The CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Witness Lee

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book, composed of fourteen messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Taipei, Taiwan, in the summer of 1952, concerns the crucified Christ as the secret to Christian living and growth in life and as the way for God to accomplish His eternal purpose.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LIFE AND THE WAY

First Corinthians 2:2 says, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified." Verse 18 of chapter 1 says, "The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Also, verse 23 says, "We preach Christ crucified." From these few verses we can see that Christ and the cross are inseparable.

ALL SAVED ONES POSSESSING A DUAL LIFE, NATURE, AND PERSONALITY

God's purpose is that Christ would mingle Himself with us to be our life and nature, that the two—Christ and we—would become one. Christ and we being one is the issue of the mingling of the two—Christ and His believers. We may say that everyone who is truly saved is two yet one—having two lives, two natures, and two personalities. This is why many times in our experience we live a life of contradictions. We experience having two persons—one within and one without. The person within is Christ, and the person without is our self. Sometimes the inward One will not approve of what the outward one wants. Other times the outward one will not go along with what the inward One intends to do. Thus, there is often a conflict within us. The person without clearly resists the will of the person within, and the person within obviously condemns the intentions of the person without. This shows us that every saved one has a dual life and dual personality; moreover, it proves that God is truly in us.

The crux of the matter is this: do we want God or ourselves to gain the victory? Do we want God or ourselves to be defeated? Do we want the inward person or the outward person to have a free way? This is a crucial question. If we allow our outward person to have a free way, that is, if we allow our self to gain the victory, ten years from now we will still be the same; we will still be what we were originally. However, if we allow our inward person to have a free way in us, that is, if we allow God to gain the victory, then God will be expressed through us. Consequently, people will be able to meet God in us.

Thus, the crucial question is whether it is God who has the ground to rule and direct in us or we who rule and direct ourselves. Herein lie our victory, our holiness, our experience of all spiritual realities, and even our growth in life in the Lord.

If we allow our inward person to be frustrated and our outward person to prosper, we as Christians will definitely be defeated, and it will be impossible for us to be holy, to grow in life, and to be spiritual. If we do not live in and by the Lord, we surely will not live for the Lord. Even though we will still have the Lord's life, we will live in, by, and for ourselves.

THE LORD BEING PRESSED IN US

This kind of living prevents the Lord from having a way in us. Furthermore, it causes Him to be frustrated, just as He was frustrated and restricted in the flesh in His incarnation. Hence, He said, "How I am pressed" (Luke 12:50). Today, however, He is pressed not in His flesh but in you and me. Previously, He was pressed, constrained, and bound in His flesh, which He put upon Himself in His incarnation. Therefore, He had to pass through death that the life within Him could be released. Now, however, we cause Him to be constrained; we give Him such a problem. Our conduct, our disposition, our naturalness, our oldness, and all that comes from our old life and our old nature cause Him to be bound, pressed, and restricted. Therefore, we need to be broken and to pass through death.

If we preach the gospel merely with words, our preaching will not be effective. Christ cannot be readily released by our preaching the gospel merely with our mouth. We need to be broken; we need the mark of death on us. Since we are saved, Christ lives in us, yet this Christ who is within us cannot be released because He has been bound, concealed, and covered within us. The problem lies in our natural self, which needs to be broken, to pass through death, and to be dealt with by death.

A GRAIN OF WHEAT ABIDING ALONE UNLESS IT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES

The Lord Jesus said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). This word applies not only to the Lord Jesus but also to us. Today we have the Lord's life

in us, so we are the many grains of wheat. Yet we are unable to multiply, unable to bear much fruit, and unable to produce many grains because we have not been broken through death.

Many of us are very stable, steady, and whole. Many times, however, our stability, steadiness, and wholeness are our problem. For example, although we may have been saved for years, we may not have any scars or any evidence of the work of the cross on us, and our being may still be intact, whole, steady, and unchanged. The only difference may be that before we were saved, we were wild, careless, and misbehaving. After being saved, however, we are no longer wild and careless but rather well behaved. This is merely a change in behavior.

There are two kinds of change that can occur in a Christian. One is a change in outward conduct, and the other is a change in the inward life. A change in outward behavior means that in the past you did whatever you liked, acting loosely and without any restraint. But now, since you have been saved, you feel that your former conduct would not befit a Christian, and therefore you need to be more cautious. However, this is merely an outward change; your inner being is still the same. You are still secure and firm, stable and steady, whole and intact. You are still your original person. Our problem is not in our outward behavior but in our disposition, our natural life, and our old self.

GOD DESIRING THAT MAN BE TRANSFORMED IN LIFE INWARDLY

Christianity today exhorts people to improve their outward behavior, but what God pays attention to is far higher than this. God is not after a mere change in man's outward behavior; rather, He desires man to have an inward transformation in life. He does not want us to merely change our outward living. He wants us to be broken in our inward disposition. The outward change of behavior gains the praises of man, but it cannot please God. What God desires and what pleases Him is not the improvement of our outward behavior but the transformation in life and the breaking of our inward disposition. Mere behavioral improvement makes us good persons but not spiritual persons. In order to be spiritual, we need to be broken inwardly. Without being broken, without suffering any blows, and without passing through death, we can be persons who are whole but not persons who are full of life.

What others see in your outward behavioral improvement is your morality but not your spirituality. Many times, just as your immorality can become your covering, so your morality can also become your covering. The unbelievers require us to have a high morality, which is reasonable and right. Yet God's requirement in us is much higher than this. God requires that we be broken and crushed so that the Christ within us—the glorious Christ, the Christ of holiness—may be lived out through us.

GOD DESIRING THAT CHRIST BE LIVED OUT FROM WITHIN US

There are a few kinds of Christians. One kind is the degraded Christian. From the human perspective, Christians of this kind do not look like Christians at all because they live and walk just like the unbelievers. Such Christians are degraded Christians. Another kind are the well-behaved Christians. Formerly, such ones were loose, but now they behave properly; formerly they did evil, but now they do good. In man's eyes these Christians are above the standard. In God's eyes, however, they are still below the standard, because what God is after is neither degraded Christians nor Christians who are above the standard.

What God desires is not just that we would be delivered from sins but that Christ would be lived out from within us. This is not a matter of being good or evil, proper or improper, or moral or immoral. Rather, it is a matter of Christ being lived out from within us. We all know that after we are saved, we have God in us as our life. However, is it we who live, or is it God who lives? Is it we who are lived out, or is it God who is lived out? The crux of the matter is whether or not we are willing to be broken and to pass through death. If we are not willing to be broken or to pass through death, God will have no way to live out from within us. However, if we are willing to be broken and to die, God will be able to live out from within us. According to the Bible, to deny the self is to pass through death and the breaking.

We should not merely take care of our human needs; we should also take care of God's need. When the Lord Jesus was incarnated, He was restricted, constrained, and unable to be released from His human body. However, through His death He was released. The shell of His human body was broken through death so that the divinity within Him, the Christ within Him, could be released. The issue of this release was that God's life could enter into many

people and into us as well. However, immediately after His life came into us, He was confined and constrained in us.

Many people observe Christmas in order to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but they have never experienced the birth of Jesus. What is the experience of the birth of Jesus? When a person is saved, God comes into him. This is the Lord Jesus' being born in him, the experience of the birth of Jesus. However, whenever Jesus Christ is born in a person, He encounters a problem. He is confined in the saved one. He was born as a Nazarene, and this Nazarene was His problem, His constraint. This constraint needed the breaking, the splitting, of the cross. When the Lord suffered the blow of the cross, His being was broken and split apart, and the life was released from within Him. However, when this life entered into Peter, John, and you and me, it encountered the same problem, the same constraint. We all can testify that Christ has been born in us. However, we do not have the assurance that Christ is being lived out or released from us.

CHRIST NEEDING BROKEN VESSELS TO BE CHANNELS OF LIVING WATER

Christ does not need whole vessels; instead, He needs broken vessels. This is because only broken vessels can be channels of living water. Whole vessels can only be cisterns of dead water. The biggest problem today is that it is hard to find any wounds or scars in most Christians. Most of us do not have any wounds, scars, marks of death, or experiences of the cross. Even though we have been saved and truly have Christ's life in us, this life has no way to come out. The reason is not that our behavior is too poor or too good but that we are too whole and too impregnable. Because we have no wounds, Christ has no way to be released from within us.

Suppose a person is quick-tempered and appears arrogant. It would be relatively easy for such a one to become humble because he may often examine himself and condemn his irritability. Suppose another person is meek by nature and apparently humble. It would be harder for such a one to know himself. Instead, it would be easy for him to become proud before God. He may think that the other person is irritable and arrogant, while he is meek and humble. What is this? This is real pride. Sometimes when we go to visit people, the wife says, "My husband is too quick." What she means is that her husband is quick but she is not and that she is meek but her husband is

troublesome. However, she is actually more troublesome before God than her husband. It is hard for many of the saints who have a number of good points to make any spiritual progress. This is due to the fact that they have listened to many messages not for themselves but for others.

Some of the saints do not seem to have a bad temper; they are as gentle as lambs. However, they always listen to messages not for themselves but for others. When they hear a word concerning breaking, they think, "Brother Chang is quick-tempered, so he surely needs to be broken. Sister Wang is not good either, so she also needs to be broken." It never occurs to them that those who are meek need to be broken even more than those who are quick-tempered.

It is often easier for God to deal with a stubborn person than with a pliable person. Someone may seem to be so pliable, like a rubber ball, that God has no way to break him. When a certain situation arises, he does not care. When he is dealt with by his supervisor, he does not care. When he is dealt with by some of his family members, he cares even less. Like a rubber ball, he bounces back whenever he is hit, and he bounces up whenever he is thrown down. This kind of person is indifferent toward everything; he is unbreakable. He cannot be broken by one person, nor by two, three, or even five persons. However, if he were a glass, he could be broken with a single stroke.

If a sister cannot be broken by her husband, her son, or her daughter-in-law, people will praise her, saying that she is really spiritual because she cannot be broken by anyone. However, we must realize that because she is not broken and cannot be broken, Christ has no way to live out from her. What she lives out is her whole self, her smooth and refined self, but not Christ. Christ has no way to live out of her.

Neither our kindness, our good deeds, nor our morality can represent Christ. Only Christ Himself can represent Christ. Nothing that we have, even if it is good, can represent Christ. The progress of a Christian's spiritual life does not depend on how much he has changed; rather, it depends on how much he has been broken and to what stature Christ has grown in him. In other words, the growth of a Christian hinges on his being broken and Christ's increasing in him.

THOSE WHO ARE IN GOD'S HAND

HAVING MANY WOUNDS

No one who is a good vessel in God's hand can be whole; rather, he must be full of scars and wounds. A certain sister may have believed in the Lord for over a decade, yet because her life has been easy and smooth, she has no wounds at all. She got married to a husband who is considerate, she gave birth to a son who is obedient, and she found a job that is easy and smooth. Everyone says that she is very fortunate; actually, it is not so. Many times the work that God carries out in someone who is truly in His hand is the work of breaking, smiting, and splitting. Jesus the Nazarene, the One who was the most acceptable to God, also experienced many sufferings while He was on the earth. He was called "a man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3), and He was full of bruises and wounds. Hence, a person who is in God's hand, if he is highly regarded or esteemed by God, will have many wounds as the result of God's work in him. What kind of work is this? This is the work of breaking. If God favors us, His hand will work in us in many ways, and we will thus have many scars and wounds. These scars and wounds will become outlets for the flow of living water.

In the eighteenth century John Wesley was a famous evangelist in England, who was a useful servant of God and was powerful in the preaching of the gospel. However, his wife was a suffering to him. One day when he was preaching, many in the audience were touched. Suddenly, his wife ran in and shouted, "What are you doing here? Can I not take care of your food?" History tells us that at the time of her death, she still had not been saved or changed. If you had asked John Wesley why God had not changed his wife, he might have told you, "If God had changed my wife, I would have lost my power." The power of a Christian lies not in prosperity but in adversity, not in favorable circumstances but in unfavorable circumstances, in situations from which he cannot escape.

THERE BEING THE OUTLET OF LIFE ONLY WHEN THERE IS THE BREAKING OF THE CROSS

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us that he had a thorn in his flesh, and concerning this, he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from him (v. 8). Yet, instead of answering his prayer, the Lord allowed the thorn to remain in his body. The Lord's purpose was that Paul might experience His sufficient grace (v. 9) and realize that he needed to be broken. What the Lord

meant was that if Paul did not have this thorn in him, which caused him to feel wounded and sorrowful, Christ would have no way to flow out of him. Perhaps we are afraid of suffering, but please bear in mind that the cross is the outlet for the Lord's life. All those who have received the grace of the Lord can tell Him, "O Lord, if I am not broken, You will have no way to come out. For You to come out from me, I have to receive Your breaking." The cross is the outlet for the Lord's life. He who has the breaking of the cross has the outlet of life, and he who has wounds has the outflow of the Lord's life.

In Malaysia all the rubber tree farmers know that the only way the latex can flow out from a rubber tree is if it is cut open. Not only so, they know that the bigger the cut, the more the outflow. This is a very appropriate portrait of us, describing how we Christians first must be broken and cut open, and then the element of Christ, the life of Christ, can flow out from the cut. Hence, many times the more we are in darkness, in affliction, in hardship, and in a place where there is no sunlight, the more Christ's life will flow out through us.

Therefore, we see that the problem that God's life in us faces is not the world, sins, or human relationships but our natural man. Of course, the world, sins, and human relationships are hindering factors, but they are very minor hindrances; they are like garments that can be taken off. Inside a Christian, however, is a more subjective problem—our self, our natural life. This problem needs breaking. Many times there is no need for us to be broken in order to get rid of sins, the world, and human ties, but to get rid of our self, our naturalness, and our disposition, we need the breaking of the cross.

"JESUS CHRIST, AND THIS ONE CRUCIFIED"

In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul says, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified." What Paul knew was of two aspects: one was Jesus Christ, and the other was Jesus Christ crucified. To Paul, if there had been only Christ and no cross, he would have had nothing to preach. The degree to which the cross breaks us determines the extent to which Christ is released through us. The degree to which the cross works in us determines the extent to which Christ is expressed through us. Our very being is an enemy of Christ and a hindrance to God, and it needs to be dealt with by the cross. We have truly been saved, but Christ has no way to come out from within us. Christ cannot be released from within us because we have become a hindrance to Him. The problem today is not with others but

with you and me. May God have mercy on us to show us this vision. This vision has two aspects, two emphases: one is Christ's being in us, and the other is the breaking of the cross.

We often think that sins and the world are the most difficult things for Christians to deal with. Hence, we assume that as long as we have thoroughly dealt with sins and are absolutely delivered from the world, then we are good Christians. We must see, however, that although some people have already dealt with sins thoroughly and have been delivered from the world absolutely, there is still a problem in them. This problem is that they have not yet been broken. For example, a bottle may contain some water, yet the water cannot flow out. You may say that the water is stopped because the bottle is too dirty, but after you wash the bottle, the water still cannot flow out. Or you may say that it is because of the decorative patterns on the bottle, but even after you remove the patterns, the water still cannot flow out. However, if you break the bottle, the water will flow out. In the same way, even though you may have gotten rid of the filthiness and the worldly flavor in you, life still cannot flow out through you. The problem lies in the fact that you have not been broken.

Hence, we need to ask God to have mercy on us to show us that the cross must do a breaking work in us. When we were first saved, we thought that if we could deal with our sins and the world and do good deeds, we would be good Christians. However, this is not adequate. God's goal is that we would be broken in order that Christ may come out through us. This is why Paul says that he did not determine to know anything except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified. The cross is seeking an outlet in us for Christ. Many Christians have truly been saved and are zealous for the Lord. They have been delivered not only from sins but also from the world. Yet they do not make any progress in their spiritual condition, and the Lord still does not have a way out through them. Therefore, it is not our zeal, our dealing with sins, or our getting rid of the world that gives the Lord a way out. Rather, the greatest frustration that Christ encounters in us is our self. Even though we may preach the gospel successfully and bring thousands upon thousands of people to be saved, Christ still may not have a way out through us. Christ will have a way out only when our being, our self, has passed through the breaking and the dealing of the cross. Only through this kind of breaking will Christ have a way out of us.

EVERYTHING OF THE OLD CREATION

HAVING BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

We have said many times that we have to follow the Lord to take the way of the cross. But what does this mean? This means that we must receive the breaking of the cross. What is the meaning of the cross? The Bible shows that when the Lord was hanged on the cross, He was crucified with the human body that He had put on. In God's eyes, when He was crucified, all those who belong to Him were also crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6). If you ask a Jew, "Who was crucified?" he would say, "A Nazarene, the son of a carpenter." If you ask a Gentile, "Who was crucified?" he would say, "A man of universal love was sacrificed on the cross." If you ask a Christian, "Who was crucified?" he would say, "My Savior." This is the reply of a newly saved one. An advanced Christian, however, would say, "My Savior and I. I was crucified with my Savior." Moreover, all things apart from God—the soulish things, the sinful things, all the created things, and everything of the old creation—were crucified with Christ.

Genesis 6 is the story of Noah building the ark. The ark's passing through the flood signifies our passing through death. However, it was not that Noah simply passed through the flood but that Noah was in the ark, and when the ark passed through the flood, Noah and his whole household also passed through the flood. From God's perspective we have already died on the cross. Everyone who belongs to the Lord has already been crucified with Christ. This is a fact, not a doctrine. In God's eyes you and I are already dead, already finished. The cross has done the terminating work. For us to have such an experience, however, we need light and revelation. We need light, vision, and seeing in order to experience Christ as our life within; in like manner, we also need light, vision, and seeing in order to experience our co-crucifixion with Christ. May God have mercy on us to show us not only that Christ is our life but also that we have already been crucified with Him. To be terminated is an attitude, not a mere doctrine. This requires light and revelation.

The cross is first a fact, then a revelation, and finally an experience. We have already heard the word of the cross, but we still need the light to reveal to us its reality. After we see it, we will joyfully say, "O Lord, I praise You. That which I never saw, I now see. I have already died on the cross. What a rest! What a release! What a deliverance!" On the one hand, death is not a good thing, but on the other hand, death is very wonderful. Once we die, all the burdens of our lifetime are swept away; hence, one death solves all problems.

Some people may exhort us to crucify ourselves. However, who can crucify himself? It is impossible to crucify yourself. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was God's work and was under God's ruling. God gathered the Romans, the Jews, and the Greeks, and He crucified the Lord Jesus through those who were against God. Jesus the Nazarene did not crucify Himself; rather, He was crucified under the sovereign arrangement of God.

Due to the fact that it is impossible for a person to crucify himself, God gives man the light concerning the cross, showing him first the fact of the cross, then the revelation of the cross, and finally the experience of the cross. What is the experience of the cross? It is when our faithful God arranges our circumstances to prepare the cross for us in our daily living. Our family, our physical body, and all the people, events, and things around us coordinate together to become the cross that works in us in order to break us. Hence, after we have seen the fact of the cross, we have to be prepared, because God's hand will come in to do the breaking and smiting work in us.

CHRIST AND HIS CROSS ISSUING IN LIFE AND THE WAY OF LIFE

For those who love the Lord and are pursuing the Lord, herein lies the way to follow the Lord. According to God's view, we are already on the cross. Today God is speaking such a word to us. The day will come—perhaps today, tomorrow, in a year, or in ten years—when we will be willing to receive the breaking of the cross. We will be willing to allow God's hand to arrange our circumstances to carry out the breaking work in us so that we may have scars and wounds in us for Christ's life to flow out through us. Therefore, one who is willing to receive the cross is graced and blessed. He is also a channel of living water through which Christ may flow. Such a one, just as Paul says, does not know anything among the saints except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified. Without Christ, there is no life; without the cross, there is no way. Christ and His cross issue in life and the way of life for God to flow out of us.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE AND GOD'S WORK

Galatians 4:19 says, "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you." Philippians 1:20b-21a states, "Even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ." Ephesians 4:13 says, "Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Verse 19 of chapter 3 says, "To know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." These words show us God's work in and purpose for His redeemed people.

If we really know the Bible, we should be able to see a particular matter in the Lord's word, a matter that has never and will never come up in man's mind. The matter that we are referring to is God's eternal purpose. Although the truth of the Lord has already spread throughout the world, there are very few who really know this mysterious and marvelous matter revealed by God in His word. Today there are quite a number of Christians who have a pure heart, who are zealous, who have love and faith, who care for the things of the Lord, and who are willing to pay a price by sacrificing themselves and living for others. Yet among these Christians it is hard to find one who can meet God's standard and who really knows the purpose ordained by God in eternity. May God grant us the grace that we may clearly see this purpose ordained by God in eternity.

THE MINGLING OF GOD AND MAN— GOD BECOMING MAN AND MAN BECOMING GOD

What does God really desire? God desires to mingle Himself with man. We have to always bear in mind that God does not desire anything else; He desires only to mingle Himself with man. He wants to mingle with man to the extent that, while remaining the true God, He became a man, a real man. We are not saying that when He became a man, He was no longer God or ceased

to be God. Rather, we are saying that He was God mingled with man and that He was both man and God simultaneously. He was the complete mingling of God with man. In God there was man, and in man there was God. The human nature was in God, and the divine nature was in man. In God there was the human element, and in man there was the divine element.

This is the purpose that God desires to accomplish. God's purpose is to arrive at the stage where the human element is within Him and the divine element is within man. He comes to mingle with us to the point that He becomes man, and we become God. This kind of speaking may shock you. How can we be God? We can be God because we are mingled with God. We are mingled with God to the extent that we can say, "Even though we are humans, we have God in us. We have His life, His nature, and His personality. Because He is in us, His personality becomes our personality, His nature becomes our nature, and His life becomes our life. Moreover, His image is our image, His glory is our glory, His holiness is our holiness, and His goodness is our goodness. Just what He is, so also we are, and right where He is, there also we are."

We all must see this. In fact, all the saved ones will see this sooner or later. The day will come (perhaps it will be in the kingdom or in the new heaven and new earth) when we will see that all those who serve God are exactly the same as the God whom they serve. Conversely, the God whom we will serve will be exactly the same as we who serve Him. He will be God, possessing the human element, and we will be humans, possessing the divine element. We use this simple word to explain the mysterious heart's desire of God.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE—
GOD MINGLING HIMSELF WITH MAN

The unique purpose of God in creating all things and mankind, in leading us through all kinds of environments, and in continually working in us in various ways is to mingle Himself with us that He may become our content, our life, and our nature. However, it is very difficult for the saints to be deeply impressed with this kind of word. Why is this? It is because God's purpose is basically nonexistent in us. It is absent not only from our thought but also from our hope. Hence, all of us who are saved should pray that the Lord will open our eyes not only to see corruption, sinfulness, and vanity but also to see

something higher, deeper, and more spiritual—to see that God's purpose is to mingle Himself with man.

Today many Christians teach people that there are heaven and hell, that man is sinful and evil, that man should fear God and repent to God, that Jesus Christ bore the sins of man and died for man on the cross to receive God's punishment on man's behalf, and that by believing in Him man will be saved. Their conclusion is that man should love God, serve God, and live a life of holiness by God. They think that to attain to this stage is praiseworthy and satisfactory. However, it may be praiseworthy for man but not for God. Man may be satisfied by this, but God cannot be satisfied.

God's central purpose, His central will, His eternal plan, is not merely that man would be redeemed, have a loving heart, and live a life of holiness. What God desires is much more than this. God's eternal will, His mysterious plan, His heart's desire, is that He would enter into man, into you and me, to be mingled with you and me. He wants His life to be mingled with our life, His nature to be mingled with our nature, His personality to be mingled with our personality, and His element to be mingled with our element. He wants to mingle with us to the extent that it is hard to say whether He is God or a man or whether we are men or God. At this time God and man, man and God, will be inseparable and even indistinguishable. God's nature becomes man's nature, and God and man, having become one and mingled together, cannot be separated.

We do not have an adequate knowledge of the Lord because we do not even know how to answer the question regarding whether the Lord is God or man. One day, however, God will show us that Christ is God becoming flesh, God manifested in the flesh, and God mingled with man. Once we see this vision, we will say with exultation, "The Lord in whom we believe is said to be God, and He truly is God. He is also said to be a man, and He really is a man. He is God yet man, man yet God. Today He is in heaven as the One who is God yet man, man yet God—the One who is the mingling of God with man. He is not only simultaneously God and man but also the mingling of God and man. God and man are not two; rather, the two have become one. It is hard to say whether He is merely God or merely man, because the two have become one."

CHRIST BEING MINGLED WITH US

TO TRANSFORM US

What does it mean to be saved? To be saved means that from now on you have God's life within you, and you are not the same anymore. Originally, you were a real man. One day, however, you repented and believed in the Lord Jesus by opening your heart and spirit to Him. As a result, He came into you. From that point on, you changed in nature. (If you have not changed in nature, I am afraid that you are still not saved.) Formerly, you were only a man, but since you received Jesus as your Savior, you have changed in nature. A person who has changed in nature is a saved person.

For example, if this cup of water tastes sour, you would not dare to drink it. However, after sugar is added into it, it is sweetened and tastes good. Why is this? This is because something else has been added into it. Hence, believing in Jesus is not for man to be improved or reformed. Neither is it to receive the Christian religion and to be taught its beliefs. To truly believe in Jesus is to have the Spirit of Christ imparted into you, to have a great measure of Christ imparted into you through the Holy Spirit, so that you have an additional element within you that is bright, holy, and good. Once this element enters into man, man has a dispositional transformation.

Formerly, you were irritable and unforgiving, but now you yield to others in everything and are willing to be wronged. Being a Christian, however, is not a matter of cultivating oneself in order to eliminate the "sour taste" in one's life. Even though we Christians have the element of Christ within us, our "sourness" is still here. The difference is that although our "sourness" is still here, something "sweet" has also been added into us. What is a Christian? A Christian is one who has Christ mingled with him. Previously, you were an irritable person, but now Christ's meekness swallows up your irritability. This is not the result of your improvement, your cultivation, or your exercise, but it is Christ's life entering into your life, Christ's nature entering into your nature, Christ's personality entering into your personality, and Christ Himself entering into you to be mingled with you. Once Christ is mingled with you, He will swallow you up. You have no way to swallow Him up, because He is strong and you are weak, He is great and you are small. Therefore, you are changed in nature. Darkness is changed to light, irritability is changed to gentleness, rebelliousness is changed to submission, cruelty is changed to love, and filthiness is changed to holiness.

For this reason we have to spend much time to pray that the Lord will grant us the light to see that God's eternal purpose is that He intends to mingle Himself with us. Only when we see this will we know what it is to be spiritual and what it is to make spiritual progress. Only when we see this will we know what the Lord really wants to accomplish in man. What God wants to accomplish in man is this mingling. Apart from this, regardless of what we do, God will not be satisfied. He not only will not be satisfied, but instead He will be sorrowful and will grieve until we see that His eternal purpose is to mingle Himself with man. Only then will He find satisfaction and rest, and only then will He truly gain something within us.

We all have to pray and ask the Lord to show us His eternal purpose and His mingling of Himself with us. Although we may have heard such a word, inwardly we still may not have the vision, the inspiration, and the revelation, and we still may not be able to see. Hence, we have to pray and ask the Lord to show us this spiritual vision related to His heart's desire. We have to ask the Lord to unveil us that we may know that what He is after within us is not our love, our faith, our zeal, or our good behavior. Rather, what He is after and what satisfies Him is to mingle Himself with us.

CHRIST BEING FORMED IN US

Galatians 4:19 says, "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you." Once a person is saved, he has Christ within him. However, at this point Christ has not yet been formed in him because he has too little of the element of Christ. Although we are saved, up to now we still may not have much of Christ in us. Some people may have been saved ten or twenty years ago. They are full of doctrines—they know about Adam, Eve, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When you ask them about Genesis, they say that it is about God's creation. When you ask them about Revelation, they tell you that it is about the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls. They probably know more than you do. However, they do not have much of the element of Christ within them. Such ones are merely saved; Christ has not yet been formed in them.

Some of us have been in the church for more than twenty years. We have heard many doctrines, we are zealous, and we also love the Lord, but Christ's element has not increased much in us inwardly. We have very little of Christ's element both in our judgment and in our conversation. Why is this the case?

It is because we only have a small amount of Christ in us, and Christ has not grown in us or been formed within us. This is why Paul says that he travailed again in birth until Christ was formed in the believers.

If we know this and see this, we will prostrate ourselves before God and say, "O God, have mercy on me. Even until today I do not have much Christ in me. There is very little sense of Christ in my living, in my inclinations, in my daily walk, and in my attitude. There is very little of the element of Christ in all these aspects. Christ has not yet been formed in me, and I have just a small amount of Christ." Then what other things do we have in us, seeing that we have only a small amount of Christ? We have our self, the world, our preference, our sins, our goodness, our meekness, and our temper. In short, within us there are both good things and bad things. Many things apart from Christ occupy us, leaving no room for Christ.

Therefore, Paul told the Galatians, "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you." The problem with the Galatians was not that they loved the world or lusted after sins. Their problem was that they turned their attention to things other than Christ. They paid attention to doing good deeds by themselves. Since they relied too much on themselves, they left very little room for Christ. This does not mean that it is wrong to perform good deeds but that when you rely on yourself, Christ has no place or opportunity to gain your time and space so that He can gain ground in you. As a result, He has still not been formed in you.

CHRIST BEING MAGNIFIED ALWAYS

Paul told the Philippians, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death" (Phil. 1:20). What Paul meant by saying this was that he always allowed Christ to be magnified in him in any circumstance, whether through joy or through sorrow, through light or through darkness. Christ was not only formed in him but also magnified in him. Paul allowed Christ to fill him continually so that whatever circumstance he encountered, whatever pain he suffered, and whatever hardship he experienced, Christ could be magnified in him, not just in any particular situation but always.

Therefore, we all need to know one thing. There is no way for Christ always to be magnified in us and in our Christian life except to allow Him to be our element within and to increase in us. If we do this, Christ will be expressed through us. Our insight will be Christ's insight, our mind will be Christ's mind, our expression will be Christ's expression, our preference will be Christ's preference, and our living will be Christ's living because Christ will have been mingled with us.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH HINGING ON THE INCREASE OF THE ELEMENT OF CHRIST

Ephesians 4:13 says, "Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Here Paul indicates that once we know Christ, we will progress and arrive at a full-grown man and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Do not think that the church is progressing simply if it increases in number from several hundred to three or five thousand. It may not be. The growth of the church hinges not on an increase in number, in love, or in zeal but on the increase of the element of Christ. The church progresses when there is the increase of Christ's element and the growth of Christ's life. It is true that zeal, love, and the denial of the self can be found in Christians; however, the zeal, love, and self-denial in the lives of Christians should not be of man but of Christ.

Therefore, we must know that the content of the church is Christ, and the growth of the church is also Christ. Only Christ Himself should increase in the church. Some people had only a certain amount of Christ in them in the previous month, but after one month, three months, or five months, they have more of Christ's element in them. Now when we meet them, we not only touch their zeal, love, meekness, humility, and freshness, but we also have the feeling that Christ's element has increased in them. When we come into contact with them, they give an atmosphere that they have more of Christ's element in them. It is not merely an increase in love, faith, zeal, and self-denial, but something that is most real and subjective—the element of Christ—has increased in them. This is the genuine growth of the church. The genuine growth of the church hinges on the increase of the measure of the stature of Christ in the church, the increase of the element of Christ day by day.

THE NEED OF PRAYER

In the past we only knew that as Christians we needed to have love, zeal, faith, humility, and meekness. Now we know, however, that Christ as an element has to be added into us and that He has to grow in us, be formed in us, and be expressed through us. How wonderful it is that Christ lives in us to be our life, our nature, and our personality! However, although we know, realize, and understand this, we do not really know this Christ. We do not know how Christ becomes the life in us, how His element becomes our element, how His life becomes our life, how His nature becomes our nature, and how His personality becomes our personality. Therefore, we need to pray and look to God that He will give us the revelation. Our eyes must be opened so that in our spirit we may see the light, the revelation, and the vision that Christ wants to mingle Himself with us. We really cannot convey this with words; hence, we need to petition, pray, and look to the Lord for the light and revelation.

From now on, we need to pray specifically, not for any other thing but to know Christ. We should not pray for our work but for this revelation, the revelation that Christ in us has become our life. We have to comprehend, to sense, and to practically experience Christ's mingling with us.

READING THE BIBLE FOR CHRIST TO INCREASE IN US

The genuine spirituality of a Christian depends on Christ's being mingled with him. If Christ is mingled with us to one degree, we have one degree of spirituality. If Christ is mingled with us to ten degrees, we have ten degrees of spirituality. The extent of our spirituality is based upon the extent to which Christ has mingled Himself with us. Thus, our spiritual reality depends on Christ's being mingled with us. We should have the realization that our pursuing and our spirituality all depend on Christ's being mingled with us.

Take reading the Bible as an example. A person may have read the Bible for one year, but Christ was not mingled with him one bit. Why not? It is because he does not know what the Bible is. Second Corinthians 3:6 says, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." This shows us that we have to read the Bible with our spirit, because what the Bible reveals to us is not in our mind but in our spirit. That which is in our mind is of doctrine, of the letter, which kills us. That which is in our spirit gives us life and makes us living. Therefore, when

we read the Bible, we have to know Christ through the words of the Scriptures. We have to know Him in our spirit and give Him the ground to increase in us.

Now we all are clear that the purpose of reading the Bible is not to gain some biblical knowledge but to allow Christ to increase in us. Many times, through our reading of the Bible, Christ comes into us. Many people, however, merely read the Bible without having Christ mingled with them. A person may have been a Christian for over ten years and may have read the Bible many, many times, but he may not have much of Christ added into him or have much knowledge of Christ. When others come into contact with such a one who has read the Bible numerous times and yet does not have the increase of Christ, what they touch is simply doctrines in letter. Such a person always thinks that others are wrong and at fault, because his mind is filled with doctrines in letter, and he is short of Christ.

Many Christians like to refer to "learning the truth." Actually, learning the truth is not a bad thing, but today many people are misusing this term. The truth is Christ Himself. To "learn the truth" is to let Christ come into us, to let the element of Christ increase in us. Many people allow Christ to add Himself to them in a continual way through their reading of the Bible, the divine word. Thus, when we contact them, they do not have to give a long discourse, but after only a few simple words they give us the sense of the presence of Christ. They have Christ's life and Christ's element, so when we meet them, we feel that we are meeting Christ. There is something in their words that causes our spirit to feel sweet, at ease, and watered, and also to sense that Christ is nearer and more glorious.

At other times, however, we meet certain saints who read the Bible regularly and know how to preach. Yet the more they speak, the colder we become; the more they speak, the more we lose the Lord's presence; the more they speak, the more we lose our interest in attending the meetings. Why is this? It is because they are full of doctrines. The letter kills. Only Christ gives life. We should read the Bible not to look for doctrines but to seek after Christ. If you really see the revelation through these words, when you go and read the Bible again, you will hate to have merely the doctrines, and you will pray, "O God, save me from knowing mere doctrines without meeting You. Reveal Yourself in Your word, and touch my spirit with Your word that I may give You the ground in me. Lord, do come in."

If we read the Bible in this way, the Lord will touch our inner being and even deeply touch our opinions and concepts. We may have been saved for ten or twenty years but not have much of the increase of Christ in us. We are still full of our natural man, our opinion, our self, and our disposition. We do not have much Christ in us. From now on, however, when we read the Bible, the Lord may touch our inner being with just one sentence or one verse. When this happens, we have to pray, "O Lord, forgive me. I have not been seeking after You all these years; rather, what I have been seeking is just doctrine in letter, and what I have been seeking is just myself. I am filled with the world, my lusts, and my preferences, yet I am so short of You. You have not gained much ground in me. Lord, please forgive me." If we read the Bible with a contrite spirit—asking the Lord for His mercy that He would break in us what we are unable to break by ourselves and remove what we are unable to remove by ourselves—then perhaps after just twenty minutes or half an hour Christ's element will be added into us.

As a result, when we fellowship with others, our careless speaking will disappear, our evil and perverted thoughts will vanish, and our contemptuous and jealous heart will depart. Why will these things happen? They will happen because Christ will have increased in us. His sweetness in us will replace our sourness. This kind of Bible reading is real Bible reading. The Bible is neither doctrine nor knowledge but Christ Himself. If we do not gain Christ and touch Christ, our reading of the Bible is empty and in vain. Only when we touch Christ will we have the genuineness and the reality of the Bible.

TOUCHING THE LORD IN WHATEVER WE DO

Today although many people pray, they do not gain much of Christ. If you merely pray for your family to enjoy peace, your children to be free from danger and harm, and your business to prosper, you miss the real significance and purpose of prayer. Real prayer is for you to contact and touch Christ. We need the light to see that if we do not touch or meet Christ, it would be better not to pray. This is not to say that we should not unload our burdens before God; rather, this is to say that we should do all these things in spirit. We have to touch Christ and tell Him, "O Lord, I still have this problem. Would You like to solve this problem for me? I still have this burden. Would You be willing to bear this burden for me?" We should touch and contact the Lord in our prayers. His answering our prayers is a minor thing. What we should treasure is His contact with us during the process.

For example, before you go to visit someone, to do a certain activity, to help the saints, or to preach the gospel, you should first touch Christ and ask Him, "Am I doing good, helping others, and preaching the gospel out of myself or out of Christ? Am I doing all these things by myself or by Christ?" The same matter may be of two different sources; it may be out of ourselves, or it may be carried out through Christ. The same matter may originate from us or may originate from Christ. Different sources will have different outcomes.

We need to realize one thing. Not only hatred comes out of ourselves, but love can also come out of ourselves. We should not only reject our hatred, but we should also reject our love. We have to seek to touch the Lord's presence, because in Him is love, and it is by Him that we love others. By touching Him in this way, it will not be we who love but He who loves. Consequently, when we love, He loves.

Ten years ago someone from the northern part of China asked me a question, "Since our love may come either out of ourselves or out of Christ, how can we tell the difference? How do we know if our love is of ourselves or of Christ?" This question is hard to answer. However, we know that when we love others, we do have some feeling within. Sometimes when we love someone, we are murmuring within, asking why we love this person so much even though this person does not love others. If this is the case, we should know that this kind of love is one hundred percent of ourselves. When you have the feeling that you love people, yet others do not love people, this kind of love is, no doubt, from yourself. When your love is of Christ, although obviously you love others, you do not sense that you are one who loves others, nor do you boast in yourself.

GETTING RID OF OURSELVES FOR CHRIST TO INCREASE IN US

It is the same with virtues such as goodness, meekness, and humility. If our virtues are of ourselves, we will boast in ourselves and condemn others. If, however, our virtues are of Christ, others will sense them, but we will not have any feeling about them. We can see this principle in Moses. People saw the shining of his face, but he himself did not see it (Exo. 34:29). Perhaps some will ask, "If we do not have any feeling that we are doing something, how can we do it? If we do not feel that we are meek, how can we be meek?" Seemingly, this is paradoxical, but actually, when we are living in our spirit, we will know

and sense what is from our self and what is from Christ. When we have a clear feeling that something comes from our self, we have to reject it. At that time Christ will come out of us. When we have a feeling of the self, we have to hate and reject it. We have to hate and reject not only the evil self but also the good self. We do this because we have a revelation within. We see that Christ has a place in us and that He is our life and our nature. Because of this seeing, we will not allow our evil self to replace Christ, nor will we allow our good self to replace Christ.

If we really have the light, we will see that many things in us are enemies of Christ and that many matters in us are substitutes of Christ. If we have the light, we will see that all these things are frustrations to God and to Christ. May God have mercy on us by removing these substitutes and frustrations from us so that Christ may increase and grow in us. Eventually, Christ will be mingled with us to such an extent that we and He, He and we, will be completely one. This is genuine spirituality and real spiritual growth. This is God's eternal purpose and God's work.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELEASE OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Luke 12:50 says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!" The Greek word for *pressed* has a wonderful meaning that is hard to express in translation. Although the Chinese translation is somewhat clear, it is still far from the original meaning. The original meaning of this word refers to a person being confined in a house or put into a box and therefore feeling constrained and pressed, not freed or released.

The Lord said that He had a baptism to be baptized with and that He was pressed until it was accomplished. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and this baptism was His death, the death on the cross. Many who do not know the mystery of Christ's life think that the Lord Jesus was afraid to die on the cross. However, this verse shows us that the Lord was very eager to die on the cross. Why? He was eager to die because there was a powerful, unlimited, and eternal life concealed in Him, and He strongly wished that He could release it.

GOD BEING INFINITE AND HIS LIFE ALSO BEING INFINITE

Christians often use the term *everlasting life,* which is the eternal life. In their understanding, the meaning of *eternal* is only with respect to time. Hence, to them, the eternal life refers to the life that lasts forever and ever. In the Scriptures, however, *eternal* means "infinite," not only with respect to time but also with respect to space. The eternal life is the infinite life. Such a life transcends the element of time because time has no way to encompass or measure this life. In the same way, space also cannot encompass this life because it is eternal and unlimited. Just as God is infinite, so His life is also infinite. He transcends both time and space; He transcends all things because He is the infinite God.

THE INFINITE GOD COMING INTO THE FINITE MAN

One day this infinite God came into a small man who, on the contrary, was finite. Do you know how much space each one of us occupies? All those who have built a meeting hall know that each person occupies a space that

measures only 3.75 square feet. You occupy no more than two square feet when standing up and no more than ten square feet when lying down. Man truly is too small and too limited. Not only so, when you are in Taipei, you cannot be in Tainan, and when you are at home, you cannot be in the meeting hall. You are too restricted. Please bear in mind that the finiteness of man is just the opposite of the infinitude of God.

What is incarnation? Incarnation is God's coming into man and mingling Himself with man. God is infinite, whereas man is finite. Incarnation is the mingling of the infinite God with the finite man. If you put me into a 3.75 square-foot box, I will feel constrained, pressed, and bound every second. If I were there for only one minute, I would be pressed for the entire minute.

All those who know the Bible and the mystery of Christ's life say that although God is the infinite God, one day He came into Jesus the Nazarene, limiting Himself in this finite man for thirty-three and a half years. Just as a man is lowly, so also was He in His appearance. Previously, He was infinite and unlimited, but now He had become limited in His human flesh. When He was in Galilee, He could not be in Judea; when He was in Peter's home, He could not be in James's home. He was very much under restriction every day that He was on the earth. In the beginning He transcended both time and space. However, in order to enter into man, He came into time and space. Every day that He lived as a man was a day of limitation. Hence, He said that He had a "baptism to be baptized with," which referred to His death. He was pressed to accomplish this matter.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS DOING THE BREAKING WORK

What is the effect of death? The effect of death is the breaking work. What needs to be broken? The human shell has to be broken. Where is it broken? It is broken on the cross. Many people think that the death of the cross is merely a suffering of punishment and pain. However, all those who know the cross know that the cross is more than the suffering of punishment and pain. The death of the cross causes the human shell to be split and broken so that the unlimited life can be released from man. This is what the Lord meant when He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with." He was very much restricted in the human flesh; therefore, He longed to go to the cross that He might be broken. His death was a breaking work that enabled the unlimited life to be released from Him.

A GRAIN OF WHEAT ABIDING ALONE UNLESS IT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES

In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus said, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone." The life of the grain of wheat is concealed in the shell of the wheat and is restricted by this outer shell. However, if this grain of wheat dies, death will have an effect, which will allow the life of the wheat to be released. Hence, the Lord Jesus said that once the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it begins to grow and bear much fruit. However, suppose we put this grain of wheat into a beautiful box to honor and respect it. If this grain of wheat could speak, it would plead with us, saying, "Do not honor and respect me in this way. I am greatly bound here. I would rather that you give me an environment in which I could die. I am very eager to die because death is my only way out. Only by death can the life within me break forth."

THE LORD'S LIFE BEING RELEASED THROUGH THE DEATH OF THE CROSS

Those who know Christ will say that the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross is beyond human imagination. If you ask a Muslim why the Lord Jesus died, he may tell you that Jesus sacrificed Himself for the truth. If you ask a genuine Christian why Jesus died, he will reply that Jesus died to bear the sin of the world and become a curse for the world. We have to bear in mind, however, that knowing the Lord to this extent is not high enough or accurate enough. If you ask a more advanced and spiritual Christian, he will say, "The Lord Jesus not only bore the sin of the world on the cross, He also obtained a great release. His life, which was concealed in the human shell given to Him by Mary, was released. This was because the death of the cross broke His human shell and split the veil, His physical body. His life was thus released on the cross."

When He was on the cross, a soldier pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water (19:34). Blood signifies that He bore our sins and redeemed us. Hence, the death of the Lord Jesus was a redemptive death, as indicated by the blood. However, not only did blood come out on the cross but also water. Water refers to life. The Lord's death was not merely for the accomplishment of redemption but also for the release

of life. If He, the one grain of wheat, was to be multiplied thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold, He had to pass through death. If He had not died, He would have remained a single grain. But since He died, the life of this single grain has entered into the many grains. He was a seed that was full of life. If He had not died, His life would have remained only in Himself and could not have entered into Peter, James, John, the other disciples, and all those who have believed in Him. Do not say that time is so long and space is so wide. If He had not died, His life would have stayed only in Himself and could not have been in the disciples. If He had not died, He could have walked among the disciples, but He could not have lived in them.

Regrettably, the disciples only knew the preciousness of the Lord's presence among them, but it never occurred to them that the Lord would come into them and be mingled with them. The Lord intended to be in them as their life. The Lord said that He had a baptism to be baptized with, that He had to suffer death. The Lord felt that death was a glory and a release, but the disciples were sorrowful. Why were the disciples sorrowful? It was because the Lord had to die. There were originally thirteen of them altogether—the Lord Jesus plus the disciples. If the Lord died, however, they felt that they would be like orphans. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus told them not to be sorrowful because in only three days He would come back into their midst. Furthermore, not only would He be in their midst, but He would also enter into them and abide in them. Previously, whenever the disciples were in Galilee, and the Lord was in the land of Judea, He had no way to be with them because He was restricted by His human shell. However, after the Lord's death His life was released from within Him, and after His resurrection this life entered into all those who believed in Him.

THE LORD ENTERING INTO HIS BELIEVERS AS THEIR LIFE AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

On the day of the Lord Jesus' resurrection, the eleven disciples were in a house, and the doors were shut. Suddenly, the Lord Jesus appeared. After His resurrection He intentionally appeared to the disciples to show them that He was no longer limited by time or space. The disciples were in the house, and the doors were shut, but He was not limited by those things. Why? It was because He had already transcended all those things. On the one hand, He is

over all; on the other hand, He is in all. Whenever someone believes into His name and calls upon His name, He enters into him to be his life.

In Acts, when we see Paul, Peter, John, and Stephen, we cannot but worship the Lord, because He as the only grain had died and already borne much fruit. He is Christ, the eternal life. Through His death and resurrection everyone who believes in Him receives His life. Hence, everyone who believes in Him is Christ. Paul, Peter, John, and Stephen were all Christ because His life was in them, and He Himself was in them.

THE MULTIPLICATION OF CHRISTIANS

Suppose that in the beginning there was only one seed of wheat. After this seed is sown into the ground, it dies, yet some time later it grows up and becomes thirty seeds. Then, after these thirty seeds are sown into the ground, they also die and later grow into nine hundred seeds. In this way after many decades the whole earth is eventually filled with wheat. This is like the multiplication of Christians. The Christian life is afraid of ease and of being complimented. To prevent Christians from multiplying and spreading, all that is necessary is to pay them a high compliment, offer them a high position, cause them to enjoy happiness, and make them feel at ease. On the contrary, the more Christians are persecuted and opposed, the more they flourish. Christians do not fear men's opposition; rather, Christians fear men's praises. Two thousand years of history show us that the more Christians are killed, the more Christians there are. In the second century the Roman emperor gave the order to kill all the Christians. One day a Roman official presented a letter to the emperor, saying that there would be no more people in the city of Rome if the killing continued. Why was this? This was because everyone believed in Jesus.

What was the process that God's life went through in order to enter into man and be released out of man? The life of God was in Christ originally, but there was only one Christ in the flesh—Jesus the Nazarene. When Jesus the Nazarene was in Galilee, He could not be in the land of Judea; when He was in the land of Judea, He could not be in Galilee. He was One who was restricted in the flesh, but one day He died. From the human perspective death is pitiful, yet in the eyes of Christ death was glorious, because after His death He transcended time, space, and every kind of bondage. Moreover, from the day of His resurrection, His life entered into man.

In Acts, Peter and the other apostles testified for the Lord. Their testimony was the testimony of the Lord's resurrection life. At that time Roman politics, Greek philosophy, and Jewish religion had no way to deal with Peter and the apostles. They testified, saying, "The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree" (5:30). After the Lord's resurrection they brought three thousand people to be saved on one day (2:41) and five thousand on another day (4:4). The Sanhedrin wanted to arrest the apostles, but they said, "It is necessary to obey God rather than men" (5:29). After the life of the Lord Jesus entered into them, the entire Roman Empire, Greek philosophy, plus the Jewish religion were not able to put them down. This is the immensity of the power brought forth through the resurrection life of Christ.

THE CHURCH BEING THE EXTENSION AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST

We all have had the kind of experience where we intend to do good, yet we are not able to do it. This is because we are weak. We must realize, however, that because Christ has come into us, there is no good thing that we cannot do, and there is no good deed that we cannot perform. The infinite life of Christ with its infinite power has entered into us. Just as He is, so also are we. Just as He has the life of God, so we also have the life of God. Moreover, the life that is in us is the power of God. All Bible readers know that the four Gospels are the biographies of Jesus, and Acts is the biography of the disciples. Strictly speaking, however, Acts is also the biography of Jesus. The four Gospels are the biographies of Jesus as an individual, and Acts is the biography of Jesus in the disciples. Hence, there is not only one Jesus in Acts. The disciples of the Lord became the church as His extension in time and His spread in space. After two thousand years of extending and spreading, this Jesus is now in the United States and in China at the same time; He is in the East and in the West simultaneously. This is the purpose God intends to accomplish. The reason the Lord Jesus had to die and be raised was so that He could enter into man to be man's life for His spread and extension.

In Christianity today, however, people present God's salvation and the truth in a very superficial way. Since they do not see the deep and mysterious content of God, they merely tell people, "You are sinful, but Christ died for you and bore your sins that He might give you joy and peace. If you believe in

the Lord Jesus, you will receive only blessings and will not suffer loss." Sometimes when people do not have peace, after praying to the Lord, they have peace. The same is true with their business; sometimes their business is blessed when they pray. However, Christianity has missed a great and precious point—God's life enters into man at the time he believes in Jesus.

Let us use the installation of an electric lamp as an illustration. If everything is ready, but the lamp has not yet been connected to the electric source, the lamp cannot shine. Once the lamp is connected to the electric source, the electricity will immediately enter into the electric lamp to make it shine. This shining does not come from the outward polishing. If the electric lamp is polished outwardly but not connected to the electricity, it still will not shine. Once the electricity enters into the electric lamp, the lamp will emit light. We Christians are the same. Do not think that if you "polish" yourself outwardly, that is, if you improve your behavior, you will be saved. Without the light, without Christ's coming into us, and without God's life, we are still empty within. Nothing can satisfy us until the day that we open our heart to receive the Lord Jesus—not only receiving His bearing of our sins but also receiving Him as our life. Then He will come into us, and we will be saved.

CHRIST'S LIVING IN US

We look to God to show us that the most precious matter concerning a saved person is nothing other than the fact that he has Christ, the very God, in him. One day in 1934 while I was preaching in Tientsin, I saw that Christ is in me. At that time I was almost beside myself, and I wanted to tell everyone, "Do not touch me. Within I am too great and too glorious. The God of glory, the great Christ, is living in me." Christ in us is truly too great a matter! When we are sorrowful, He comforts us. When we are weak, He strengthens us. When we are in darkness, He enlightens us. When we are unable to do good, He empowers us from within. He lives in us as our life and our disposition. He is our very being. Therefore, now for us to live is Christ, and Christ is also magnified in us.

There is a brother whose colleagues all regard him as a good and blameless man, but they feel that there is one thing about him that is strange. He is always preaching Jesus to people and urging people to believe in Jesus. Thus, this brother's colleagues have given him the nickname "Jesus." Actually, this is not a nickname—this is a glory. In fact, he is Jesus. He has the life, the love,

and the disposition of Jesus—he is Jesus. Hence, he can do things that others cannot do, and he can live a life that others cannot live. Where does his power come from? It comes from Jesus, not the Jesus in heaven but the Jesus who lives in him.

Those who are inexperienced may think that this brother is crazy. How could Jesus enter into a man? How could Jesus be our life? If we truly know this, we will shout that He is very willing to come into us. We are lowly and unable to stand in His light, yet He is willing to come into us to be our life, our personality, our love, our morality, our holiness, our patience, and our power. Herein lies the real power of God's salvation. This power is the life of Christ in the Christians.

THE TREASURE BEING IN EARTHEN VESSELS

If we think that to believe in Jesus is merely for us to obtain peace, joy, and blessing, then we only know the appearance of the treasure. For example, suppose you go to a jewelry shop to buy a diamond, and the salesperson puts the diamond into a very nice box. When your children see the package, they want that pretty box but ignore the diamond inside the box. It is the same with many of us in our knowledge concerning salvation. Why do we believe in Jesus? We believe in Jesus because we want to avoid sufferings and to have peace and security. What we want is only the pretty box. We do not know that God's salvation is for Christ to be our life. All we want is the box, but we have not seen the diamond within. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." What is this treasure? This treasure is Christ Himself, God Himself.

The center of the entire New Testament is that the Triune God is living in us and we in Him. The Holy Spirit is in us, Christ is in us, God is in us, and we are in the Triune God. The center of the New Testament is to show us that we, the saved ones, have God in us. It is true that God gives us peace, joy, and blessing, but these are all outward things. The intrinsic content of God's salvation is God Himself, Christ Himself. He is the treasure in us, the earthen vessels.

THE CHRISTIAN GROWTH BEING DEPENDENT ON KNOWING CHRIST AS LIFE

We often say that Christians have to grow, but what is the Christian growth? Our Christian growth begins with knowing that God is in us. When we were saved, Christ came into us. However, our eyes need to be opened one day to see that Christ is truly the treasure. This glorious Christ, the God of glory, is living in us; He is our life. This is the first step of the Christian growth.

Our Christian growth is dependent on our knowing Christ as our life. What is a Christian? In short, a Christian is one who has two different lives—his own life and Christ's life. Once a person receives Christ, he is no longer simply himself, but he has Christ within him. Christ and he have become one. This simple word reveals the highest, most glorious, and most mysterious fact—Christ is in us as our life.

Every saved one has the life of Christ. Therefore, every saved person has two lives—his own life and Christ's life. These two lives live together. If you truly are a saved person, many times you may have an experience in which you sense that apart from yourself there is another person within you. This is the wonderful thing about being a Christian. You have no need to consult people outwardly, because there is One in you who is very wonderful, and you can come near to Him. When you have a problem, you can trust Him. When you encounter something that you do not understand, you can ask Him. When you are sad and sorrowful and no one sympathizes with you, this One in you, as a voice or a thought, will comfort and cherish you. When you are about to lose your temper or to commit a sin, this One will urge you not to do so and will stop you from doing so. In addition to yourself, there is another person in you. This person is Christ, God, and the Spirit.

A CHRISTIAN'S POWER BEING IN CHRIST WHO LIVES IN US

If you have never had such an experience, I am afraid that you are not yet saved because you do not have God and His life in you. A Christian, a person who is truly saved, has Christ in him as his other person. We must clearly see the fact that Christ is living in us. The reason why a Christian is able to endure sufferings is because Christ lives in him. The reason why a Christian can sacrifice and consecrate himself is because Christ lives in him. The reason why a Christian earnestly preaches the gospel is because Christ lives in him. The power, motivation, and burden of a Christian all come from the Christ within him.

Today even though many people are saved, they regrettably do not know that Christ is in them. Some people have an incomplete understanding concerning this fact and are not living in this reality. This is similar to a person who prefers to remain in darkness and not turn on the light even though an electric lamp has been installed in the room. Christ is already in us, yet to this day we still do not live by Him much of the time. Rather, we still live by ourselves. Although we have Christ, we are not willing to live in Christ. Hence, every day all the saved ones have to face these two persons—one is themselves, and the other is Christ. Which one of the two will you choose? Do you want to live in yourself or in Christ? Do you live for Christ or for yourself? Do you give room to Christ or to yourself? This is the choice every Christian must personally face. Because you are a person who is subjective—that is, you have a mind, emotion, and will—you must make the choice by yourself. If you choose to live by Christ, this will please God, and this is what God desires. However, if you choose to live by yourself, God will not be able to do anything, and He will let you do what you want.

CHOOSING TO LIVE BY CHRIST

The key is whether you choose to live by yourself or by Christ. If you choose to live by yourself, you will appear the same as you were before you were saved. The reason why many Christians appear the same as the unbelievers is that they are living by themselves. If they would live by Christ, the glory and the beauty of God would be expressed in them. Whether we live by Christ or by ourselves is altogether dependent on us. God will not choose for us. He desires that we choose Christ, and He has put His life in us. However, God will never choose for us. If we do not live by Him, we will still live in darkness. Suppose there is an electric lamp in this house. If we are not willing to turn on the switch, the electric company will not be able to do anything for us. Now Christ is in us, and God is in us. Whether or not we choose to live by Christ is altogether dependent upon us.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE CROSS

In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul says, "I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified." Then in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 he says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us. We are pressed on every side but not constricted; unable to find a way out but not utterly without a way out; persecuted but not abandoned; cast down but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

JESUS CHRIST BEING THE ONE WHO WAS CRUCIFIED

From Paul's word we see that a Christian's center is Christ, the One who was crucified. Christ is the life, and the cross is the way. We have received not only Christ but also His cross; we have received not merely a life but also a way. We have received Christ as our life, and we have also received the cross as our way.

These two items, however, are often neglected in the church today. Christians preach Christ, telling people that Christ is the Savior and life of man, yet in their daily lives very few of them really experience Christ as life. Today many people in the church know and speak the truth of Christ being our life, but the experience of having Christ as life in their daily living is rare.

We really have to look to God that we may definitely know in our experience what it is to have Christ as our life and to know what is the cross of Christ. Today there are innumerable Christians all over the world, yet among them we can hardly find one whose living and work testify that he is living in the cross and that he is walking on the path of the cross.

CHRIST AS THE CRUCIFIED ONE BEING THE CENTER OF GOD'S SALVATION

Christ as the One who was crucified is the center of God's salvation. Hence, Paul told the Corinthians, "I did not...know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Yet what was the condition of the Corinthians? We see from the book of 1 Corinthians that they paid attention to many so-called spiritual matters, such as spiritual gifts, spiritual eloquence, and spiritual power. They also paid attention to faith. Paul even said to them, "You do not lack in any gift" (1:7). In other words, the Corinthians had gifts, eloquence, faith, and various other so-called spiritual things. However, Paul wanted them to see that all these things that they paid attention to were not God's focus. They had not touched or received God's focus. What is God's focus? Paul said, "I did not...know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified."

THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST BEING THE UNIQUE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH GOD'S PURPOSE

The central purpose of God is that He wants to become our life. However, how can He become our life? He becomes our life through the cross. Where there is the cross, there is the life of God; where there is the cross, there is the way of God's life. We must look to God to show us what Christ and the cross will accomplish in us and how we can know Christ and the cross.

God's life in Christ has been given to us. Every saved one has Christ and the life of God. However, whether or not this life can have a place in us, mingle with us, be constituted in us, and live out from us altogether hinges on whether or not we experience the work of the cross. The extent of the work of the cross in us determines how much ground Christ's life has in us, how much we are mingled and constituted with Christ's life, and how much we live out this life.

No doubt, God's life is in us, and Christ is living in us. However, how can the life of Christ, which is in us, be constituted into us? How can His personality become our personality and His element become our element? How can His life swallow up all our natural being, fill our inner being, become our element, and be expressed through us? The only way for God to accomplish all these things is through the breaking of the cross. Only the cross enables Christ to have the position, the opportunity, and the way to do what He wants to do and to accomplish what He wants to accomplish in man.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS BEING DEATH AND TERMINATION

What is the cross? Many people's understanding of the cross is that it is a kind of suffering. Of course, the cross is painful, but this is just half of the correct understanding. The ultimate significance of the cross is not suffering but death. The slogan of the cross is, "Take Him away! Take Him away!" When the Lord Jesus was about to be crucified, people cried out, "Take Him away! Take Him away!" (John 19:15). The cross not only caused the Lord Jesus to suffer, but the ultimate purpose of the cross was to take Him away, to do away with Him, and to terminate Him; suffering is only the process. Death terminates a person, bringing him to an end. Death is the ultimate significance of the cross. The significance of the cross is to terminate, to bring to an end. The cross terminates not only sins but also you and me.

If a person is not dead or finished, it will be extremely difficult for him to be delivered from sins and the world. Only a dead person can be delivered from sins and the world. A living person cannot be separated from sins, nor can he be free from the entanglement of the world. Hence, the ultimate significance of the cross is to put man to death, to terminate man. If a person is really on the cross, the ultimate issue is that he is ended.

What is the way of the cross? The way of the cross is not merely a way of suffering pain and affliction but a way of termination. Today our spiritual knowledge and concepts are very shallow. We think that to be spiritual we have to be zealous, to love the Lord, and to conduct ourselves properly. We think that as long as we are able to deal with our temper and improve our behavior, we can satisfy God's heart. However, God does not give us "dealings," "improvements," or other methods. God gives us only Christ and His cross.

CHRIST BEING THE EXPRESSION OF GOD AND THE CROSS BEING THE TERMINATION OF MAN

What is Christ? Christ is the expression of God. What is the cross? The cross is the termination of man. The cross terminates man, and Christ expresses God. Just as Christ and the cross are inseparable, the experiences of God's expression in man and the cross's termination of man are also

inseparable. Christ brings God to us, and the cross terminates us. The purpose of God's salvation is not for us to improve our behavior, to be zealous, to be loving, or to have the highest morality; instead, the purpose of God's salvation is for us to be terminated through the experience of the cross. We need to be terminated and brought to an end. We deserve only to be hanged on the cross.

Here we need the light to see that the cross is an experience. This experience is always to terminate man, to bring man to an end, to bring man to nought, and to bring man to zero. The word *zero* is not welcomed by people. Businessmen do not want their business to become a "zero"; students do not like to get a "zero" on their tests; and bank depositors do not like to have a "zero" balance. No one likes the word *zero*. God's salvation, however, is to bring man to zero, to bring man to an end, and to terminate man through the cross.

Those who do not know God's salvation like to exhort people to reject evil, to turn to good, and to improve their behavior. The ultimate purpose of God's salvation, however, is to bring man to death, to bring man to the cross. Does one who is hanging on the cross, dying on the cross, still need to improve himself or reject evil and turn to good? Does he still need man's exhortation? We all know that there is no such thing as exhorting a dead person. We can exhort only a living person. If we know God's salvation to a higher extent, we will see where we are. We will see that not only our sins and our behavior but also we ourselves were hanged on the cross.

Now every one of us knows that we are those who are on the cross. However, here is the question. Since we are on the cross, is our living also on the cross? The cross is not a doctrine. If it were so, it would take us only five minutes to understand it. One day God will open our eyes and grant us His view to see that we are already on the cross. This light will nail us down so that, like a nail, we are unable to move. After we have seen this light, the light will follow us, accompany us, and keep a close watch on us. From that time on, we will reject even good, not to mention sin and evil.

NEITHER DOING EVIL NOR DOING GOOD BY OURSELVES

Some people may not understand what this means. Many times we commit sins by ourselves. In addition, we also perform good deeds by ourselves. We

do evil things by ourselves, and we also do good things by ourselves. However, today God wants us not only to reject evil but also to reject good. God wants us to reject our evilness as well as our goodness. If we do not reject our goodness, then God's goodness and God's life will not be able to come out from us.

A certain elderly brother was a very good man. One day he said, "It is definitely good to live out God's love, but to live out man's love is better than to live out man's hatred." He said such a word because he did not see that only one kind of person can live out God's love. What kind of person is this? This is a person who rejects himself. A person who rejects himself will reject not only his hatred but also his love. God's love cannot be expressed in someone who lives in his hatred; likewise, God's love cannot be expressed in someone who lives in his own love. God's love is as bright as pure gold, but man's love cannot be compared even with yellowish clay. The Bible tells us that even our righteousnesses are like a soiled garment (Isa. 64:6), not to mention our sins. In God's light we cannot but confess that even our love is not complete and that our inner motive is not pure. Our inward element is mixed. However, God's love is not like this. Like pure gold, God's love is pure, unblemished, boundless, immeasurable, and without motive.

In short, if what is of man is not rejected or broken, then what is of God will not be expressed in man. If we are not terminated, no matter what kind of help we ask of God, He will not answer. God never helps us to do anything. Whenever we do something by ourselves, God will not move His hand or do anything to help us.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S SALVATION BEING TO PUT MAN ON THE CROSS

After a person is saved, he thinks that he should never lose his temper or speak any idle word. Hence, he prays, "O God, give me the strength, and help me not to lose my temper or speak any idle word." However, God listens to every kind of prayer except this kind. We all may have had such an experience. We asked God to help us not to lose our temper, but in the end, we lost our temper in a bigger way. This is because the purpose of God's salvation is not to help us but to crucify us and terminate us. Suppose a bad-tempered person is dead. Will he still ask for help to not lose his temper? When a person is dead, his temper is dealt with. When a person is dead, his idle words are gone.

In the same principle, if a meek person is dead, can he still be meek? Regardless of whether a person is irritable or meek, once he is dead, there will be no more irritability or meekness. Only those who are alive have all kinds of expressions and problems. With those who are dead, all their problems are gone and over. If we see that we are on the cross, our temper will be gone, and our meekness will be over. If we see that we are on the cross, our hatred will be terminated, and our love will come to an end. When we are dead, everything is finished. The meaning of the cross is death, and the experience of the cross is the termination of our entire being.

GOD'S LIFE BEING EXPRESSED THROUGH US WHEN WE ARE FINISHED

Perhaps some people will ask, "If we are terminated, does it mean that we are through?" Many years ago a Christian once said that if we bury a piece of stone in the soil, the stone will be terminated and through because it does not have life. However, if we bury a seed in the soil, this will offer the seed an opportunity to grow out of death, because there is life in the seed. This is the distinction between those who have God's life and those who do not. For those who do not have God's life, once they stop all their activities, they will be finished; however, for those of us who have God's life, once we are finished, we will allow God's life to come out from within us. In other words, once we stop our love, our morality, and all our human activities, we will see that God's love, God's goodness, God's attributes, and God's life will be spontaneously expressed through us.

Today the main problem among Christians is not committing sins but doing good. We might not live out sins, but if we merely live out our own goodness, we will be at most a good man who has turned from evil to good; we will have no way to experience the cross. Those who have experienced the cross do not have evil, and they also do not have good. Christ can have ground only in those who experience the cross, and only such ones can live out God's life.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS HAVING NO EFFECT ON MAN'S LIVING

If a person merely has the doctrine of the cross but does not know or experience the cross, then the doctrine will have no effect at all on his person

or living. Some people claim that they know the cross, that they are already on the cross, and that they are already finished and terminated. However, when you see their living, you find that they do not know what the cross is. Their entire living is according to their self. They think in their own way, they look at people according to their own view, and they deal with matters according to their own judgment. Everything is according to their self. People of this kind can only tell good from evil; they want the good but not the evil. They can at most discern right from wrong; they want what is right and reject what is wrong.

However, a person who really knows the cross is one who is enlightened by God. Day by day he lives under the light of the cross and is able to tell, in big or small things in his living, what is of the self and what is of Christ, which view is from the self and which view is from Christ, which idea is from the self and which idea is from Christ, which action is from the self and which action is from Christ. He does not care whether something is right or wrong, good or evil, but whether it is of Christ or of himself.

One day under God's enlightenment, if we really see that we have been terminated, this seeing will give us a deep understanding of our actions, thoughts, and responses every minute of our daily life. This will enable us to discern whether they are of ourselves or of Christ. If we really have the light of the cross, whenever we have an attitude or thought that comes out of ourselves, we will immediately have an inner sense of condemnation.

One day God will show us that everything that comes out of the "I" is His enemy. If the "I" is not done away with, God's life will not have an outlet. This seeing will make it impossible for us to live out our own life. Because of this seeing, whenever we want to express our opinion, we will not be able to express it. This is the experience of the cross.

WHERE THE CROSS IS, CHRIST IS

Once we stop all our activities, the Spirit of God will immediately have the ground in us and the opportunity to touch us and operate in us. Thus, what is expressed through us will be God Himself. Once the cross does the killing work in us, resurrection will come. Where death is, resurrection is; where the cross is, Christ is. When there is the work of death within us, there will be

resurrection, and the Spirit of Christ will be expressed. At that time what comes out of us will be God Himself and Christ.

If we pour water on a person, even though the water flows away, his clothes are wet and mingled with water. Every time we contact the cross, Christ passes through us. Every time Christ passes through us, He constitutes us and mingles Himself with us. When we have more of this kind of experience, we will reach a stage at which Christ will not only stay in us, mingle Himself with us, and add Himself to us, but Christ will also live out through us. The cross finds a place and an outlet for Christ in man. As a result, Christ is mingled with man, and man is terminated on the cross. This is the crucified Christ.

We look to God to shine on us and give us the light to such an extent that not only will we refrain from saying any bad words by ourselves, but we will also refrain from saying any good words by ourselves. Not only will we refrain from expressing anything bad, but we also will refrain from expressing anything good. The attitude of expressing things by ourselves will be put on the cross and terminated. If in everything we do we are willing to learn the lesson of asking ourselves whether what we are doing is out of ourselves or out of Christ, then we will be blessed.

We should not take what is outwardly right or wrong, good or evil, as the standard; rather, we should take the inward Christ as the standard. We should not only ask ourselves whether we hate people or love people, but we have to ask ourselves further whether we love people out of our own love or out of Christ's love, because we are now on the cross and have been terminated. A terminated person does not have his own love or hatred; neither does he have right or wrong. One who is terminated on the cross has only one thing—Christ living in him. Where there is the death of the cross, there is the resurrection of Christ.

When Christ is living in us, whatever He lives out from us—goodness, love, light, or anything that is profitable to others—will enable others to touch Christ. Not only so, we also will have more of the element of Christ within us. Day after day, Christ will add more of Himself to us. He will do this to the extent that we will not even need to think, but Christ in us will give us the clear feeling to know what is of Him.

What God desires today is that many people will see from the light of the cross that they have been terminated by the cross. This seeing will cause us not only to stop doing evil but also to stop doing good. This seeing will put our entire being to death. Thank the Lord that whoever has the death of the cross has the expression of the resurrected Christ. When we have such an experience, we will see that Christ is our life and that we are in the death of the cross and on the path of the cross.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CROSS

Matthew 16:21-25 says, "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You! But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men. Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it."

As followers of the Lord, it is often difficult for us to have the experience of the cross because in our natural being we may have never realized how much the cross must work in us. We know that the ultimate result of the cross is to terminate us completely. Hence, from beginning to end, the work of the cross in a person who pursues and follows the Lord completely terminates his being and all that is of himself, step by step. This teaching is easy to understand but not that easy to experience.

GOD PAYING ATTENTION NOT TO RIGHT AND WRONG BUT TO CHRIST

In our natural being we cannot avoid the concept of right and wrong. We tend to think that if we do something right, we are pleasing God, and if we do something good, we are in His shining. We seldom realize that what God pays attention to is beyond goodness and beyond right and wrong. What God pays attention to is whether we do things out of Christ or out of ourselves. According to our concept, God rejects what is wrong and accepts what is right. In God's view, however, only that which is of Christ is acceptable; whatever is of ourselves, whether good or bad, is utterly rejected by God. God's view is different from man's view. God does not take right and wrong or good and evil as the criterion; He takes Christ as the criterion. Whatever is not of Christ,

whether good or bad, is not acceptable to God. Only that which is lived out in Christ and by Christ can be accepted by God. In short, what God wants in us is not what we live out but what Christ lives out through us.

THE DIFFICULTY OF MAN IN CEASING HIS ACTIVITIES

However, there is a big problem. Since man is a living being, having his own preference, thinking, emotion, will, and choice, how can he not live out himself? How can he cease all his activities and let Christ live out through him? This is truly a difficult matter. Not only is it difficult to stop ourselves in big matters, it is even more difficult to stop ourselves in small matters. For example, if we are really enjoying ourselves in a conversation with someone, it is not easy for us to stop ourselves. Even if we stop talking outwardly, we may still murmur within. It is difficult for us to simply listen while others are telling us something. This shows us that when a person is active, it is not easy for him to stop his activity.

In the service of the church today we often do things out of ourselves. Apparently, the things we do are good, right, and profitable, but actually they are done out of ourselves. We may even know that we do them out of ourselves, yet it is still difficult for us to stop. To a certain extent we all have experienced this. Consider reading the Bible as an example. Sometimes while we are enjoying reading the Word, we may get an inward feeling that we should spend a little time to pray for the church. According to spiritual principles, once we have such a feeling, we should immediately stop reading and pray instead. However, usually we are not willing to stop. This again shows us that it is not easy for us to stop our activity.

It is the same with the matter of fellowship. Sometimes we may fellowship with someone to a point where we are full of joy and want to continue talking with him, but we have a feeling within us that we should go visit a saint who is sick or has a problem. It is one thing to have the willingness to fellowship with others, but it is another thing to have the feeling to go and visit the saints. However, because we are too willing to fellowship, we are unable to stop, and because we are enjoying the fellowship, we would not visit the saints.

NOT OUR BEING OBEDIENT TO THE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS,

BUT THE LORD LIVING HIMSELF OUT THROUGH US

Do not think that it is easy for us to be obedient. This is not so. To obey the teachings of the Bible is seemingly an easy task, but to obey the One within us is not so easy. A person can be zealous according to the Bible by himself, but he absolutely cannot obey the Lord by himself. What the Lord wants is not that we would love others after reading about it in the Bible. Rather, what the Lord wants is to live out His love and to love others through us.

BOTH LOVE AND HATRED BEING THE EXPRESSION OF OURSELVES

Perhaps we have had an experience similar to the following. After reading from the Bible about loving others, it so happens that someone we like is right beside us, so we begin to display our love for that one. Apparently, we really love him, and many people may even publicize the fact that we love others. However, this love is one hundred percent out of ourselves. When it is we who love others, the Holy Spirit will give us a feeling that this love is out of our natural man and is actually ourselves. Just as our hatred is the expression of ourselves, so our love is also the expression of ourselves.

Whether I am wearing a Western suit or a Chinese long gown, I am still myself. Even if I put on the best garment in the whole world, I am still myself and have not changed a bit. In the same way, I may wear a “garment” of love or a “garment” of hatred. Although outwardly there is a difference, I am still the same. I am the one who hates, and I am also the one who loves—I am the one doing both.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CROSS TERMINATING OURSELVES

The experience of the cross is not merely a suffering but a termination. Whether we love or hate people, we need to be terminated. Unless we are put to an end, Christ will not be able to come out of us; He will have no way out of us. If we love others by ourselves, people will be able to touch our love and ourselves, but they will not be able to touch Christ. This is because the cross has not worked in us. In other words, the cross has not yet put an end to our love; the cross has not yet put us to death.

DENYING THE SELF, TAKING UP THE CROSS, AND FOLLOWING THE LORD

The Lord Jesus said that if anyone wants to follow Him, he must take up his cross (Matt. 16:24). Prior to this word the Lord mentioned that man must deny himself. We need to see that the cross is an adversary of the self and that what the cross deals with is the self. The Lord spoke such a word with a certain background. That day the Lord had solemnly spoken to the disciples that He would go to Jerusalem to suffer death. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" But the Lord turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men" (vv. 21-23). What Peter expressed was not hatred but sympathy, love, and concern. Yet this love was of the self, and Satan is hidden in the self. May God open our eyes one day to show us that Satan is hidden in and mingled with our self. Not only is our hatred Satan, but even our love for others has Satan hidden in it.

Sadly, hardly anyone today knows this. Even Peter did not realize this. Do you think he hated the Lord or loved the Lord? Of course, he loved the Lord. No one would ever say that Peter hated the Lord, yet the Lord called him "Satan." Many times our thoughts of loving the Lord, of doing good, and of pleasing God all come out of Satan. Why is this? As the Lord said, "You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men." Whenever we are in ourselves, setting our mind on the things of men, we are Satan.

If someone were to tell us that we were full of Satan, we surely would be upset. However, this is a portrait of man, not a statement to be used for scolding people. If we really knew our self, we would see that what is in you and me, the descendants of Adam, is Satan. The bad element is Satan, and the good element also is Satan. In the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there is good as well as evil. Everything that comes out of us is unclean because it has been mingled with Satan.

The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 24). If a person is willing to give up himself and deny himself, Satan will have no ground in him. Satan is mingled with man's intention, but the cross, which is on God's side, does

away with man. Everything that is of man comes out of Satan. If we hate God by our self, we definitely cannot please God. However, even if we love God by our self, we still cannot please God because Satan is in our self. Hence, in a way God does not pay attention to what is being expressed. Rather, God pays attention to whose expression it is—Christ's or ours. If it is ours, then we need not only repentance but also the cross. The cross requires those of us who follow the Lord to forsake ourself and deny ourself. If we want to follow Christ, we need to deny ourself, take up the cross, and follow Him.

HAVING ALREADY BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH THE LORD

The Lord first bore the cross and then was crucified, but with us, we first are crucified, and then we bear the cross. On the day the Lord Jesus was crucified, we were crucified with Him. Hence, on our side, we first are crucified, and then we bear the cross. What does it mean to bear the cross? Many people think that to bear the cross is to suffer. For instance, there may be a wife who is always suffering hardship because her husband has a peculiar disposition. Someone may advise her, saying, "This is the cross that God has given you. You just have to bear it." This shows that many people have the concept that there is more than one cross. Your husband is a cross, your wife is a cross, your boss is a cross, your employee is a cross, your children are a cross, and your daughter-in-law is a cross. It seems that there are numerous crosses for us to bear. Actually, this understanding is wrong.

There is only one cross, the cross which Christ bore to Golgotha and on which He was crucified. Not only was He crucified there but so were you and I. This is an objective and accomplished fact. However, one day God may open our eyes to see the fact that not only Christ was on the cross, but all of us who have believed in Him were also on the cross. We have already been crucified with Christ. From that day on, we will be those who bear the cross subjectively.

TO BEAR THE CROSS BEING TO SEE THAT WE ARE TERMINATED

What does it mean to bear the cross? To bear the cross means to see that we are finished and ended. As soon as we begin to love someone, the cross will operate in us to kill our love. Can a crucified person still love others by himself? Can someone who is on the cross still be active? Can someone who is

on the cross still do something? It is impossible. If we know the cross and bear the cross, we will immediately see that the cross has already terminated us.

We all know that when we light a kerosene lamp, at the beginning it does not smoke, but later, after we twist the wick and raise it, the smoke comes out. Our loving others by ourselves is like lighting a kerosene lamp. When we first love someone, there is no "smoke," but after loving him more, the "smoke" comes out. This is our flesh. Today we may approve of this one and appreciate him, but tomorrow we may disapprove of him and belittle him. Therefore, when someone praises us, we should not be too excited, because later he may be the one who attacks us the most.

If a person has not been dealt with, he may do good things now, but that does not necessarily mean that he will not do bad things later. A person cannot be pure unless he has been dealt with. For this reason God has a strict requirement on us. He requires us to be delivered not only from evil and from good, but He also requires us to be delivered from our self. Hence, we must have the experience of the cross; we must pass through the cross.

HAVING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES BY PASSING THROUGH THE CROSS

The genuine experience of a Christian is the experience of the cross. Only those who have passed through the cross will be able to stand the tests, the blows, and the various trials and afflictions. Regrettably, many Christians have been saved for years but still do not have the experience of the cross. It seems that their experiences of their prayers being answered, their preaching of the gospel being effective, and their having fellowship with the saints are all spiritual experiences. But strictly speaking, whoever has not passed through the cross has not had any spiritual experiences. Only those who have passed through the cross have had spiritual experiences. Our being, our self, must first be broken and terminated by the cross. Then Christ can gain some ground in us and come out through us, and His life can also be constituted into us.

Christ is the life, and the cross is the way. Without the cross we cannot have the experience of Christ's life. Some saints fervently love the Lord, but eventually they fall, become weak, and even get into trouble. Why? It is

because they have never passed through the cross. Someone may be stumbled and may stop coming to the meetings because he was told by an usher to sit in the front row. Another one who was zealous in preaching the gospel may suddenly stop preaching because others looked at him with cold eyes. What kind of experience is this? This shows us that these people have not been dealt with by the cross. If a person has been dealt with by the cross, he will not have these negative feelings. The fact that we can sense whether people welcome us or not proves that the cross has never done the breaking work in us. Only those who have passed through the cross can endure hardship and are real spiritual men.

LOVING THE LORD PURELY

How can we experience the cross? A person's spiritual experience begins with loving the Lord. This love has to be single and pure. Many Christians' love for the Lord is not that pure. Perhaps someone will ask, "Do you mean that I have a hidden motive in loving the Lord?" This is not what I mean. However, many Christians' love for the Lord is mixed with their own preference; thus, their love is not pure. Our love for the Lord should be pure. We should not desire anything besides Him, not even something for our spiritual enjoyment. We should desire only the Lord Himself. Our heart has to be ready to say, "O Lord, I want whatever is Your will, and I reject whatever is not Your will." If we simply love the Lord, we will have the light to see that all that comes out of ourself has already been put on the cross. Thus, we will reject everything that is of us. Once we have this light, we will be able to sense in our daily living that which is from ourself. Once we have such a feeling, we must take up our cross and obey this feeling. If we ignore and disobey this feeling, this means we have come down from the cross. At that moment we are separated from the cross.

THE CROSS DOING THE KILLING WORK

If we love the Lord, He will show us the cross and enable us to receive and bear the cross. In this way the cross will be able to work in us and do a killing work day by day. When we are about to do something by ourself, the cross will do a killing work in us. When we are about to love someone by ourself, the cross will do a killing work in us. When we are about to read the Bible by ourself, the cross will do a killing work in us. And when we are about to visit people by ourself, the cross will do a killing work in us. Because we love the

Lord, once we have the sense of the cross, we will obey it. Because we love the Lord, we will receive and take up the cross and reject everything that is of ourself. This is the spiritual experience.

However, there is hardly anyone who always chooses the cross, who never rejects the cross, and who always acknowledges the cross. Hence, God raises up many things in our environment to show us whether we are those who always choose the cross. Many times God prepares a wife or a husband for us in order to test us and to see if we will choose the cross. The purpose of the outward striking and the inward breaking is to find out if we will choose the cross. It is in this kind of circumstance that many lovers and seekers of the Lord encounter difficulty. If we love the Lord and are willing to take the cross, the Lord will use the outward environment to see if we will truly take up the cross. Sometimes, because of our reluctance in taking the cross, God will use the environment to smite us and break us.

If inwardly we are willing to always bear the cross, we will save ourselves from many outward troubles. Often a person may seem to love the Lord, pursue the Lord, and be zealous for Him, but inwardly he has never seriously chosen the cross or taken up the cross. So God must use many kinds of environments to deal with him and cause him to suffer the breaking. All these outward blows, breakings, and trials are due to his unwillingness to choose and take up the cross.

If we know the cross, we will welcome humiliation more than glory, difficulty more than ease, and adversity more than prosperity. If we know the cross, we will say that we only deserve to stay on the cross, be ended by the cross, and be terminated by the cross. This is our glory. This glory is not something out of ourselves; it is Christ.

THOSE WHO ARE PURE HAVING PASSED THROUGH THE CROSS

Only those who have passed through the cross are single and pure. Those who have never passed through the cross can never be pure before God. If we have never passed through the cross, even our humility will have the mixture of the self. Hence, many times a Christian may seem to be holy outwardly, but inwardly he is filthy. When he says, “Thank you,” the self is there, and when he shows his humility toward others, the self is in it. If we have the light of the

cross, we will see that we are just filthiness. Unless the cross has removed our self, we are still unclean. The work of the cross in us is to take away our naturalness and our uncleanness.

If the Lord is merciful and gracious to us, many of our problems will be eliminated, and much of the friction will disappear. The church should be one, but without the breaking and dealing of the self through the cross, it is difficult to have this oneness. Only those who have passed through the cross know what genuine oneness is.

CHAPTER SIX

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING THE CROSS

We may say that Ephesians 3:16-19 is the highest and most central word in the Bible. This portion says, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God."

This portion of the Word shows us the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God, who fills all things. Although the words are simple, what is spoken of here is very mysterious, and what is included here is extremely rich. Not only is God Himself mentioned, but the riches and the fullness of God are also mentioned. Here we should not only pay attention to the fact that we may be filled but also to the fact that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

THAT WE MAY BE FILLED UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

We all know that the eternal intention of God is to work Himself into us and to be mingled with us. Unable to comprehend this, some say, "How can God and man be mingled together? And how can God mingle Himself with man?" There is at least one verse in the Bible that shows us this matter, saying clearly and emphatically, "that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (v. 19). Not only does God want to come into us and be mingled with us, but He also wants to fill us with all His riches—all that He is and all that He has—that we may become His fullness and expression. This, the ultimate purpose of God, is marvelous and mysterious.

All Bible scholars acknowledge that Ephesians is the highest book in the Bible and that verse 19 of chapter 3 is the highest point, the center, of the book of Ephesians. Paul prayed before God on behalf of the church in Ephesus day after day. Even though the church in Ephesus was already very high and spiritual, God still had His highest desire and purpose for them.

From this we see how much God's desire for His children is neglected and how hard it is for man to reach God's desire. What God has desired throughout the ages is that we would be filled with Him unto His fullness.

How can we be filled with the riches of all that God is? This requires the work of the Holy Spirit within us. If the Holy Spirit does not work in us, we cannot be filled, nor can we have God's riches mingled with us. In other words, unless we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, the riches of God cannot possibly become our inward element. The Holy Spirit works in us so that we may know the Christ who is making home in our hearts. Hence, here it mentions that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and that Christ is making His home in our hearts in order to reveal Christ to us little by little so that we may experience Him in a practical way. When we experience Christ inwardly, we will be able to taste and experience the riches of all that God is.

GOD IN CHRIST DWELLING IN US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

God has put Himself into Christ. Moreover, after Christ's death and resurrection He enters into us and dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:16 says, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man." This verse tells us that the Spirit who is in us is working in us. The result of the Spirit's working in us is that Christ indwells us, making His home in our hearts. It is the Spirit who indwells us, but when the Spirit is working in us, He gives us the feeling that Christ is making His home in our hearts because Christ indwells us through the Spirit.

When the Spirit works in us, Christ makes His home in our hearts so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God. Here we see a wonderful sequence: the Spirit's working in us gives us the sense that Christ is in us, and Christ's being in us is God's filling us inwardly. What is the reason? It is because God is in Christ, and Christ dwells in us through the Spirit. When the Spirit is in us, Christ is in us; when Christ is in us, God is in us.

THE FACTORS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR BELIEVERS TO EXPERIENCE THE TRIUNE GOD

We have to see from this portion in Ephesians how to be filled by the Triune God more and more through His indwelling, that is, how to be filled by God, Christ, and the Spirit. Here it mentions the Divine Trinity and the two steps, two factors, or two requirements, for us to experience the Triune God: one is faith and the other is love. The first step is faith—that Christ may make His home in our hearts through faith; the second step is love—that we may be rooted and grounded in love. In order to experience Christ in full, we must have both faith and love.

Needing to Have Faith toward Him

We must have both faith and love toward the Triune God. To have faith is to believe in God's word—to believe that Christ is making His home in our hearts. Many of us who are saved neglect this faith. We believe in a great many things, such as the kingdom of the heavens, the lake of fire, the existence of God, the Lord's death for us, the forgiveness of sins, and the eternal life. Yet very few people can say, "We believe that Christ is making His home in our hearts and that God in Christ indwells us through the Spirit." All spiritual experiences are based firstly on faith. Without faith our spiritual experiences do not have any basis. If we do not believe that God dwells in us, we will have nothing to say because we will have no basis for our speaking.

We can say this and we can say that because we believe that God in Christ indwells us through the Spirit. We need to acknowledge this fact by faith. If we do not acknowledge such a fact, how can we experience God's indwelling? Without such a faith, we cannot talk about any spiritual matter. To experience God's riches in us that we may become His fullness, we must first have this faith. I hope that all of us who hear this word will kneel down before God and praise Him with assurance that the Triune God is living in us.

I have knelt down before the Lord many times, not to ask Him for anything or to confess my sins, but to praise Him specifically for this matter. This is too great a matter. Some have prayed for healing when they were seriously ill. After they were healed, they greatly praised the Lord. Others have asked the Lord for help when they encountered a difficulty. After the Lord answered their prayers, they also greatly praised the Lord. All these testify that what they experienced was "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). However, I hope we all know that the most delightful news, the real good news of great joy, is

that the God of glory, the God who fills all things, is living in us. Please consider what a glorious miracle, what a glorious wonder this is.

In Philippians Paul tells us that all things are refuse and that only Christ is the most excellent One (3:8). Today's Christians, however, consider the refuse as something excellent, something most precious. Although we cannot say that they consider the most excellent One, the most precious One, as refuse, at least we can say that they are like children who treasure the box that holds the diamond more than the diamond itself. God is in us, but we do not care. What do we treasure? We treasure our tears and our sorrow. What do we treasure? We treasure our ability and our future. When we lose our job, we ask God to give us a job, and when we get a job, we are full of praise and thanksgiving to God. When someone in our family is sick, we pray to God with tears, and when he is healed, we praise God joyfully. We may have praised God innumerable times, but have we ever praised God concerning the indwelling of the God of glory?

D. L. Moody, a famous American preacher, once said that the greatest miracle that God does is that we who were dead in sins are made alive by receiving His life. Today we would say that the greatest miracle God does in us is much more than what Moody proclaimed. We who were dead are not only enlivened by God with His life but are also filled unto God's fullness. God Himself is the fullness, and God Himself is glory. Such a One dwells in us. If we really have the light and have seen the vision, we will be beside ourselves. May the Lord have mercy on us. We all need to have a time to praise God specifically for His indwelling and not for any other thing.

God will never forsake us, so we do not need to worry about anything. In the Gospel of Matthew the Lord told us that if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, all that we need will be added to us (6:33). What does *added* mean? For example, suppose you go to a fabric store to buy some fabric, and the storeowner "adds" a calendar to you. You did not buy the calendar, but because you bought the fabric, the storeowner gives you a calendar as something added to you. Then if you buy more fabric, he will give you yet another calendar as another item added to you. The Lord said that if we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, what we would eat, drink, and be clothed with will all be added to us. Regrettably, however, we always reject the "fabric" and care only for the "calendar." We do not recognize or appreciate the "fabric." We care only for the "calendar." Actually, what do we

have to worry about? We did not create the earth, neither did we invent sunlight and rain. We have not caused one grain of rice to grow. All these things were created and done by God. Since God was able to create all these things, can He not send all these things to us for our enjoyment? Perhaps some people will then ask, “Does this mean that we do not need to do anything but that we can simply wait for God to send all these thing to us?” We should realize that no one who fears God would say such a word.

Before God we should disregard material things. Many people have disregarded material enjoyment for the sake of God and His kingdom, yet eventually God granted them a great deal of material enjoyment. The God whom we serve never fails. Even though sometimes He puts us through trials, we still have to properly praise and thank Him for our relationship with Him. Today many Christians do not know the God who created all things; rather, they treasure all the things that He created. Paul says that he counted all things as refuse. God has never treasured these things more than Christ. However, we have a treasure in us that Paul referred to as being something excellent. God is the excellent One! Christ is the excellent One! Such a One lives in us! How glorious this is!

We must know, acknowledge, receive, and believe that this glorious God is living in us. Without such faith, we cannot talk about any spiritual experience. A person may think that it is a spiritual experience to pray earnestly for the Lord to preserve his son, who is going on a trip, and then the Lord keeps his son from danger. This person would be very joyful after having such a “spiritual experience.” Indeed, a Christian should have this kind of experience, but this cannot be counted as a real spiritual experience.

The first step of a genuine spiritual experience is the belief that God dwells in us. We should prostrate ourselves in worship to God and lift up our hearts to praise Him, saying, “O God of glory, although You are the Lord of the universe, You live in me. Although You are on the throne, You are also in me. I praise You because You want to fill me unto Your fullness. What a glory this is!” A Christian who is up to standard should have this kind of praise. The reason why we are not released and have no peace is that we have not seen, and we have neglected the fact, that the God of glory is living in us. Without faith it is impossible to see and receive this.

Some people say that our teaching is too high and too deep and that if we were to change our teaching a little, more people would listen to us. However, if we do not release such messages, the God of glory in us will not be pleased, because this is His intention revealed in the Scriptures. If we really know that the God of glory is living in us, and if we have fellowship with Him, all our problems, such as those related to sins, the world, hardships, food, clothing, housing, and transportation will pass away. The God of glory, the One of peerless worth in the universe, is living in us. How great this is!

Observe how great and wonderful this universe is. It is God who created such a great and wonderful universe, and now this God of creation is living in us. He is truly the One of peerless worth. Is gold precious? Yes it is. It was created by God. The God who created gold is indwelling us. He is not only our Lord, our Father, and our God; He is also living in us, and we are being filled unto all His fullness. If we see this, our entire being will be changed.

Many years ago in Chefoo during the fellowship in a love feast, a brother who had just been saved saw the preciousness of the glorious God living in him. After this he did not care that the distribution of his family's inheritance was taking place; he simply gave up everything. This is the personality of a Christian. This was due solely to the fact that he saw and believed that the God of glory was dwelling in him. Faith is the first step.

Needing to Have Love toward Him

The second obligation we have toward the Triune God is to love Him. Paul says, "That you, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17b). Everyone who genuinely believes in the Lord will love the Lord. If someone has helped us, it is reasonable that we would love him. Because he has done us a favor, this favor stirs up our love toward him. At the Lord's table we often hear the saints pray, "O Lord, You gave up Your life for our sins, shedding Your blood and enduring the suffering of the cross." This kind of prayer is good, but not only should we see that the Lord died for us, we should also see that He lives in us. This is the subjective aspect. At the Lord's table our heart should be touched by His grace to praise Him that He lives in us and is united with us.

The Lord not only died for us, but He also lives in us. He died for us so that He may enter into us. Without the shedding of blood, a lamb or an ox cannot enter into us as our food to become our element. It is not enough to see only

the Lord's love in dying for us; we should also see the purpose of His love in dying for us. What is this purpose? It is that He may enter into us to be our food, our life, and our element. If we see this, we will praise the Lord at His table, saying, "O Lord, without Your death and the shedding of Your blood, I would not be able to receive this bread and cup into me today. Lord, I thank You."

If we realize this, we will sense from within that the Lord is really lovely. We will not only adore Him and be affectionate toward Him, but we will truly love Him. He is so wonderful and so precious! If we genuinely know Him, we will surely love Him. We cannot experience Him unless we believe in Him and love Him. Only those who believe in Him and love Him can experience Him. Love is a strict requirement. The Lord has not turned away from us; rather, we are the ones who do not love Him. If we do not love Him, it is impossible for us to experience Him. We must have both faith and love toward Him. Faith and love are the factors for us to experience Him.

MAN HAVING THREE PARTS—SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

We need to spend some time and effort to understand our practical experience. We know that God fills us by indwelling our spirit. Man not only has a body and a soul, but he also has a spirit in the deepest part of his being. The Bible tells us that man has three parts. Speaking from the inside out, we have the spirit, the soul, and the body (1 Thes. 5:23). Speaking from the outside in, we have the body, the soul, and the spirit. The outermost part is the body, the innermost part is the spirit, and in between the spirit and the body is the soul.

Our body is our outward part, our outward organ. Our soul is our self, which includes three parts—mind, emotion, and will. When we think, we use the thinking organ, which is our mind, our brain. The word *brain* is a biological term, while the word *mind* is a psychological term. Our thinking and our consideration are functions of our mind, which is the leading part of our soul. Our emotion is the organ of our joy, anger, sorrow, and delight. We may like something, we may be happy, or we may be angry. These are functions of the emotion, the second part of our soul. Making decisions and choices are functions of our will, the third part of our soul. These three parts—the mind, emotion, and will—added together constitute the soul. What is the soul? The soul is our "I," our personality, our self. We often say "I," and

this “I” refers mostly to our soul. Most people know only that man has a body, which is physical, and a soul, which is psychological. Their analysis of man ends here.

The Bible tells us, however, that man not only has two parts—body and soul—but that man also has a spirit deep within him. All saved ones can comprehend the condition that our spirit is in and the need that our spirit has. For example, sometimes we do not have any problem physically and we are happy psychologically, but inwardly we still feel depressed. Even though we have material enjoyment and are not lacking psychological entertainment, inwardly we still feel unhappy. As a result, our seeking of God and praying to God come out of our inmost and deepest part—our spirit.

We all know that God dwells in our spirit. However, how can the God who indwells our spirit be manifested in us? When we speak about man, our emphasis is not on man’s body; rather, we are referring to man’s soul. When God is manifested in us, He is manifested in our soul. This means that God is expressed through our soul—our mind, emotion, and will. When we say that God is seen in us, we mean that God’s element is seen in our mind, emotion, and will. We think as God thinks, and we make decisions as God makes decisions.

Although many people are saved and have God in their spirit, they do not have God’s element in their mind, emotion, and will. Some zealous Christians may be moved when they kneel down to pray and touch God, but after they rise up, they are the same as they were before. Their thoughts are still their thoughts, their will is still their will, and their emotion is still their emotion. Such a one is genuinely saved and God truly dwells in his spirit, but God is surrounded by his soul and is not able to move. Outside the spirit is the soul, and outside the soul is the body. The spirit, soul, and body are three layers, and each layer is deeper than the next.

For example, consider a light bulb. Outwardly it has a shade, and inwardly it has a filament. In addition, there is electricity passing through the filament. If the filament has some problems, the electricity will not be able to pass through it. These three layers—the filament, the light bulb, and the shade—may be likened to our spirit, soul, and body. The lampshade may be likened to our body, the light bulb to our soul, and the filament to our spirit in which God dwells. If we put many colors on the lightbulb, the light within will

not shine forth. Similarly, today God is dwelling in us, but if our mind, emotion, and will are filled with our self, the world, and sins, He is not able to be expressed through us.

Now the question is, how do we allow God, who is in our spirit, to be expressed through our soul—our mind, emotion, and will—so that when people see us, they see that we have God in us? How do we become those whose thoughts, emotions, decisions, likes, and inclinations all have God's flavor, those who have God within us?

GOD'S SPREADING FROM OUR SPIRIT TO OUR SOUL BEGINNING WITH OUR HEART

How can God spread into every part of our soul from our spirit? God's spreading to every part of our soul begins with our heart. Our heart has two aspects: the biological aspect and the psychological aspect. Our biological heart can be seen during a surgical operation, but no one has ever seen our psychological heart. Here we are speaking about the psychological heart. According to the thought in God's Word, the heart includes one part of the spirit and all the parts of the soul. The main part of our spirit is our conscience, and our soul includes our mind, emotion, and will. All these parts combined together comprise our heart. Hence, when we touch the source of man's problem, we touch man's heart. It is not enough to say that just our soul represents our being. Actually, it is our heart that represents our being.

The Chinese refer to someone who is absent-minded as a person whose heart is absent. Man's heart is very important; it represents man's genuineness. When the Bible speaks of man's relationship with God, it says that we must use our spirit to worship and contact God (John 4:24). However, we not only need to use our spirit, but we also need to use our heart. Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In our relationship with God, our heart is a crucial station. We have a spirit within and God dwells in us, but if we do not have a heart to love God or desire God, He will not be able to do anything in us.

In the four Gospels the Lord paid attention to the matter of dealing with man's heart. In the Gospel of John, the Lord asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?...Do you love Me?" (21:15-17). Even in the Gospel of Matthew, He also said that he who loves his father or mother or son or

daughter above Him is not worthy to be His disciple (10:37). In the three and a half years with the disciples, the Lord mainly wanted to gain the disciples' hearts. The Lord drew them and appeared sweet and lovely in their eyes in order to gain their heart.

Song of Songs 1:2-3 says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine. / Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you." The first step of pursuing the Lord begins not with the spirit but with the heart. Everyone who follows the Lord is first drawn by the Lord. Hence, this seeker of the Lord says, "Draw me; we will run after you" (v. 4). If we do not love the Lord with our heart, the Lord will not be able to do anything in us. We love the Lord because our heart is drawn by Him. This love is not a love of adoration or affection but a romantic love. He is so good and so sweet! He is altogether lovely! We must love the Lord to such an extent.

Our heart connects and joins our soul with our spirit. When we love Him, this love will transmit what is in our spirit to our soul. As we love the Lord, we will see how much we are filled with ourselves in our mind, emotion, and will. Then we are willing to take the cross. To take up the cross is to deny our soul, to deny our mind, emotion, and will, and to deny our very being. When we do this, the cross will set a mark on us and kill our self. In this way we will experience the cross. Our self, our love, our choice, our resolution, and our knowledge will all be on the cross.

When the cross works in our soul, it kills the self in our mind, emotion, and will. Where there is the death of the cross, there is also resurrection. The cross works in our mind, emotion, and will to create room for Christ to be in us. At this time the Spirit also transfuses God's mind into our mind, God's emotion into our emotion, and God's will into our will. The more we know Him, the more we will know ourselves; the more we know ourselves, the more the cross will work in us; and the more the cross works in us, the more the Spirit will come into every part of our being. When the Spirit comes in, Christ comes in, and when Christ comes in, God comes in.

As a result, day after day our mind, emotion, and will are filled with God's element. Then our thoughts will become God's thoughts, and our preferences will become God's preferences. God will mingle Himself with us to the extent that all our attitudes, speaking, expression, and actions will express God.

When God has mingled Himself with us and has filled us with all His riches, we will become His fullness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FOUR POINTS CONCERNING PRAYER FOR GOD'S WORK

Isaiah 6:8 says, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us? And I said, Here am I; send me." Today many of us have received special grace from God to see the way that God is taking and the work that He is doing, so that we can be blessed in receiving His commission and answering His call. For these important matters we must have adequate prayer.

GOD'S WORK BEING BASED UPON OUR PRAYER

We know that God's work is based upon our prayer. How much God works depends on how much we pray. How strong God's work is depends on how strong our prayer is. How effective God's work is depends on how much spiritual element we have in our prayer. A certain servant of the Lord once said that the extent of our prayer determines the extent of God's work. The people we pray for are the people God will work on, and the degree to which we pray is the degree to which God will work. Our prayer paves the way for God's work.

We look to the Lord to work among us not only today but even more in the future. For this we must have much more prayer. Without sufficient and thorough prayer we cannot expect God to work more. Therefore, we look to God to grant the saints the burden to pray. We look to God to press them to pray, even to the extent that they would have no peace and would not be able to eat or sleep until they pray. The psalmist told us that a day in the courts of God is better than a thousand elsewhere (Psa. 84:10). This means that spending time in prayer is a thousand times more effective than spending it in other matters. To spend a day in prayer is better than spending a thousand days in other matters. We look to God to grant us adequate prayer and also an adequate number of praying ones.

GOD NOT DESIRING TO WORK ALONE BUT WANTING MAN TO WORK TOGETHER WITH HIM

The Bible tells us that God is working all the time. Jerusalem was the center of God's work in the Old Testament. God intended to work to the extent that Jerusalem would be a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:6-7). However, God did not begin doing this right away. What did He do? He first appointed watchmen, men who watched in prayer upon the walls of Jerusalem. These watchmen who were appointed by God reminded Him day and night, giving Him no rest and taking no rest for themselves. Does this seem strange? There is no problem in the heavens, but there is a problem on earth. God's will is secure in the heavens but not on earth. The "electricity" cannot be transmitted to the earth, and thus, God cannot do anything. We cannot see God's work and blessing on man that much because of the problem on man's side.

Please listen to this call: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" (6:8). God has an intention in the heavens to save men, but who cares for this intention? Throughout the ages God has constantly been asking, "Who will go for Us?" He wanted to save the children of Israel, but who was willing to work together with Him? He wants to give grace to man, but who cares for His heart? There is no problem on God's side, but there is a big problem on man's side. What is the problem? The problem is that our prayers are not right, having originated from the erroneous concept that we must wait for God to work, when in fact God is waiting for us to work with Him. For a long time God has wanted to work. He wants to save thousands of sinners and has been ready to save them for a long time, but He has not found anyone to work together with Him. Thus, He is still sighing, "Who will go for Us?" This sighing indicates how great a problem this is. This great problem is that in this universe God is prepared to give men grace, to save men, and to work in every corner of the whole earth. However, there is no one on earth who is willing to cooperate with Him.

God's work requires man's prayer. Without man's prayer, God cannot do anything even if He wants to. This is a big principle in God's work. If God cannot find people to work with Him and to pray, He will not be able to do anything, even though He is the almighty God and is willing to do it. Why is this so? The reason is that He does not work alone; instead, He desires that man work together with Him. This is the law of His work. If He cannot find such ones, He will not be able to work.

GOD LACKING MAN'S COOPERATION ON THE EARTH

What is this law? Many saints among us have studied electricity. According to the laws of electricity, two wires are required to transmit electricity—the supply wire and the return wire. Only when these two wires are connected can there be the transmission of electricity. If there is a supply wire but no return wire or a return wire but no supply wire, electricity cannot be transmitted. You may ask, "Why is there such a law?" I do not know. Even electricians may not be able to give you an adequate explanation. Nonetheless, they have discovered this fact that there must be return and supply wires for electricity to be transmitted. The things on earth are a reflection of the things in the heavens. The Spirit of God cannot be transmitted to the earth because a "return wire" is lacking—men on the earth who will cooperate with Him. Although God has no problems in the heavens, He has a problem on earth because He has not been able to gain a group of people on earth to cooperate with Him.

In Matthew the Lord taught us to pray, "Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth" (6:10). This indicates that there is no problem with God's will being done in heaven, but there is a problem concerning God's will being done on earth. God's will encounters a big problem in man, yet hardly anyone realizes it. Therefore, very few pray, "O God! Please send me." In a certain age and place there may be only one who is willing to answer God's call. Yet as long as this one is willing to care for God, to work with God, to cooperate with God, and to bow his knees in prayer, this person will be an outlet for heaven. All the heavenly blessings, power, grace, and even God Himself will be transmitted to the earth through that person. Then the world will be able to receive God's grace, obtain God's blessing, and know God Himself through him.

Is this matter difficult or troublesome? To God this matter is not difficult or troublesome at all. The difficulties and troubles all lie with us. Our heart, our understanding, our answering, our receiving, and our prayer are all insufficient. Therefore, in words we can understand, God tells us that if we do not work together with Him, if we do not pray, and if we do not remind Him, He will rest. Do you understand the meaning of this? This means that He has a work to do, but He may not be able to do it. Whether or not He can do it depends on our willingness to pray and to remind Him. If we pray to Him and remind Him, He will work, but if we do not pray to Him or remind Him, He will not work.

Today the Lord has truly been merciful to us in granting us such a peaceful environment and people who are so hungry and thirsty for salvation. Yet those who have been saved are very few in number, the gospel has not been widely spread, and many places still do not have churches. Is it possible that the Lord is not willing to save people? Is it possible that He is not pleased to save them? If we know God and care for His heart's intention, we will realize that God has been ready for a long time and has been waiting for man to answer His call. The "supply wire" is already there, but there is no "return wire" yet; therefore, there is no electricity or light in this place. What is this "return wire?" It is you and I. We have delayed many of God's works and have failed to save many souls in time. If we would care for God more and pray more, more souls would be saved.

Today the salvation of God seems to be powerless, and the gospel does not seem to be the power of God because very few are being saved. Is this the fault or problem of heaven or of earth? Is the problem on God's side or on our side? If we really know God, we will see that all the problems and hindrances are in you and me. If we do not care for God, look to God, work together with God, pray to God, or remind God, He will be unable to do anything. Why is this? This is because God can never do anything against His principle. If He cannot find a man and if there is no one who will work with Him, He will have no way to do His work on earth. Although He desires to work and is able to work, He has no ground to begin His work. Why? It is because there is no one cooperating with Him.

SETTING ASIDE TIME FOR PRAYER EVERY DAY

I hope that in the near future we all will be able to confirm the fact that if we are willing to answer God's call, many people around us will be saved, and God's grace will be transmitted to the earth through us. It is not too hard or troublesome to answer God's call; it is merely a matter of our heart's desire. If we have the desire to answer God's call, from now on we should resolve to set aside some time to pray before the Lord every day. We need to pray again and again because unless we have adequate prayer, all that we have is mere doctrine. We have to meet God, touch God, and answer God's call in order to meet His need in this age.

Now we will cover a few crucial items and the goal to which we all must pay attention. I hope that we all would keep these few points firmly in our mind,

bringing them before God in prayer and reminding God day and night until we see God's work become a praise on the earth.

HAVING A HEART FOR THE LORD

First, we need to spend time specifically to pray that the saints would have more of a heart for the Lord. This means that we have to pray to the Lord that the saints would have a heart that is sufficiently inclined toward the Lord and that every one of them would love the Lord. We should not only pray that they would be saved and participate in the church life but that they would also be touched by the Lord and have a heart for Him—not just any heart but a heart sufficiently inclined toward Him. The first issue concerning man is his heart. Today educators regard man as an animal of thought, but there is a part in man—his heart—which is more subjective and which better represents him than his mind.

For three and a half years our Lord Jesus was on the earth with the disciples every day, leading and teaching them. The most important matter that the Lord focused on was the matter of touching their hearts. Although we cannot find such a word in the Gospels, we can draw the conclusion that the Lord was touching their hearts. The Lord touched James's heart, Peter's heart, and Andrew's heart; He touched the hearts of all twelve disciples. What the Lord paid attention to in those three and a half years was their hearts. Why was this? This was because if they had not inclined their hearts toward God and had not fixed their hearts on the Lord, they would have had no future in spiritual matters, and the Lord would not have been able to do anything.

The Lord became flesh that He might work through the disciples, but if the disciples had not had a heart for the Lord, how could the Lord have done anything? Suppose James, Peter, John, and Andrew had no heart for the Lord and had simply gone fishing. Suppose they had been saved and blessed yet had no heart for the Lord's work. How could the Lord have worked through them? If the Lord had been unable to bring the disciples to the upper room in Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost could have come and the Holy Spirit could have been outpoured, but there would have been no vessel on the earth to receive the leading of the Holy Spirit. However, on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended, there were a hundred and twenty people whose hearts were ready and were for the Lord. Hence, when the Holy Spirit descended, He was able to find one hundred and twenty people on the earth

whose hearts were for the Lord and were sufficiently inclined toward the Lord.

When the Lord appeared to the disciples in the Gospels, He appeared as the lovely One. We see in the Gospels that the Lord manifested His power, but we also see that the Lord showed His loveliness. One woman anointed Him with precious ointment and kissed His feet (Luke 7:37-38). This shows us how lovely the Lord was and how sweet and precious He was among His disciples. He did not compel the disciples; rather, He drew them with His grace, His love, His sweetness, and His glory. Which part of the disciples did He draw? He drew their hearts. The Lord touched the disciples' hearts with His loveliness.

The Lord touched people's hearts with His loveliness to the extent that they did not care for anything. Two of the sisters—Mary the Magdalene and Mary of Bethany—forsook everything to love the Lord. Why? It was because the Lord was lovely and precious to them. Thus, they forsook everything to love and seek the Lord absolutely. However, after the Lord's death the brothers, such as Peter, were still weak, even though they knew that the Lord had resurrected. Peter took the lead to go fishing, and the rest of the disciples went with him. That night they caught nothing. As soon as the morning broke, the Lord appeared in their midst. Did the Lord rebuke them? No. The Lord came to them, was gentle before them, and cared for them. The Lord asked them on the shore, "You do not have any fish to eat, do you?" How lovely the Lord was, and how caring He was toward them! After Peter heard that voice, he disregarded everything, forsaking the boat and the fish, and threw himself into the sea. At that time did the Lord rebuke him? No. The Lord did not rebuke him; rather, He asked Peter gently and sympathetically, "Do you love Me more than these?" What the Lord meant was, "Do you love Me more than the sea? Do you love Me more than the world? Do you love Me more than your boat? Do you love Me more than your occupation? Do you love Me more than your fishing skill? Do you love Me more than your capability? Do you love Me more than your companions? Do you love Me more than the one hundred and fifty-three fish? Do you love Me more than these?"

Instead of rebuking and blaming Peter, the Lord simply asked him, "Do you love Me more than these?" How did Peter reply? Peter answered, "Lord, You know that I love You." Then the Lord asked him again, "Simon,...do you love Me?" Peter did not know how to answer, so he simply told the Lord, "You

know that I love You." The Lord did not ask him this only once or twice but asked him three times. This is recorded in John 21. The sole emphasis and purpose of the Lord's work in those three and a half years was to touch the disciples' hearts and lead them to love Him.

Without John 21, there would not have been Acts 1. If man's heart is not touched by the Lord, he will not be able to tell the Lord, "O Lord, I love You." The Lord brought Peter, James, John, and the rest of the disciples to a point where they were touched by His love and saw His glory. Then what did they do? They left their relatives and possessions behind and went up to the upper room in Jerusalem. They suffered much persecution and hardship there, but they were not afraid. Their going up to the upper room signifies that they had forsaken everything of the earth. What did they do in the upper room? They wanted only the Lord, not the world or anything of the earth. They forsook everything, including their possessions, families, relatives, positions, and reputations, and trampled all these things under their feet.

They prayed in the upper room day after day, praying again and again, continuing steadfastly for ten days. They did not seek after the things of the earth but only after the things of the heavens; they cared not for man but for God alone. This was their unique goal. They prayed until one day the Holy Spirit came upon them; they prayed until one day the "supply wire" found the "return wire," that is, until God found man. At that time the "electricity" was transmitted, and the Spirit came. As a result, first three thousand and then five thousand people were saved. From where did these three thousand and five thousand saved ones come? They came from prayer, from the love for the Lord. Without the love for the Lord, there would not have been any forsaking. Without the forsaking, there would not have been any prayer. Without the prayer, there would not have been the descending of the Holy Spirit. Without the descending of the Holy Spirit, there would not have been any power. Without the power, there would not have been any work. And without the work, no one would have been saved.

Without these one hundred and twenty people loving the Lord and emptying the world from their hearts, God would have had no way to work. However, due to the Lord's drawing, they emptied the world out from their being and their hearts. The world had no place in them, the world could not usurp them, the world had no power over them, and the world had been emptied out of them. These people not only loved God, but they were emptied

of the world, and they turned their entire being away from the earth completely. Previously, their fishing boats, their fishing nets, and their fishing companions had been lovely to them, and their hearts had been directed toward the world, their possessions, their occupations, and their families. One day, however, the Lord came to ask them, "Do you love Me more than these?" The Lord's word turned their hearts around. Their hearts were turned to such an extent that one day they simply gave up everything—the earth, the sea, the boat, the net, and the fish. Instead, they just wanted the Lord, the things of the heavens, and God. When they went up to the upper room in Jerusalem, their whole being and all of their hearts were turned toward the Lord. They prayed until the day the Holy Spirit came upon them and filled them. The filling of the Holy Spirit was the power. May we all see that without prayer, there will not be the filling of the Holy Spirit; without the filling of the Holy Spirit, there will be no power; and without the power, the work will not be effective. All these things come from prayer.

Where does prayer come from? Prayer comes from our love for the Lord. Without a heart that loves the Lord, there will be no prayer. Hence, we need to hear the Lord speaking to us, "Do you love Me more than these?" Not only do we need to hear His voice, but we also need to answer, "O Lord, You know that I love You." We need to pass through this before we can arrive at Acts. First, there was the prayer in Acts 1, and then there was the descending of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. I hope that all the saints will sense and see the Lord's sweetness and beauty. May the Lord draw us so that we may love Him and be touched by Him, so that our heart may be turned right-side up toward the heavens.

Time is very short; the day of the Lord's coming is drawing near. When we see the changes in the world, should we not pray? We need to love the Lord and turn our hearts to Him while we still have today. From this day on, we need to pray and ask the Lord to turn all our hearts around so that we who belong to God would be those who love God.

THE SPIRIT'S ENTERING

Second, in the Gospels the Lord paid attention to the matter of our heart, but in Acts and the Epistles the Lord touches the matter of our spirit. This has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, the Spirit of God enters into us to fill us,

and on the other hand, we enter into the Holy Spirit to know the spiritual things and to have the spiritual seeing, revelation, and understanding.

This point is more advanced than the preceding one. It is not sufficient merely to have love. If we only have love, we may still be empty within because we may not have the entering of the Spirit into us. If we do not enter into the Holy Spirit, we will not have adequate knowledge. Our understanding of spiritual matters and things will be very superficial and limited, and we will not be deeply rooted spiritually. This requires much prayer. May the Lord bring us into the Holy Spirit that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit and be opened in spirit, not only hearing the doctrines but also seeing the light, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and entering into the spiritual reality.

RECEIVING THE GIFTS AND THE CALLING

Third, we need to receive the gifts and the calling. What is a gift? A gift is a spiritual ability. For example, perhaps some saints do not know how to preach the word, so they ask the Lord for the gift of preaching. Perhaps others do not know how to preach the gospel, so they ask the Lord for the gift of preaching the gospel. Still others may not know how to lead people, so they may ask the Lord for the gift of leading. Moreover, some among us should rise up and ask for gifts that are easier to obtain: the gifts of healing and casting out of demons. When we preach the gospel, sometimes we may find that many people are very superstitious. Therefore, we cannot preach the gospel to them by speaking only. We need to pray and ask God for the gifts—the gifts of healing and casting out of demons. We need to have such boldness. I hope that each one of us would receive some spiritual gifts. Some could cast out demons, some could heal diseases, some could preach the word, some could edify the churches, some could preach the gospel, some could administrate the church, and some could minister to the saints. May the Lord give these gifts to His church in many ways.

The calling is related to the gifts. I hope that the saints would answer the Lord's calling to set aside their time and everything else for the Lord in order to serve as workers, elders, or deacons. This is a glorious matter.

SPREADING THE WORK AND ESTABLISHING THE CHURCHES

The fourth item is the spreading of the work and the establishing of the churches. The preceding three items are for this goal. We look to the Lord that He would raise up many saints to answer His calling for the work of spreading the gospel. We hope that by the end of this year the Lord will add ten more places, such as Hualien, Su-Ao, Miaoli, Panchiao, Chutung, and Changhua, that would have the Lord's table. This is our primary goal. Second, we hope to have churches in all the counties and cities. Third, we hope to have churches in all the towns and villages. Then the gospel will reach the local people, and the Lord will be widely preached among them. This is our long-term goal.

May we all see that there is no other place and no other age that needs the gospel more than this place and age in which we are now. We thank the Lord that He has given us a stable society and environment that are convenient for the preaching of the gospel. If we do not make good use of this time to work for the Lord, we will truly let the Lord down. We look to the Lord for the burden of prayer that we may overcome everything and that we may receive power from on high and thus allow the gospel of the Lord to go forth from our midst.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH

First Corinthians 1:22-23 says, "For indeed Jews require signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness." Then verse 24 continues, "But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Colossians 3:11b says, "Christ is all and in all." The Jews require signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but Paul clearly told us that Christ is the power of God, the wisdom of God, and that Christ is all.

In order to meet the spiritual needs of many saints, we need to see the reality of the church. Actually, the reality of the church is a spiritual reality. The church has been on earth for two thousand years. Such a history of two thousand years shows us that the world has many different understandings and has made many comments concerning the church. In addition, even those who are in Christianity have different understandings and have made many comments concerning the church. Hence, we desire to come back to God and to His Word in order to see what the church really is and what the reality of the church really is. If the Lord opens our eyes to show us the reality of the church, we will sense that man's understanding, and even our understanding, of the church does not match the criterion revealed in God's Word. Man's understanding of the church is altogether the understanding of an unlearned person, and it is altogether apart from God's Word. This is not only true with secular people, but it is even the same with so-called Christians.

THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST

What then is the reality of the church? The reality of the church is the spiritual reality of Christ, which is just Christ Himself. The entire New Testament shows us what the church is. The church is the enlargement of the principle of Christ.

In the Bible we have Christ, Christians, and the church, but we do not have Christianity. Why is this the case? We need to spend some time to consider these four items: Christ, Christians, the church, and Christianity. In the Bible we can find the first three items, but we cannot find what people today call

Christianity. This term *Christianity* is not revealed in God's Word but is a human invention. Although this word is used frequently in many human writings, including books, newspapers, magazines, and treatises, we cannot find the word *Christianity* in God's Word.

CHRIST BEING GOD MINGLED WITH MAN

Spiritually speaking, Christ is God who became a man. Christ is God mingled with man. "Great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16a). In the universe and among the human race there is One who outwardly is a man but inwardly is God. His human name is Jesus, but His title according to His commission is *Christ.* Thus, Christ is God coming into man to accomplish what God wants to accomplish and do what God wants to do. In His commission His title is *Christ.* For instance, I am So-and-so Lee. My name as a man is Witness Lee. But suppose I was appointed to be a representative. Then my official name would be Representative Lee. Christ, however, was not merely a representative of God on the earth. To accomplish what God intended to accomplish and to do what God intended to do, Christ was God Himself in man.

We all know that God has an eternal plan. In order to carry out His eternal plan in man, God became flesh and came into a man. He became a real man; outwardly, He was a man, but inwardly, He was God. According to His office, this God-man was called Christ. What is Christ? Christ is God mingled with man, God joined with man. He is the crystallization of the union of God and man. If we want to know the church, we must know Christ. For example, we have a certain kind of water that we call honey-water. Why do we call it this? We call it this because there is honey in the water. Then, what is Christ? Christ is God mingled with man. God has been united and mingled with man, He cannot be separated from man, and His name is Christ. Hence, the principle of Christ is the mingling of God with man, the two becoming one. Just as water is blended with honey to become one, so God and man were mingled together to become one. This is the principle of Christ.

A CHRISTIAN BEING ONE WHO HAS CHRIST IN HIM

What is a Christian? A Christian is one who has Christ in him. The Greek form of the suffix *-ian* of the word *Christian* denotes man. Many people think that to be a Christian is comparable to being a disciple, but in fact, it is not so.

Whereas a disciple may simply refer to an apprentice, a Christian refers to a Christ-man. For instance, suppose we have a glass that contains water. We would then call this glass a water glass. It was originally just a glass, but after we put water in it, it becomes a water glass. In the same way, formerly, you were just a man, but now you contain Christ. As a result, you are called a Christ-man. However, the term *Christ-man* sounds quite strange, so the Bible translators use the word *Christian* instead. Nevertheless, today many people have a misconception, thinking that a Christian is a disciple of Christ who learns of Christ, a person who does whatever Christ did. Actually, the word *Christian* in Greek simply means "Christ-man"—a person with Christ in him. Christ is in him, and he and Christ are joined together.

God is mingled with Christ, and Christ is mingled with man; this is a Christian. In other words, a Christian is one who has Christ in him. God is in Christ, and Christ is in the Christian. The people who have Christ in them are Christians. A saved person must have Christ in him. If he does not have Christ, he is not yet saved. When a person has Christ in him, he is a "Christ-man," a Christian.

THE CHURCH BEING THE TOTALITY OF ALL THOSE WHO HAVE CHRIST IN THEM

Then what is the church? The church is a composition of all those who have Christ in them. I have Christ in me, you have Christ in you, and he has Christ in him. The Christ in each of us added together is the church. Even if there were no other Christians in Taipei except a few of us, when we were added together, we would still be the church in Taipei. What is the church? The church is the mingling of Christ with all those who belong to Him. Collectively, these ones are called the church. Some people say that they are going to church. In fact, to say this is not accurate. They are not going to church but to a meeting hall. The church, however, is not a meeting hall or a building. The church is Christ plus all those who belong to Christ. A person who belongs to Christ is called a Christ-man, and when a group of people who belong to Christ are added together, they are the church.

Because people do not know this, they think that the church is a place of worship. In the English language people always use the word *church* to refer to both the church and a place of worship. This is due to a lack of knowledge of the truth. Some who know the Bible have used the word *assembly* for the

church. What is the church? The church is a group of people who have received Christ and who all have Christ in them. Please remember that God was in Jesus the Nazarene, whose name was Christ, and that this Christ has entered into many people. Individually, these ones are Christians, and corporately, they are the church. In the Bible another spiritual term for the church is *the Body of Christ.*

In the New Testament the title *Christ* has two different meanings or two different usages. In some places it refers to the Lord Jesus Himself, but in other places it refers to the corporate Christ. The individual Christ refers to the Lord Jesus Himself (Matt. 16:16), and the corporate Christ refers to the Lord Jesus and those who have Christ in them (1 Cor. 12:12). The church is the corporate Body of Christ.

Suppose I point at Brother Huang's head and say, "This is Brother Huang." Is this right? Yes, this is absolutely right. Suppose I point at Brother Huang's body and say, "This is Brother Huang." Is this right? Yes, this is also right. Brother Huang's head is part of Brother Huang, and his body is also part of him. The two parts added together are Brother Huang. What is the church? The church is the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is Christ. What is a Christian? A Christian is Christ. What is the church? The church is Christ. Why is this? It is because what is within a Christian is Christ, and what is within the church is also Christ.

Since degraded Christianity has not seen this due to a lack of light, many people say that the church is a charity organization or an evangelistic mission. These names are superficial and degraded and do not indicate the content of the church. The content of the church is Christ Himself. Christ is the church, and the totality of all Christians is the church. Some people believe in Buddha. The world calls this Buddhism. At the same time some believe in Christ, and the world calls this Christianity. Hence, Christianity has become one of the world religions. It has become a religious organization that is without Christ.

Although there is no such thing as Christianity in the Bible, in the human race there is Christianity. What is Christianity? Christianity is a religious organization that has lost Christ and is without Christ. Individually, a person who has Christ is a Christian; corporately, all those who have Christ are the church. However, today there is a group of people who belong to Christ in name but do not necessarily have Christ within them. In terms of being a

religious organization, they can be considered a part of Christianity, but if they do not have Christ within them, they are not the church. In other words, what people consider to be Christianity is not the church. What people consider as Christianity is a religious organization, an evangelistic mission, but the genuine church is composed of those who have Christ in them as their life and content. Within these people, all their personality, disposition, thoughts, interests, desires, feelings, and contents are just Christ Himself. When people touch them, they do not touch merely their outward being, but they touch the Christ within them. For example, you may touch a water glass, but what you drink is the water in the glass. The reason it is called a water glass is that it contains water. Similarly, a group of people is part of the Body of Christ because within them they have Christ as their content and they are filled with Christ.

Paul says that the Jews required signs and that the Greeks sought wisdom. The Jews believed in God, but they required signs. Through and through, all that mattered to them were signs. The Greeks sought wisdom, and they talked about knowledge with regard to everything. However, Paul says that we who serve God do not preach the Jewish religion or Greek philosophy—we do not preach signs or wisdom—but we preach Christ (1 Cor. 1:22-23). Please bear in mind that the spiritual reality of the church is Christ Himself. To say this in the simplest way, Christians are those who have Christ in them, and the church is the sum total of all those who have Christ in them.

After hearing the gospel, someone may say, “I cannot believe right away. I have to do a little study first.” Outwardly speaking, this word is reasonable, but in fact, this is not the way to believe in Christ. For our education it is right to study, but it is not right when it comes to believing in Christ. For instance, when someone gives you an orange, do you study it before eating it? No one would study an orange before eating it. If you try to study the Bible before you believe in Christ, then I am afraid that after you have studied the entire Bible, Christ will still be Christ, and you will still be you. You will have nothing to do with Christ. Why will this happen? This will happen because although you may have used your mind to study Christ, inwardly you have never touched Christ. Even if after your thorough study, you finally approve of Christ, understand the doctrines of Christ, and are baptized, you still will not be a Christian if Christ has not come into you. Thus, you will still not be a saved person.

Some elderly women who live in villages and may be considered nearly illiterate have received Christ. Such ones do not know Genesis, nor are they clear about Revelation, but they have received Christ inwardly and have contacted Christ. They pray all the time and allow Christ to fill them. When you contact them, you sense a sweet and glorious flavor, because what you touch is neither Christianity nor doctrines but a living Christ. Although they cannot read much and are not eloquent in prayer, when you pray with them, you sense a sweetness, and you have the feeling that they have brought you to Christ. Why is this? This is because they have Christ in them, and they are filled with Christ inwardly.

This is a Christian. This is the church. This is the reality of the church. Not only so, this is spiritual reality. The genuine church is not the Christianity seen by men outwardly. Neither is it the doctrines of Christ that are outwardly studied by people. The genuine church is the living Christ who has become our life and content. This is the reality of the church, the spiritual reality.

THE WAY TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST

Now we have to see how we who are saved can know more of Christ, be filled more with Christ, and have more experiences of Christ. We have to see that the spiritual reality of the church is Christ Himself. Unless we know Christ, experience Christ, and are filled with Christ, all our works in the church will be void of spiritual value and of spiritual reality, because all spiritual reality is just Christ Himself. We all have Christ and are saved, but how can we be filled with Christ? How can we experience Christ? How can we know Christ? Here we will briefly cover one principle.

THE THREE MARYS

The first step for man to receive Christ is believing. Once you believe, you are saved. However, for a person to further receive Christ, he must not only have faith but also have love. Not many Christians know what it is to love Christ, and not many Christians realize that if they do not love Christ, they will not be able to experience Christ or be filled with Him. In the Bible there are stories of three people that show us specifically how a person has to love Christ in order to experience and know Him. Interestingly, these three people are all females, and all of them have the name Mary. One is the Mary who gave birth to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 1:16). Another is the Mary of Bethany, who

was a sister of Lazarus and who anointed the Lord Jesus with fragrant ointment (John 12:3). The third is Mary the Magdalene, who went to the tomb of the Lord Jesus after His resurrection and wept before the empty tomb, and to whom the Lord eventually appeared (20:1). These three different Marys loved the Lord in three aspects—in His birth, in His death, and in His resurrection.

Those who experience the Lord also experience Him in these three aspects: in His birth, in His death, and in His resurrection. It is wonderful that there is a Mary in each of these three aspects. The Lord's birth was through a Mary; before the Lord's death there was a Mary; and after the Lord's resurrection there was also a Mary. Spiritually speaking, we all are "Marys." Just as Christ was begotten in Mary, Christ was also born in us. First, we must experience Christ's coming into us; second, we must experience Christ's death; and third, we must experience Christ's resurrection. Paul says, "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Phil. 3:10). One who experiences Christ should have these three aspects in his experience: letting Christ come into him to be born in him, experiencing Christ's death, and experiencing Christ's resurrection.

We can easily understand Christ's being in us, but we may not understand that much about Christ's resurrection. One thing is certain: if we want to experience Christ's death and resurrection, we must be a "Mary." According to the record of the Scriptures, there is only one kind of person who has the experience and knowledge of Christ's death and resurrection. The name of such a person is Mary. Without being a Mary, even though we may be saved, we still have no way to experience Christ. Without being a Mary, even though we may be saved, it is as if we do not have Christ. For Christ to be born in us and to fill us, and for us to pass through Christ's death, be delivered from the old creation, pass through Christ's resurrection, and enter into the new creation, we must be a Mary. The record of the Scriptures is very meaningful. Nothing is by chance or by coincidence. The birth of Christ needed a Mary, the death of Christ needed a Mary, and the resurrection of Christ also needed a Mary. They were three different persons, yet they all had the same name. This is a lesson from God.

THE FIRST MARY BEING ONE WHO LOST HER OWN STATUS

If a person wants to allow Christ to be born in him, and if he wants to experience Christ's death and resurrection, this person must be a Mary. What is it to be a Mary? When we read their stories, we have to bow our heads and worship the Lord. Perhaps they did not have much learning, talent, or knowledge, but they did have a love for Christ and the experience of letting Him pass through them. The first Mary loved the Lord Jesus to the extent that she forsook her own status. When the angel told her that she would conceive in her womb and bear a son, she replied, "How will this be, since I have not known a man?" Then the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:28-35). For this pure virgin to receive this commission, she had to sacrifice her status. Even her fiancé misunderstood her and wanted to send her away. This shows that this Mary had experienced the Lord Jesus, allowed Him to pass through her, and entirely disregarded her own status.

Everyone who experiences the Lord must be one who loses himself. Today some Christians do not give Christ the way to pass through them and to fill them because they are not willing to sacrifice their status. They are truly saved, but they do not let Christ pass through them. What is the reason that they do not allow this? They do not allow this because they have their own status and are not willing to sacrifice or lose it. One who truly loves the Lord and wants to experience the Lord must be one who sacrifices his own status. Mary was a virgin, but she was willing to sacrifice her status of being a virgin. If she had maintained her status of being a virgin, the incarnation of Christ could not have happened in her.

Although many among us have been saved, Christ still does not have a way to pass through us. What is the reason that He does not have a way? It is because we stay in our status and are not willing to forsake it. We all know about the great and famous revival of the Moravians in history. The unique reason for that revival was that there was a person who allowed Christ to pass through him. A young count named Zinzendorf loved the Lord to the extent that he forsook the title of count and became even more common than the common people. Because he sacrificed his own status, Christ had the way to pass through him, to fill him, and to gain ground in him so that he could be an outlet. This led to a big revival.

Today our big problem is that even though we preach Christ, very few of us are willing to sacrifice our own status. If a boss is willing to not act like a boss

due to his love for the Lord, this is to sacrifice his status as a boss. If a person is not willing to sacrifice his status, Christ will not have the way to pass through him. Some Christians are very spiritual, but the problem we find in them is that they want to maintain their status. Despite the fact that they love and pursue the Lord, they still have this problem. It is this problem that prevents Christ from passing through them. A man should maintain his status as a man; however, as a lover of the Lord, he must be willing to cooperate with the Lord when the Lord requires him to sacrifice his status.

Perhaps someone will ask, "What does it mean to sacrifice one's status?" I will give you some examples. Suppose a saint who is a manager says to his employee, "Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. Go and hear the gospel." This is an example of one who is not willing to sacrifice his status. Suppose a wife says to her maidservant, "Amah Wang, if you do not believe in Jesus, you will not be saved." Although her word is right, Christ will not be able to come out of her because she remains in her status. Some people bring their status with them when they come into the church. A saint who is in a suit may not shake hands with another saint who pulls a cart for a living. He will shake hands only with a boss. This is status. This is not to say that those who love the Lord and are touched by the Lord's love will be unethical people. In fact, they will be very ethical and will love their colleagues and servants even more. If a manager is touched by the Lord, he will be able to exhort his employee, saying, "In the flesh I am your manager, and you are my employee. But in fact, we both are sinners. What a sad thing it will be if you do not receive the Lord Jesus! I look to the Lord that you would sincerely listen to the gospel." Please remember that this is not a doctrine but is Christ's coming out of a person.

Sometimes people are willing to give up everything except their status. The rich fellowship with the rich, the learned fellowship with the learned, the students fellowship with the students, and those who have a position fellowship with others who have a position. Some people may say, "Birds of a feather flock together." In principle, however, as Christians we are all the same species. The problem is that outwardly we all have a status that we are not willing to sacrifice. As a result, the Christ within us cannot come out of us. Why is it that we still have a status, and why are we not willing to lose our status? It is because we do not love the Lord enough.

As human beings, we should keep our status; however, as lovers of the Lord, we should overflow life and release Christ. Please remember that the first

requirement for the overflow of life is to lose one's status. The reason that your servants and employees are not saved is that you are not willing to lose your status. As men, we have our own status; however, as lovers of the Lord, we have no status. If for the Lord's sake, the richer saints in the church fellowship with the poorer saints, what a beautiful scene this will be! If as a rich person with a high status and a good family, you invite some poor saints to your home to have fellowship, how beautiful this will be! This is not to say that you must do this in order to be a Christian; rather, this is to say that even though you are saved, Christ will not be able to have a way in you or to pass through you if you do not lose your status. May the Lord have mercy on us to show us that the church is Christ Himself and the outflow of Christ's life.

CHAPTER NINE

BEING BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Romans 6:3-5 says, "Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection." Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." First Corinthians 11:23 says, "I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread." Verse 26 says, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes."

CHRIST BEING THE ESSENCE OF A CHRISTIAN AND OF THE CHURCH

We all know that the reality of all spiritual things is Christ. The essence of a Christian is Christ, and the essence of the church is Christ. Without Christ there are no Christians; without Christ there is no church. We have to understand this word in a very deep and subjective way. Never think that the church is something produced outside of Christ. The essence of the church is Christ Himself. The church is not merely produced out of Christ; neither does it merely come into being through Christ. Rather, the church itself—the very essence of the church—is Christ. Whether we speak of a Christian himself or of the church, the essence is just Christ. If Christ is not in someone, that one is not a Christian; if Christ is not in a group of people, they are not the church.

Colossians tells us that Christ is all and in all (3:11). Speaking of Christians, we may say that Christians are Christ; speaking of the church, we may say that the church also is Christ. Christ lives in the Christians, and Christ also lives in the church. Moreover, all the Christians' experiences, and all the church's experiences as well, are experiences of Christ Himself. Christ Himself is the Christians' experience, and Christ Himself is also the church's experience. Neither the church nor any Christian can have a spiritual

experience apart from Christ. Apart from Christ a Christian is devoid of spiritual experiences; apart from Christ the church is also devoid of spiritual experiences. All the experiences of Christians and of the church are not only in Christ but also are Christ Himself. All spiritual experiences are just Christ Himself. If we do not touch or experience Christ, we will not gain Him, and our experience cannot be counted as a spiritual experience.

I hope that we all would grasp this principle firmly. Whether speaking of believing in the Lord, baptism, breaking bread, reading the Bible, praying, preaching the gospel, edifying the believers, serving, worshipping, or any other spiritual experience, the experience itself must be Christ. If we do not touch Christ in our prayer, our prayer cannot be counted as a spiritual experience. If we do not touch or contact Christ in our Bible reading, then our reading of the Bible is at the most the reading of religious scriptures; it is without any spiritual experience. In the same principle, if we do not touch or contact Christ in every spiritual matter, we are merely touching empty things without touching the spiritual reality, because the spiritual reality is just Christ Himself. It is only when we touch Christ in everything that we can have the spiritual reality. Christ Himself is the spiritual reality.

BELIEVING IN THE LORD

What does it mean to believe in the Lord? In the countryside of mainland China many Christians refer to "believing in a doctrine" instead of "believing in the Lord" and speak of "listening to doctrines" instead of "meeting together." However, a Christian's experience should be a matter of touching Christ. To be a Christian is not to believe doctrines but to believe in the Lord, to touch the Lord, to receive the Lord, and to contact the Lord by faith. It is not a matter of religion or doctrine but a matter of Christ Himself. If a person merely believes doctrines without touching Christ inwardly, he is at most a follower of the Christian religion; in God's eyes he is still not a Christian, a Christ-man. He has doctrines but not Christ. He understands the doctrines with his mind, but he does not have Christ in his spirit. He does not have any contact with Christ and has not touched Christ; thus, he is not a Christian.

Hence, being saved by believing in the Lord is absolutely different from "joining Christianity." A truly saved one is a constituent of the church; this is different from joining Christianity. Many who have joined Christianity have not received the Lord. They have received a religion without receiving the

living Savior. They have joined Christianity, but Christ has not been joined to them. They are in Christianity, but Christ is not in them. They have a relationship with Christianity, but Christ does not have a relationship with them. They have Christianity, but they do not have Christ. They belong to Christianity, but they do not belong to Christ. All they have received is merely Christianity. As such, they have believed and received the doctrines concerning Christ, but they have not received the Lord. They understand and believe many doctrines, which are a matter of the mind and the intellect, but they have not received and do not possess the Lord in their spirit.

If someone tells us about the doctrine of an orange, this doctrine will only enter into our mind, but the vitamins of the orange will not enter into our stomach because our mind can receive only the concept of the orange, not the orange itself. We must use our mouth to eat the orange. In the same way, our mind can study the doctrines concerning Christ, but our mind cannot receive Christ Himself. In order to receive Christ, we must use our spirit. The Lord Christ is the Spirit, and His essence is Spirit. If we want to contact and receive Him, we cannot use our mind to merely think about Him. We have to receive Him with our spirit. No matter how much we understand an orange with our mind, the orange cannot enter into our stomach; likewise, no matter how much we understand Christ, Christ cannot enter into us. Only when we use our spirit and open our spirit to receive Christ will He enter into us. He has to pass through our mind, emotion, and will and enter into our innermost part—our spirit. To believe in the Lord is to have Christ enter into our spirit.

I hope that all the saved ones among us would realize that to believe in the Lord is to open our spirit to receive the Lord into us. Formerly, our spirit and our heart were empty; we were without God and without Christ. However, one day, from our innermost part, we opened our spirit from deep within to receive Christ. From that day on, we had something added into us—Christ Himself. In this way we were saved. After being saved, we are no longer one person. We are two yet one. Formerly, it was only we ourselves, but now we have Christ in us. The two—He and we—have become one. This is to believe in the Lord.

BAPTISM

What is baptism? Baptism is not a ceremony for joining the church. A certain book containing questions and answers about the church tells people

that baptism is a ceremony for joining the church. This kind of speaking has a "Babylonian" flavor and is from the spirit of error in man. This word is absolutely not from the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "One faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Baptism is not a ritual. What then is baptism? Some people say that through baptism we are immersed into Christ's death. Although this is not wrong, there is a prerequisite to being immersed into Christ's death.

Many people when reading Romans 6 always miss one phrase. They read that they have been baptized into Christ's death and that they have been buried with Him, but they miss the phrase *baptized into Christ Jesus*. Verse 3 says, "Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" How can we be baptized into Christ's death? Only those who have been baptized into Christ can be baptized into His death. Thus, to be baptized is to be immersed into Christ. Because we have been baptized into Christ, we are in Christ and are identified with Christ. Hence, when Christ died, we also died.

For example, suppose a store called Huang's is one million dollars in debt, but because I do not know it, I buy its stock and become a shareholder. Two months later, someone comes to me and asks me to pay the debt. I tell him, "I do not owe you anything." Then he asks me, "Are you a shareholder of Huang's?" I reply, "Yes." Then he says, "Because you are a shareholder of Huang's, its debt is your debt." Since I have become a shareholder of Huang's, its mistake becomes my mistake, and its debt becomes my debt. In the same principle, when we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ. Hence, when Christ died, we also died, and when Christ was resurrected, we also were resurrected.

In baptism we are baptized into Christ. What is baptism? Baptism is to be immersed into Christ. To believe in the Lord is to receive Christ, and when we open our heart to receive Christ, this is to believe in the Lord. Through baptism we are immersed into Christ; that is, we are baptized into Christ from our spirit. If a person who enters into the baptistry does not have the faith to commit himself to the Holy Spirit, yet allows himself to be baptized into Christ through the church, his baptism is meaningless and worthless. Baptism is an act of faith, and it is through this act of faith that we are baptized into Christ. It is neither an outward form nor an outward ritual.

Many Christians truly have the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in their baptisms. In their baptisms they are filled with faith. In such a faith they have an outward action—they give themselves to the Holy Spirit through their faith. When they enter into the water, they are baptized into Christ. From that time on, they are baptized into Christ and are in Christ. Christ's death is their death, Christ's resurrection is their resurrection, and Christ's experience is their experience because they have been identified with Christ.

THE SECOND MARY—
KNOWING AND EXPERIENCING THE LORD'S DEATH

Now we will go on to speak about the second Mary. The first Mary is related to Christ's birth, and the second Mary is related to Christ's death. Anyone who wants to let Christ be born in him must be like the first Mary. Who does the first Mary represent? The first Mary represents those who love God to such a degree that they do not care for their own status. The principle of God's becoming flesh is the giving up of His status. If God had considered Himself to be God, He could not have become flesh and entered into man. The reason that God could become flesh is that He lost His own status. Hence, for one to receive God into him, he must also be one who loses his status. Mary gave up her status of being a virgin and became a pregnant woman. If it were not for one's love for God, no one would be willing to do this. All those who want Christ to enter into them must likewise lose their status.

The second Mary is related to Christ's death. Many Christians know of the Lord's death, but they do not understand the meaning of the Lord's death. In the New Testament the Lord's death—or the Lord's cross—is a big topic. Paul says that he did not determine to know anything except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). Generally, every Christian should know Christ's death, but to this day very few Christians have really understood it. In the Gospels the Lord told the disciples again and again that He had to suffer death, but none of His disciples heard, understood, or knew what He was saying. Immediately after the Lord told the disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem to suffer death and be crucified, the disciples turned around and had a contention as to which one among them would be the greatest.

The mother of the sons of Zebedee came with her two sons to ask the Lord Jesus for one thing—that her two sons would sit, one on His right and one on His left, in His kingdom. This was the disciples' response after hearing of the

Lord's death. Then the Lord asked them, "Are you able to drink the cup which I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?...But to sit on My right or on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared" (Mark 10:38, 40). The baptism with which the Lord was baptized refers to His death, and the cup which He drank refers to the shedding of His blood. The Lord Jesus told the disciples so many things, but they did not understand. Why were they unable to understand? It was because they loved vainglory, position, reputation, and themselves instead of the Lord. It is impossible for one who loves himself to know the Lord's death.

Among the many disciples of the Lord was one—Mary of Bethany. This sister was different from the other disciples. The other disciples loved not the Lord but themselves; this sister loved not herself but the Lord. Thus, while the other disciples could not understand the things the Lord said, she could. While no one heard the Lord's speaking concerning His death, she did. Others did not know the time, but she knew that a few days later the Lord would be delivered to sinners and would die, so she grasped the opportunity to pour ointment on the Lord. Judas, the disciple who loved money, rebuked her, saying, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). This kind of person cannot know the Lord. If a person always haggles over money and is calculating in material things, his love will be reduced to nothing by his calculating. Such a one cannot know the Lord. Mary loved the Lord to such an extent that she did not keep accounts. If there are accounts, there is no love. When there is real love, there is no accounting.

In the entire New Testament only Judas knew accounting. Was Mary confused? No, it was Judas who was confused. A few days later when Judas was betraying the Lord Jesus, he bargained and asked for thirty pieces of silver. He must have been influenced by his accounting on that day. Many times when a person is too clear and is too good in calculating, he is unable to know Christ's death because he does not know the preciousness and sweetness in Christ's death. Neither does he know how great a salvation or how glorious a release there is in Christ's death. Because he does not know Christ's death, he does not appreciate it.

However, the Lord testified for this sister, Mary, telling the disciples to leave her alone because she had done a noble deed to Him. The Lord said that they always had the poor with them, and whenever they wanted to they could

do good deeds for them, but they would not always have Him. What she had done for the Lord was not a waste. Moreover, the Lord told the disciples, "Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her" (Mark 14:6-9). This may be considered the second gospel, which is preached simultaneously with the Lord's dying love. The first gospel is that the Lord Jesus died for us, and the second gospel is that we know and comprehend His death.

Those who do not love the Lord cannot have the experience of Romans 6. The experience in Romans 6 is the experience of dying with Christ. Mary was the only one among the disciples who was conformed to the Lord's death in the experience of dying with Him. Among so many followers, only Mary knew, appreciated, experienced, and had a foretaste of the Lord's death. Why was this the case? It was because she was Mary, and the meaning of Mary is to love the Lord. Only those who love the Lord will allow the Lord to be born in them, only those who love the Lord can know the Lord's death, and only those who love the Lord can know the Lord's resurrection.

THE THIRD MARY—DESPERATELY SEEKING THE LORD

The one who experienced the Lord's resurrection was also a Mary. Many people followed the Lord but did not love the Lord. After they saw that the Lord had died and was buried, they all went home. However, there was one among them, Mary, who came early to the tomb while it was yet dark on the day of the Lord Jesus' resurrection. Did she not know that the Lord was in the tomb? Yes, she knew. So why did she still go there? She did so because of her love for the Lord. She thought that even if she could not see the Lord, it would still be sweet to see His tomb. Mary was the first one who discovered that the stone was taken away from the Lord's tomb. The tombs of the Jews were caves dug out in a hill, and in the caves they put the dead. Mary saw that the stone was taken away from the tomb and ran to the disciples and told them that someone had taken the Lord out of the tomb. Then Peter and John ran to the tomb, but when they saw that the dead body was no longer there, they went back to their own homes. Mary was the only one who stood outside the tomb weeping (John 20:1-11).

A person who really loves the Lord will love Him to such an extent that he would not care for his own status nor count the cost. In fact, love that does not confuse you is not real love. Many saints' love for the Lord is too clear and

calm, and as a result, they do not receive the real light. When the two disciples saw that the Lord was not in the tomb, they went away because they were too calm and too clear. Mary, however, was there weeping. As she wept, both light and revelation came. While she was weeping, she saw two angels, and then she saw Jesus. The Lord asked her why she was weeping. Thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away" (vv. 11-15).

It was at that moment Jesus said to her, "Mary!" Once this voice was expressed, she knew that it was the Lord. When the Lord was on the earth, He had called her with that same voice. The word of the Lord Jesus was so dear and lovely to her. He said, "Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (vv. 16-17). In principle, the Lord's resurrection should not have been seen by anyone, but because Mary was so earnest in her pursuing, the Lord had to appear first to her.

Many Christians quote Romans 9:16, which says, "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Many who quote this verse are slothful and loose persons because all those who really know the Lord are determined seekers. Only Mary rose up early while the sky was yet dark. Do not think that this was an easy matter. At that time Jewish girls were supposed to stay home. It would have been very dangerous for her to run to the tomb early in the morning. If something bad had happened to her that day, the brothers would have said that this sister had lost her protection because she had not submitted to authority. God will let only those who love Him know His birth, His death, and His resurrection. Only this kind of person can experience Christ and know Christ. Only a "Mary" can know the Lord's death and experience the Lord's resurrection.

CHAPTER TEN

BREAD BREAKING—RECEIVING CHRIST

The content of the church is Christ, and the intrinsic reality of every single matter in the church is Christ Himself. If we do not touch Christ and gain Christ, then even our worship and service will be meaningless. Just as the reality of believing in the Lord is Christ's coming into us, and the reality of baptism is our union with Christ, so also all the services in the church should be related to Christ.

After a person is saved, he encounters several things. The first is baptism, and the second is the breaking of bread.

BREAD BREAKING

What is the meaning of bread breaking? And what is the reality of bread breaking? Once we mention the breaking of bread, almost all Christians will say that breaking bread is for remembering the Lord. It is true that in the Bible even the Lord Himself told us that we have to break bread in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). Thus, based on this word, many Christians conclude that the significance of bread breaking is the remembrance of the Lord. Although this word, this definition, is not wrong, the meaning of remembering the Lord is not simple.

The remembrance spoken of by the Lord is different from our thought concerning remembrance. When we talk about remembrance, we have our own concept. What is this concept? For example, after a father dies, his children remember him. We all understand this kind of remembrance, but is this remembrance the same as our remembrance of the Lord? I am afraid that many people would say that our remembrance of the Lord is simply our meditating on the Lord. This kind of concept, however, is very different from the thought of the Bible.

REMEMBERING THE LORD

NOT BEING MEDITATING ON THE LORD

According to our natural concept, we think that when we break bread in remembrance of the Lord, we have to calm down and meditate on the Lord in a detailed way. We feel that we need to contemplate how God came down to the earth from the heavens; was born in a manger; lived in Nazareth for thirty years; trod through Galilee and the land of Judea; suffered man's reproach and persecution; was betrayed, bound, and scourged for us; bore the cross to Golgotha; was crucified; endured unbearable pain; bore our sins; and was judged by God on our behalf. Moreover, we feel we need to contemplate His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and His sending of the Holy Spirit. We also feel we need to contemplate the fact that He is now sitting in the heavens as our High Priest and that one day He will come again to take us to be with Him forever to enjoy His glory in eternity. We have all these scenes within us: from the throne in the heavens to the manger in Bethlehem, from Galilee to Judea, from the virgin Mary to Golgotha, and from the tomb to resurrection, ascension, the second coming, the rapture to be with the Lord, and the enjoyment of glory forever. However, this kind of remembrance is based upon a kind of religious concept that is void of any revelation or spiritual value.

All the terms and all the utterances in the Bible are different from our natural comprehension of things. The faith referred to in the Bible is different from our understanding of faith. The repentance mentioned in the Bible is different from our comprehension of repentance. And the remembrance spoken of in the Bible is definitely not according to our realization of remembrance. When the saints remember the Lord in the Lord's table meeting every Lord's Day, if they all concentrate in their mind to meditate on the Lord Jesus silently, does this mean that they all love the Lord, are spiritual, and have the Lord's presence? This kind of remembrance by meditation is not the result of revelation but is a kind of religious worship. This is not service that is according to revelation but service that is according to our natural concept.

TO REMEMBER THE LORD BEING TO EAT THE LORD'S BODY AND DRINK THE LORD'S BLOOD

In the Bible we cannot find the Lord telling us to meditate on Him in our remembrance of Him. What then did the Lord say? While eating the final Passover, He "took a loaf and gave thanks, and He broke it and gave it to them,

saying, This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). The Lord did not tell the disciples that at the Lord's table they had to quiet their heart to meditate on Him in remembrance of Him. Rather, the Lord said, "This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." What the Lord indicated was that to remember Him is to eat Him. The remembrance in the Bible is not meditating. First and foremost, it is eating. What do we eat? We eat the Lord's body.

Verse 20 continues, "And similarly the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you." What the Lord meant was that He wanted them to drink the cup in remembrance of Him. Hence, what is it to remember the Lord? We remember the Lord when we eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood. The remembrance of the Lord in the Bible is to eat and drink the Lord. To remember the Lord is to eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood.

THE LORD BECOMING OUR FOOD

What does it mean to eat the Lord's body and drink the Lord's blood? To eat the Lord's body and drink His blood is to eat and drink of the Lord Himself. A person may say, "I have eaten some chicken." How was he able to eat the chicken? Without death and without the shedding of blood, the chicken could not have entered into him. The reason that the Lord Jesus can enter into us and become our food is because He died and shed His blood.

One day the Lord Jesus told the Jews, "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (John 6:27). This meant that the Jews should not have sought to eat bread and be filled, because that bread was merely physical food and was temporary. Instead, they should have sought the food that abides unto eternal life. The bread that the Lord would give was His flesh, but the Jews did not understand Him, so they contended with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52). Then the Lord Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life...For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him" (vv. 54-56). Then many of His disciples said, "This word is hard; who can hear it?" (v. 60). This was due to the fact that they were full of their natural concepts.

What is it to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood? To eat the Lord's flesh and drink His blood is to take the Lord into us by eating and drinking Him. The Lord is life. Therefore, when He comes into us, eternal life comes into us.

EATING AND DRINKING THE LORD BEING TO RECEIVE THE LORD

From this we see that it is through His death that the Lord gave Himself to us. If He had not died or shed His blood, He could not have any relationship with us and would not have a way to enter into us. The reason why He can enter into us is because He died and shed His blood and thus became edible and drinkable to us. Now whenever we turn to our spirit, believing and receiving the Lord who died and shed His blood for us, we eat His flesh and drink His blood. We believe that in His body He bore our sins on the cross, that He died for us, and that His blood was shed for us on the cross. In God's eyes, when we believe and receive the Lord in this way, we are eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

What was accomplished by the Lord's flesh and blood is now our portion. When we believe in Him and receive Him, He enters into us through the Holy Spirit. Thus, when this happens, He is in us and in union with us, and we are in Him and in union with Him. Thus, to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood is to receive the Lord Himself as our enjoyment, our life within, and our food. This is to eat the Lord's flesh and drink the Lord's blood.

The greatest principle in eating and drinking is receiving, and the principle in receiving is union. Whatever you eat and whatever you drink will enter into you. Moreover, you are united with what you eat and drink. No matter how much we meditate on a person, he cannot come into us. Hence, bread breaking is not to meditate on the Lord but to eat the Lord's body and drink His blood. In baptism we enter into Christ and are united with Christ, and in bread breaking we eat and drink the Lord Himself and are thus united and mingled with Him. Every time we break the bread, more of the Lord comes into us. Every time we remember the Lord, we have a deeper union with the Lord. This is to remember the Lord.

EATING, DRINKING, AND

REMEMBERING THE LORD IN SPIRIT

In the past when we remembered the Lord, many of our concepts were religious and much of our remembrance was in our mind. Every time we came to the Lord's table, we contemplated His being God, His becoming flesh, His living on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, His dying on the cross, His being raised in three days, His ascending to the throne, and His waiting to come again. We always remembered the Lord in this way—we worshipped and meditated on Him in our mind. However, the Lord said that He is Spirit and that those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness (4:24). Only when we use our spirit and are in our spirit can we touch the Lord, worship the Lord, and genuinely remember the Lord.

Our genuine remembrance of the Lord is our receiving the Lord and allowing Him to enter into us again. The Lord said, "This is My body which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of Me...This cup is the new covenant established in My blood, which is being poured out for you" (Luke 22:19-20). We eat the bread, which signifies the Lord's body, and drink the cup, which signifies the Lord's blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord. Our eating and drinking of the Lord is our remembrance of the Lord. The Lord does not want us to meditate on Him or contact Him with our mind; rather, the Lord wants us to contact Him, eat Him, and drink Him with our spirit. When He was broken for us on the cross, He shed His blood and released His life. The bread and cup we touch outwardly signify His body that was given for us and His blood that was shed for us. This means that He has died and His life has been released from within Him. Now we not only receive the visible bread and cup outwardly, but at the same time, we also touch and receive the Lord Himself in our spirit. We allow Him to come into us again, and again we gain Him, receive Him, and enjoy Him. The Lord said that this is to be "in remembrance of Me."

REMEMBERING THE LORD
BEING TO RECEIVE THE LORD AGAIN

In breaking bread we turn to our spirit and through the symbols receive the Lord again and again. Every time we break bread, we receive the Lord once more, and every time we break bread, we again contact the Lord who died and resurrected, touching Him in our spirit. If we really see this, the next time we break bread, we will realize that inwardly we have been filled with too many

other things so that the Lord is not able to find any place, any empty room, in us. When we realize this, we need to pray, "O Lord, remove all the things that should not be in me so that You may have a place in me." The revelation we see will touch our inward problems and cause us to tell the Lord spontaneously, "O Lord, I am glad to pour myself out and empty myself. O Lord, I receive You as the Spirit into me. Fill me with Your resurrection life." By doing this, after breaking the bread we definitely will be filled with Christ.

There was once a brother who had been at odds with his wife for a long time. Inwardly, he felt that it was not right, but he simply could not help it. Every time he came to the Lord's table, after singing a hymn and calming down, he would begin to pray, "Lord, You are God, who took the form of a sinner and humbled Yourself for us. You were born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth..." He enjoyed his prayer, and the saints were joyful in their spirits. However, just as he was not happy with his wife before the Lord's table, he also was not happy with her after the meeting. After the Lord's table and after this meditation and prayer in his mind, he still had not been touched by the Lord inwardly. Therefore, he was the same after the meeting as he was before the meeting. He was still intact and was the same as he had always been.

One day, however, after receiving revelation and seeing that to remember the Lord is actually to receive the Lord, he could not touch the bread anymore. Why was he unable to do this? He could not touch the bread because he realized that since he was not pleased with his wife, he could not receive Christ into him even though he might take the bread outwardly. Thus, he could no longer break the bread. He felt very bad, and so he poured out his sins and everything that was in him, saying to the Lord, "O Lord, I pour out all my displeasure, my self, my sins, and the world that is within me." This was not a meditation in the mind but a receiving of the Lord into him. In that one hour of remembering the Lord by breaking bread, he enjoyed the Lord again. As a result, he became a different person.

BREAKING BREAD BEING TO PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S TABLE

The Bible tells us that when we break bread, we partake of the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 21) and enjoy the Lord. When we invite people for a meal, we cannot serve ourselves as food. However, the Lord's table is different. In the Lord's table the Lord Himself is spread on the table. What is spread on the

Lord's table is the Lord Himself. In remembering the Lord we come to His table, and on this table His flesh and blood are displayed. Today Christianity has made the Lord's table a religious matter, without the reality of Christ. However, when we come to the Lord's table, we come to receive the Lord Himself. We empty ourselves so that the Lord can come in. In this one hour we enjoy the Lord by eating and drinking of Him. By the end we have received and enjoyed Him inwardly. As a result, the world and the flesh are gone.

To partake of the Lord's table is to remember the Lord. Is there anyone who would attend a feast merely to observe and think but not to eat and drink? Everyone who attends a feast surely eats and drinks. Thus, if we really know what it is to remember the Lord, we will definitely eat and drink to our heart's content at the Lord's table. Then every time we remember the Lord, we will be able to say with boldness that all our hunger and thirst are fully satisfied. When people ask us about what we are eating and drinking, we can tell them readily that we are eating and drinking the Lord Jesus. When we receive Him into us, He becomes our life and strength within, enabling us to love those whom we cannot love, to do what we cannot do, to be what we cannot be, and to live in a way that we cannot live. Then during the week He will be digested in us to become our everything, making us joyful and satisfied. This is to enjoy Christ and to receive the Lord.

I hope that our remembrance of the Lord will not be centered on meditating but will be based upon receiving. Every time we remember Him, may we eat Him, drink Him, and enjoy Him inwardly. Then may we take His riches back with us so that we will have Him as our satisfaction, joy, and supply. This is to remember the Lord.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LIVING OUT CHRIST

Colossians 3:4 says, “When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.” Galatians 2:20a says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” Then 4:19 says, “My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you.” Philippians 1:20b says, “With all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.” Verse 10 of chapter 3 says, “To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” All these verses show us that Christ is our life and our living.

SPIRITUAL REALITY BEING CHRIST

The reality of the church is Christ, and spiritual reality is also Christ. Without Christ, a person has neither the reality of the church nor spiritual reality. Through all our spiritual experiences—whether believing in the Lord and being saved, being baptized into the Lord, or breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord—we contact and gain Christ Himself. If a person believes in the Lord yet does not gain Christ, his believing is in vain. If a person is baptized yet is not united with Christ, his baptism also is empty. If a person breaks bread in remembrance of the Lord yet does not gain and enjoy the Lord once again, his remembrance is worthless in the eyes of the Lord. This is because true remembrance of the Lord is to receive the Lord into us that we may gain Him and enjoy Him. When we render worship and service to the Lord, we should gain and enjoy the Lord Himself.

The entire spiritual living and work of a Christian must be the experience of Christ Himself. On the surface it seems that Christ wants us to worship Him, serve Him, and work for Him. In other words, it seems as if He wants us to do something for Him. In actuality, however, He wants us to enjoy Him, experience Him, and gain Him. If a person really knows what it means to preach the gospel, while he is preaching, he will be experiencing Christ, gaining Christ, and enjoying Christ. Although he is preaching the gospel to others, and although his gospel preaching is for the Lord, in the process of his preaching he will be enjoying, experiencing, and gaining Christ.

CHRIST BEING OUR LIFE

Colossians 3:4 says, "Christ our life." This reveals how intimate the relationship between Christ and us is. When we say that a certain thing equals our life, it means that we regard that thing as something important, something closely related to us. Christ is our life. He is not only the object of our believing, the reality of our baptism, and the content of our bread breaking, but He is our life. Our life before God is Christ Himself.

However, most Christians' knowledge concerning Christ as life is far off. Many Christians think that after a person is saved, all his problems before God are related to the matter of improving his behavior. Since he is saved, all his problems before God would be dealt with if he could improve his behavior after his salvation. For example, before a certain person is saved, his living may be loose, his conduct poor, his morality below standard, his character questionable, and his reputation bad. After this person is saved, however, he naturally thinks that since he has become a Christian, his responsibility before God is to improve his behavior, conduct, and character. Therefore, he begins to focus on improving his behavior.

We absolutely acknowledge that after a person is saved, his character should be noble, his behavior should be proper, and his conduct should be upright. Please remember, however, that after a person is saved and becomes a Christian, God's demand on him is much higher than these things. After a person is saved, what God wants is not to improve his behavior nor to uplift his morality but to change his life. This means that God does not demand a mere improvement in morality from a formerly poor one to a good one. God requires not only a change in the outward living but also a change of the inner life.

TO BE SAVED BEING TO RECEIVE GOD'S LIFE IN ADDITION TO MAN'S LIFE

God's salvation is not only for the forgiveness of our sins and the washing away of our filthiness; God's salvation is to give Christ to us at the time we are saved. When Christ enters into us, He becomes our life. At the instant we are saved, we receive Christ as our life; that is, we receive God as life into us. This life in us is different from our natural life. We receive another life in addition to our natural life. Therefore, from the time we are saved, we have two

different lives in us. One is the life we had originally, and the other is the life of God, which has been added into us.

Never think that we need to be saved because our life is poor, and therefore God wants to improve our life. This is not so. When God saves us, He gives us another life—His own life—in addition to our own life. In the beginning we did not have God's life, but when we believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him as our Savior, God's life was added into us.

The basic matter with a Christian is that he has God's life added into him. Once this life comes into him, he has two different lives in him. One is the life he had originally, and the other is the life of God, the life that was added into him. In his own life there are all kinds of wickedness, such as evil, filthiness, darkness, hatred, jealousy, guile, and covetousness. This is his original life. However, the life that is added into him, because it is the life of God, is good, bright, meek, loving, righteous, and holy. The seeds of the goodness of God are all in this life, which is just Christ Himself.

This life that is added into us is Christ Himself. Before we are saved, we live by our own life, the life that is within us. We walk, live, and work entirely according to the life we have originally. In that life we have a little bit of goodness, love, meekness, humility, and other virtues. However, that life is not pure; it is mixed with darkness, evil, hatred, jealousy, and all kinds of deceit. Hence, through our living, we find that in our being we have hatred as well as love, and we have jealousy as well as sympathy. We also find that we harm others as well as help others. We are so complicated and so contradictory; sometimes we are like bad people, and other times we are like true gentlemen.

LIVING NOT BY OUR OWN LIFE BUT BY GOD'S LIFE

There is pride in our humility, hatred in our love, falsehood in our honesty, and there are evil intentions even in our good intentions. There are many evil things hidden in all our good elements. This is because man's life has become evil, corrupted, and filthy. It is impossible for man's life to be acceptable to God. However, even if man's life were not evil or filthy, man's life would still be man's life. No matter how good man's life is, it still is not God's life.

Christians are people who have received God's life. Once a person is saved, he has Christ, God, and God's life in him. From that time on, God's life is in him, not for him to change his outward behavior but for him to live by God's life. Formerly, he lived by his own life, but now God wants him to live by God's life in him instead of by his own life.

We may use the following illustration. In the past we lit kerosene lamps, but now we have lamps that run on electricity. However, many people, owing to their habit of lighting kerosene lamps, still prefer lighting kerosene lamps instead of switching on electric lamps. Hence, the question is not whether or not the light shines but what the source of the shining is. We cannot assume that once the light shines, everything is fine. We must also ask, "Does this shining come from kerosene or from electricity?" Our life was formerly a "kerosene lamp," but after we were saved, God's life came into us. This was like the installation of an electric lamp into us. Thus, instead of using the "kerosene lamp," we should switch to the "electric lamp."

We all know that if a kerosene lamp is not shining, it will not smoke; however, the more the kerosene lamp shines, the more it smokes. There is both light and smoke in the kerosene lamp. Likewise, in our natural life there is both good and evil. The more we try to do good by ourselves, the more mistakes we commit; that is, the more we "shine," the more we "smoke." In our being there is good and there is also evil. In fact, our natural life is simply the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's intention is not for us to forsake evil and to do good by ourselves. This is man's concept, not God's intention. God's intention is that we would live not by our own life but by His life. If we live by God's life, we will "shine" but not "smoke." If we walk by God's life, we will immediately see that there is only good and no evil in His life.

God's life is God Himself. Hence, when we live by God's life, we live by God. In this way what we live out is not only good but also God Himself. What is expressed through us is God's nature and His flavor. When we live by our own life, we may do good or evil—either way it is lived out by our own life. People may touch the goodness in us, but they cannot touch God. They may not notice any wickedness in us, but neither can they see God's nature in us. Why is this? It is because at the most we have only improved our behavior; the source of our life within remains unchanged. Strictly speaking, this is not to be Christians but to be moralists. Christians are not merely ethical; they also

live by God. Christians have Christ as their life, and they live by Him as life. As a result, what they live out is not merely something good or ethical but Christ Himself.

We must be clear that since we are saved, we now have Christ in us as our life. What does this mean? For example, if we have a body that is without life, we will be unable to speak, think, see, hear, sit, or walk. Our whole being will be unable to move. The reason why we can move and think is that we have life within us, and all our actions are according to this life and are of this life. That Christ is our life means that all our actions, thoughts, words, and doings are according to Christ and are of Christ. Our moving is Christ's moving in us, our speaking is Christ's speaking in us, and our thinking is Christ's thinking in us. Our entire living and walk are according to Christ in us; we do everything by Him.

Do not think that this is merely a theory. We all must grasp this basic point firmly. What is a Christian? A Christian is one who has Christ in him as his life. What is baptism? Baptism is being immersed into Christ. What is bread breaking? Bread breaking is to eat Christ—to eat the Lord's body and to drink the Lord's blood. It is to eat and drink of the Lord Himself and to receive the Lord Himself. The basic principle of the Christian living is to be in Christ, by Christ, and of Christ for the gaining of Christ.

CHRISTIANS HAVING CHRIST IN THEM AS THEIR LIFE

Most people have the concept that a Christian is one who observes rules and regulations, has a high morality, and is honest and upright. Although this is good, strictly speaking, such a person is not a Christian but a moralist. A Christian is not defined by how proper or lofty his behavior is but by Christ's living in him. A Christian is one who has Christ in him as his life.

We think that if a person were spiritual, he would be meek, would not lose his temper, would speak gently, would not act hastily, and would not be irritable. We must realize, however, that such a quiet and good-tempered person is just like a sculpture. Of course, there are some people who are born calm, steady, and good-tempered. For instance, there may be a certain mother with several children, all of whom are naughty and unruly. Everyone around the children gets angry with them, but the mother does not get angry. No matter how bad her children behave, she maintains her composure. Is she

spiritual? No, it is because she was born this way. Therefore, whether or not a person is spiritual cannot be judged by his outward appearance. Not everything that shines is a lamp running on electricity. We still must ask what the source is.

Some people are born calm, others are trained to be calm, and still others pretend to be calm. The outward expression and attitude of a person do not necessarily show that he is spiritual. If we want to know whether or not a person is really spiritual, we have to inquire as to the source of his expression and attitude—is it Christ or himself?

Living out calmness by oneself is completely different from living out calmness by Christ. Only when we have Christ as our life are we really Christians, and only when we live out calmness by Christ are we really Christians. A person who merely lives out virtues such as calmness, meekness, and propriety is not necessarily a Christian. Only a person who lives by Christ is a Christian. Many Christians are calm, meek, and proper. They have a high morality and are the best among all men. Their living, daily walk, and behavior are really convincing. However, we cannot judge a Christian only according to his outward living; we must also judge him according to his inner life. A person is a genuine Christian only when he has Christ living in him as his life. We must hold tightly to this principle, this main point.

LIVING BY CHRIST TO LIVE OUT CHRIST

If we apply this principle or main point in examining our own living, can we say that we live and walk by Christ today? Today all our living, our speaking, and our behavior, including our thoughts and judgments on every single matter, should not be according to ourselves but according to Christ in us. The question is not whether we are Christians who do good or evil but whether we are Christians who live by ourselves or by Christ. Are all our words, our thoughts, and even our views and judgments about every matter according to ourselves or according to Christ? Do they come from our life or from Christ's life? This is a big question.

Husbands and wives ought to love one another. A Christian husband should love his wife. Likewise, a Christian wife should submit to her husband. This is similar to the Chinese saying: "The husband sings, and the wife sings along." However, the Bible does not require Christian couples to only be in harmony

with each other. Rather, the Bible requires that the husband love his wife not by himself but by the Christ who lives in him and that the wife submit to her husband not by herself but by the Christ who lives in her. Thus, a Christian wife has a few possibilities in being a wife. One possibility is that she would not be submissive to her husband. However, this would be improper and unsuitable for a Christian. Another possibility is that she would be very submissive to her husband. However, with such a submission there are also two possibilities. One possibility is that she would submit to her husband by herself. The other possibility is that she would submit to her husband by Christ, by living in Christ's life, and by having Christ's life as the power, origin, and source of her submission to her husband. This second submission is not mere submission but a submission that comes out of Christ.

Hence, there are at least three kinds of wives. The first kind of wife does not submit to her husband. The second kind of wife submits to her husband by herself. We can praise this kind of wife as a good wife but not as a spiritual wife. The third kind of wife not only submits to her husband but does so not by herself but by taking Christ's life as the origin, power, source, and center of her submission. This kind of submission is not only good but also spiritual.

If the virtues we live out in our daily life are not Christ living out from within us, at the most, we can say that we have done well and rightly, but we cannot say, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." People will appreciate our virtues, but we cannot say, "It is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). Furthermore, we cannot say, "Even now Christ will be magnified in my body"; neither can we say, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:20-21). We may know how to be meek, how to behave well, and how to be quiet, but we may not know Christ. We may live in our meekness, proper behavior, and quietness but not in Christ. We may know the power of morality but not the power of Christ. We may live in an ethical atmosphere but not in the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, we may be moralists who gain others' praises without living in the Holy Spirit or living Christ's life. We may be able to say that we are moralists and well-behaved persons, but we may not be able to say that we are Christians.

Although we have been saved and have Christ's life, when we live by ourselves and not by Christ, we are not Christians who live out Christ practically. We may give all the ground in us to meekness, quietness, and

good behavior, but we may not give any ground to Christ. Every day we may still be living by ourselves with fear and trembling, being full of meekness, quietness, and humility yet without Christ. People may praise us for our meekness and quietness, but they cannot see Christ in us because Christ has vanished from us.

If in our daily living we enjoy Christ, depend on Christ, fellowship with Christ, and are filled with Christ, then we can say that for us to live is Christ. Then what we express will spontaneously be meekness, quietness, and proper behavior. Moreover, people will sense a special flavor in us—the fragrance of Christ. This is not being a moralist or a virtuous man; this is the living Christ living Himself out from us. This is proof, not only by our life but also by our living, that we are Christians. What is a Christian? A Christian is one who has Christ in him and who lives by the Christ who lives in him.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

ALL SPIRITUAL MATTERS RELATED TO A CHRISTIAN DEPENDING ON CHRIST

Ephesians 4:13 says, "Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Galatians 4:19b says, "Until Christ is formed in you." God shows us clearly in His Word that all spiritual matters related to a Christian depend on Christ. Whether it is our believing in the Lord, our baptism, or our breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord, everything in our Christian life depends on Christ. All spiritual matters depend on whether or not we have Christ. Any experience in which we do not experience Christ cannot be counted as a spiritual experience in God's eyes.

Many of us still do not have a real seeing or feeling regarding this matter. We know that the Lord Jesus is God, that He has the eternal life, that the Lord Jesus is the Savior, and that we have received His salvation and have His life. Yet in our feeling, we are still not very clear that God's purpose is for Christ to be our life and everything. Even though we have believed in the Lord and now belong to the Lord, there is one thing that we have not seen accurately. God wants Christ to be everything to us. This is not something outward but inward. Christ is in us as our life. Life is intimately related to us. To say that we do not have life would be to say that we do not have ourselves. God's purpose is for Christ to be our life, yet we who are saved do not have much realization that Christ is our life.

Very often we are able to live and walk as if everything is normal, even though we have put Christ aside. Often at these times we are even pleased with ourselves, thinking that we have done well. This shows that although we are saved, we still have not clearly seen that Christ is our life and that we have to live by Him. If we see this clearly, we will have a deep sense that apart from Him we can do nothing and that apart from Him we cannot live. Deep within us we must see this revelation and vision so that our living will be in Christ and by Christ.

GOD'S DESIRE BEING THAT CHRIST WOULD BE MAN'S LIFE AND LIVING

Today we still do not have an adequate understanding of the fact that Christ is our life and that, as the Bible says, apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). We have not seen that God rejects and refuses all that comes out of us. Anything that comes out of us, no matter how good it may be, is not acceptable to God. Only Christ counts; only Christ is valuable. Our hatred is definitely not acceptable to God, but our love is also not acceptable to Him. Only that which comes out of Christ is acceptable to God. God's ordination concerning His Son is that we would love His Son and live by the life of His Son, so that His Son would be able to pass through us to be our life within and our living without. This is God's intention, God's purpose.

Many of God's children have not seen God's intention. Rather, they think that God wants them to improve themselves. Hence, their deepest pursuit is focused on improving themselves. Every time they pursue the Lord, they want to change themselves. When a person does not care for spiritual matters, he is indifferent to everything. He does not like to preach the gospel, to attend meetings, or to fellowship with the saints. However, at a certain time, perhaps when he is touched in a meeting, or if he suffers a blow and is disciplined, his heart is awakened, and he begins to have a heart to pursue spiritual things. At this time he has the strong thought that he will change his condition. In the past he was slothful, but now he will be diligent. In the past he did not read the Bible, but now he will read the Bible. In the past he did not pray, but now he will pray. In the past he was not zealous, but now he will be zealous. In the past he did not attend meetings, but now he will attend meetings. Of course, all these things are right and good, but they are not God's purpose. God's purpose is His Son, Christ.

GOD'S EYES BEING ON CHRIST

God does not require that His children have a change in behavior or a desire to do good. If God's children change themselves from being indifferent to being zealous, from not reading the Bible to reading the Bible, from not praying to praying, from not attending meetings to attending meetings, God's heart still will not be satisfied. If we had the right understanding, we would know that our seeking God and our slothfulness in not seeking God are actually the same. From the spiritual perspective, reading the Bible and not

reading the Bible are the same. This does not mean that it is not necessary for us to be zealous, to pursue the Lord, to pray, to read the Bible, or to meet. This is not what we mean. We should regularly read the Bible, pray, and meet. However, merely reading the Bible, praying, and meeting does not mean that we are spiritual, for these things cannot satisfy God. What counts and what can satisfy God's heart is that Christ is in our reading of the Bible, in our praying, and in our attending meetings. Only Christ can satisfy God.

Hence, God's heart is not satisfied if now we are reading the Bible when formerly we did not. God's desire is not fulfilled if now we pray when formerly we did not. God's purpose is not accomplished if now we attend meetings when formerly we did not. This is not the way God's purpose is fulfilled. God's purpose is not in our attending meetings, in our being zealous, in our reading the Bible, or in our praying. God's purpose is in Christ. If we are zealous merely for the sake of being zealous, if we meet merely for the sake of meeting, if we read the Bible merely for the sake of reading the Bible, and if we pray merely for the sake of praying, then in God's eyes all these things are nothing but religious activities, which can never satisfy Him.

I hope that we can see that all spiritual matters depend on Christ, not on spiritual activities. The reason why all these activities have some value is that they help us to touch Christ. The reason why reading the Bible and praying have some value is that they help us to touch Christ. The reason why seeking God zealously has some value is that it helps us to touch Christ. However, if we merely have a kind of seeking, zeal, Bible reading, prayer, or meeting—all without touching Christ—these things are merely activities and are merely a religion. What is a religion? When we have a certain kind of action and a certain kind of living in which we seek and worship God without touching Christ, that is called a religion. It is neither spiritual nor pleasing to God because in it we do not touch Christ Himself.

For instance, there may be a person who prays every day. To do this is right and correct. The question, however, is whether there has been an increase in his inner knowledge and experience of Christ after he has prayed for a period of time. After this kind of prayer if his inner knowledge and experience of Christ have not increased and are exactly the same as before, then his prayer is nothing but a religious ritual. However, after half a year of prayer, if his knowledge of Christ and the element of Christ have increased within him, and he has deeply experienced Christ, then in God's view his prayer is not

something religious but is something pleasing to Him. It is pleasing because he has touched Christ, gained Christ, and experienced Christ.

God's only heart's desire is that Christ would be in us as our life. If we do not live in this life or by this life—if what we live out is not of this life—then no matter what we do, whether good or bad, it will not be acceptable to God. Even if it is something good, in God's view it will be merely something religious because it is not out of God or out of revelation, and it is not Christ Himself. Only what belongs to Christ and comes out of Christ is worthwhile and acceptable to God.

GOD WANTING MAN TO DENY HIMSELF AND LIVE BY CHRIST

We all must know this principle to the extent that we abhor ourselves and all our living that comes out of ourselves. In the past we abhorred only our negative aspects, such as our pride, jealousy, and vainglory. We thought that if we were humble, meek, not making a show, and not boasting, we would be right and good. However, this is not so. Many times, even though a person may be meek, humble, and hidden, he is still himself. His meekness and humility, his being hidden, and his not boasting are all of himself and by himself. Never forget that in the self, there are good things as well as bad things. A Christian may live out love, meekness, and goodness, but if these things are without Christ, they are still of himself. Thus, these things may win the praise of man, but they are not pleasing to God. God's purpose is that, in Christ, we would deny ourselves and live by Christ.

Therefore, God asks us one thing: Are we living by our own life or by Christ's life? God's concern is different from our concern. We are concerned about good and evil, but God's concern is beyond this and deeper than this. He cares about whether we do something by ourselves or by Christ. We are concerned about what we do, but God is concerned about who is doing it. Even if we do something good and right, it will not necessarily be counted, accepted, and treasured by God. God will still ask us if we did it by ourselves or by Christ. If we do something by ourselves, even though it may be good, meek, and humble, it will not win God's praise and acceptance. We may be able to gain the praises of men, but we deviate from the way of God.

God's way is in Christ, whereas our way is in ourselves. Although sometimes we pray that we would truly be willing to rely on Him and to look to Him, the fact is that we are still living by ourselves. We have never denied our goodness, our meekness, or our merits. We have never denied, depreciated, and trampled under our feet the things in us that are appreciated by others. On the contrary, we treasure all these things. We confess the name of the Lord, we serve the Lord, and we come near to the Lord, yet we still have the basic problem of not denying ourselves. We still think that what we do for Christ by ourselves and in ourselves is well pleasing to God.

THE SUBJECTIVE PROBLEM OF MAN BEING MAN HIMSELF

The subjective problem that God encounters in us is our self. It seems that although both sins and the world may no longer have much ground in us, Christ does not have much ground in us either. We may forsake sins and the world, but it seems that we also forsake Christ. We may think that we are for Christ and live by Christ, but in fact, we still live in ourselves and by ourselves. We may have had a change in name but still may not have changed much in reality.

We do good by ourselves, yet we claim that our goodness comes out of Christ. In man's eyes this seems to be very spiritual, but in God's eyes this does not mean anything. Humanly speaking, many saints have improved and changed, but spiritually speaking, they are still the same. In the past they had a bad temper, but now they have improved and have a milder temper. Humanly speaking, they really have improved, but spiritually, there is no change or advancement in their knowledge of Christ.

Let me illustrate this. Suppose we have a cup that contains some water yet the cup is covered with a handkerchief. Some may say that the cup is for containing water and should not be covered with a handkerchief because it does not look nice. However, if the handkerchief is taken away, does the water in the cup increase? The removing of the handkerchief may be a change or an improvement to the look of the cup, but the water inside the cup does not increase when the handkerchief is taken away. The change in many Christians is similar to this. It is the change of "taking away the handkerchief." There is a brother who used to be very rude to his wife, but now that he has begun serving as an usher in the church, he feels that he should not lose his temper

with his wife anymore. Although this kind of change is good, it is something outward. Spiritually speaking, before God he is actually still the same because the amount of Christ that was within him when he had a bad temper is the same as the amount of Christ that is within him now that he has a good temper.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS
BEING THE ADDITION OF THE ELEMENT OF CHRIST

I hope we can see that our spiritual life is Christ, our spiritual living is Christ, and our spiritual progress is also Christ. Do not think that spiritual progress is merely a change in our outward expression. Genuine spiritual progress is the increase of the element of Christ within us. We all agree that we should take away the handkerchief, but the water inside the cup must also increase. The worst case is that neither the water increases nor is the handkerchief removed. Some had a bad temper a few years ago and still have a bad temper today. Others have changed their bad temper to a good one, have gotten rid of their bad habits, and have become well behaved; however, the Christ in them has still not increased. A Christian's progress should not be only outward improvement but should be an inward increase of Christ. A Christian's progress should not be only an outward deliverance from bad habits and bad behavior but should also be an inward increase of the element of Christ.

Some people improve their outward behavior but do not have more of Christ in them. This is not spiritual progress but religious progress. This is not the growth of Christ but the growth of morality. Today very few Christians are able to discern between morality and Christ. They often regard a certain Christian's morality to have its source in Christ and are not able to discern whether the change in a Christian is merely an ethical change or a change due to the increase of Christ. Ephesians 4:13 and Galatians 4:19 clearly show us what Christian progress is. When Christ grows and is formed in a Christian so that there is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ within him, this is Christian progress. When Christ is formed in a Christian, and the measure of his stature is increased within him, this is Christian progress.

The revelation in the Bible is very clear concerning Christian progress. Unfortunately, however, it is difficult for us to change our concept. When we notice that someone has an improvement in his behavior, we say that he has

made some spiritual progress. For instance, a person used to quarrel with his wife, but now he no longer quarrels with his wife. He becomes diligent instead of slothful, and he no longer has any opinions or things to say but works quietly instead of being talkative and opinionated. We may praise him, saying that he has made spiritual progress. This shows that we are still too natural and that we do not know what spirituality and spiritual progress are.

What is real spirituality? Spirituality is Christ Himself. What is spiritual progress? Spiritual progress is the increase of Christ. Whenever Christ increases in the saints, their speaking will be reduced; whenever Christ increases in them, their bad temper will diminish. This is a sure thing. However, if a person's bad temper is reduced, yet there is no increase of Christ, then his change is merely something ethical. The improvement of his temper and behavior is the result of his own effort, his own cultivation. It is something moral but does not come from the increase of Christ in him. He may have entirely changed his living by his own effort, but he has not touched Christ, contacted Christ, or had any inward increase of Christ. He has changed outwardly but not inwardly because Christ has not increased in him.

If we want to have spiritual progress and spiritual growth, we must turn our mind to God to see the light and the revelation that this is not a matter of morality but of Christ. The point is not that since we used to be unethical, we should now be ethical; rather, though formerly we did many things by our own life, now we should do everything by Christ's life. God wants us to deny our life and live by Christ's life. Hence, we have to see clearly that Christ is our life and our living. Once we have seen this clearly, we will spontaneously have a change in our mind to turn from ethics, good deeds, and proper behavior to Christ Himself.

LIVING OUT CHRIST RATHER THAN MORALITY

It is very serious and very crucial to our spiritual progress to have such a turn. Therefore, I hope that these words will shine on us so that we may be enlightened to see that what God wants is just Christ Himself. Being a Christian is not a matter of morality, for the goal of a Christian is something higher than morality. Being a Christian is a matter of Christ. Living morally does not make us Christians who are up to standard. Only when we live out Christ are we "standard" Christians. Christ is the reason a Christian can be a

Christian. A genuine Christian does not only have Christ within, but he also lives Christ without.

When a Christian lives out Christ, he lives out the highest morality. However, strictly speaking, the power of a Christian does not depend on living morally but on living Christ. Even if we reach a certain standard of morality, this does not make us Christians who are up to standard. When Christ is continually increasing in us, we will be Christians who are up to standard. Everything related to a Christian is a matter of Christ. If we see this, we will turn our concept from morality to Christ, and we will treasure Christ more than morality. This seeing is very powerful. In fact, this seeing will change our Christian life. Without seeing this, our reading of the Bible will be merely a mental comprehension, our prayer will be in our mind, our decisions will be according to our mind, and everything we do will be done in our mind. However, from the day that we have this seeing, we will no longer use our mind to contact Christ, read the Bible, or pray; rather, we will use our spirit in doing everything.

It is not a question of whether or not we have doctrines but whether or not we have Christ. The focus is not on seeking doctrines but on seeking Christ. When we are seriously seeking Christ, He will have the ground in us and will move in us, speak to us, and touch us. In other words, inwardly we will have nothing other than the living Christ. Because we treasure Him, seek Him, and touch Him, He will have the opportunity in us, and His Spirit will be able to move in us and touch us. As a result, Christ will increase in us. Once Christ increases in us, when we are about to lose our temper, Christ will touch our temper. As a result, there will be some conflict with Him, and some friction between the two of us. At this time, if we love Him, treasure Him, and allow Him to gain the victory, He will have the opportunity and ground in us to get rid of our temper by His resurrection power, and in the end our temper will be gone. This will be a genuine change; this is what God desires.

GOD'S PURPOSE BEING FOR CHRIST TO BE FORMED IN US

On the one hand, we will have the increase of Christ inwardly, and on the other hand, we will have a change of expression outwardly. The inward increase of Christ will get rid of our outward temper, pride, and rudeness. Hence, the improvement of our temper will not be due to an uplifting of our

morality but to an increase of Christ. Christ will increase in us to the point where everything that is incompatible with Him will be discharged.

We treasure Christ instead of morality, but this does not mean that we do not need morality. There are many Christians who do not treasure morality, but in the end their morality is higher than that of others. Some Christians esteem Christ more than they esteem their parents, but in the end they honor their parents more than others, because Christ in them gets rid of everything in them that is against honoring their parents. Their living comes out of Christ and expresses Christ, and this expression is an honoring to their parents. Although they highly regard Christ and do not highly regard the matter of honoring their parents, when they live out Christ, they do have a living that honors their parents. This is a real spiritual living. The more there is of this kind of spiritual living, the more Christians will make progress.

A Christian's progress is nothing but Christ living out through him. When Christ is lived out through him, Christ not only increases in him but also grows in him into a full-grown man and is formed in him. At this time, not only will a Christian have the life of Christ, but he will also have the stature of Christ. Then, because Christ is filling him to be his everything, Christ's view will become his view, and Christ's thought will become his thought. He will have the revelation and the light to realize that everything that comes out of man—even though it may be supreme and appear to be the best—cannot please God. Thus, he will reject all that comes out of himself. He will despise his own goodness and morality and will put aside everything that comes out of himself. He will treasure Christ inwardly and give Christ the opportunity to move in him and touch him in every way. Eventually, the element of Christ will increase in him. This increase will dismiss everything that is not of Christ. In this way the Christ in him will increase unto full stature and unto a full-grown man. His whole being will be filled with Christ. His thoughts will be Christ, his concepts will be Christ, his inclinations will be Christ, and his judgments will also be Christ. He will be filled with the element of Christ in every single matter. Christ will then be formed in him. This is the purpose of God's work in us.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BEING UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING APART FROM THE LORD

In John 15:5 the Lord said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

DOING ALL THINGS BY ABIDING IN THE LORD

The Lord said, "For apart from Me you can do nothing." What does this mean? As far as we are concerned, we are still able to do many things apart from the Lord. It seems that we do not need to rely on the Lord to preach the gospel, we do not need to rely on the Lord to visit the saints, and we do not need to rely on the Lord to serve Him. Many of us have had this kind of experience. In our service, our work, our preaching of the gospel, and our visiting of the saints, we can apparently accomplish a great deal without having much fellowship with the Lord and abiding in Him. In the Lord's eyes, however, everything that we do without fellowshipping with Him or relying on Him—everything that we do by ourselves—does not count. This is why He said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." This means that only the things we do by abiding in the Lord count in God's eyes. Apart from Him everything that we do means nothing.

The Lord's word here does not necessarily mean that we are fallen and are far away from the Lord but that there is a barrier between us and the Lord. The first part of the verse speaks of one who abides in the Lord and the Lord in him. Then the latter part says, "For apart from Me you can do nothing." The word *for* indicates that this phrase explains the preceding part. Hence, the part on the branches being apart from the vine and not being able to bear fruit explains the preceding part, which is on not abiding in the Lord. What does *apart from Me* mean? This does not necessarily mean that when we are apart from the Lord, we do not look like Christians anymore because we have committed sins or trespasses. We may pray, go to meetings, and preach the gospel as usual. Apparently, we may not have any problem with the Lord and

may appear to be normal Christians, but in fact, we may be apart from the Lord and may have lost our fellowship with the Lord inwardly.

What does it mean to abide in the Lord? We may use the following example. A telephone "abides" in electricity. Once the electricity is switched on, the telephone begins to "abide" in the electricity, and at the same time the electricity also "abides" in the telephone. The telephone and the electricity are in communication and in union with each other. This kind of communication and union produces an effect that enables the telephone to transmit sound. However, whenever the electricity is turned off, the electricity ceases to abide in the telephone, and the telephone is no longer able to transmit sound. The telephone apparently remains the same, but actually it is disconnected from the electricity. A Christian may be right and proper in appearance and irreproachable in his spiritual living; however, he may not be abiding in the Lord, and the Lord also may not be abiding in him. At this time everything that he does and all his living are worthless in God's eyes and do not mean anything. His so-called normal living is one that is lived out from himself and by himself but not one that is in union or fellowship with the Lord or one that the Lord lives out from within him.

From God's perspective, all spiritual reality is Christ Himself. In all our spiritual progress and living before God, only that which is Christ counts. Our spiritual life is Christ Himself, our spiritual living is Christ Himself, and our spiritual growth is also Christ Himself; all spiritual matters are just Christ Himself. Therefore, without Christ in us, we do not have a spiritual life; without living in Christ, we do not have a spiritual living; and without the increase of Christ in us, we do not have any spiritual progress. We may have a great amount of doctrinal knowledge and many spiritual practices, but they cannot be counted as spiritual progress. Our spiritual progress is the increase of Christ in us. Anything that is not Christ is not spiritual and has no spiritual value in God's eyes.

ABIDING IN THE LORD TO BEAR MUCH FRUIT

Many Christians often ask, "What does the Lord want us to do?" The Lord said that if anyone abides in Him, He will also abide in him. The Lord's meaning is very clear—He wants us to abide in Him. What does it mean to abide in Him? The word *abide* is easy to comprehend. For example, when you abide in your house, this means you and your house are joined together.

When you abide in your house, you and your house become one. Abiding in the Lord refers to our union with the Lord. Once we are joined to the Lord, we will spontaneously bear fruit.

What does it mean to bear fruit? For the branches of the vine to bear fruit means that the vine is expressed through the branches, that the life within the vine is expressed and seen without. When the branches abide in the vine, they bear fruit, and the life of the vine is expressed through the branches. This is the crystal of the vine, the essence of the vine. The fruit a person bears while abiding in the Lord is the overflow of the Lord's life—the Lord's life passing through him and flowing out of him. What flows out of him is Christ's life, Christ's essence, and Christ Himself.

Based on this principle, we can examine our daily walk to see whether or not it is Christ Himself and whether or not it is the life of Christ passing through us and flowing out of us. In principle, our Christian living and work should issue from our union with Christ; they must be the result of our abiding in Christ and Christ's abiding in us, a union of the two. The issue of such a union is the overflow of Christ's life, Christ's nature, and Christ Himself in our Christian living.

When an electric lamp is joined to the electricity, the electric lamp is abiding in the electricity, and the electricity is also abiding in the electric lamp; the two are united. The issue of such a union is that the electric lamp shows forth and expresses the electricity within it. The showing forth and the expression of the electricity is the "fruit bearing" of the lamp, the effect of the lamp. When the effect of the lamp is shown outwardly, it becomes the function of the lamp. The function of the lamp is to express the electricity that fills the lamp inwardly. The lamp's bearing fruit and producing an effect before men is its showing forth of all that is within.

This is the best illustration to portray our relationship with Christ. We abide in the Spirit of Christ, and Christ also abides in our spirit. This is communion and union. The issue of such a communion and union is that we have the crystal of Christ's life in us. This crystal is the fruit that we bear, which is Christ Himself. This is the principle of our living and work.

THE GOAL OF THE GOSPEL

BEING FOR CHRIST TO ENTER INTO MAN

We often preach the gospel, give testimonies for the Lord, and exhort people to believe in the Lord, but do we know what the ultimate result of our gospel preaching is? What are the goal, the center, and the reality of the gospel? The issue, the goal, the center, and the reality of the gospel are all for Christ to enter into man, that is, for Christ's life to enter into those who receive Him as their Savior that they may be produced as "grapes." If we think that our gospel preaching is for people to "go to heaven" and not to "hell," then our gospel preaching is too poor. If we have not seen that the preaching of the gospel is for the Christ in us to flow into others, and if we do not take this as the goal, the center, and the reality of the gospel, then our gospel is far off and cannot achieve God's goal.

How many times do we have a deep sense that in our gospel preaching we have to transmit the Lord's life into a sinner that he may become a "grape" of Christ the vine and may have the element and the life of Christ within him? How often do we have such a strong feeling in our gospel preaching? I am afraid we only sense that this certain one is our friend, and if he does not believe in Jesus, he will go to hell, which will be very painful. Thus, we may kneel down before God and in tears pray, "O God, please save him because You desire all men to be saved and not one to perish. O God, You see, my friend is still living a sinner's life; this really grieves my heart." Many times we think that we can soften the Lord's heart with our tears so that the Lord will stretch out His hand, pull this person up, and save him from perdition. What is the goal of this kind of gospel preaching? This kind of gospel preaching aims only at saving man from suffering in hell in the future. The Bible shows us, however, that this is not the goal of gospel preaching. To preach the gospel is to dispense Christ from within us into others so that they also may have Christ, His life, His nature, and His element in them. Thus, they will no longer be merely men but Christ-men, even reproductions of Christ. In this way they will become "grapes," the fruit we bear as branches of the vine.

CHRIST BEING THE CENTER AND THE REALITY OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

This does not mean that when we go out to preach the gospel, we do not need to tell people about God, sin, Jesus being the Savior, and the way to receive Him as their Savior and that we only need to tell them that we are

transmitting Christ into them that they may become "grapes." Rather, we hope that all Christians would see this light so that in their gospel preaching they would forget about heaven, hell, and future suffering. We have to tell people that the reason they suffer is that they do not have Christ. They have many other things, but they do not have Christ. We have to let them know that we are Christians, we have Christ in us, we are branches of Christ as the vine, and we have come to contact them in order to transmit Christ into them. When they have Christ in them, they will become precious, bright, and heavenly.

We all should preach the gospel in this way—to transmit the Christ from within us into our friends and everyone in our family. We all are branches of the vine. When Christ's life is transfused into us and passes through us, flowing out from us into others, they will have Christ's life and become the fruit we bear as branches of the vine. This is the goal of our gospel preaching. If we preach the gospel without imparting Christ to others, our gospel has no center and no reality. The center and the reality of all our spiritual activities should be Christ Himself.

The principle is the same in the visiting, the building up, and the shepherding of the believers. Christ must be the center and reality of all spiritual activities. For example, there may be a brother who has a problem, who lost his job, or who fell or backslid, and we may go and visit him merely to console him, comfort him, and tell him to pray, to read the Bible, and to receive the enlightening. Even though we cannot say that this is wrong, this shows that we still do not know spiritual reality. We are simply rendering him some help and comfort. Although this is good, if it is void of Christ, there is no center and no reality. The center of all spiritual things is Christ, and the reality of all spiritual things is also Christ.

MINISTERING CHRIST TO OTHERS SO THAT THEY MAY HAVE MORE OF CHRIST

If we have seen that spiritual reality is Christ Himself, when we go out to visit the saints, to shepherd the saints, or to teach the saints, we will hold on firmly to the principle that we are ministering Christ to them. This is not merely to comfort them in their suffering but to transmit and supply Christ into them through fellowship. For this reason we need to gain and experience more of Christ, because if we have not received the supply from Christ, it will

be difficult for us to supply others, and if we have not experienced Christ, it will be difficult for us to nourish others. There is a hymn that says, "He lives for me that I may give / His love to hearts that pine" (*Hymns,* #362). May we all be this kind of people, giving His love to the hearts that pine.

Some preach the gospel with escape from eternal perdition as the goal, and others preach the gospel with the ministering of Christ to others as the goal. We are already clear about the difference between the two. Hence, when we go out to preach the gospel, we have to firmly grasp this principle and center—that we are transmitting Christ into others so that they may have Christ's life and nature, that is, so that they may have the life of the vine. This is the goal of our gospel preaching.

Similarly, we may also have two different goals in edifying and caring for the saints. Many times we do not take Christ as our goal in taking care of the saints. For example, when a person is sick and we go to visit him, we often want to give him some consolation. When a person cannot distinguish his left hand from his right and we go to visit him, we want him to have a clear mind. In our visiting, exhorting, and shepherding, we always take things other than Christ as our goal. Because we do not see this matter clearly and do not take it seriously, we miss the center and purpose of our gospel preaching and visiting. We must see that apart from the Lord we can do nothing.

Spiritual reality depends on supplying man's need with the Christ in us. If we have seen this, no matter what we do, whether exhorting, encouraging, or shepherding people, we will firmly grasp the principle that we are ministering Christ to others so that they may have more of Christ. It is true that when we visit people, we hope that they would be zealous and would not backslide. However, we have a more positive goal, which is Christ Himself; we have to minister Christ to them. Whether they are indifferent, backslidden, or befuddled, we have only one goal, and that is to transfuse Christ into them.

CHRIST BEING ALL AND IN ALL

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians in his old age, he still confessed that he did not have an adequate knowledge of Christ. In Philippians 3:10 he says that he was still pursuing to know Christ. Whether we are spiritual or not depends on whether we are pursuing Christ all the time. We are not spiritual because we are short of Christ. We do not have any spiritual increase or

spiritual weight because we are short of the knowledge of Christ. We have no spiritual insight and are short of love and holiness because we are short of Christ.

Christians do not lack so many different things; what they lack is Christ Himself. First Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ "became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." We all must realize that Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption, our life, our power, our light, and our everything. In God's eyes every spiritual matter, every spiritual reality, is just Christ Himself.

All our spiritual lack and shortages are due to the fact that we are short of Christ. You are short of zeal because you do not have enough Christ, I am short of love because I do not have enough Christ, and he is short of faith because he does not have enough Christ. It is useless to exhort people to have zeal, love, or faith. All we can do is minister Christ to them; then they will spontaneously have zeal, love, and faith. When Christ comes into us, we have wisdom, light, and the way because Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). Apart from Him we can do nothing, and apart from Him everything we do means nothing in God's eyes.

If what a person ministers to the church is not Christ, and if the shepherding he renders to the saints is not Christ Himself, then even though he may receive praise from man, he will not receive praise from God, whether he is a deacon, an elder, or a serving one. Even though he may receive man's approval, he will not receive God's approval. This is because all that is done outside of Christ is counted as nothing in God's eyes. Only when we are in Christ and allow Christ to pass through us and to flow out of us will all that we do count. Whether it is in our gospel preaching, in our visiting the saints, in the elders' shepherding, or in the deacons' serving, only when Christ passes through us and is expressed through us will anything be valuable. Spiritual value is Christ Himself; only what is of Christ is valuable.

NEEDING TO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD IN EVERYTHING WE DO

Perhaps some will ask, "How do we allow Christ to pass through us and come out of us?" In order to allow Christ to pass through us and come out of us, our fellowship with Him is indispensable. John 15 mentions our abiding in

the Lord; this abiding in the Lord is our fellowship with the Lord. We need to fellowship with Him in everything we do. Whether we are preaching the gospel or visiting someone, we must be inwardly connected with the Lord. Once the electric lamp is connected to the electricity, it shines, and once the electric lamp is disconnected from the electricity, it ceases to shine. In the same way, Christians should not have any problem in their fellowship with the Lord. We must be inwardly connected and joined to the Lord continuously. At every moment and in every matter we must pay attention to our connection and union with the Lord. When we are connected and joined to the Lord, we are fellowshipping with the Lord. Then when we go to preach the gospel, the gospel will be released through us; when we go to visit the saints, Christ will be released through us.

We all know that if we are connected to the electricity, whenever we contact someone, the electricity in us will flow to that person. In the same principle, if we want Christ to pass through us and to reach others through us, we must be those who are in fellowship with Him. We ourselves know whether or not we are connected and joined to Christ. If we are not connected or joined to the Lord, we will be unable to give Christ to others. However, if we are in fellowship and contact with the Lord, whether we are elders or deacons, whether we are going to preach the gospel or going to visit people, once we contact them, Christ will be released through us, and they will gain Christ. We must firmly grasp this basic principle.

Hence, before a person begins to preach the gospel or minister the word, he must first have fellowship with the Lord and contact Him. In this way, when people listen to him, they will sense that his speaking is living. It is only by fellowshipping with the Lord, on the one hand, and by speaking the message, on the other hand, that his message can be living. In preaching the word a person should not depend on his eloquence, utterance, and knowledge; neither should he simply tell people about the Bible. While preaching the word, the preacher must be connected and joined to the Lord. His words, utterance, knowledge, and reading of the Bible are only an outlet for Christ to flow out from him. As a result, after hearing the message, the speaking, and the words of the Bible, people will receive the Christ who is in the message, in the speaking, and in the Word.

All spiritual matters are just Christ Himself. Visiting the believers is Christ Himself, preaching the gospel is Christ Himself, and preaching the word is

Christ Himself. Every spiritual matter is simply Christ Himself. If Christ is not the center and the reality, the word itself will be empty, the visiting will be false, and the gospel will be dead. For us to serve God, we must be connected and joined to Christ. Only when we have fellowship with Christ inwardly can we minister Christ to others. Hence, whether we are preaching the gospel, visiting the believers, or serving as an elder, we must always be connected to Christ whenever we serve.

RESTORING OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD THROUGH DEALINGS

Whenever we sense that we are disconnected from Christ, we have to deal with it immediately. Before we preach the gospel or preach the word, if we sense that we are not connected to Christ, we have to deal with this right away in order that we may be reconnected with the "electricity," the Spirit. The reason why our preaching cannot touch people is that we are not connected or joined to Christ. The One who touches people is Christ as the Spirit. It is not our mind, our thought, our eloquence, or our knowledge that can touch or minister to others; rather, it is the Christ transfused through our preaching who can touch and minister to people. Therefore, we must be connected to Christ all the time.

Sometimes we may have the experience that right before we are going to speak, our inner fellowship with the Lord is interrupted. At this time we should go to the Lord immediately to deal with what needs to be dealt with in order to restore the fellowship. There is no problem with the Christ who is in us; however, if we do not abide in Christ or fellowship with Him but speak by ourselves in our mind and in our determination, Christ will be gone. This does not mean that Christ is no longer in us but that our fellowship with Him is interrupted. Thus, we must learn that when we are not moved inwardly, we should not say anything, but when we have a feeling within, we should speak according to this inner feeling. We must be cautious and fearful to speak according to our memory, knowledge, and doctrines; rather, we must speak according to the feeling of Christ inwardly. In this way what we speak will be Christ and the Spirit.

CHRIST BEING THE UNIQUE GOAL

We should contact Christ in everything we do. When we serve, we have to contact Christ; when we read the Bible, we have to contact Christ; when we preach the gospel, we have to contact Christ; when we talk, we have to contact Christ; when we pray, we have to contact Christ. We must always contact Christ inwardly. For this we have to practice in our daily living, first, to be connected with Christ, second, to do everything in union with Christ, and third, to take Christ as the goal all the time. If a saint is sad, we should not merely comfort him; we have to give him Christ. When we preach the gospel, we should not only show people that they are sinful, but we should also show them that they need Christ and that God's purpose in them is for them to receive Christ. We may speak thousands of messages or do thousands of things, but in all of them our unique goal must be Christ. In this way our daily living, our work, and our service will be spiritual and will have spiritual reality.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST

First Corinthians 12:12 says, "Even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ." *So also is the Christ* is a great and mysterious statement in the Bible.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST, AND THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST ALSO BEING CHRIST

First Corinthians 12:12 begins, "Even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body." Bible expositors all admit that this verse refers to the church. The church is the Body of Christ, and in this Body there are many members. Moreover, all the members of the Body, being many, are one Body. Undoubtedly, this verse is speaking about the church. The strange thing, however, is that the conclusion to this word refers not to the church but to Christ—"so also is the Christ." We may think it would be more logical to change *Christ* to *church*. But when the Holy Spirit inspired man to write the Bible, He did not say, "So also is the *church*," but "so also is the *Christ*." From this we see a mystery. This mystery shows that not only is the Head of the church Christ but that the church as the Body of Christ is also Christ.

Based on this we can determine that in God's eyes, not only is the Head of the church Christ, but the church is also Christ. Christ Himself is the essence of the church. On the surface the sum total of all those who are saved is the church, the Body of Christ. However, according to the intrinsic, genuine nature of the church, the church is not merely the sum of all those who are saved; rather, the church is the total of all those who are saved who have Christ in them as their life and spiritual reality.

On the surface the church is a group of saved ones who have been added together, but on the inside the church is the Christ who is in these ones who are added together. You have Christ in you, I have Christ in me, and others

have Christ in them. The aggregate of all of us who belong to Christ is "the Christ." The totality of the Christ in us is still Christ. Thus, the church is not simply a group of people added together. Only when a group of people who have Christ in them are added together are they the church. Strictly speaking, it is the Christ in all of us added together that is the church.

THE CHURCH BEING CHRIST HIMSELF

What is the church? The church is Christ Himself, and Christ Himself is the church. Because the church is something spiritual, without Christ there is no church, and without Christ there is no reality of the church. The essence and the content of the church are just Christ. We can say that the reality of Christ is Christ Himself, the reality of spiritual matters is Christ Himself, and the reality of the church is also Christ Himself. Every genuine spiritual experience is an experience of Christ Himself and is Christ Himself. No Christian experience is something other than Christ Himself. If we have an experience that is not Christ Himself, this experience is religious and behavioral but not spiritual. Hence, any "Christian" experience that is not derived from the experience of Christ is something of religion, ethics, and good behavior. It is definitely not of the Spirit nor of Christ, because it is void of Christ's nature.

Everything that we do in spiritual service—whether it be prayer, preaching the gospel, visiting the believers, or anything else—the inward element should always be Christ Himself, because the spiritual reality is Christ Himself. Christ is in you, Christ is in me, and Christ is in many others. The aggregate of the Christ in all of us is the church, and the church is Christ.

The church is not a building, a chapel, or a meeting hall. Moreover, strictly speaking, the church is not merely a group of people. The gathering of a group of people is not necessarily the church. If we gather a group of people together on the street and put up a "church" signboard next to them, they still are not the church. The church is the totality of the Christ in those who are saved. The church is Christ Himself.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE BEING CHRIST

We all should be clear that from the beginning of our Christian life, all our experiences—including repentance, believing in the Lord, baptism, attending the meetings, and preaching the gospel—are all experiences of Christ and are

Christ Himself. What then is Christian service? Christian service is Christ. If the element in our service is not Christ, then our service does not have much value in God's eyes. In John 15 the Lord Jesus clearly said, "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (v. 5). Apart from the Lord, apart from Christ, we cannot even talk about service.

What counts and has spiritual value before God is what we do while we are abiding in the Lord and the Lord is abiding in us. For the Lord to abide in us means that the Lord is joined to us, and for us to abide in the Lord means that we are joined to the Lord. Only when we are in union with Christ will what we do be something that Christ does through us, and only this has spiritual value to God. All that we do out of ourselves, with ourselves, and by ourselves can gain the praises of man but not the acceptance of God. God accepts only Christ and that which is out of Christ. If you and I are not in Christ, we will not be acceptable to God. Not only will our sins be unacceptable to God, but even the good things we do by ourselves will not be accepted by Him. God accepts only that which is of Christ and has Christ as its intrinsic element and content. Only these things have spiritual value and are counted by God.

Only when Christ is lived out and expressed through Christians as a result of gaining ground, growing, and being formed in them, will their service be real Christian service. Every morning many saints serve together to clean the meeting hall. However, there is a spiritual question here. When they clean the meeting hall, are they cleaning it with their own zeal or by touching Christ, being filled with Christ, and contacting Christ? Cleaning merely by zealousness is different from cleaning by touching Christ. Is there a difference between cleaning the meeting hall and cleaning a school? If there is no difference, I am afraid that what we do is nothing but the result of our zeal.

Please bear in mind that there is an absolute difference between spiritual service and secular work. We do not need to touch Christ to engage in secular matters, but we must contact Him for the service of the church. We need to contact Christ when we clean the windows. We need to contact Christ when we minister the word. We need to contact Christ when we pray. In whatever we do, we need to contact Christ within. All that we do, pray, and speak should come out of our inward union and contact with Christ. Then when people contact us, they will sense that we are filled with Christ. In this way Christ will pass through us and come out of us. Then when we go to visit the

believers, preach the gospel, or lead people to salvation, Christ as the electricity will flow out from us into them.

GENUINE SERVICE BEING SERVICE THAT TOUCHES CHRIST AND FLOWS OUT CHRIST

What is spiritual service? Spiritual service is outward action that issues from touching the inward feeling of Christ; this action is Christ's coming out of us. When the Holy Spirit is in us, Christ is in us, for the Spirit is the realization of Christ. When the Spirit touches us, it is Christ who is touching us, and when the Spirit motivates us, it is Christ who is motivating us. Before we go to clean the meeting hall, if we first have fellowship with the Lord at home and let the Lord supply our whole being, then when we clean the windows or the chairs, there will be the overflow of Christ—Christ will come out of us. Then anyone who contacts us will sense the flavor of Christ in us. Although we may be only cleaning, we are still able to give people a flavor that is spiritual and heavenly—the fragrance of Christ.

Many times when we listen to someone's preaching, we cannot sense the flavor of Christ in him. This is because he is disconnected from Christ, and in his living there is a barrier between him and Christ. He has not yet dealt with certain matters before God, and his spirit has lost contact with Christ. Thus, he speaks using merely his mind, memory, and thoughts. We sense his eloquence, but we cannot sense the Lord's presence with him, neither can we touch spiritual reality. He has lost his fellowship with Christ, and his preaching is merely doctrinal, without the Spirit. This kind of preaching is not spiritual because it is void of Christ. Whatever we do in our service should have Christ and should be Christ.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS BEING CHRIST HIMSELF

Not only should our service be Christ, but our spiritual ability should also be Christ Himself. What is spiritual ability? Christians often mention the word *gift*. A gift is a spiritual ability. For example, if you are able to preach the word, this is your spiritual ability. If you preach the gospel better than others and bring many people to salvation, this is your spiritual ability. Some have this kind of ability, and others do not. The Bible shows us that there are many gifts, but we must understand that spiritual gifts are Christ Himself. Spiritual

gifts, spiritual abilities, come through the Holy Spirit and are functions of Christ in man.

First Corinthians shows us that the church is the Body of Christ and that every saved one is a member of the Body. In the human body the blood circulation of the members is the blood circulation of the body, and the blood circulation of the body is the blood circulation of the members. The blood circulation of the ears is the blood circulation of the body, and the life of the ears is the life of the body, the life of the head. Thus, the life in Christ, the Head, and the life in the church, the Body, are both Christ Himself.

EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST HAVING A FUNCTION

The same life has the same blood circulation. When this life comes to the ears, it becomes the life of the ears, and when this life comes to the eyes, it becomes the life of the eyes. There is only one kind of life in the body, and there is only one blood circulation in the body. The life and the blood circulation are the same in every part of our body. Moreover, it is wonderful that when the life and the blood reach the eyes, the eyes can see; when the life and the blood reach the ears, the ears can hear. This life, this blood circulation, enables every part of the body to have its own function.

A newborn baby can barely see with its eyes, hear with its ears, walk with its feet, or do things with its hands. The baby's four limbs are all there and more or less have some function, yet they are not fully developed. Just as every member of our physical body has its own function, as saved ones and members of the Body of Christ, we each have our own function. The function of the ears is to hear. Hearing is the ability of the ears, which in biblical terms, is the gift of the ears. Hence, one's gift is one's function. The Bible tells us that some in the church can speak for the Lord and preach the gospel as the mouth. This kind of speaking is a gift and is referred to in the Bible as prophesying. Some may not possess this kind of gift and function, but those who do have the prophesying gift may not possess the gift and function that others have. To illustrate, the feet cannot speak, but they can walk; the hands cannot walk, but they can do things; the mouth cannot do things, but it can prophesy. This shows us that the hands have the gift of doing things, the nose has the gift of smelling, and the mouth has the gift of prophesying. Actually, these gifts are the functions of the different members.

THE MANIFESTATION OF FUNCTIONS—GIFTS—THROUGH THE GROWTH IN LIFE

Whether or not the various functions of our body can be expressed depends entirely on our growth in life. A newborn baby has eyes, yet he can hardly see; he has ears, yet he can hardly hear; he has a mouth, yet he cannot speak; he has feet, yet he cannot walk. This is because the baby has not yet been developed or grown up. Although we are saved and are members of the Body of Christ, due to our lack of growth in life, we cannot prophesy for the Lord, even though we may be the mouth. Although we may be the hands and should be doing certain things in the church, although we may be the feet and should be moving and running in the church, due to our lack of growth in life, our functions have not been developed to the degree that they become useful and are manifested.

Some people may ask, "Do we all have a gift?" Just look at our body. Is there any member of our body without a function? In the same way, every member of the Body of Christ has a gift. Without a gift, there is no ability, and without a gift, there is no function. There is no Christian who does not have a spiritual function in the church. In God's ordination every saved one is a member of the Body of Christ and has his own function. However, the question is whether or not he has the growth in life. God has already ordained that every saved one be a member and that every member have a gift, an ability, and a function. However, the question is whether or not these saved ones have the growth in life. Without the growth in the spiritual life, their spiritual abilities, spiritual functions, cannot be expressed.

Why do we say that spiritual gifts are Christ? We say this because without Christ's life, we cannot be the members of the Body of Christ, and we therefore do not have the functions of the members or the spiritual gifts. When Christ's life comes into you, you become the mouth; when Christ's life comes into me, I become the feet; and when Christ's life comes into someone else, he becomes the hands. It is wonderful that when the same Christ, the same life, enters into you, you become the mouth; when He enters into me, I become the feet; and when He enters into someone else, that one becomes the hands. This means that not only are the members Christ, but also the life of the members and the nature of the members are Christ. We are the members of the Body of Christ. Thus, our inner nature, our inner life, is Christ.

For example, there are nominal Christians who have not repented, have not received salvation, and do not have the Lord's life. Someone spoke to them about believing in the Lord, so outwardly they "believed" in the Lord. Someone told them about baptism, so they were baptized. Nevertheless, having "joined" the church in this way, does this make them members of Christ? No it does not. Why not? It does not because they do not have Christ in them. You are a member of Christ because Christ is in you; I am a member of Christ because Christ is in me; and everyone who is a member of Christ is so because Christ is in him. Moreover, it is a wonderful fact that when Christ's life comes into us, it makes you the mouth, me the feet, and someone else the hands. Although it is the same life of Christ that we receive, this life becomes different members in different people. Some are one kind of member, and others are other kinds of members. In addition, even though they all are members, the functions of some have been manifested, but the functions of others have not. The reason some are able to manifest their functions is because Christ has increased in them and developed in them to the extent that their functions are manifested in a matured way. However, some are not able to manifest their functions because, despite the fact that they are saved and have Christ, Christ does not have the ground to grow in them. Thus, their functions are not yet manifested.

We have to see what it is to be a member of the Body of Christ. We should ask, what is the ability of a member? What is the function of a member? If Christ has not entered into you, you are merely an individual and not a member of the Body of Christ. When Christ comes into you, you become a member of the Body of Christ, but you still may not have a function because Christ has not yet been developed in you. If Christ has the ground in you to develop and mature, your spiritual gift will be manifested spontaneously. Therefore, we have to see that we are responsible if we do not have any serving function. If we do not have any function, it is because although we may already have the life of Christ and the Spirit of Christ in us, we have not given Him the opportunity and ground to grow and develop in us.

Many Christians have the concept that they are not of much use in the church. They think that although they are saved ones, they are not able to do anything. For example, there was once a person in Shanghai who did not pursue spiritual matters very much after he was saved. Although he regularly attended the meetings and sometimes prayed with tears, his mind and his thinking could not be turned around. He did not sin, but neither did he love

the Lord. When people exhorted him to love and serve the Lord, he would tell them that since he was merely occupying a seat in the meetings and could not minister the word, preach the gospel, or care for the saints, it did not make any difference whether or not he was in the church. However, not long after he said this, the Lord did a work in him, and he became ill. The Lord worked in him, causing him to sense the Lord's loveliness. Then this brother began to pursue the Lord, to spend much time in prayer every day, to consecrate himself to the Lord, to allow the Lord to reign in him in both big and small matters, and to practice to be in the Lord's presence and to walk with the Lord. Thus, he allowed the Lord to have the first place in him. After he had such a turn, his function in the church was manifested. Not only did he know how to read the Bible properly, but when he stood up to read the Bible in the meetings, his reading was full of feeling. At this time his gift was manifested. When he spoke concerning a few verses from the Bible, people could sense the shining and the authority of God. This was not the eloquence of man but the gift of God.

When a baby is first born and is lying on the bed, his feet are lovely, but they cannot walk because they are not yet developed. Day after day, however, through eating and drinking, the baby's feet grow and become strong, and eventually, the day comes when he is able to stand. Some time later he is able to walk and run. Surely this is a kind of miracle. A baby who originally could not walk is now able to walk and run. Spiritual gifts mature and develop in the same way. Without life, there is no spiritual ability, and without life, there is no spiritual function. Many people have been saved for years, yet their functions are not yet manifested. They do not know how to preach the gospel, visit the believers, or lead others. The only reason for this is that the life in them has not grown or matured and that Christ has no ground in them. Hence, their spiritual ability, their spiritual gift, is not manifested.

When we see how the Lord has cared for us and preserved us, borne our sins, and given us His life and everything, a love for Him will be generated in us. It is in this love that we consecrate ourselves to Him and allow Him to enlighten us and show us the things in us and our relationships with others that are not pleasing to Him and need to be dealt with. At this time if we submit to Him and deal with these matters, we will have joy, strength, and peace within. Moreover, we will be able to care for, preach the gospel to, and shepherd people. Once Christ's life is developed and matured in us, our function will immediately be manifested.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GIFTS BEING ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON US

How much of our gift is manifested and how useful we can be in the Lord's hands do not depend on the Lord but depend entirely on us. Have we given the Lord the opportunity and the ground in us? Who is reigning in us—the Lord or our flesh? These questions are too great and too crucial. If these questions have not been answered, and we have not dealt with them, even though we are saved, Christ still will not be able to grow in us or be developed in us so that our function can be manifested. The leading ones and serving ones in the church should spend much time to pray for all the saints that their spiritual gifts will be manifested and developed.

We should never think that we are not gifted; instead, we should go to the Lord and pray, asking the Lord to have mercy on us that we may be willing to hold on to Him, to give Him the ground in us, and to let Him gain us so that the life in us may be developed. Once this life is developed, the functions, the gifts, will be manifested. If someone is the feet, once he is developed, he will be able to walk. If someone is the hands, once he is developed, he will be able to do things. If someone is the eyes, once he is developed, he will be able to see. The manifestation of all the gifts depends on whether or not we are willing to give the Lord the ground for His life to develop in us.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE FOR THE EXERCISE OF GIFTS

There is no one who is saved who is not a member of the Body of Christ, and there is no one who is a member who does not have a gift or function. If there is a member who seems not to have any function, it is because he has not given Christ the opportunity to develop and mature in him. Hence, we have to pray, to come back to the Lord, to put ourselves aside, and to entrust ourselves entirely to the Lord. No matter what we do, we have to look to the Lord so that to the extent that the saints have received gifts, to that extent they will exercise their gifts. How much of our gift we can exercise is based on how much the life in us has developed. The development of this life is based on our fellowship with the Lord, and our fellowship with the Lord is based upon our love for the Lord.

Thus, we have to love Him and consecrate ourselves to Him. We have to deal with anything that we sense is not according to His heart. If our

fellowship with the Lord is not that deep or intimate, we need the Lord to have mercy on us that we would strengthen our fellowship with Him and allow Him to have the ground in us in a deeper way. When the Lord has the ground in us, the Holy Spirit will have the ground in us, and our spiritual gift will be manifested. In this way the Body of Christ will function, the condition of the church will be normal, and God will be able to gain true worship.