a life of laboring, worrying, dreaming, and suffering.

Some believers who are still laboring, worrying, dreaming, and suffering may say, "I thought that life would be better after I became a Christian, but it's about the same. What, then, is the purpose of being a Christian?" Because of questions such as this, a number of Christians have been attracted to the teaching concerning prosperity, the teaching which claims that Christians can become rich and successful. Nevertheless, it is a fact that most Christians are laboring, worrying, dreaming, and suffering. Furthermore, most, whether they are a success or a failure, are going in a downward direction.

THE THREE KINDS OF LABOR IN HUMAN LIFE

If we read the Bible carefully, we shall see that there are three kinds of labor in human life, not including working at a job to earn a living. The first kind of labor is the labor to be a good person, to have good behavior, and to improve one's character. In this labor people struggle to be humble, patient, and loving. In the Bible, especially in the New Testament, to work means to do such things. But no one can be saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9). This means that no one can be saved by the works of trying to improve one's behavior and character, to keep the law, and to be good, patient, kind, and honest. This kind of effort is a real labor, and in the New Testament this is called work.

According to the Bible, the second kind of labor is to worry, to be anxious. What a hard job it is to labor under anxiety! If you could do your job day by day without having any anxiety, you would be a healthy person. However, you may spend more hours each day worrying than you do working. Can you say that you have not had any anxiety, any worry, so far today? Day by day, everyone is anxious. You may be anxious about your health, your job, or a great many other things. I, of course, am not an exception. I have learned from experience that the only way to escape anxiety is to enjoy the Lord. Whenever I am not enjoying Christ, I have anxiety. Christ is versus anxiety. In the Life-study of Philippians we gave a number of messages entitled "A Life Full of Forbearance but without Anxiety."

The third kind of labor revealed in the Bible is suffering. Suffering is a very hard labor. When we enjoy God in the jubilee, there should not be any suffering. Paul, for example, suffered from a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). Concerning this thorn, he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from him (v. 8). However, instead of removing the thorn, the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you." The Lord seemed to be telling Paul, "No, I

shall not remove the thorn, for My grace is sufficient. If you enjoy Me, you will not have any suffering."

To say that we shall not have suffering when we enjoy the Lord does not mean that our environment will improve. On the contrary, in many cases the environment changes for the worse. Consider the situation of Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Paul and Silas were cast into prison in Philippi. We would expect that this imprisonment would have been a great suffering for them. However, Paul and Silas were not suffering there in prison—they were enjoying the jubilee. They were singing and praising the Lord. Although they were in prison, they had enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

A MISTAKEN CONCEPT

As believers, we should not have the concept that because we are saved, love the Lord Jesus, have given everything to Him, and want to do everything for Him, our environment will be prosperous. No Christian should have this thought. If this is our philosophy of the Christian life, we need to abandon it. Such a view is absolutely wrong.

Many of those who have served the Lord were martyred. For example, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the New Testament, was beheaded. When John sent two of his disciples to ask the Lord to do something for him, He indicated that He would not do anything (Matt. 11:2-5). The Lord went on to say, "Blessed is he who shall not be stumbled in Me" (Matt. 11:6). Here the Lord was indicating to John that He would not do anything to save him from martyrdom; rather, He would leave him in prison to be put to death. Likewise, Peter and Paul were martyred.

Do you think that being a martyr is a matter of suffering? Actually, anyone who is suffering is not qualified to be a martyr. Martyrdom is an experience of jubilee. One martyr, a British missionary killed in the 1930s in China, said as he was being put to death: "Every martyr's face is like the face of an angel, and every martyr's heart is like the heart of a lion." Stephen was certainly not suffering when he was martyred. When he was about to be stoned, his face shone like that of an angel (Acts 6:15). Instead of suffering, Stephen was enjoying the Lord.

LOVING THINGS OTHER THAN GOD

If we feel that in a particular environment we are suffering, this indicates that we still love certain things other than God. If we love God uniquely and wholly, we shall not be troubled by any kind of environment. This is the reason the Lord Jesus indicated that we must love Him more than we love our parents, brothers, sisters, wife or children (Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26). If we feel that it would be a suffering to lose our parents, children, wife, or husband, this means that we do not love God solely. It means that we place our love on something or someone other than God. If we love God solely, giving our love entirely to Him, having nothing to divide our love, we shall not be bothered by whatever happens to us.

Suppose you lose your house. Would that be a suffering to you? Would you still be able to praise the Lord, praising Him even for the loss of your house? If losing your house is a suffering and if you would not praise the Lord for it, this indicates that you love your house as well as God, perhaps more than God. If you did not love your house, you would not suffer as a result of losing it. Rather, you would say, "Hallelujah! My house is gone, but my God is not gone. He is more to me now than before. When I had a good house, God was not so much to me. But now that I have lost my house, God has become much more to me."

As a father of many children and a grandfather to many more grandchildren, I know that every parent wants his children to be successful. Perhaps you would like your children to be apostles, elders, deacons, or deaconesses, or you may want them to be doctors, lawyers, or computer scientists. But how would you feel if none of your children were an apostle, elder, deacon, or deaconess, or if none of them were in a respected profession? Would you be happy or disappointed? Recently I heard someone praising the Lord that his son had become a medical doctor. But I never heard a parent praising the Lord because his child received a failing grade.

The point of these illustrations is that even seeking Christians may not live a life of jubilee. On the contrary, because they love things other than God, they have suffering instead of enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

We all should do our job; however, we should not labor in the sense of struggling to be good, worrying, dreaming, and suffering. We should be able to say, "I only love my God. He is my portion. Nothing and no one apart from

Him is my portion. A new car, a nice house, a good promotion, the top salary—all these are not a real portion to me."

NO ANXIETY IN THE JUBILEE

If we are living in the jubilee, we shall not have any anxiety. Concerning anxiety, the Lord Jesus says, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you should eat and what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on....Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?...Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own evil" (Matt. 6:25, 27, 34). There is no need for us to borrow tomorrow's anxiety and bear it today. Every day has its own evil. Nevertheless, some saints, young as well as old, borrow anxiety not only from tomorrow but from years to come. This means that some are anxious not only concerning tomorrow but concerning what will happen years from now. Some grandparents may even be anxious concerning their third generation. They actually borrow the anxiety of a future generation and labor under it today.

Do you know why we are anxious both about today and tomorrow? We are anxious because God does not have the full ground within us. We still give a "corner" of our being to other things, and that corner causes us trouble. However, if we give all the room in our heart to God, we shall not be anxious or troubled by whatever happens to us. If in our hearts there is no ground for anything or anyone other than God, He will always be our enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest. The environment may change, but He remains the same.

It is very difficult for us to give all the ground in our being to God because we are fallen and have a fallen nature. The very cells and fibers of our physical bodies and our entire soul, including our mind, will, and emotion, are fallen from God, from the enjoyment of God, and from rest in God. We have fallen into many things other than God. Anything, whether good or bad, that is not God Himself can be a source of anxiety. Only God is enjoyment; only God is satisfaction and rest. No matter how good something else may be, it cannot be our enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

A LIFE THAT LIVES GOD

The life of jubilee, that is, the life that lives in the jubilee, is a life that lives God. When some hear this, they may say, “Isn’t this the victorious life? Isn’t this a holy life, a life of the Spirit?” Yes, the life of jubilee is a victorious and holy life, and it is a life of the Spirit. But although we have heard many messages on living in the Spirit, we still do not live very much in the jubilee. Instead, we have the labor of struggling to improve ourselves, the labor of anxiety, the labor of dreaming, and the labor of suffering. What a hard labor it is to struggle to be good! It is an even harder labor to worry, to have anxiety. It is also a labor to dream, to have expectations. Every kind of expectation is a dream. Finally, there is the labor of suffering. When we have suffering, we cannot have enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest.

How can we be released from all this labor? The only way to be released is to take the Triune God as our portion. If we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, the all-inclusive Spirit will render us His bountiful supply. Then we shall enjoy God in Christ as the good land flowing with milk and honey, and we shall have enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest. We all need this jubilee.

The Gospel of Luke leads us into the life of the jubilee. The Man-Savior saves us from bondage into the jubilee. He saves us into the liberty, enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest of God’s jubilee.

The entire New Testament teaching concerning the Christian life involves the jubilee. When the kingdom comes, we shall enjoy a greater jubilee than we enjoy today. Then in eternity, in the New Jerusalem with the new heaven and new earth, we shall have the greatest jubilee. We shall enjoy God in full as our satisfaction and rest. Today we have a foretaste of this jubilee.

All day long we should enjoy God as our enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest. We should not struggle, worry, dream, or suffer. Even in the most difficult situation we can still enjoy the Lord. If we give all the ground in us to God and enjoy Him, not even martyrdom will be a suffering to us. Instead of struggle, anxiety, dreams, and suffering, we shall have the all-inclusive processed Triune God as our enjoyment, satisfaction, and rest. The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit will be ours. This is the enjoyment of the jubilee.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE AGE OF THE JUBILEE

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:8-10, 39-41; Luke 4:16-19; 2 Cor. 6:2; Gal. 5:1; Matt. 11:28; John 8:34, 36; Acts 26:18; Rom. 8:1-2, 19-23

A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE TRANSLATION OF THE CHINESE BIBLE

In these messages we will consider the year of jubilee. The Chinese term for *jubilee* is not found in traditional Chinese writings; it was invented by the translators of the Chinese Bible, which is one of the best translations in the world. In the early days some of the Western missionaries who came to China knew the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek languages. After their arrival in China, they learned the Chinese language and desired to translate the Bible into Chinese. As they were translating the Bible, each of the missionaries would retain a top Chinese scholar as his assistant. According to their knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, the missionaries would first use spoken Chinese to express the meaning in the original languages and then ask their assistants to compose into proper writing what they had expressed in spoken Chinese. Whenever they encountered a word or phrase that did not exist in Chinese, they had to invent a new word or phrase. Many of these uniquely created terms are popularly used today and are exceptionally valuable, such as the Chinese equivalents for *Jesus, Christ, justification, redemption, sanctification,* and *jubilee.* We truly thank and praise the Lord for the newly invented vocabulary in the Chinese Bible.

Many people do not realize the difficulties encountered in translating the Bible into Chinese in the early days. Many phrases in the original languages of the Bible do not exist in Chinese. For example, certain phrases in the original text of the Bible have the meaning of *in,* such as *in God, in love, in the light, in life,* and *in Christ.* However, such expressions using *in* do not exist in Chinese phraseology. Instead, Chinese expressions use *by, through, upon,* and other such words. In Chinese we say “walk by love” instead of “walk in love.” We do not say that one person is in another. Rather, we say that one is by or through another person or that one depends upon another. Yet, *in* is a crucial word in

the Bible. Therefore, the missionaries found it very difficult to translate the Bible into Chinese. Nevertheless, after much consideration they began to adopt expressions using *in*. Thus, we can see expressions such as *in Christ* and *in love* in the Chinese Bible. Still, many times the Chinese Bible does not use *in* but *by*. In the Chinese Bible *walk by love*, for example, equals *walk in love*. Nevertheless, *walk in love* has a deeper denotation. We are saved in Christ, not merely by Christ, that is, not merely by depending upon Christ. For example, when taking a steamboat, we sail on the sea not by depending upon or hanging on to the boat. We would soon lose our strength to hang on to the boat, especially if a strong wave came along. Rather, we sail on the sea by staying in the boat. In the same way we are saved not merely by depending upon Christ but by being in Christ.

CHRIST AS OUR GOOD LAND TO BE OUR INHERITANCE

In the Chinese Bible the term *hsi-nien* for *the year of jubilee* is a new invention. *Hsi-nien* is a good term, yet most people do not understand what it means. Since this particular term was invented during the translation of the Bible into Chinese, we need to go back to the Bible for its original meaning. In the Bible this term is complicated. The first time it is mentioned is in Leviticus 25. At that time the children of Israel had been redeemed and delivered by God out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Formerly, they had fallen into the land of Egypt and were serving as slaves under Pharaoh, having neither freedom nor an inheritance. This typifies that, as the descendants of Adam, we fell into the world and became captives of Satan and slaves of sin. Egypt typifies the world; Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, typifies Satan; and the children of Israel typify God's people enslaved in the world. Today people in the world have fallen into the hands of Satan to be slaves of sin. They have no freedom or rest; instead, they are toiling every day. Today not only peddlers and porters but even prominent officials and distinguished persons are toiling. Everyone is toiling; the only difference is how they toil. However, the Lord Jesus as our real Moses was sent by God to deliver us out of the land of slavery into Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. This good land, the land of Canaan, is Christ Himself.

Through Moses God told His people that He would bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. Both milk and honey are produced by a combination of two kinds of lives—the animal life and the vegetable life. Milk is produced by cattle, which are of the animal life. However, milk cannot be

produced by the animal life alone; it also needs the vegetable life—grass. Thus, milk is a product of the animal life nourished by the vegetable life. The principle is the same with honey. Bees are animals, but without flowers, the plant life, they would not be able to produce honey. Therefore, the phrase *milk and honey* indicates that the good land is full of cattle, bees, grass, and flowers, not snakes and beasts. The good land flowing with milk and honey indicates that this land is full of the animal life and the plant life. In type, Christ is the issue of these two kinds of lives. When John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:29); this speaks of the animal life. The Lord referred to Himself as a grain of wheat that died (12:24); this speaks of the plant life. He is the mingling of two kinds of lives to produce milk and honey. All this signifies that Christ as the good land is full of life, rich to the uttermost, to be our supply for our enjoyment.

God brought His redeemed people out of Egypt, through their wandering in the wilderness, into the good land of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey. After the children of Israel had conquered the land, God, through Joshua and the high priest, divided the good land of Canaan into twelve different portions, and each tribe was allotted a portion. The descendants of Joseph received a double portion through Manasseh and Ephraim, whereas the tribe of Levi received no inheritance of land. The land allotted to each tribe was not according to each one's own idea; it was altogether God's decision as to which tribe would be in the north, which tribe would be in the south, and which tribe would be in the middle. Moreover, the allotment to each tribe was according to families. Thus, each family was allotted a piece of land, and each one in the household enjoyed the inheritance of the land. Therefore, when the Israelites entered into Canaan, everyone had their own portion. There were no landlords or capitalists, and neither were there paupers, beggars, or debtors.

CHRIST AS THE YEAR OF JUBILEE, THE YEAR OF GRACE, TO FALLEN MAN

The Israelites were redeemed and blessed by God and eventually were brought into the good land of Canaan, and each family was allotted their portion of the land. Under God's care, not only were the Israelites blessed, but even their land was blessed. Every seventh year the land did not have to yield its produce. In that year the Israelites and the land were to rest. In the

seventh year no one sowed his field, because this was the year ordained by God as the Sabbath year. Then after seven Sabbath years there was the Pentecostal year, the fiftieth year. The Pentecostal year was not just a Sabbath year; it was beyond human description. Because of this, the translators of the Chinese Bible struggled to invent the Chinese term *hsi-nien* for *the year of jubilee* to describe it. After the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, every fiftieth year was a year of jubilee to them. Fifty years signifies the entire course of fallen human life. The year of jubilee, which is the fiftieth year, signifies the conclusion of our fallen human life.

As we have seen, the Israelites were redeemed by God; they left Egypt, journeyed through the wilderness, and entered into Canaan. After entering into the land of Canaan, each family received a portion of the good land flowing with milk and honey for their rich enjoyment. However, some of the people were lazy and gluttonous. Lazy people like to eat, but they do not like to work. To be sure, one who is lazy and gluttonous becomes poor. In ancient times the people did not have much to sell, so when they became poor, they sold their land. However, if the land had been sold permanently, in just a few generations there would have been an extreme disparity between the rich and the poor. Therefore, God told the Israelites, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, because the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev. 25:23). They were not to sell their portion of land, the possession that they had received from God, into permanent ownership. This is unlike the sale of land today, in which once land is sold, it is sold forever. The longest duration for which a piece of land could be sold was fifty years. After a man sold his land, in the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, he as the original owner would receive back his land.

Furthermore, some of the people were so gluttonous and lazy that even after selling their land they were still in poverty, and they had no alternative but to sell themselves as slaves. Nevertheless, when the year of jubilee arrived, they no longer remained slaves but obtained their release. In the year of jubilee, which the Israelites were to sanctify, they proclaimed release throughout the land to all its inhabitants, and each one returned to his possession and to his family (vv. 9-10). No one needed to pay for redemption; everyone freely recovered his possession and his freedom. Therefore, in the fiftieth year no one was without land, and no one was in slavery. Therefore, the year of jubilee was a grace to them.

Isaiah 61:2 calls the year of jubilee "the acceptable year of Jehovah." This can also be translated as "the year of Jehovah's grace." This verse is included in the Scripture that the Lord Jesus read in Luke 4:17-19, where the above phrase reads, "the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee." In Isaiah it is the year of grace, whereas in the New Testament it is the year of jubilee. Therefore, the year of jubilee is the year of grace. Man became a vile sinner, not only lazy and gluttonous but also reckless and lawless. Laziness and gluttony made him so poor that he had to sell his possession, and recklessness and lawlessness caused him to become so destitute that he had to sell himself. Consequently, he fell into a situation in which he had neither his possession nor his freedom. However, in the year of jubilee every owner is returned to what he has sold, and everyone regains his freedom.

Politicians and philosophers have been trying their best to find ways to meet the needs of people, but the more "isms" they invent, the more people suffer. What the Bible teaches is far better than any theory or "ism." What we need is not a theory or an "ism" but the coming of the Lord Jesus into mankind. In His coming He was anointed by Jehovah to announce the gospel to the poor, and He was sent to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of God's acceptance of man, the year of jubilee, which is the year of grace. The year of jubilee is the time when God forgives and accepts man.

As a type in the Old Testament, the year of jubilee is recorded in Leviticus 25, and as a prophecy it is found in Isaiah 61. The type was given about fifteen hundred years before the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the prophecy was given about seven hundred years before His coming. During this time, however, the Jews were altogether ignorant of the significance of the year of jubilee in Leviticus 25 and the year of grace in Isaiah 61. Over the years they simply kept the regulations of the law according to their tradition, worshipping on every Sabbath day and going to the synagogues to listen to teaching. But one day the Lord Jesus came, and on a particular Sabbath day He entered the synagogue, picked up the scroll, and opened it to Isaiah 61, which prophesies that God would anoint the Lord Jesus with His Spirit to announce the gospel to the poor and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee. Then Jesus said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The Jews bore witness to Him and marveled at the words of grace proceeding out of His mouth (v. 22). However,

to this day they still do not understand the true meaning of these words of grace.

Today we understand the true significance of the words of grace spoken by the Lord. God created man with the purpose that man would be a vessel to contain Him for His expression. Hence, immediately after man was created, God gave Himself to man to be man's possession. The inheritance that God has given to us is God Himself. He has not given us anything other than Himself because, in God's view, everything else is dung. The inheritance spoken of in the Bible is the inheritance among the saints to be received by all those who believe into the Lord (Acts 26:18). This is God Himself. We are those who inherit God. Therefore, after God created Adam, He did not say much to him; He simply indicated that He wanted Adam to receive Him to be his real possession. However, due to his fall, man forsook God, lost God as his possession, and fell into the world. Consequently, man sold not only his own possession but also himself.

When considering human society, we may divide human beings into three categories: optimists, pessimists, and those in between. Many optimists are dreamers and persons without sobriety, and they are filled with imaginations about everything. In the eyes of pessimists, however, nothing is good. To them, China is not good, and America is also not good. When they are in one place, they say that another place is better, and when they are in the other place, they say that the first one was better after all. Those in between are neither overly optimistic nor overly pessimistic; they are very clearheaded. They teach their children to study hard, to endeavor, to be sure to graduate from college, and to pass the English language test so that they can go to the United States to study. If they do not obtain a Ph.D., at least they receive a master's degree. Then after getting their degree, they work even harder so that they can get married, have a family, and build up a career. However, regardless of whether they are optimists, pessimists, or in between, they have all lost God as their possession and have sold themselves to be slaves of Satan.

Ephesians 2:12 says that people living in the world today have no hope and are without God. Whether rich or poor, noble or base, civilized or barbaric, everyone is the same; all have no hope and are without God. Not only so, people today have fallen to such an extent that they have sold themselves to sin and Satan. Some people have sold themselves to sinful things, such as extravagant eating and drinking, sexual indulgence, gambling, and drug

addiction. With others it may not be as obvious; nevertheless, they also have sold themselves and are therefore without freedom, having no control over their own will. Those who are unmarried think that marriage is the way to be freed from problems. After marriage, however, they discover that instead of obtaining freedom they have entered a new kind of slavery. The basic problem is that man has sold himself and lost God; thus, he has completely lost his freedom and his own possession and has become a slave. Paul says in Romans 7:14, "I am fleshy, sold under sin." Not only the unbelievers but even many believers are still not wholly delivered from the slavery under Pharaoh.

Therefore, in the year of jubilee there are two main blessings: the returning of every man to his lost possession and the liberation from slavery. If we want to be truly free and able to enjoy God as our possession, we must receive the Lord Jesus as the real jubilee in us. If we have Him, our possession is recovered, and our freedom is returned to us. The Lord Jesus has released us so that we may have God as our possession and be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan in order that we may have real freedom. Every one of us who has experienced the grace of the Lord can testify that before we were saved, we had no freedom and no control over ourselves. Now that we have been saved, the Lord has released us from within so that we are no longer slaves. Not only so, we have been brought back to God as our possession. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest." We are no longer those who toil and are burdened; we are those who have freedom and enjoy rest. Furthermore, we are no longer poor; instead, we have God as our inheritance (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12). This is the meaning of the year of jubilee.

EVERYTHING BEING TO OUR SATISFACTION

The Lord told Paul, "I send you, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:17b-18). As we have seen, the inheritance referred to in this verse is God Himself. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul says, "Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Paul exhorts us to receive the Lord right away because now is the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee. The year of jubilee is a holy year, a year of grace. If we have jubilee, we have God; if we have God, we have grace.

The Chinese word for *jubilee* means "everything being to one's satisfaction." When everything is to our satisfaction, we are in the jubilee. *Jubilee* means having no worry or anxiety, no concern or care, no lack or shortage, no sickness or calamity, and no problems whatsoever, but rather having all benefits; hence, everything is to our satisfaction. How is it possible today for a person to have everything to his satisfaction? Every day not everything in our human life is to the satisfaction of our heart's desire. Perhaps things are satisfactory today, but tomorrow they may not be. Therefore, our human life is not always satisfying, and our environment is not always gratifying. Everything can be satisfying to us only after we have gained the all-inclusive Christ as our enjoyment. In Philippians 4 Paul indicates that he knew Christ and experienced Him to such an extent that everything was to his satisfaction. He says, "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content. I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack. I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me" (vv. 11b-13). It is not outward persons, matters, or things but Christ within who enables us to be calm and free of worries as we face all kinds of situations.

In the age of the Old Testament, which was the age of law before the coming of Christ, man was in the position of a slave. It was not until Christ came that He proclaimed the coming of the year of jubilee (Luke 4:16-21). It is easy to understand the year of jubilee as lasting only for a year. However, the word *year* implies an age. We may say that *the year of jubilee* refers to the age of the jubilee, not just to one year, the fiftieth year. The fiftieth year typifies an age, an era. Dispensationally, the age of jubilee is divided into two periods. One period is the New Testament age, which is the age of grace today; the other period is the age of the millennium, which is the fullness of the jubilee.

According to the dispensation, Christ has already come, so the age of jubilee is here, but we do not have the jubilee in us unless we have allowed the Lord Jesus to come into us. Thus, according to experience, Christ must come into us to be our jubilee. Not only so, even if we have believed into Christ and have allowed Him to come into us, unless we allow Him to live in us and unless we live by Him, we are not practically living in the jubilee. If we live by Christ in a certain matter and allow Him to live in us, we enjoy jubilee in that matter. In this way everything pertaining to that particular matter is to our satisfaction. In our married life, for example, if we allow Christ to live in us and we also live by Christ, then everything in our marriage will be to our satisfaction.

Whatever is unpleasant becomes pleasant, and whatever is not satisfying becomes satisfying. The same is true in going to school, in teaching school, and in doing business. If we allow Christ to live in us and if we live by Him, everything is to our satisfaction. Otherwise, everything is a problem, and nothing is a jubilee. In other words, when Christ comes into us, jubilee comes into us. Do not think that just because we are saved, we have the jubilee. Christ is our jubilee whenever we live by Him, but He is not our jubilee when we do not live by Him.

The year of jubilee is Christ; therefore, the year of jubilee is the year of grace, because grace is God Himself in Christ to be our enjoyment. When we hear the gospel, we hear the jubilee. Once we repent and believe into the Lord, jubilee enters into us. From then on, at any time and in any matter, in dealing with anyone or anything, if we live by Christ, Christ is our jubilee. Sometimes we may have the painful experience of putting Christ aside and thus losing God temporarily. Once we have lost God, we have sold ourselves and become slaves again. However, once we begin anew to enjoy the Lord Jesus, we have God and we enjoy freedom. At this time, within us everything is to our heart's satisfaction, and the jubilee is in us. We are happy and rejoicing, we prosper, and we live long. This is the meaning of the jubilee.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE POSSESSION OF THE JUBILEE

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:9-13; Psa. 16:5, 2; 90:1; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14; Col. 1:12; Eph. 2:12; Luke 15:11-24

In the previous chapter we saw something concerning the age of the jubilee. The jubilee refers not only to a day or a year but to an entire period of time. In typology the jubilee lasted a year, but in fulfillment it refers to the entire New Testament age and the millennium. To God's chosen people the entire New Testament age is the age of the jubilee. In this chapter we will consider another crucial point—the possession of the jubilee.

THE SITUATION OF FALLEN MAN

The Bible calls the fiftieth year among the Israelites the year of jubilee. In that year every owner was returned to his lost possession, and everyone who had sold himself as a slave regained his freedom. Exodus 1 shows us that when God's elect, the Israelites, fell into Egypt, they not only lost their possession but were afflicted and enslaved by Pharaoh, king of Egypt. This is a picture depicting the condition of fallen man. A person living on the earth has two things: himself and his possessions. Whatever a person has can be put into one of these two categories. We all have ourselves; in this respect we are all equal. With regard to our possessions, however, we are not equal; some may have houses, lands, stocks, bank accounts, a wife, children, and grandchildren as their possessions. However, fallen man has lost everything and even sold himself as a slave.

The children of Israel fell from the good land into Egypt, the land of slavery, and eventually they lost everything. The land of Canaan, which God had given to them, was no longer theirs. It was not that the land left them but that they left the land. They left their possession, the good land of Canaan, and brought everything with them into Egypt. After losing the good land, they lost themselves; they had no freedom and became Pharaoh's slaves. This is the fullest type in the Bible depicting fallen mankind. According to this picture, as fallen mankind, we have lost our possession, and we have also sold ourselves, becoming slaves who own nothing. This was the situation of the children of

Israel in the land of Egypt, and it is also the situation of the entire human race.

THE JUBILEE BEING AN AGE OF ECSTASY FOR OUR SALVATION

In the previous chapter we defined the Chinese term for *jubilee* as "everything being to one's satisfaction." In the jubilee all things are pleasant and satisfying to our heart, and we are free from anxiety, at ease, excited, and exultant. In English the word *jubilee* denotes a rejoicing, a joyful shouting. The Hebrew word for *jubilee* is *yobel*, which means "a joyful noise," "a shouting with the blasting of a trumpet," and "a proclamation." It is a proclamation not of sorrow or lamentation but of the gospel, the good news of great joy.

When the children of Israel, God's chosen people, fell into a pitiful situation, God came to redeem them through Moses out of the land of Egypt that they might gain their freedom. When God led them out of Egypt, He performed a great miracle by separating the waters of the sea for them to pass through. Then, when they crossed the Red Sea and saw their enemies drowned and buried, they were in ecstasy, shouting and dancing for joy. Miriam led them to sing with great jubilation on the bank of the Red Sea. Fighting was the men's job, whereas singing was the women's specialty. We should be women in this way before God, and the more excited we are, the better. We should not remain in oldness, embracing the traditional way of Christianity, the way of having a Sunday morning service in a rigid manner. Instead, we should exult, as Psalm 100:1 says: "Make a joyful noise to Jehovah, all the earth." In Hebrew, *make a joyful noise* means to shout together noisily to Jehovah. However, the Chinese translators dared not translate it in this way and therefore rendered it as "shout for joy unto the Lord." Ezra is another book in the Bible that has a record of people making a joyful noise. When the foundation of the temple was laid, after the children of Israel had returned to Jerusalem from their captivity, all the people shouted with a loud shout. They could not discern the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of weeping, for the people shouted with a loud shout (3:11-13). Some may ask, "Doesn't 1 Corinthians 14:40 say that in the meetings all things should be done becomingly and in order?" This is true, but the Bible has not only 1 Corinthians 14 but also the Psalms. There are many verses in the Psalms that

tell us to make a joyful noise and to rejoice, and not only to rejoice but also to exult and leap for joy. When the jubilee came, millions of Israelites made a joyful noise in a loud and spontaneous way, shouting with joy, even at the same time. Today choirs are orderly because they sing in a rigid way, without any jubilation, but if we all sing with excitement, it is hard to be altogether orderly.

The jubilee is an age of ecstasy. The New Testament age is an age of ecstasy, and a Christian is a person in ecstasy. Over fifty years ago, Brother Nee said, "If, as a Christian, you have never reached the point of being beside yourself, you are not up to the standard." He added that we should be beside ourselves before God but soberminded before men. Some seize this word and say, "See, didn't Brother Nee say that we should be soberminded?" Yes, we need to be soberminded before men, but have we ever been beside ourselves before God? The Bible has many sides; we cannot look only at one side. Yes, we should be soberminded before men, but to be soberminded does not necessarily mean to be quiet. To shout in the meetings is not to be deranged and to yell in a frenzied way. We may shout for joy and still be soberminded. On the one hand, we rejoice and make a joyful noise, but on the other hand, we are soberminded, exercising restraint. If we, as Christians, have never reached a point of being beside ourselves or being "crazy," if we have never been in ecstasy before God, we are not up to the standard. Rather, this shows that we do not have a sufficient enjoyment of God. If we have a sufficient enjoyment of God, we will leap for joy. Even as an old man, I am often beside myself before God, yet those around me may not be aware of it. It seems that I am serious every day, coming and going according to a prescribed schedule, yet God knows the real condition. We have a real reason to be beside ourselves. If there is no joy in us, we cannot be beside ourselves, but if we are always enjoying God, we will reach a point where we cannot help but be beside ourselves. In the same way, because the children of Israel enjoyed the grace of God's all-sufficient redemption, when they crossed the Red Sea, they shouted and leaped for joy, praising and singing with a loud voice, and cheering unceasingly.

After this, God brought them through the wilderness into Canaan and allotted the good land of Canaan to them. Each tribe received an allotment of land, and each family within each tribe also received an allotment. Furthermore, each household within each family enjoyed their portion of the allotment. Therefore, once they entered Canaan, everyone possessed a portion

of land. There were no rich ones or poor ones, because all the households were equal, each possessing a portion of land. There was no need for anyone to become a slave, because everyone was his own landlord. There were no small landlords or big landlords; they were all the owners of their own land. Moreover, they lived a wealthy life because the land was a land flowing with milk and honey.

However, after receiving their allotted portions of the land, some of them slowly declined and became lazy. Some who were gluttonous and slothful gradually became poor. They began to sell what they owned, and even after selling their land, they eventually had to sell themselves as slaves. God, who is wise, foreknew all these things, so He set up a simple ordinance. In the forty-ninth year after the children of Israel entered Canaan, the trumpet was to be blown on the tenth day of the seventh month throughout all the land. The tenth day of the seventh month was the Day of Expiation. Based on the expiation for sin, freedom was proclaimed to all the people of Israel. Therefore, if someone had sold his land, he would be returned to his land, and if someone had sold himself as a slave, he would regain his freedom. There may have been many who had sold their land and themselves. Those who had lost their possession and had become slaves must have danced and been in ecstasy when they heard the blast of the horn, the silver trumpet, proclaiming the jubilee. This shows the significance of the jubilee. God's wisdom is immense and incredible. At the arrival of the fiftieth year, there was no more selling of land or of persons; every household had a portion of land once more. Every fifty years there was a balance of the ownership of the land; this was the fairest way to deal with the land.

IN REDEMPTION GOD BEING OUR POSSESSION FOR OUR ENJOYMENT

We must now consider what man's possession is. Psalm 16:5 says, "Jehovah is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; / You maintain my lot." An inheritance is a possession. The land is not our real possession; rather, God is our possession. The land is merely a type, a symbol, and a figure. How can we say that God is man's possession? From Genesis 1:26 and Romans 9:21-23 we can see clearly that man was created by God to be His vessel. A vessel as a container is empty by itself; hence, it needs content. The content of a vessel is its possession. An empty cup is a destitute cup. One who is thirsty desires a

drink, but an empty cup cannot quench his thirst. To be empty is to be poor, and to be poor is to be empty. Man is a vessel of God; hence, if man does not have God, he is empty and poor. The first chorus of *Hymns,* #1080 says, "Vanity! Vanity! / Vanity! Vanity! / 'Tis chasing the wind, / It's all vanity!" The last chorus says, "Christ without, all is vain! / Christ within, all is gain! / All things are vain, / Christ only is gain!" Man without Christ is vain. Hence, man's real possession is not land or a house, and neither is it a wife or children; man's possession is God. God created man as His vessel to contain Him. If we as a vessel do not have God as our content, we are empty and poor.

After God created Adam, He put Adam in front of the tree of life, indicating that He wanted Adam to receive the tree of life; besides this, He indicated little else to Adam. What is the tree of life? The tree of life is God. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst" (John 6:35). Psalm 36:9 also says, "With You is the fountain of life." The Lord is the tree of life and the river of life; he who believes into Him eats and drinks Him and is satisfied. To be sure, God is our possession. Furthermore, according to Psalm 16:5, God is not only our inheritance but also the portion of our cup. In this verse, *inheritance* is a general expression, whereas *cup* is a more personal expression. God is not only our inheritance but also the portion of our cup for our enjoyment. God is not only our possession but also our real enjoyment. Moreover, God maintains our allotted portion.

God presented the tree of life to Adam, but Adam did not take it; hence, he lost his portion of the enjoyment of God. Adam fell from God's presence, and as a result, all the people of the world lost God. Therefore, Ephesians 2:12 says that people living in the world today have no hope and are without God. The prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 is a portrait of all mankind. From kings and presidents to street sweepers and beggars, everyone is a prodigal son who has become penniless and who lives with "hogs." The fall of man is a fall from God, a fall from man's possession. Man has lost God as his possession and enjoyment. This is the first step of man's loss.

The second step is that in the fall, man sold himself to sin. Paul says in Romans 7:14, "I am fleshy, sold under sin." As fallen sinners, we have lost God, and we are without God. Not only so, we have sold our members to sin to become slaves of sin (6:19). Sin dominates man. Today people in the world, no matter who they are, are under the domination of sin. Some people have a

higher degree of intellect and thus are controlled by their reason. For the sake of society, their relatives, and their friends, they are not reckless outwardly, but they are still reckless in their mind. Who is not sold to sin in his heart? We have all sold ourselves to sin.

God called Paul and said to him, "I send you, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:17b-18). This inheritance is God as our possession, that is, God as our land with its rich produce. Today man needs land to provide food for his living and a lodging for his rest. As we have seen, Psalm 16:5 says, "Jehovah is the portion of my inheritance," and Psalm 90:1 says, "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." *Hymns*, #600 is written based on these two psalms. The general idea of the hymn is that God is our eternal portion, our everlasting all, and our safe abode. God is our land and our dwelling place. It is no wonder that when the Lord Jesus came, He said, "Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Moreover, in John 15:4 He said, "Abide in Me." Today all men have lost God as their possession, and they have no real dwelling place. Fallen people are all drifting about and wandering without a home. Although they may live in high-rise buildings or large mansions, within them there is no rest, no dwelling place. Man is wandering because he has lost God. God is man's real dwelling place and real possession.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL BEING THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S JUBILEE, THAT MAN MAY BE SAVED AND RETURNED TO HIS POSSESSION TO ENJOY GOD

When we preach the gospel, we proclaim God's jubilee to others. In Luke 4:18-19 the Lord Jesus made a proclamation concerning the coming of the jubilee. The proclamation of the jubilee in Luke 4 governs the central thought of the whole Gospel of Luke, and the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is an excellent illustration of the jubilee. Before examining this parable, however, we must consider a few verses. In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul says, "In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, who is the

pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory." What does it mean to be saved? To be saved is to return to our inheritance, to return to God, to come back to God and enjoy Him anew as our possession. God is our inheritance, and after we are saved, the Spirit of God is in us as the pledge, the guarantee, the proof, and the security of our inheritance. In Greek the word for *pledge* or *guarantee* also means "sample." A sample is a foretaste, guaranteeing the full taste in the future. Today the Holy Spirit is in us as the guarantee, the sample, of God as our enjoyment, giving us a foretaste and guaranteeing our full enjoyment of God in the future. Therefore, to be saved is to gain God. We have not only obtained salvation, but even more we have obtained God. When we have God, we have everything; without God, we have nothing. We are saved only when we have God, and with God we have everything. Therefore, God is our inheritance.

Furthermore, Colossians 1:12 says, "Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light." Today God has become our blessed portion in Christ. Apart from Christ, people live in the world, having no hope and being without God. Outside of Christ, we are without God in the world. We, however, can no longer say that we are apart from Christ. We are in Christ, and we have God. This is not merely a saying but a reality. Perhaps some may ask, "Why is it, then, that some Christians are still unhappy?" We may illustrate this with electric lights. Lights may be installed in a building, and the electricity may be connected, but if we do not use the switch to turn them on, the lights do not shine. There is electricity, but there are no lights; practically, this is the same as having no electricity. This is the situation of many Christians. Even though they have God, they are like lights that do not shine because they do not "turn on the switch" by taking God as their portion.

As Paul says in Ephesians 2:12, we were apart from Christ, having no hope and without God in the world. Today, however, we are no longer apart from Christ. Rather, we are in Christ. We have God, and we "turn on the switch" to enjoy God as our possession. The jubilee is altogether related to our possession, and our possession is God. When we have God, we have the jubilee; when we have God, everything is to our satisfaction. Our preaching of the gospel is our blowing of the trumpet of redemption to proclaim to the world, "Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of

salvation," the year of jubilee (2 Cor. 6:2). Though man has fallen far from God, God is waiting for him, longing for his return.

We may now consider the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. We are all very familiar with the parable of the prodigal son's return. Some have even known this story from their childhood. In this story the Lord Jesus spoke of a certain father who had two sons. The younger one, being befuddled, asked the father to give him his share of the inheritance. After he received his inheritance, he went out and lived dissolutely until he spent it all. Then he had no choice but to go and join himself to a citizen of a "distant country," which signifies the satanic world. This citizen, who may be compared to Satan, was more oppressive than Pharaoh and sent him to feed the hogs. Pharaoh sent the people to build cities, but in this parable a citizen sent the son to feed hogs, which is worse. Building cities is a matter of sweating and making bricks, but in order to feed hogs, one has to associate with them. Eventually, the son desired to eat the carob pods which the hogs ate, yet even then his hunger was not satisfied. As a result, the prodigal son came to his senses and returned to his father's house.

A Chinese proverb says, "The return of a prodigal son is more precious than gold." Many people refer to this parable when they preach the gospel. However, this parable is mainly concerned not with the prodigal son's return but with the father who looks for his son and accepts him with embraces and affectionate kisses. The father's acceptance of the son was the "year of jubilee" to him. A father's great fear is that his children might run away from home; this is a very painful thing. Although it is painful for an only son to run away from home, we may think that a father of many children would not care as much about one son. However, a father treasures every one of his children. A father even cannot bear it when a son runs out of the house for a short time. In this parable the father not only looked occasionally for his son, but he must have stood at the door of his house every day, eagerly waiting for his son's return. Therefore, when the son returned, the father saw him from afar and immediately ran to him to embrace him and kiss him (v. 20). This was his acceptance of the son. The day of the return of the prodigal son was a year of jubilee to him. That was the year of grace, the acceptable year of God. God accepts all fallen and repentant prodigal sons.

According to spiritual significance, this story depicts a fallen man who completely lost his possession in the house of God the Father. He left his own

possession and sold himself as a slave. Today all fallen people, regardless of their profession, whether presidents, kings, or poor beggars, are "feeding hogs." To feed hogs is to engage in unclean business. We may say that a profession in politics is dark, but in reality, which profession is not dark? If politics is the darkest profession, then commerce is the second darkest, but is education not dark? Those who have a Ph.D., medical doctors, and everyone else are also in darkness. Everyone is "feeding hogs." The most obvious result of feeding hogs is to become unclean; this indicates one's engagement in unclean things. In today's society, which profession does not practice giving and receiving bribes? If one does not give bribes, he has no way to succeed. Whose money is earned in an absolutely clean manner? It is no wonder that the Lord Jesus gives money a name, "the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke 16:9). The very nature of money is unrighteous. Even if a person seems to be righteous, as long as he makes money and acquires a fortune, he is "feeding hogs"; he is engaged in unclean business. Perhaps when some hear this, they may say, "Since this is the case, from now on I will give up my schooling and abandon my job." This is not what we mean. In this world people have to work lest they become vagrants and loafers. How can one eat without working? Rather, this story is a picture showing us that once a fallen man leaves God, he goes to "feed hogs," regardless of what profession he is in. We should consider seriously whether we are clean in our work. All fallen people working in society are "wallowing in a pigpen," although some eat better "carob pods" than others. Everyone is "feeding hogs" and eating "carob pods."

When the prodigal son considered his situation, he may have asked himself, "Why am I doing this? My father is very rich, so why should I perish here in famine?" This is a sinner's repentance. However, the concept of a sinner after his repentance is to return home to work. Therefore, the prodigal son went on to say, "I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (15:18-19). Then he rose up and went to his father to speak according to what he had prepared. However, the father did not want to hear what he had to say, so before the son could finish his speaking, the father interrupted him and told the servants, "Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry" (vv. 22-23). The fattened calf signifies Christ, who is God. God in

Christ has become the fattened calf for the enjoyment of the repentant and returning prodigal sons. To us, this is the jubilee.

Therefore, Luke 15:11-32 is an illustration of the jubilee proclaimed in Luke 4:18-19. The prodigal son sold his possession and himself. One day he returned to his possession and his father's house. That was a jubilee, a liberation, and everything became pleasant and satisfying. In the father's house there was only enjoyment with eating and drinking; there was no labor. This corresponds to Leviticus 25:11, which says that the people were neither to sow nor reap in the year of the jubilee; they should only eat and enjoy. Furthermore, they could only eat of the produce directly from the field. This means that they ate what God supplied without the need of their own labor. Similarly, the father in Luke 15 did not listen to what the son had to say about being a hired servant. Instead, the father desired to give the son the fattened calf for him to eat and enjoy. No one is unworthy; rather, all are worthy because God says, "I have accepted you." The jubilee is the age, the time, of God's acceptance, indicated by the father's acceptance of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

The jubilee in the Bible is the age of the gospel, which is this age. Once we repent and turn to God by receiving the Lord Jesus, we obtain God within. This is the beginning of our jubilee. From that day onward, our whole life is a jubilee, and we enjoy the jubilee forever. We can continually enjoy God as our possession. We thank and praise the Lord that our jubilee will be richer and richer from now unto eternity. This is the meaning of the possession of the jubilee.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FREEDOM OF THE JUBILEE

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:39-41, 54; Luke 4:18-19; Acts 26:18; John 8:34, 36; Rom. 7:14; 6:6-7; 8:2; Gal. 5:1

ENJOYING GOD AS THE POSSESSION OF THE JUBILEE AND OBTAINING THE FREEDOM OF THE JUBILEE

In the preceding chapter we saw the possession of the jubilee, and in this chapter we will see the freedom of the jubilee. Possession and freedom are both positive, but there is a difference between them. Some may say that they would rather have freedom than a possession, but this concept is not correct. Our possession is God. We cannot renounce God, saying that we want freedom instead of God, because without God there is no freedom. Our possession is God, and our freedom comes from our enjoyment of God. When we have our possession and enjoy our possession, the result is that we have freedom. Freedom is to be without oppression or deficiency. Some people apparently are not oppressed, but they are poor. Only those who have suffered the misery of poverty really know what poverty is. Poverty is a tremendous bondage. Nothing oppresses people more than poverty; it can oppress people to the extent that they have no escape. How we thank God that today He is our possession, and when we enjoy Him, we have freedom!

Without the types of the Old Testament, we would have no way to understand the plain words of the New Testament. Thus, the Old Testament types are very precious to us. Kindergarten students can appreciate pictures and models. If we speak about an airplane, they may not understand what an airplane is, but if we show them a picture or a model of an airplane, they will immediately understand. The Bible seems to use the “kindergarten teaching method”: the New Testament contains plain words, and the Old Testament contains pictures. The New Testament clearly tells us that without God, we lose our possession; that is, we do not enjoy God, and consequently we sell ourselves into slavery. We have lost God and have been sold into sin. However, if the Bible only said this without giving us a picture, we would still not be clear. This is why the Old Testament types are helpful. Each point in the types

completely corresponds to the clear words in the New Testament. We need the proper understanding to comprehend these types. Some people, when they read the Old Testament types, such as the ordinances concerning the tabernacle and the offerings in Exodus and Leviticus, feel that they are insignificant and hard to understand. When I first began to read the Bible, I felt the same way. Whenever I came to genealogies, types, and prophecies, I wanted to skip over them. Today, however, I can say that some of the most precious items in the Bible are the types.

The Old Testament describes the year of jubilee very well. Leviticus 25 is a long chapter, but it has only two main points. The first point is that in the year of jubilee all those who had lost their possession were returned to it. The possession was not returned to its original owner; it was the owner who was returned to his possession. On the one hand, man left and lost his possession, but on the other hand, his possession lost him. Did we lose God, or did God lose us? Both are true; we lost God, and God lost us. As we have seen, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is an illustration of the year of jubilee. We are all the real prodigal sons. Today even kings, presidents, prime ministers, and cabinet officials are prodigal sons. In this parable, did the son lose his father, or did the father lose his son? This parable mainly does not speak of the son's losing the father. In verse 24 the father said, "This son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found." From this verse we can see that the father's losing the son is emphasized more than the son's losing the father. Therefore, in the year of jubilee we mainly do not have our possession restored to us; rather, we are returned to our possession. Primarily, God is not restored to us; we are returned to God. The greatest blessing in the year of jubilee is that we are returned to God as our possession. This is the first main point in Leviticus 25.

MAN HAVING REAL FREEDOM BY ENJOYING GOD AS HIS POSSESSION

The other main point in Leviticus 25 is that we have obtained freedom. Because we were poor, we not only lost God as our possession but also sold ourselves as slaves. Since we sold ourselves, we lost our freedom. However, when the year of jubilee comes, we not only are returned to God as our possession, but we also obtain freedom and are released from the bondage of slavery. Today many people talk about freedom, civil rights, and human rights,

but if man does not enjoy God, he cannot have real freedom. When today's politicians speak about freedom, they say nothing about our being returned to God as our possession; therefore, nothing of what they say is of a proper nature. Beginning at least with the French Revolution two hundred years ago, people have been pursuing democracy in order to obtain freedom. However, when people only speak about freedom without being returned to God, the result is that many problems are produced, and many evil things are brought in. Who has obtained real freedom? If someone says that he is so free that he can go freely to gamble, he does not realize that he has fallen into the slavery of gambling and is under more bondage than ever. Seventy years ago in China, women and young people had little freedom. They had to rise when they saw their fathers, grandfathers, or uncles come in the room, and they yielded their seats to them politely. Today in America, however, most children do not yield their seats to their father or even to their grandfather; in this sense, they are very free. However, many children in former times had true freedom, while today's children have the wrong freedom, a freedom under the yoke of slavery. In the same principle, the yoke of slavery borne by many women today is worse than before because many women today do not have God. The biblical principle is that we must first be returned to God before we can have freedom. If we want to obtain freedom without being returned to God, the result is that we do not have true freedom.

THE TRUE HUMAN CONDITION—POOR, CAPTURED, AND OPPRESSED

Man has lost God and is without God because of the fall. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of the year of jubilee, the first thing it teaches is that man must be returned to God. Then when we have God and enjoy Him, we have the real freedom. According to the Old Testament type, when the year of jubilee came, a person who had sold himself into slavery was returned to his own possession and to his own family to be reunited with his relatives, and at the same time he was also released from the yoke of slavery and was no longer a slave. In the New Testament age, in Luke 4, the Lord spoke of the condition of three kinds of people. Verse 18 says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed." The three categories of people in this verse are the poor, the captives, and the oppressed. On the one hand,

these are three kinds of people, but on the other hand, they are three human conditions. When we lost God, we became poor, and the result of poverty was that we were captured. Then after being captured, we were oppressed. When the year of jubilee comes, however, we obtain freedom and are delivered from poverty, captivity, and oppression.

When I was young, I did not know whether *the poor* denotes those who are poor materially or poor spiritually. Some may say that *poor* denotes being poor in material things, and material poverty symbolizes spiritual poverty. This way of explaining this verse is wrong. The really poor people are not those who have no money. The really poor ones are those who do not have God. We may consider today's millionaires; even though they have much wealth, if the emptiness in the depths of their being cannot be satisfied, are they not poor? To be without God is to be really poor. Material riches mean nothing. Paul said that material matters were like refuse to him. He said, "On account of whom [Christ] I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). He counted all things as refuse for Christ's sake. The word *refuse* here refers to dog food, that is, dregs and rubbish that are thrown to the dogs. What Paul means by this is that if a man on earth does not have God, then whatever he enjoys apart from God is like dog food. Only God is man's real food. The Lord Jesus said that He is the bread of life. Apart from Him, everything is dog food or worse than dog food. When the prodigal son in Luke 15 left his father, he left his inheritance. As a result, he had to eat hog food, which may be worse than dog food. There was an abundance of food in his father's house, but he himself was so poor that he had to eat hog food. Please remember that it is not those who do not have money who are poor; rather, it is the people who do not have God who are poor.

Hence, the phrase *announce the gospel to the poor* in Luke 4 actually means to preach the gospel to those who are without God. This corresponds to Ephesians 2:12, which says that formerly we lived in the world, having no hope and being without God. Why did we not have hope? It was because we did not have God. People who live in the world without God do not have hope. Whether kings, queens, or presidents, all are poor because they live in the world without God. We must not misunderstand the Bible. Announcing the gospel to the poor does not refer to preaching the gospel to those who are poor in material things. Otherwise, millionaires, bankers, and presidents would not need the gospel, since they are not poor in material things. The

accurate meaning here is that all men, whether rich or poor, honored or despised, need the gospel, and they need to gain God.

Moreover, Luke 4:18 says, "To proclaim release to the captives." America today is the freest country; no one can wrongly capture anyone here. In reality, however, nearly everyone is a captive. The leaders have been captured, and the people have also been captured. Who captured them? According to Acts 26:18, the Lord told Saul of Tarsus that He would send him to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God." Strictly speaking, we have all been captured by Satan. All human beings, regardless of their occupation, gender, or age, are captives of Satan and are under his authority. Apparently, human beings are free, but actually in the whole world no one is free, because all are captives under the authority of Satan. First John 5:19 says, "The whole world lies in the evil one." All the people of the world remain passively in the sphere of the evil one's influence, under the evil one's usurpation and manipulation.

The Bible never says that fallen people are the slaves of Satan; rather, it says that fallen people are the slaves of sin and the captives of Satan. Satan has captured us, and sin has enslaved us. Being a captive is much like being a slave, but there are some basic differences. In Romans 7:14 Paul says, "I am fleshy, sold under sin." To be sold under sin means that we have sold ourselves as slaves to sin. However, we are not the captives of sin; we are the captives of Satan and the slaves of sin.

Now we must go further to see what sin is. The common definition is that rape, robbery, sorcery, and fornication are sin. Likewise, extravagant eating, drunkenness, sexual indulgence, and gambling are also sin. Similarly, murder and arson are sin; not honoring one's father and mother is sin; stealing and looting are sin; lying and cheating are sin; and cursing and hating are sin. However, in the intrinsic sense, these are not the real sin. Sin is something intrinsic in man's being; murder and arson are merely the outward, sinful acts that are carried out and manifested. They may be regarded as the results of sin, but they are not sin itself. What, then, is sin? The Chinese followers of Confucius studied this matter carefully. The result of their studies produced the two great and opposing theories of human nature in Confucianism: the theory that human nature is good and the theory that human nature is evil. Advocates of the former asserted that man is born good, while proponents of the latter maintained that man is born evil. However, they did not carry out

their research to the extent of knowing the real meaning of sin. In actuality, sin is just Satan. Romans 7 says that sin can dwell in us (v. 20). Normally we say that a table is placed in a house; no one would say that a table dwells in a house. Only living persons can dwell in a house. The fact that sin dwells in us proves that sin is in us as a living person. Romans 7 also says that the sin that dwells in us has killed us (v. 11). A table cannot kill, but sin kills. Before sin kills a person, it oppresses him, forcing him to do what he does not want to do. Sin is a "gangster" who coerces people to do what they do not desire to do. Paul said that he did not want to covet, but the sin that dwelt in him made him unable to control himself. He said that to will to do good was present with him, but to work out the good was not, because someone who was stronger than he was dwelt in him. This one not only overcame him but also killed him. In this way the Bible reveals that sin is Satan.

Before Satan entered into man, sin was not embodied; after Satan came into man, sin was embodied in man. There is no school of sin to teach people to sin. No parents would teach their children how to sin, but it is remarkable that as children grow, they spontaneously commit sins without anyone teaching them. This is because the sin that dwells in them drives them to commit sins. As a person's will develops, he may feel that sinning is not good, and he therefore no longer wants to commit sin. However, the sin within him does not let him go, and it forces him to do that which he does not want to do. We can see this particularly in those who smoke opium, drink, and gamble. When some people do these things, even their visage appears demonic. They are very clear that if they keep gambling, they will lose all their money and become poor, but the addiction within them drives and pressures them to gamble. An addiction is a lust. Addiction to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs comes from Satan. Once a person has become addicted to gambling, he cannot stop himself from gambling, and once someone has become addicted to alcohol, he cannot stop himself from drinking. When his addiction to alcohol makes its demand, he must have a drink, and when the addiction to gambling rises up, he must gamble. There are no exceptions to this pattern. After the addiction abates and a person comes to his senses, he regrets what he has done. He regrets that he has shamed his parents, wife, and children. Then he may call upon heaven and earth to witness his oath that he will never do it again. However, only a few hours later when the addiction returns, he is powerless against it.

Thus, there is a sinning factor, an addiction to sinning, within man. This factor, this addiction, is Satan himself, and man is his captive. He has captured man and dwells in him as the inciting sin. First Satan captured us; then he came to dwell in us as the inciter, the instigator, of our sins. The result is that he has become our illegal master, and we have become his captives to the extent that we are unable to do good and can only commit sins. In the Bible, Satan is also called Beelzebul. According to the original language of the Bible, Beelzebul means "the lord of the dunghill," from the name meaning "the lord of flies." The top of a dunghill is covered with flies. As the lord of the dunghill, Satan specializes in leading flies to feed on dung; hence, he is also the lord of flies. Since he is the lord of flies, all sinners are like flies that follow Satan to "feed on dung." They go wherever there is a stench, following Beelzebul to feast on dung. Even upper-class people are like flies. Beelzebul can disguise himself with a high-class appearance so that all the "flies" following him appear to be of a high class. Such persons hold dancing parties in upper-class places, but such places are merely cultured "dunghills." These people dress nicely and are very cultured, and when they dance, they seem elegant. In actuality, however, they are "eating dung."

All the descendants of Adam are the captives of Satan; everyone has been captured by him. After he captured us, he entered into us as Beelzebul, the lord of flies, and began leading us about to commit sins. Deep in his heart, no one wants to sin, but when a person becomes addicted and is stirred up by Beelzebul, he has to follow, allowing himself to be led around "by the nose." Afterward, he regrets it and may say, "I am so stupid; what was I doing? Why did I have to do that?" Although deep in his heart no one wants to sin, eventually everyone sins. No one has control over himself, and everyone has become a slave of sin. This is why the Lord Jesus said, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

One who becomes angry at someone and then can immediately get over his anger may be considered to be a sage and a virtuous man. Logically, as saved ones, the saints, we should surpass the sages and virtuous ones, but can we quickly get over our anger? It is not easy to come back to the Lord after we get angry. Perhaps a person may be one who has learned the lessons well and is able to come back to the Lord and calm his anger. However, after such a one leaves the Lord's presence, his anger may return again when he sees the offending person. Wood and stones do not become angry, but no human being can avoid getting angry; only dead people do not get angry. All these

problems are due to the fact that man is under bondage and has no freedom. The sin within us is a real controlling power. In Romans 7:24 Paul says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" How we thank God for Romans 8:2, which says that in Christ the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and of death! We thank the Lord for His mercy. Many can testify that when they get angry, they can get over it very quickly, and the anger does not come back. This is because the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the bondage of sin.

BEING RELEASED AND HAVING REAL FREEDOM ONLY BY ENJOYING GOD AS THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

In Luke 4:18-19 the Lord Jesus quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to announce the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away in release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of jubilee." As we have seen, to announce the gospel to the poor is to preach the gospel to those who have lost God, and *those who are oppressed* refers to those in slavery. We should not think that the year of jubilee came to free us only on the day we were saved. Actually, the entire age of the New Testament is the age of the jubilee. We have our entire Christian life in the jubilee, living a life of liberty, release, and freedom from bondage.

Announcing the gospel to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, and sending away in release those who are oppressed are the freedoms of the jubilee. These are the blessings of the jubilee, the blessings of the gospel. The blessings of the gospel are the return to God and the gaining of God as our possession. Once we enjoy God as our possession, we are free. Only those who enjoy God do not commit sin and are really free. John 8:36 says, "If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed." If we want to be free, if we do not want to commit sin, then we must obtain the Son of God and enjoy Him. The Son of God today is the life-giving Spirit. This life-giving Spirit is the Spirit of life, who is in us as the law of the Spirit of life. Therefore, the law of the Spirit of life is just the Lord Himself, who passed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life. Every life has a law, so the Spirit of life also has a law. The law of the Spirit of life releases us from the law of sin. We enjoy the freedom of the jubilee not only at the

moment we believe in the Lord, but beginning from that day we should enjoy this freedom all our life and for eternity. This freedom comes from our enjoyment of God. He has become our possession for our enjoyment, and when we enjoy Him, we obtain freedom. This is how we have the real freedom and are no longer in bondage. However, if we do not enjoy God sufficiently, we will still be in bondage in many things.

In conclusion, the year of jubilee is for us to be returned to God as our possession and as our enjoyment so that we may become free and be released from all oppression. Thus, we are returned to God from the authority of Satan and are freed from the slavery of sin. Hence, it is useless to struggle and strive. The only effective way for us is to believe the gospel and enjoy God. Some may say, “I will go home and make up my mind not to be angry or lose my temper again,” but whereas one can make up his mind to do good, he does not have the power to perform the good. Making up our mind will not work; we must enjoy the Lord. We must learn to contact this true and living Lord to enjoy Him. In this way He becomes our release within us and our freedom. As a result, we have not only our possession but also our freedom.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LIVING OF THE JUBILEE

Scripture Reading: Lev. 25:10-12; Psa. 90:9-10; 73:14-17, 25; Eccl. 1:2-3; Rom. 8:19-21; Matt. 11:28; Phil. 4:6-7, 9; 1 Cor. 5:8; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19; 2 Cor. 12:9; 13:14

RECOVERING OUR LOST PORTION— LIVING THE LIFE OF THE JUBILEE IN THE AGE OF THE JUBILEE

In chapter seven we saw that the Lord has come to bring in the New Testament age as the age of the jubilee. In chapter eight we saw that the possession of the jubilee is God Himself. God has become our inheritance, the portion of our cup, and our eternal dwelling place in all generations. Since God is our inheritance, our enjoyment should be God. In chapter nine we saw the freedom of the jubilee. Freedom means release, to be freed from all bondage, all heavy burden, all oppression, and all enslavement. Paul says that all things were lawful to him, but he would not be brought under the power of anything to be its slave (1 Cor. 6:12). Everything in our life can be a bondage to us, and we can be slaves under any matter. To pursue education is to be enslaved, and to not pursue education is also to be enslaved. The poor are ruled by poverty, and the rich are ruled by money; the Chinese expression for *miser* refers to one who is a slave of money. The jubilee is a matter of possession and also of freedom. The jubilee is to return those who are poor and who have lost God back to God as their possession, and it is also to proclaim release.

In the holy year, the year of jubilee, freedom is proclaimed to all the people. Today in the age of democracy, people greatly promote freedom, but the result is that they have very little freedom. Based on nearly sixty years of observation, I have found that people are much more free when they do not pursue outward freedom. We may illustrate this with political freedom. Sixty years ago, there was a certain amount of political freedom in China. No one would interfere with others, taxation was simple, and people could freely travel without permits. Today, however, after much pursuit of freedom,

traveling is very troublesome, and there are many restrictions. People continually talk about liberty and seek for freedom, but eventually they are bound and restricted in every way. Wherever we go on the earth, there are bondage and restrictions. People often use doves to symbolize liberty. "Liberty doves" are released during celebrations, but after the doves are released, they never return. In the same manner, once freedom is "released," it "flies away." If we do not pursue freedom, we may enjoy some amount of freedom, but the more we talk about freedom, the more we lose it. Many people consider that America is free, but the freedom in America is an unrestrained freedom. There is little real freedom here. American society is full of entertainment, crime, dancing, gambling, and other matters. All these are very strong bondage. Americans fall into bondage because they are too free. As a result of this kind of freedom, they fall into indulgence and are enslaved. The Lord's salvation causes us to have real freedom. The Lord Jesus said, "If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). We can only enjoy real freedom when we have Christ, the Son of God.

THE REAL CONDITION OF HUMAN LIFE BEING VANITY

Now we will consider the living of the jubilee. The jubilee is not a mere doctrine or simply a declaration; the jubilee is a kind of living. When the year of jubilee came and the trumpet sounded, release was proclaimed throughout the land. This ushered in a practical living, on the one hand, of enjoying the life of rich possession and, on the other hand, of enjoying freedom. The jubilee is a type in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament it is fulfilled in all those who believe in the Lord. However, if we do not know the real condition of human life, we do not know how much we need the jubilee. Every person is like a glass filled with the wrong content. For the glass to contain the right drink, it must be emptied; to know our real condition is to be emptied. For this reason we will present a clear picture from the Bible of the real condition of human life. If we see this picture, we will not be deceived about human life.

Hymns, #1080, which was written based on Ecclesiastes, depicts the actual condition of human life. The real condition of life is neither good fortune nor misfortune. Actually, both good fortune and misfortune are useless. The true condition of human life can be summed up in one word, *vanity*. The wise King Solomon said that a man has no advantage in all his work which he does under the sun, and a generation goes and another generation comes, yet there

is no remembrance of those who were before; hence, all is vanity of vanities (1:2-11). All things of the human life are vanity, like pursuing after shadows and chasing after wind; they are fleeting and short-lived.

Psalm 90:1 says, "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place / In all generations." This declaration is the proclamation of the jubilee, but verse 9 says, "All our days have passed away in Your overflowing wrath; / We bring our years to an end like a sigh." These words thoroughly portray the real condition of human life. There is nothing much worth singing about in the entire life of a man. When Moses wrote this psalm, he was over eighty years old, perhaps almost one hundred twenty years old. Having had the experience of human life, he said that we bring all the years of our life to an end as with a sigh. Little children do not know about human life, so they do not sigh. However, old men are always sighing; they sigh from morning until evening. They sigh when they think about themselves, they sigh when they think about their children and grandchildren, and they sigh when they think about their relatives and friends. There is nothing that does not make them sigh. Even when they sing, they cannot sing for too long, because eventually their song becomes a dirge or a lamentation. The days of man's entire life are nothing but a sigh. Verse 10 goes on to say, "The days of our years are seventy years, / Or, if because of strength, eighty years; / But their pride is labor and sorrow, / For it is soon gone, and we fly away." This is a word of experience spoken by Moses as an old man. His description of human life is thorough. A person may live to the age of eighty years due to his strength, but all that he can boast of is nothing but labor and sorrow, for his life is soon gone, and he flies away. Even though I am also eighty years old, I hope to live for forty more years, because I enjoy the Lord and I have hope. If one lives to the age of eighty without the Lord, then the phrase *labor and sorrow...it is soon gone, and we fly away* is a description and a true portrait of the real condition of his human life. The Bible is the only book that speaks the truth; every philosophy and "ism" is deceiving. The Bible says that the real condition of human life is only "labor and sorrow...it is soon gone, and we fly away." Ecclesiastes 1:2 says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." In Hebrew, *vanity of vanities* means "emptiness of emptinesses." Solomon's words fully agree with the words of Moses. Moses said, "It is soon gone, and we fly away," whereas Solomon said, "All is vanity and a chasing after wind" (v. 14).

Psalm 73 was written by a seeker of God. In verse 14 the seeker said, "I have been plagued all day long / And chastened every morning." Before they are

enlightened by the Lord, many believers are like this psalmist. It seems to them that even though they are seeking the Lord and loving Him, they end up receiving plagues and chastisements. Even though the psalmist loved the Lord out of a pure heart, everything was an affliction to him. Consequently, he could only say that he had been plagued all day long and chastened every morning. Then he went on to say, "When I considered this in order to understand it, / It was a troublesome task in my sight, / Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end" (vv. 16-17). Once he went into the sanctuary, received the enlightenment, and carefully considered this matter, he understood. Having understood, he went on to say, "Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth" (v. 25). In this way he was led from vanity into reality, which is just God Himself. Because he passed through vanity, the psalmist, who was rich in experience, realized the real situation. It is as if he was saying, "Since all things under the sun are vanity, why should I pursue them? To do so makes me a fool. Now that I have woken up to reality, I do not want any of these things. What I want is the God who fills heaven and earth. Having Him, I do not pursue anyone else in heaven, and having Him, I do not desire anyone else on earth."

It is not easy for many Christians to turn in this way. This is because when man thinks of God, the fear of God is aroused in him, and when he begins to fear God, he comes under the philosophy that God will be kind to him and that the more he fears God, the more prosperous he will become, the healthier he will be, the more children and grandchildren he will have, and the more he will have good fortune and not misfortune. When I was small, I often heard my mother say, "Giving birth to a son lasts a moment, but fearing for a son lasts a lifetime." I have experienced the truth of this word. Once a son is born, his parents are afraid that he may not survive. They are afraid that he may not eat or drink well or that he may catch a cold and become sick. After this, they are afraid that he may not get into a good elementary school, junior high school, or high school, and once he gets into a good school, they are afraid that he may not pass the entrance examination to get into a good university. After he is admitted to a good university, the parents are afraid that he may not pass the English language examination to be able to go to America, and after he passes the examination, they are afraid that he may not be able to get into a good graduate school. Furthermore, they are afraid that he may misbehave himself with young friends or marry the wrong wife. Such fears are

endless. Therefore, human life is nothing but labor and sorrow and will be soon gone. There is no genuine good fortune.

Job is a long book of forty-two chapters. Some readers do not grasp the significance of this book, and they lose interest when they read it. The characters in Job seem to argue the whole time. At first, Job's three friends argue with Job; later, Elihu joins in, and finally, even God Himself joins in. In recent years, however, I have begun to have more appreciation of the book of Job. Although this book is of considerable length with forty-two chapters, it deals with only one issue. Job was originally a man blessed with possessions and children, but suddenly calamities came one after another—his livestock were stolen, his possessions were burnt, and his children were killed in an unnatural way. Natural disasters and man-made calamities came one after the other, causing Job to end up with nothing. Not only so, but Job's wife troubled him. She could not comfort Job even a little; on the contrary, she provoked him, saying in effect, "See, you fear God, yet what do you end up with?" God took everything away from Job and left him with only a mocker. When a person is smitten repeatedly to the extent that everything he has is gone, he truly needs sympathy from others, but all those who could comfort Job had died. Of all the sufferings of Job, the most severe was the mocking from his wife. This caused Job to suffer exceedingly. It seemed that God had been extremely cruel. Nonetheless, after passing through these trials, Job gained God. He was able to say, "Jehovah gives and Jehovah takes away; / Blessed be the name of Jehovah" (1:21). Had Job not encountered this stripping and suffering, his experience and enjoyment of God could not have been as great.

THE SECRET OF A CHRISTIAN'S ENJOYMENT OF REST BEING GAINING GOD AS HIS ENJOYMENT

The book of James in the New Testament says that we need to consider the experience of Job and remember how he endured (5:11). Both James and Peter acknowledge that our Christian life is altogether a life of trials (1:2; 1 Pet. 4:12). God did not promise that we Christians will have everything to our satisfaction on earth. Perhaps after some hear this word, they will say, "Are you not contradicting yourself? Didn't you tell us that the jubilee means that all things are to our satisfaction?" Yes, everything is to our satisfaction but not the things themselves; rather, our satisfaction is in God. If we do not have

God, nothing is to our satisfaction. If we have God, everything is to our satisfaction. Whether or not something is to our satisfaction does not depend on the environment; it depends on whether or not God is there. Without God, even if all things go smoothly, they are not to our satisfaction. But once we have God, even if things do not go smoothly, they are still to our satisfaction.

What Job encountered in his life was very difficult, but he was still satisfied, and he could still worship and praise. It seems that he was saying, "Being given something and having something taken away are the same. There is no difference between many possessions being given to me and my possessions being taken away from me. It does not matter whether Jehovah gives or Jehovah takes away; to me, they are the same." This is not easy to experience. Paul said, "I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Phil. 4:12). It did not matter to Paul whether he was poor or rich or whether he was lacking or abounding. Therefore, he could say, "In nothing be anxious" (v. 6). If we only read verse 6, we may think that Paul was in a good situation. In reality though, it was not so, because at that time he was in prison. Moreover, according to the context, he did not receive a rich supply during his imprisonment. The churches had received his nurturing, but they did not supply him adequately. Only the church in Philippi took care of him. This is why he said, "I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound...I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me" (vv. 12-13). He was very qualified to tell us to be anxious in nothing. Even though he was in a poor circumstance in his imprisonment and did not receive a rich supply at that time, he was able to exhort the saints to be anxious in nothing. He could be anxious in nothing because he made known all his requests to God; thus, the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, guarded his heart and his thoughts in Christ Jesus (v. 7). In this way he enjoyed the presence of the God of peace. Therefore, only when we have God, do we have real peace. Even if there is no peace in our environment, if we have God, we have peace.

MAN LOSING THE ORDAINED BLESSING WHEN HE LOSES GOD

Man was created for God, and God is man's blessing. However, because man sinned and became fallen, he lost God and thus his blessing. Hence, man's whole life became empty. Man not only lost God in his fall, but he also fell into bondage. We may say that human history of six thousand years is a

history of losing God and being in bondage. Because man does not have God, he struggles to obtain enjoyment. The result of man's struggle and strife is that he falls into all kinds of bondage. Everything in human life is a bondage. Even our relatives become a bondage to us: our parents, children, spouse, and siblings are all a bondage. This is why the Lord Jesus said that if we do not love Him above our father or mother, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, and husband or wife, we are not worthy to be His disciples (Matt. 10:37-38). This means that if our inward being is occupied by any person or thing, the Lord has no ground in us. Since man was created by God, he should be fully occupied by God within. However, this does not mean that we should not take care of our children and parents or that we should not care for our brothers or sisters and wife or husband. What this means is that all the room in our being must be given to the Lord. When the Lord has gained the ground in us, we will be secure. When I was a small child, I saw big sailboats and wondered why their masts were so tall. I thought that the tall mast was only for hanging the sail in order to catch the wind. Later, some sailors told me that the mast is not only for hanging the sail but also for stabilizing the boat. A sailboat with a tall mast cannot be easily capsized. After I was saved, I realized how this is altogether true in our experience. Without the Lord, we are like a sailboat without a mast, having no stability, so that we drift aimlessly. If we do not have the Lord as our "mast," the "boat" of our human life is unstable and can be easily overturned. Our human life can be capsized if it is empty within. If a glass is filled to the brim, impure things cannot get in. In the same way, if we are filled with the Lord, things that are not of the Lord cannot come in.

Christians in general have a wrong concept, and some preachers even lead them into this wrong concept. They think that although there are sufferings in their human life, when they believe in Jesus, they will have peace in their environment. They consider that although life is full of sufferings and adversities, Jesus, who is full of compassion, will outwardly rescue them from their sufferings when they believe in Him. This is not the biblical concept. Actually, what the gospel says is that we as fallen ones have all kinds of suffering because we have lost God and do not have Him within. Even the outward blessings enjoyed by fallen man are a suffering. After man's fall, there is no blessing; rather, everything is a suffering. Moreover, not only does fallen man not have the Lord, but he also sins against Him. Therefore, he needs to repent, confess his sins, turn to the Lord, and let Him come into him to be his life and blessing. This is the message of the gospel.

Of course, after receiving the Lord, some have experienced a turning point in their broken marriage, others have been cured of a critical illness, and still others have experienced an improvement in their difficult situations. I have seen many such cases, but it is not always so. After receiving the Lord, some who were gravely ill prayed continually to the Lord for healing, yet the Lord never healed them. Healing does not depend on us; it depends on Him. What the gospel stresses is not that our sickness will be healed but that we need to receive the Lord and allow Him to come into us to be our life and our blessing. Sometimes we may call upon the Lord concerning our circumstances, but He may or may not answer our call. Whether or not He answers depends wholly on Him. The Bible does not say that all those who believe in Jesus will have their sickness healed. Timothy, who was Paul's dearest young co-worker and whom Paul called his genuine child, had a stomach ailment. Nevertheless, even though Paul had performed many signs and wonders and had healed many diseases (Acts 19:11-12), he told his spiritual son, his beloved Timothy, to "no longer drink water only, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1 Tim. 5:23). Even Paul himself had a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). Many Bible interpreters say that this thorn was a sickness in his body, most likely a problem with his eyes. This thorn remained with Paul all the time, causing him to suffer. He said, "Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me" (v. 8). However, the Lord seemed to say, "Paul, do not ask this anymore. I will not answer your prayer. I will not remove the thorn from you. Rather, it will constantly remain with you. Nevertheless, My grace is sufficient for you." A number of people had been healed of their diseases simply by means of handkerchiefs or aprons carried away from Paul's body. Yet, when he had a thorn in his flesh that caused him to suffer, he had no way to remove it. Furthermore, he was imprisoned late in life. In his first imprisonment he appealed to Caesar and was released through Caesar's arbitration, but he was imprisoned a second time during Caesar's persecution of the Christians and was killed soon afterward. This was Paul's experience before the Lord.

EXPERIENCING GOD IN TRIALS

As fallen ones, we may have the fallen natural concept that if we fear God, serve Him, love Him, and follow Him, we will prosper in everything; the unhealthy will become healthy, and the foolish will become wise. However, God has not promised this. *Hymns,* #720 was written by an experienced Christian. Stanza 1 and the chorus say,

God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

Many times, God has placed those who love Him into trials and sufferings so that they may experience more of Him. When everything is calm and peaceful, we seldom think of enjoying God and know very little about experiencing the Lord. Only when we fall into sufferings can we be humbled to trust the Lord wholeheartedly, call on Him, and enjoy Him.

This is why man often needs to be put into a situation by God to be stripped by Him. God may strip him of his health, take away his children, or remove the thing he loves most. This is a time of "weaning." A small child is comfortable, warm, and satisfied in his mother's bosom, but sooner or later he has to be weaned. A child suffers great sorrow during the weaning period. Very often, God "weans" us by taking away our outward blessings. Our health may leave us, we may lose our house, or our better children may die while the naughty ones remain. I have seen this happen. God may not take anything at first, but once He does, He only takes the best. He does not take the foolish children—He leaves them with us to make trouble—but He may take those who are clever, capable, and comforting. God wants to see whether we care for Him or for our children. Only God is not a suffering to us. Everything else, whatever we love, is a suffering to us. If we buy a car and love it, that car burdens us and damages us. When we buy a good house, that house puts us under bondage and brings pain to us. Even when we buy good clothes, they become a limitation to us. Whatever man loves is what damages him, but if we love God, God will not damage us. Apparently, it seems that God hurts us by taking away what we love and what, apparently, should not be taken away. Actually, He takes away what we love because we love that thing more than God. Abraham was tested by God. One day God told Abraham to offer his son up to Him. Yet, when Abraham began to offer up his son, God said in effect, "This is good enough; you can keep him." God no longer wanted him to offer

his son. God does the same to us. If we can give all we have to God, He can also give it back to us. Therefore, we have to change our concept.

THE LIVING OF THE JUBILEE

BEING A LIVING OF FULLY ENJOYING GOD

What is the living of the jubilee? The living of the jubilee is a life in which we take God instead of other things as our enjoyment and enjoy only God Himself in every situation. This is not to say that we should not study. On the contrary, we should study diligently. Neither does it mean that we should not work; we should work dutifully. Likewise, it does not mean that we should not be proper parents raising our children; rather, we should properly fulfill our responsibilities as parents. However, all these are just our living, our outward human life, which is not crucial. What is crucial is that the inward, primary factor of our human life is right. If our inward, primary factor is not right, our outward living will not be right. This primary factor is nothing other than God Himself. We must let God Himself be the primary factor within us. Only then will we know how to deal with our children, how to honor our parents, how to study, and how to work. If this primary factor directs us within, everything will simply be a duty to us, not a burden or hardship. However, if we are not directed by this primary factor, everything will become a weight and a suffering. In the end, we will become captives and even sell ourselves as slaves.

For us to live on earth today, we need to have a car for transportation and a house for lodging. We need clothing, food, and marriage. All these are necessities. Children should study diligently, be educated, finish college, and work hard. However, all these are just the duties of our human life; they should not become an encumbrance or a bondage to enslave us. However, if we do not have God as our primary factor within, we cannot avoid being under the bondage of these persons, things, and matters. We should be encouraged to get married, but we must not turn marriage into an encumbrance. When choosing a partner for marriage, our attention should not be focused on marriage, as an encumbering burden, but on God. We should also be encouraged to study, but studying should be an obligation and not a burden to us. As we are fulfilling our duty, we must have the Lord within. Often people ask me how they should choose a partner for marriage. Fifty years ago, I used to answer in many ways, but today I do not like to give

suggestions. If one does not have the Lord, whomever he chooses is wrong. Even if everything seems to be right at the time of his choosing, once he is married, he may feel that he chose the wrong person.

The Christian life should be a life of fully enjoying the Lord. When we enjoy the Lord fully, He becomes our jubilee; that is, He becomes our inheritance and liberty. Not only so, the Lord also becomes our living. In such a living, we love Him to the uttermost and let Him be the Lord. Then He becomes the primary factor and center in us to lead us and govern us. In this way, when we pass through things, we will not be tormented, enslaved, or dominated by them. Instead, we will be free. I hope that we can understand this word. By the Lord's mercy today I have reached the age of eighty. I have passed through all the sweetness and bitterness of life, and I have thirty to forty children and grandchildren. Therefore, I have many troubles and many cares. Without the Lord as my primary factor and center within, I would suffer considerably. However, because the Lord is in me, I do not have any burden or hardship. Moreover, I do not put any hope in my children, my grandchildren, or my great grandchildren, because I know that with hope there is disappointment. One who does not hope will not be disappointed, but the more one hopes, the more he is disappointed. Perhaps some will say, "Since this is the case, is there any meaning to human life? Let us give up." Those who study history see the extent of the confusion among people in the world and often say that human life is hopeless. However, we may give up, but God will never give up. We can feel meaningless, but God does not. Although He has been dealing with mankind for six thousand years, He is not through. God will not give up; He is still waiting, and with Him a thousand years are like one day. God is waiting to gain us as those who have been chosen by Him, and He will work to the extent that His chosen ones on earth do not desire anything other than Him and are for nothing besides Him.

For our existence we cannot avoid having a family and a married life. We are also obligated to obtain an education and work at a job. However, all these are not our burdens; on the contrary, they are working for us that we may be perfected to enjoy the Lord even more. This is the living of the jubilee. A Christian's life of jubilee should be a life of fully enjoying the Lord, a life that is full of joy and praises. If we cannot rejoice and praise, it proves that we are not living a normal life of the jubilee. This is why 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks." This is to give thanks not only in things that are successful but in all things.

The Lord came that He might save us and dispense Himself into us. If our heart is set on anything other than the Lord, that thing, whether good or bad, becomes a suffering to us. If our heart is set on our children, husband, or wife, the result is a suffering. If our heart is set on our education, business, house, or land, the outcome is misery. If our heart is set on any person, thing, or matter other than the Lord, the end is wretchedness. The unbelievers do not have the Lord; they have not received the Lord as their salvation. Hence, they can only set their heart on persons, things, and matters. However, since we have been saved and have the Lord as our center, we should set our heart on Him. When the Lord comes, He is our salvation to deliver us from sufferings. All sufferings come from the persons, things, and matters outside of the Lord. To those who are without the Lord, everything is a suffering. Whether bad things or good things, whether poverty or riches, whether being educated or uneducated, all are sufferings. However, when we have the Lord, He saves us from all these sufferings. If we take the Lord as our center, we can enjoy Him as our life of jubilee.

The living of the jubilee is a living in the enjoyment of Christ. The Lord is sovereign in everything. Everything we have is in the Lord's sovereign hand, and whatever He arranges for us cannot be wrong. In my life of following the Lord for sixty years, I can truly testify that where we go or where we stay is entirely not in our hands but in His hands. We may think that we are what we are today because of our endeavoring and struggling, but we must realize that without the Lord's sovereign arrangement, no matter how much we struggled and endeavored, we could not be what we are. Everything is under His sovereignty. Therefore, we should empty ourselves of everything and tell the Lord, "Fill me, gain me, and possess me. Lord, no matter what the outward situation is, I just want to enjoy You. If I am healthy, I thank You. If I am not healthy, I also thank You. If I have children, I thank You, and if I am childless, I also thank You." In this way poverty or wealth and peace or danger are all the same to us. That is why Paul said that "as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (Phil. 1:20b). To us, to live is Christ, and whether we live or die, He is magnified in us all the time. In this way we enjoy God and live the life of the jubilee. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we all may see this and learn to enjoy the Lord to such an extent.