Basic principles of the experience of life

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in a training in Altadena, California, on July 13 through August 20, 1963.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:12; Col. 3:4; John 11:25; 14:6; 1:4; 3:16, 36; 10:10

THE SCRIPTURES BEING A BOOK OF LIFE

Nothing is more important than life. We all know that the Scriptures are a book of life, not a book of knowledge. Although the Scriptures are written in the way of knowledge, they are not for knowledge but for life. We must realize that in the very beginning there were two trees in the garden of Eden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life is for us to contact and receive, and the tree of knowledge is something we should stay away from. To take from the tree of knowledge means death to us. Only something taken from the tree of life is life to us. Therefore, we must be very clear that today the Scriptures are a garden, and in this Scripture garden there are also two trees. If we take something from the Scriptures as knowledge, we will have nothing but death, but if we take something as life, the result, the issue, to us is life.

What is in the Scripture garden is life as the center of God's intention. At the very beginning of the Scriptures there is a blueprint with the tree of life as the center. Then at the end of the Scriptures there is another picture with the tree of life again as the center. If we pay full attention to this matter, we will realize that from the very beginning to the very end, throughout the entire Scriptures, there is the central thought, the central line, of life. Life is always the central thought, central matter, and central line. If you would ask me what the Scriptures teach, I must tell you that they teach the matter of life. They are a book of life, revealing to us that God is life to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The picture in Genesis 2 is very clear. After man was created, he was placed in a garden before a tree, which is called the tree of life, showing that God's intention is that man deal with life. Eventually, at the end of the Scriptures there is the tree of life as the life supply to all the redeemed ones. Therefore, it

is clear that if we want to know something about the Scriptures, about the revelation of God, we need to understand and appreciate the matter of life.

Have you noticed that in the entire universe, in God's creation, life is the center? If we could take away every kind of life—the vegetable life as well as the animal life—the whole universe would be a barren, desolate desert. What is the meaning, the center, and the beauty of the universe? It is life. To be lifeless is to be meaningless. If there were no kind of life in a city—no vegetable life, no animal life, no human life, and even no angelic life—what kind of city would it be? There would be no meaning there. In our home and family there must be life. The more life we have, the more meaning there is. Some people who do not have children buy dogs, cats, birds, or fish. They try to have many kinds of lives in their home because the more life they have, the more meaningful their home is. Today many people have artificial flowers, but these are meaningless because they are beautiful but lifeless. What kind of universe would it be if we took away all the life?

THE REAL LIFE BEING CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

Moreover, have you realized that all the lives in God's creation are not real lives? All these lives are figures, types, and shadows; they are not the real life. If we desire to understand the Scriptures and the spiritual matters, we must remember well that all the items in God's creation are not the real items. They are simply figures, symbols, types, and shadows of the real thing. What is the real thing? The real thing is Christ Himself. The heavens are a type of Christ, and the earth is a type of Christ. Everything good, everything on the positive side, is a type of Christ. We do not sit on a real chair; we are seated in Christ. It is the Lord who upholds us; He is the real seat to us, on whom we rest. The only real item is the Lord Christ Himself. The vegetable life, animal life, and human life are figures of the one real life, that is, Christ.

With all lives there is a beauty. The most beautiful things are the things with life. Look at the flowers, the birds, the fishes, and all the animals. When we go to the ocean, we can see how beautiful the lives in the water are. All the beauties of the different lives are types of the beauty of Christ. With Christ as life there is the real beauty.

In addition, have you realized how many different kinds of life there are? These are the riches of life. Simply with trees alone, we can never exhaust

naming the different kinds. When I was very young, I thought that I had seen every kind of tree, but when I left my home, I saw many more different trees in the north and in the south of China. With life there are the riches. How many kinds of animals, beasts, birds, and fishes there are! We cannot exhaust telling the names of all the varieties. These are the riches of life, which are a type of the riches of Christ.

Furthermore, there is the power of life. If we bury a tiny seed under the earth, after a few weeks it will break through the earth, grow up, and bring forth many beautiful items. This is the power of life. With Christ as life there is power, which is the resurrection power, the power of resurrection. Nothing can hold or restrict it. The more we restrict it, the more it becomes stronger and more powerful. Remember well that with life there is beauty, riches, and power.

What do we mean by the term *life*? It is hard to give a definition of life. Life is something mysterious. If we go to the scientists, they cannot tell us, and if we go to the medical doctors, they cannot give an adequate definition. I have had a number of good talks with medical doctors about the physical life, and I asked them what the difference is between a dead person and a living person. From the medical point of view there is little difference with respect to the physical body. A dead body and a living body are nearly the same. To me, however, there is a great difference. When a person is dead, he is dead, and when he is living, he is living. How then can we define life, and in the whole universe, what is life?

As Christians, we must know what life is. There is a verse in the Scriptures that says, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:12). If we have the Son of God, we have life, and if we do not have the Son of God, we do not have life. What then is life? Christ, the Son of God, is life. As we have seen, all the different lives in God's creation are not the real lives; they are types and shadows. The real life is Christ.

As humans, we have a life. Why then do the Scriptures say that if we do not have the Son of God, we do not have life? We must answer by saying that we have a life in figure, a life in shadow. Yes, we received a life from our parents, but that life is not the real life. That is a life in figure, a shadow of the real life. The real life is Christ. If we do not have Christ, we do not have life, and we are

still in darkness. Now we may realize what life is. Life is Christ, the Son of God.

We must know the verses that support this thought. Besides 1 John 5:12 there is Colossians 3:4, which speaks of "Christ our life." Moreover, in John 11:25 the Lord says, "I am the resurrection and the life," and in 14:6 He says, "I am the way and the reality and the life." In addition, John 1:4 says, "In Him was life," and 10:10 says, "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly." John 3:16 and 36 also support the divine thought that life is simply Christ Himself, the Son of God, as life to us. With Christ as life there is beauty, there are riches, and there is the power of resurrection.

GOD BEING LIFE TO US IN THE SON AND THROUGH THE SPIRIT

Christ as the Son of God is life to us, but we need to ask what Christ has to do with God and with the Holy Spirit. Here we need to realize the fact of the Triune God. The God in whom we believe is a Triune God, the one God in three persons. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This verse speaks of three persons, yet the three persons have only one name. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one God with three persons.

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here there are three persons with three items of blessing—Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit with grace, love, and fellowship. Love, grace, and fellowship illustrate the relationship among the three persons of this one God. Love, grace, and fellowship are three items of one thing. We may say that love is grace, and grace is fellowship; fellowship is grace, and grace is love. Stated more clearly, fellowship is the transmission of grace, and grace is the expression of love. There may be love in my heart toward a brother, but how can I express this love? I may buy a nice Bible and present it to him. This Bible is a grace from me to him, and this grace is the very expression of the love in my heart. However, I may be in Los Angeles, and he is in Minneapolis, so I must ask the post office to mail this Bible to him; this is the transmission of the grace. There is the love in my heart, the grace as the expression of my love, and the transmission as a means to pass this grace on to the brother. In the same way,

the Father is the very source, the Son is the expression of the source, and the Spirit is the transmission of the expression.

John 1:18 says that no one has ever seen God, but the only begotten Son of God has declared Him. This means that the Son of God is the expression of God. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the transmission of the Son of God. Therefore, when we say that the Son of God is life to us, we simply mean that God is life to us in the Son and through the Spirit. What is life? In the entire universe God Himself is the very life. With Him there is the fountain of life, the source of life. However, God is life in the Son and through the Spirit. Here is something very mysterious and very wonderful. God is the very life, and He is life to us in His Son and through His Spirit.

THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE WATER OF LIFE

In the Scriptures God uses a certain illustration to reveal Himself as life to us. Christ is revealed as the tree of life, and with the tree there is always the flowing river. The tree of life yields its fruits, and the river of life constantly flows with the living water.

Many times the Scriptures speak of a fountain, a source, a well of water, a river, or a stream. From the very beginning, in the book of Genesis, to the very end, in the book of Revelation, there is the line of the river, flowing all the time with the living water. The river is in the second chapter of Genesis, and in Exodus 17 this living water flows out of the smitten rock. Then there is the well springing with water in Numbers 21, as we sing in *Hymns*, #250: "Spring up, well, with water." A well is a fountain of water. The Psalms many times say something concerning the living water, a living stream flowing all the time. There is also the flowing stream in Ezekiel 47. Then, when the Lord Jesus came, He told us that He has the living water which springs up into eternal life (John 4:14). Christ is the spring of water, and the Holy Spirit is the flowing stream.

Eventually, in Revelation, at the end of the entire Scriptures, there is a clear picture of God in Christ as the center with a living stream flowing out of this center. In the New Jerusalem God is in Christ the Lamb as the center, and from this very center a living stream flows out to reach all the redeemed ones to be received by them as their life supply. Many times in the New Testament

we are told that there is such a living stream. This very stream is the outflow of God Himself to reach us and be received by us as our life supply.

The way for God to be life to us is to constantly flow out. With the living water there are three aspects. First there is the source, the fountain. Then there is the spring to store the water. Finally, there is the flow, the stream. God the Father is the source, Christ the Son is the spring, and the Holy Spirit is the flow, the stream, of living water. Therefore, the Father is in the Son, the Son is through the Spirit, and the Spirit reaches us, enters into us, and lives and dwells within us to be life and the life supply to us. God is life to us as living water flowing in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Now, if we have the Holy Spirit, we have the Son, and if we have the Son, we have the Father. On the other hand, if we do not have the Spirit, we do not have the Son, and if we do not have the Son, we do not have the Father. The fountain, the well, and the stream are all one.

Many Christians today pay much attention to the matter of the Holy Spirit, but they often do not realize that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, the Spirit of Christ, Christ Himself as life to us. If we want to receive the Holy Spirit, we need to realize that the Holy Spirit is Christ as life to us. If we do not experience Christ as life to us by the Spirit, we will be dead. Moreover, our experience and understanding concerning the Holy Spirit will be different from that in the Scriptures.

Today many Christians think that they have had a certain experience of the Holy Spirit, but inwardly they do not understand the matter of life. They do not realize that Christ is life to us. I have heard many messages from this kind of Christian concerning the manifestations, the evidences, of the Holy Spirit, but I have never heard a message about the Holy Spirit being Christ Himself as life to us. They have neglected this matter. If you try your best to find books, messages, or articles about the Holy Spirit, you will see that it is hard to find a word on the Holy Spirit being Christ Himself as life to us. I have read many books about the so-called Holy Ghost, and the result is that I am very disappointed. In the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of life, the living water of life, to us, but among so many books about the Holy Spirit it is hard to find one that conveys the revelation, even if expressed in different words, that this very Holy Spirit is Christ as life to us.

Many people today pay much attention to speaking in tongues. Apparently, the purpose of speaking in tongues is the edification of a believer. The real edification of a Christian, however, is the true growth in life. Edification is a life matter. To have true edification, we must know life, realize the experiences of life, and have the real growth in life. It is regrettable that many people who speak in tongues do not have much growth in life. In 1936 I myself helped many people to speak in tongues, but after one year, by 1937, I found that none of them had the real growth in life. Because of this I asked myself what the purpose of helping people to speak in tongues is. If there is something real in speaking in tongues, there must be some real growth in life. The best way to test, check, and discover if speaking in tongues is real or not is to check whether or not there is some real growth in life. We need to realize that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ as life to us.

THE FATHER IN THE SON THROUGH THE SPIRIT REACHING OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

Now we may consider something very subjective to us. This very Spirit of life reaches us not only by coming down upon us, but even the more by entering into us, dwelling within us, and living in us. The Triune God—the Father in the Son through the Spirit—is now within us. We have three parts: a body, a soul, and a spirit. The Triune God has entered into us and is now dwelling and living within us by making His home in our spirit. If we are going to know life, we must realize that God is life to us in Christ through the Spirit, and this Spirit as life to us is now dwelling and living in our spirit. Our spirit is the residence, the house, the home, of this very Spirit.

Remember well that today the Triune God is life to us as the Father in the Son, the Son through the Spirit, and the Spirit in our spirit, taking our spirit as His residence to dwell and live there. If we desire to know and realize the real experiences of life, we must know that today the Triune God is in our spirit as life to us. The Father is in the Son, the Son is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in our spirit as life to us. This is the very center of the Christian life, and this is the very center of the church life. What we deal with is nothing other than this very Triune God, as the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit, who dwells and lives within our spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Gal. 1:15-16a; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:20; Eph. 4:13; Rom. 8:9-11

In the first chapter we saw clearly that life is the Triune God Himself. In the whole universe all the different kinds of lives are not the real lives. They are simply the types, figures, and shadows of life. The real life is God Himself. We have also seen how God comes to be our life. He comes firstly in Christ and secondly through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Christ is called "the life" (1 John 5:12; John 11:25; 14:6), and the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). This very Spirit of life is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, this Spirit is the Spirit of the Triune God. Moreover, the very Spirit of the Triune God comes into our spirit to make our spirit His residence. He dwells there, lives there, and works there, taking our human spirit as His home, His house, His residence.

First John 4:13 says, "In this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, that He has given to us of His Spirit." We all know that the Holy Spirit is within us, but within what part of us does He dwell? We need to locate the Holy Spirit within us. Romans 8:16 proves that the Holy Spirit today is within our spirit, taking our spirit as His abode, His residence. This verse says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." To be the children of God is a matter of life, which is testified by the Holy Spirit as life in our spirit. This proves that the Spirit of God as the Spirit of life resides and dwells in our spirit. Our human spirit is the abode, the residence, the house, of the Holy Spirit.

A rule, or principle, is that in order to have a strong ground in the Scriptures, we always need at least two verses to prove a matter so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses we can establish it. Therefore, we may also use 1 Corinthians 6:17, which says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The Lord is the Spirit, and when we join with the Lord, we become one with the Lord in spirit; we are one spirit with the Lord. This proves that the Holy Spirit is mingled together with our human spirit, and our spirit is the place where the Holy Spirit dwells. Today we can locate the Holy Spirit not only

within us but also, in a very definite way, in our spirit, because He witnesses with our spirit, and we are joined to the Lord in our spirit as one spirit.

In addition, Philippians 2:13 shows us that God is working within us. This verse says, "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure." The Triune God, who is now dwelling within us through His Spirit, is working within us both to will and to do. In the same principle, Hebrews 13:20-21 says that the God of peace does in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. However, by these two passages alone we cannot prove that it is the Holy Spirit who is working. For this we must use 1 John 2:27, which speaks of the anointing as the indwelling and working Spirit who abides in us and teaches us concerning all things. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life dwelling in us and working within us.

THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE BEING THE EXPERIENCES OF GOD

In this chapter we shall see something concerning the experiences of life. Although Christians today speak concerning spiritual experiences, they very seldom say that we experience life or that we have experiences of life. What are the real experiences of life? If we realize that life is the Triune God Himself, we must realize that the real experience of life is the experience of God.

If a person says that he has had some Christian experiences, he may simply mean that he has repented. Formerly he was a sinner, but now he has repented and turned to God. However, there are at least two different kinds of repentance. One kind of repentance is merely a human repentance without experiencing God. There is another kind of repentance: while someone is repenting, he can experience God within him. What is the difference between the repentance of a worldly person and the repentance of a true Christian? According to the general teachings in today's Christianity, repentance is merely a change of direction and a dropping of the old life. I do not say that this definition of repentance is right or wrong. I would simply beg you to forget about the general teaching of today's Christianity. What we are presenting here is something real of life, which is different from the general teachings. It is something genuine and real in the Scriptures.

Real repentance is a repentance in which we experience God, a repentance in which God passes through us and we pass through God. It is a repentance in which we have been met by God and we meet God. After this kind of repentance, something of God Himself is mingled with us. We may compare this with our drinking of water, after which the water is mingled with us. For Christians, real repentance is the way in which, with which, or by which we experience God. God passes through our being—through our heart, through our spirit, and even through our understanding—and we pass through God. We experience God in such a repentance.

I can testify that I have had these two different kinds of repentance. When I was eighteen or nineteen years old, I had a repentance that was one hundred percent a human repentance. At that time I felt that as a young man, for the sake of my future, I had to give up playing in ball games and spend all my time in study. I had such a repentance, and I succeeded in that matter. However, I repented by myself, and in that repentance I experienced nothing of God. After more than one year, I went to a gospel campaign. There the Lord truly met me. The Lord passed through me, not merely outside of me, but within me, and I passed through the Lord. I experienced God in that repentance. That was a real repentance in the way of experiencing God. This is a genuine experience of life. The real experience of life is the experience of God Himself.

Formerly a brother may have been very proud and careless. One day he receives the feeling that he is wrong to be this way, so he makes up his mind to adjust himself to be humble and careful. This is a repentance, and it is a repentance experienced by a Christian. However, do you believe this repentance is a real experience of life? It is not. Such a repentance has nothing to do with God. A real repentance as an experience of life is one in which God one day meets someone, and he meets God. Then in the presence of God he has the feeling that he is proud and careless. God passes through him, and God brings him to pass through Him. He does not make up his mind to be humble or careful. He simply tells the Lord, “Lord, here I am. I am this kind of person, Lord, but I praise You that today You have met me and I have met You. O Lord, praise You, I have met You here!” After this there is a real change within him. This is the real experience of life in the matter of repentance. The real experience of life is that we experience God, we let God pass through us, and we pass through God. It is something in which we and God are mingled together. It is not that we alone do something. It is God

Himself mingled with us to cause us to have a change. This is a real repentance as the experience of life.

Many Christians today talk about love. There are also two different kinds of love. One is the human love, and the other is the divine love, that is, God Himself experienced by us. One day we may hear a message saying that we have to love one another. After we hear this, we may repent and make up our mind that from now on we will love our brothers. We may pray, asking the Lord to help us, "Lord, I am weak in this matter. Please help me to love my brothers." Then we will try our best to love others. The first day we may truly succeed. Then the second day we may succeed about seventy percent of the time, the third day sixty percent, the following week only twenty percent, and after three weeks we may succeed only one percent of the time. We all know this story. Is this kind of "Christian love" a real experience of life? No, it is not. A real experience of life is the experience of God.

One day, perhaps while we are praying, studying, reading the Word, or even walking on the street, God may come to visit us. God meets us, and we meet God. Something penetrates and permeates us. Something of God passes through us. After this, even if we have not made up our mind to love others, we will unconsciously love others very much. We will have love, and this very love is nothing other than God Himself experienced by us and expressed by us toward others. What is the mutual love among Christians? It is God Himself expressed by us toward one another. This is a real experience of life. It is the experience of God Himself.

THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE BEING THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST

Christ Revealed in Us

Because God is life to us in Christ His Son, the real experience of life is the experience of Christ. God can be life to us only in Christ. It is in Christ that God is life to us, so in order to experience God as life, we must experience Christ as life. By our experiences and our spiritual knowledge, we know that the experience of Christ as life has steps, or stages.

According to the Scriptures, the first step, or stage, of the experience of Christ is that God reveals Christ in us. This is the word of the apostle Paul,

who in Galatians 1:15-16a says, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me.” If we have the real experience of life, we have at least had this very first step of experiencing Christ. Christ has been revealed in us. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. One day the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us in a very subjective way, and He brings Christ into us. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive Him, but in what way do we receive Him? It is by the Holy Spirit revealing Christ into us.

We may classify Christians in three different categories. Some are Christians of Christianity, some are Christians of Christian teachings, and some are Christians of Christ. We should not be quick to say that we are not Christians of Christianity. We should say, “Apparently I am a Christian of Christianity, yet I am something more.” We are also Christians of Christian knowledge and teachings, but we are still something more. We are not only Christians of Christianity and Christians of Christian teachings; we are Christians of Christ Himself.

I was born of my mother a Christian of Christianity, although I was not yet reborn. Later, when I was young, I became improved. I became a Christian of Christian teachings by the teachings of the pastors and preachers in the denominations. I was taught by Christian teachings to be a Christian. Praise the Lord, eventually I became a reborn Christian of Christ! One day the Holy Spirit revealed Christ into me. From that time I had a certain experience of Christ. I knew that Christ is within me as my life. Christ is no longer merely objective but subjective to me. Formerly I was in Christianity, and I accepted all the Christian teachings, but at that time I did not have Christ. It was at a certain time that the Holy Spirit revealed Christ into me.

I saw many so-called members of Christian churches. They repented, and they were baptized, but later on they simply gave up Christianity. Some who were my age became important members of the Communist Party, which is against Christianity, yet I can recall that when we were young, they were apparently zealous Christians. However, they never met Christ. Christ was never revealed to them. To be a Christian in Christianity is one thing, to be a Christian by Christian teachings is another thing, and to be a Christian by Christ being revealed in us is a third thing. This is to be a real Christian, and this is a real experience of Christ. The first step of the experience of Christ as life is that Christ is revealed into our spirit by the Holy Spirit.

Christ Living in Us

The second step, or the second stage, for us to experience Christ as life is Christ living within us. After Christ is revealed in us, He lives within us. Galatians 2:20 says, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." If someone does not know this verse, he has no real part in Christianity.

Christ Being Formed in Us

The third step, or stage, in the experience of Christ is that Christ is formed within us (4:19). The experience of Christ is not the experience of humility, patience, or any aspect of good character. All those things are not the real experiences of life. The real experience of life is Christ Himself experienced by us. It is regrettable that today there are very few Christians who can differentiate between Christ experienced by us and mere patience. Someone can be very patient or humble yet be one hundred percent without Christ. To experience Christ as our patience or humility is absolutely different from simply having patience or humility.

A brother may have been taught to be patient, and he may have made up his mind to be patient. Day and night, morning and evening, he tells himself to be patient, and he may even place a slogan or proverb in his room to remind him to always be patient. This is mere patience and nothing more. When he succeeds in being patient, he may be very proud of himself. He may say, "I am the most patient one. Look at that brother and sister; they are not patient." However, he is self-deceived, and he is also deceiving the other brothers and sisters. Others may say, "Oh, look at that brother! He is so patient. He is very much of the Lord and like the Lord." This is a form of deceit. It is not the real experience of Christ.

The real experience of Christ is that day by day, even today, Christ meets us and we meet Him. We may not know anything about patience, but we do know something of Christ. We may have no intention to be patient. In our dictionary there may not even be such a word as *patience,* but we have it unconsciously. When we go to the Lord, we may not feel or sense that we are patient. Rather, we may confess, "O Lord, I do not love You enough, and I do not keep myself in contact with You moment by moment." However, the brothers and sisters can realize that within us there is a divine, spiritual, and pleasant patience.

The real experience of life is nothing other than the experience of Christ Himself. In this spiritual dictionary there is only one word: *Christ.* It is very easy to have this spiritual vocabulary. There are not many words but only Christ Himself.

Whenever we pray to ask the Lord to help us in certain matters, such as loving others, being humble, and being patient, He never answers such prayers. The more we pray to love others, the more we find that we hate others. The more we pray to be humble, the more we find that we are proud. The Lord never answers this kind of prayer. Real prayer is to say, "Lord, I feel that I have not contacted You much this day. I did not go along with You moment by moment." The real experience of life is the experience of Christ Himself, that is, Christ revealed in us, Christ living in us, and Christ formed in us.

Christ Being Magnified in Us

The fourth stage of the experience of Christ is that Christ is magnified in us (Phil. 1:20). For Christ to be formed within us is something inward, but for Christ to be magnified in us is something expressed outwardly. We need Christ revealed in us, Christ living in us, and Christ to be formed within us, and we also need Christ magnified in us.

For Christ to be magnified in us means that there is always something of, or something as, Christ Himself expressed through us. People can always sense something of Christ expressed and magnified in us. This is the real experience of life. It is not simply to be humble, to be patient, and to love others. To be humble, patient, and loving is common among humans. In the history of China there were certain men who succeeded in their practice to be good. They were so good that compared to them, many Christians may be put to shame. Many Christians put together could not compare with them in their good character. However, that is not Christ. Good character is not Christ Himself. Christ Himself is something else. Do not try to teach Christians simply to have a good character. This is the teaching of fallen Christianity. Rather, do your best to experience Christ as everything in the spirit, and try your best to help others to experience Christ in such a way.

How can we realize what the real experience of Christ is and what the experience of something other than Christ is? When we experience something

other than Christ, we are always aware of it. When we love others merely by ourselves, we know that we are loving. When we are patient and humble merely by ourselves, we know that we are the most patient and humble person. To be aware that we are humble and patient with the brothers simply proves that we are not experiencing Christ. When we experience Christ, we simply sense Christ Himself, and we are not aware of anything else. Other people realize that in us there is something strange, heavenly, and divine, but we ourselves do not sense it. As long as we know we are loving the brothers, that means we are not loving by Christ; we are not experiencing Christ. Try to test this. If we can say, "O brothers, do you realize how humble and patient I have been with you?" this simply proves we are now out of Christ. If we can feel how good we are, this shows how much we are out of Christ.

The real experience of Christ as everything is that we sense only the presence of Christ and nothing else. Other people can realize many good, heavenly, eternal, spiritual, and divine things with us, but we ourselves do not sense them. What we sense is the presence of Christ. We are not aware that we are patient or that we are loving others, but, praise the Lord, we are dealing with and seeing the Lord Christ Himself! This is the real experience of Christ.

We must be careful. Today Christians talk much about power. Many think that when they are powerful, they are full of Christ. It is not so. Many powerful people have very little of Christ. To have power is one thing, but to experience Christ as life is another thing. We must differentiate between the so-called spiritual power and Christ Himself as life. To experience Christ as life is absolutely something in the Spirit of life, but to experience spiritual power is something else. In the Old Testament times there was a very powerful person named Samson. Does this mean that he truly knew something of Christ as life in reality? Far from it! Someone may be powerful in a certain way, but he still may not have experienced Christ as life. This is not something from our imagination. In the past years I have seen many persons who were powerful in preaching the gospel, yet when we look into their lives, we feel sorry for them.

A person may be powerful in a certain way, but that may not be the right way to be powerful. The right way to be powerful is to be powerful not in power only but also in life. It is possible for Christians to be powerful in a wrong way. We need to differentiate these two ways. To be powerful in a

wrong way is one thing, but to experience Christ as our life as well as our power is another thing. The apostle Paul was very powerful, but in his writings we can realize that he was a man full of Christ. He was full not merely of power but of Christ. Perhaps some people will not agree with me; that is their business. We commit this matter to the hand of the Lord. As a mouthpiece of the Lord, I must speak what I have been burdened with. I am purposely raising this matter once again because there is an urgent need for this kind of knowledge.

Today many Christians pay too much attention to the so-called gifts. We must realize that the gifts are one hundred percent different from Christ as life to us. We may have all the gifts, but we may not have experienced Christ. This is illustrated and explained clearly and emphatically in 1 Corinthians. In 1:7 Paul told the Corinthians that they did not lack in any gift, but in 3:1 he says, "I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ." In the first two chapters of this Epistle, Paul indicated that whereas the Corinthians taught concerning the gifts, he preached Christ crucified (1:23), and he did not determine to know anything among them except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified (2:2). Christ and the cross of Christ are the answers to all the problems in the church today. To have all the gifts is one thing, but that is not the experience of life. The experience of life is to experience Christ Himself revealed in us, living in us as life, formed within us, and magnified through us.

I can never forget a story that was passed on to me more than twenty-five years ago. In the fifth or sixth century, one of the Lord's servants was very learned, eloquent, and powerful in ministry. One day after he ministered, a young brother remained after the meeting had been dismissed. The minister came to him and asked, "Young man, why are you still here?" The young man replied, "I feel there is something I must fellowship with you." This minister, an aged, qualified, learned, eloquent, and powerful man, looked at the young man and asked, "What do you have to fellowship with me?" The young man said, "I will speak to you humbly. In your ministry there is knowledge, eloquence, and power but very little Christ." The aged man trembled, prostrated himself on the floor, and cried, "Lord be merciful to me! I am here doing something with so little of Yourself." From that time on there was a revolutionary change in that minister. He changed from being eloquent and powerful to being a person with Christ.

We must realize the difference between gifts and Christ. We may have the best gift, but we may not have the real experience of Christ. It is very possible to be this way. This is why we have often said that as far as the experience of life is concerned, many persons have been damaged by their "gifts." The so-called gifts are one thing, but to experience Christ as life is something else.

If you would ask me what the best record of the experience of Christ as life is in the entire Scriptures, I would say that it is 2 Corinthians. Second Corinthians is the best record of how the apostle experienced Christ as life. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle deals with the gifts, but in the second Epistle the apostle reveals to us the right way to have the real experience of Christ as life. There is a big difference between these two Epistles; we should read them once again to see this.

The Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ

The fifth stage of the experience of Christ is that we arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). This, of course, is a corporate matter. To have the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ is not a matter for individuals. It is a matter of a corporate Body. When we are built together in Christ by experiencing Christ, we will have the stature of the fullness of Christ, and this stature will come into full measure. We will have the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE BEING THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SPIRIT

All the above experiences of Christ are in the Holy Spirit. The real experience of life is the experience of the Spirit, not as the Spirit of gifts nor as the Spirit upon us, but as the Spirit of life, the Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit now is the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of life, living and dwelling within us as the reality of the indwelling Christ, causing us to experience the indwelling Christ. The real experience of life is the experience of the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of life living within us to make the indwelling Christ a reality in our daily life.

For this matter we need to read Romans 8:1-30. Verses 9 through 10 say, "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in

you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness." Verse 9 speaks of the Spirit of Christ, and verse 10 speaks of Christ Himself. This means that when we experience the Spirit of Christ, we experience Christ. Verse 11 begins, "And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you." This proves that this Spirit of Christ, who is the reality of Christ Himself, is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God who raised up Christ from the dead. Here we have the three-one God, the Triune God. To experience the Holy Spirit is simply to experience Christ and to experience God, because God is in Christ and Christ is realized as the Spirit.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIRST EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 3:3-7; 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 6:17

In the previous chapters we have seen what life is and what the real experience of life is. In this chapter we will see the first experience of life, the beginning of the experience of the divine life, which is regeneration.

BEING BORN ANEW TO HAVE THE LIFE OF GOD

John 3:7 says, "Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew." Here the Lord used the word *must;* regeneration is a "must." But why must we be regenerated? The simple reason is this: We need the life of God. We need to be born again simply because we need the divine life, which we do not have by our natural birth. We have a life that is created by God, which we received of our parents, but this created life is not the real life. It is a picture, a type, a shadow, of the real life. Therefore, we need to have another life, a second life, the real life. This is the divine life, which is God Himself in Christ through the Spirit as life to us.

We need the divine life. If we as humans want to be real persons, we must be born twice. If we are born only once, we are not real persons; we are false persons, merely shadows. A shadow is not a real man. When we were born the first time of our parents, we received the shadow life, the figure life. Now we must be born a second time of God in order to have the real life, the eternal, endless, indissoluble, divine life, which is God Himself. Our human life was made as a vessel to contain God. Thus, the human life is not the real life; it is only an empty vessel to contain the real life, which is God Himself. Therefore, we must be born again to be filled with God, to contain God as our life.

Today many in Christianity preach regeneration on a very low plane. When I was young, I was taught much about regeneration on the lowest plane. I was told that we need to be born again simply because after the fall of Adam, man became sinful and corrupted. Many who preach in this way use several verses. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, / And it is

incurable; / Who can know it?" Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Cushite change his skin, / Or the leopard his spots? / Then you also may be able to do good, / Who are accustomed to do evil." Romans 7:18 also says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells." Those who preach in this way say that since we cannot change our sinful nature, we need to be born again.

Without a doubt, it is true that our life cannot be changed, and we all need to receive another life. However, even if we had never become corrupt and sinful, we still would need to be born again because, as vessels, we still need to be filled. Even if we did not fall and were still as we were when we were created by God, we still would need to have the divine life. Consider the picture in Genesis 2. Immediately after Adam was created, God put him in front of the tree of life. At that time Adam was one hundred percent proper, having nothing sinful. However, Adam did not have the divine life, so he still needed to take the fruit of the tree of life. We must be born anew not simply because we are sinful. Even if we were not sinful, we still would need to be born again, born of God, in order to have God's life. No matter how good we are, as long as we are only born of our parents, we do not have the life of God. In order to have the life of God, we must be born of God.

BEING BORN ANEW TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John 3:5 says that unless we are born anew, we cannot enter the kingdom of God. Every kingdom has its own life. To enter the kingdom of the birds, for example, and to understand the things in the kingdom of the birds, we must be born of the birds to have the bird life. Likewise, in order to understand the things of the kingdom of God, we must be born again of God to have the life of God.

BEING BORN OF GOD TO BE SONS OF GOD

As we have seen, regeneration means to be born anew. To be born again is to be born of God. John 1:12-13 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We are first born of man, of our father, to be a son of man, but we must be born anew of God to be a son of God. When we were born of man, we received the life of man. By this we have the authority, the

right, to be a son of man. Now we must be born anew of God to have the life of God as the authority, the right, to be a son of God. Remember well that to be born again simply means to be born of God through the Spirit of God.

BEING BORN OF THE WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT

In 3:3 Jesus said, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" The Lord replied, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (vv. 4-5). As we have seen, to be born again means to be born of God, but verse 5 says that it is to be born of the Spirit of God. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? Some talk about being born of the Spirit, but the meaning of this is unclear to many people. When we receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into us and brings God into us as life. At that very moment we are born of God through the Spirit.

Verse 5 speaks of water first and then the Spirit. What does it mean to be born of water? In Christian books there are different opinions concerning the water spoken of here. Most of these opinions, however, are wrong. When the Lord spoke of water to Nicodemus, He spoke plainly, and Nicodemus understood very well. He did not stop the Lord and say, "Please tell me what You mean by the word *water*." He could understand this because of his background. Nicodemus, as we know, was a Pharisee. Before he came to the Lord, a number of the Pharisees had gone to John the Baptist. John rebuked them and told them that they needed to repent. Then he said, "I baptize you in water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is stronger than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt. 3:11). John spoke of two things: water and the Spirit. Water refers to the central item of the ministry of John the Baptist, which is that men needed to repent to such a degree that they recognized that they were good for nothing but death and burial. If someone came to John the Baptist to say that he was repenting, John might have said, "Do you repent? Do you really mean it? Then let me bury you. You need to be buried and done away with." This is the correct meaning of the water spoken of here.

To be baptized is simply to be buried. When we baptize people, we should always tell them that we are going to bury them. They are good for nothing but burial. To simply confess that we are sinful is not good enough. We must

repent to such a standard that we realize that we are good for nothing but to be terminated and buried. This is the ministry of John the Baptist before the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

What then is the ministry of the Lord Jesus? It is the ministry of life through the Spirit. John baptized people with water, that is, he put people into burial. Then the Lord Jesus regenerates people with the Spirit; that is, He brings the divine life into them. To be born of water and of the Spirit simply means that we realize, on the one hand, that as humans we need to be put into the water to be buried, and on the other hand, that we need the Lord to regenerate us with the Spirit of life. To be born of water is to terminate the old life, to put the old life of Adam into death and into the grave to be buried. Then out of death comes the resurrection life in the Spirit, which the Lord Jesus gives us. Now we can understand that to be born of water and of the Spirit simply means to die, be buried, and be resurrected, raised up, with the divine life.

THE WAY TO BE REGENERATED

The process, the way, to be born of God is first to confess that we are sinful and good for nothing but to be buried. This is not a small matter. Many people before becoming Christians think that they are good, but upon becoming Christians, they repent and say, “Lord, I am sinful.” However, after they have been regenerated, many do not continue to have the sense that they are sinful to such an extent that they are good for nothing but death and burial. We need the sense that we are truly sinful and good for nothing but burial. We must not think that we are good for anything.

Once in China, a learned man with a doctoral degree and a high rank came to our gospel meeting. After the meeting, some young brothers told me, “If this man will be saved, he will be a great help to the church.” I asked them, “Brothers, do you think this man is good for the church? You are one hundred percent wrong. This great man is good for nothing. As Christians, the first thing we must do is be buried. If you commit yourself to the church, the church first must bury you. We do not need that great man; he is good for nothing but to be buried.” To bury people is the right way to build up the church. The more the worldly giants come into the church, the more the church will be divided and damaged. All the worldly people need to be buried. Do not forget that in the church we baptize people to bury them. Do you want

to come to the church? Then you must be terminated and buried. We are good for nothing but death and burial.

If we realize this, we are blessed, because resurrection life comes out of death. If we realize that we are good for nothing but death, we will be willing to come to the Lord to receive Him. Then we will have the Lord as life in us; we will have the second life, the divine life, which is God Himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. What is the real way to be born again? It is simple. It is to realize that we are sinful, that we are good for nothing but death, and that we need the second life, the divine life, the heavenly life, which is God Himself. This very life today is in Christ, and this very Christ today is the Spirit.

When we repent and recognize and realize that we are good for nothing but death and that we need the life of God, we simply come to Him, open ourselves with our heart and spirit, and receive Him as life and everything to us. Then we are born anew of God, we have the life of God, and we become the sons of God. This is the beginning of the experience of life. The beginning of the experience of life is to be born of God to have His life. We cannot have the experiences of life if we do not have life. The first experience is to receive this life, which is God Himself in Christ.

THE RESULT OF REGENERATION

The issue of regeneration is that we have life. Furthermore, since we have the life of God, we become the sons of God. To be the sons of God is not a small matter. The Lord Jesus is the Son of God who became the Son of Man by incarnation, and we are the sons of man who became the sons of God by regeneration. This is a very basic matter. We need to realize that regeneration makes us the sons of God, the children of God.

Moreover, according to the Scriptures, since we have been regenerated, we have become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a difference between the old creation and the new creation. The old creation had nothing of God in it, but God Himself is in the new creation. We have God within us, so we have become the new creation.

Since we have been regenerated, we also have become one with God in the Spirit. First Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.”

What are we today? Are we Americans? Are we Chinese? Because we have been regenerated, that is, born of God, we should have the boldness and boast to say, "We are the sons of God, we are the new creation, and we are joined to God as one spirit!" This is not a small matter.

Do you have the assurance that you have been born of God? A little over two centuries ago, a certain young slave girl in America was saved. She was so happy and full of joy. A gentleman came to be a guest at her master's home. Seeing that she was so happy, he asked her, "What are you happy for?" She said, "Oh, I have been saved by Jesus!" That gentleman joked with her, saying, "Don't laugh too much. If you laugh too much, you may be lost. The hands of Jesus are so big, and you are so little. You might slip between His fingers and drown." The little girl told this gentleman, "If His fingers were so big, and I am so small, it would be possible to be lost. But now I have become one of His fingers." She was right. We have become one with Jesus. We are now one with God because we have been regenerated, born of Him.

BEING REGENERATED IN OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

In what part of us did the Holy Spirit regenerate us? It is in our human spirit. John 3:6 says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The first Spirit is the Spirit of God, and the second spirit is our regenerated human spirit. Our being born of God is accomplished through the Holy Spirit in our spirit. The Holy Spirit comes into our spirit to enliven our spirit with the Lord Jesus as life. Therefore, by regeneration our spirit has been enlivened, regenerated, and recreated, remade. When God first created our spirit, there was nothing of God in it, but the second time, when God comes to regenerate our spirit, God does so with Himself. God comes into our spirit to remake us, to recreate us, to regenerate us, in our spirit. This is a wonderful matter. If we are clear about this, we will know how to go on in life. Our spirit has been regenerated with God, with Christ as life. Therefore, we have a new spirit, an enlivened spirit, a spirit with Christ as life. In the following chapters we will further consider what we have received through regeneration.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WAY TO EXPERIENCE LIFE

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 36:26; Phil. 2:13; Gal. 2:20a; 1 John 2:27; Rom. 8:2, 6

We have seen what life is, what the real experience of life is, and that the first experience of life is regeneration. In this chapter we will see how to experience life. By the first experience of life we receive the very divine life. Now after we have received life, we need to constantly experience life. The proper way to experience, enjoy, and apply the life we have received is very practical, yet many dear brothers and sisters do not exactly and definitely know the way. In order to know how to experience the life that we have received, we must realize that at the time we received the Lord as our Savior and were saved and regenerated, something happened to us related to ourselves and related to God. Here we will point out a few very important and vital matters, although in actuality there are more than these.

RECEIVING A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

First, at the time the Lord regenerated us He gave us a new heart. Our heart has been changed. Ezekiel 36:26 says, "I will also give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Our old heart is hard, like a piece of stone. Here it is called the heart of stone. However, at the time the Lord regenerated us, He renewed our heart and changed our heart from a stony heart to a heart of flesh. A heart of flesh is a softened heart, a soft and tender heart. It is also a conscious heart. Since our original heart was old, it was hard for it to have a proper consciousness.

At the same time, the Lord also gave us a new spirit. Our old spirit was a dead spirit. Before we were regenerated, we were dead in our spirit, but at the time the Lord came in to regenerate us, He renewed and enlivened our spirit. Our spirit became a living and new spirit. A new heart is a softened heart, and a new spirit is an enlivened, living spirit.

Here we must point out the difference between the functions of the heart and the functions of the spirit. Many Christians consider that the heart is the spirit, and the spirit is the heart; they take it for granted that these are synonyms. However, these are two items with different functions.

The heart is an organ for loving and for desiring. We love and desire to do things by the heart. For example, I love to read the Scriptures, and I may love a certain drink. This is the function of the heart. However, we cannot receive something with our heart. I may love to drink water, but I cannot drink water with my heart, and I cannot store water with my heart. I need another organ—the mouth—in order to drink the water, and yet another organ—the stomach—in order to store the water. Similarly, we may love a certain color with our heart. We can shut our eyes and say, "I love this color," but we cannot contact and realize the color with our heart. We need another organ, the seeing organ, the eyes, to substantiate what the heart loves. It is the same with music. The heart is an organ that can love music, but we need another organ, the hearing organ, the ears, to hear music.

Do you love the Bible? To be sure, you do, but with what part of you do you love it? You love the Bible with your heart. However, if I hand a Bible to you, you cannot receive it with your heart. You love it with your heart, but you must take it with your hand. In the same principle, we love the Lord with our heart, but we receive the Lord with our spirit. Why, after giving us a new heart, did the Lord also need to give us a new spirit? It is simply because the heart is a loving organ and not a receiving organ. It is the spirit that can contact God. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." Strictly speaking, we cannot contact God by our heart. We must contact God by our spirit. We love the Lord, but we must realize that the Lord is Spirit, so we need our human spirit as a receiving and contacting organ to contact the Lord. At the time the Lord came in to regenerate us, He gave us a new heart and a new spirit. A new heart is for us to love Him, and a new spirit is for us to contact Him.

When we were unsaved, we did not have a heart to love the Lord. We may even have hated the Lord. Praise the Lord, at the time He regenerated us, He gave us a new heart to love Him, and now we do love Him! After we are saved, we always have a longing heart to love the Lord. About fifteen years ago, when I was in Brother Watchman Nee's city preaching the gospel, hundreds of people were saved. The next week the church had a baptism, and many people

came. The responsible brothers were busy taking care of affairs, so I was asked to help them. I and another brother contacted some new ones before baptizing them. When a certain young lady came to us, I asked her, “Do you love the Lord?” She wept and said, “Oh, I do love the Lord.” I asked, “Why do you love the Lord?” She answered, “I do not know. I just love Him.” I said to the other brother, “This is good enough. I am one hundred percent sure that this is one of our sisters.”

How can we know that we are saved? We simply love Jesus. Even while we are sinning, we still love Him. Perhaps some may not agree with this. They may ask, “How can someone who is sinning still love the Lord?” Yes, on the one hand, a person is weak while sinning. But on the other hand, there is something deep in his heart longing to love the Lord. It is the longing heart that causes believers to repent after they have sinned. They may feel shameful to come back to contact the Lord, but they know that the Lord is within them. Our longing heart to love the Lord is a strong proof and confirmation that we have been saved.

In addition, before we were saved, we did not have a living spirit, so we could not contact the Lord, but at the same time that we received a longing heart to love the Lord, we also received a living spirit. The Lord is the Spirit, and we have a living spirit, and with this spirit we can contact the Lord as the Spirit. Receiving a new heart and a new spirit are the two main matters related to ourselves that took place in regeneration. Our heart has been renewed, and our spirit has been renewed. So now we are able, qualified, and equipped to love the Lord and to contact Him.

RECEIVING THE TRIUNE GOD

In addition, something related to the Lord Himself also took place in us. God the Father came into us, God the Son came into us, and God the Spirit also came into us. Now the Triune God is abiding in us. God makes an abode with us. This is not a small, temporary abode; rather, it is His dwelling place. Philippians 2:13 proves that God the Father is in us. It says, “It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.” Moreover, Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” Then 1 John 2:27 says, “As for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you.” This shows

that God the Spirit as the anointing abides within us. The Father works in us, the Son lives in us, and the Spirit is always anointing in us.

The Holy Spirit of God is constantly anointing us. An anointing is like a cream that we apply to our face to soothe it with a pleasant feeling. Moreover, the Son is alive and living inside of us. Likewise, the Father is the God of His plan, the God of His will, so He operates within us the willing and the working. In this way, the Triune God makes an abode with us, that is, He dwells within us. We have become the resting place of the Triune God. Do we realize that such a wonderful thing has happened to us? The three persons of the Triune God are now within us. If we truly realized that the Triune God is abiding in us, we would be ecstatic.

The three persons of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are living and dwelling within us. This is not a small matter. If today the president of the United States came to our house, we would be ecstatic. But do we realize that the Triune God is now practically dwelling within us? You may say that you realize this, but how many times have you praised and thanked the Lord about this until you were beside yourself? Have you ever praised the Lord in this way? The very Triune God dwells within us! This is something wonderful and beyond our imagination.

We need to realize the two aspects spoken of above. Something related to ourselves happened to us, that is, a new heart and a new spirit were given to us. In addition, something related to God happened to us, that is, the three persons of the Triune God—the Father, the Son and the Spirit—are now dwelling within us. If we realize these two aspects, these wonderful facts, we will have the standing to know how to experience life. We have a new heart, a new spirit, and the Triune God living, abiding, and dwelling within us.

The very life that we have received is the Triune God. We often say that this life is the life of the Lord or the life of God. However, only once does the New Testament speak of the life of God (Eph. 4:18). It also does not speak of the life of Christ; rather, it speaks of Christ as life. There is a difference between the life of Christ and Christ as life. A person has the life of his mother and father, but he may not have his mother and father themselves. However, we cannot have the life of Christ without having Christ Himself. This is impossible. The life we have of Christ is Christ Himself; the life that we have received of God is God Himself. If we do not have God and Christ, we do not

have life. We must realize that the life we have received and enjoy is the very Triune God Himself—God in Christ through the Spirit—who is living, dwelling, and working within us.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Now we may see the way to experience the life that we have received. Romans 8:2 says, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." This verse speaks of four matters: a law, the Spirit, life, and Christ Jesus. The law is of the Spirit, the Spirit is of life, and this law has freed us in Christ Jesus. Christ is the Spirit, the Spirit is life, and with this life there is a law.

With any kind of life there is a certain law. A kind of law always accompanies a life. With the physical life there are many laws. After we eat a meal, there is a law within our body, especially in our stomach, to carry out the digestion. This is an automatic, unconscious action. If something operates unconsciously in us, it is a law. When we have trouble with our stomach, we are conscious of our digestion, but if we are normal and healthy, there is no consciousness of digestion. Rather, there is an automatic working in our stomach, which is a law. Gravity is also a law. If someone throws a book into the air, there is no need to beg it to come down. It always comes down according to a law.

There is always a law within us. We have Christ in us, Christ is the Spirit, and this Spirit is the Spirit of life, even life itself. Within this very life there is a law. In order to know how to experience life, we must know that this very life within us has a law, which is called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. With such a law it is so easy to experience life.

THE SENSE OF LIFE

Verse 6 goes on to say, "The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." This verse speaks of death on the one hand and of life and peace on the other. How can we know whether or not we are in the spirit? It is simply by checking whether or not we have life and peace. If we have life and peace, we are in the spirit. If we do not have life and peace, we have death, which proves that we are not in the spirit.

It is easy to understand the way to sense, or realize, that we have peace. The peace mentioned here is not an outward peace in our circumstances but an inward peace, a peace in our spirit, in our heart, and in our whole being. We know that we have peace in our whole being because we can sense it and have a consciousness of it. There are at least four items related to the inward peace. The first is joy, or happiness. To not have joy means that we do not have peace; if we have peace, to be sure, we will have joy. Joy always goes along with peace. Peace is the "elder sister," and joy is the "second sister." In addition, we have rest. Peace is a matter of joy in rest. Comfort and ease are also related to peace. When we have peace, we have joy, rest, comfort, and ease. All these can be sensed by us as the consciousness of life. Do we have joy, rest, comfort, and ease? If we say yes to the first item, we must say yes to all the other items. We cannot say that we have joy and not the other items. We know that we have these because we sense them as the consciousness of life. This proves that we are in the spirit.

As believers we may sin, but while sinning, we still have a heart to love the Lord. At that very moment we sense something contrary to peace. We do not have peace, joy, rest, comfort, and ease. Rather, we have unrest and something within disturbing us. We know we are in spirit, in life, by the deep inner sense, the inner consciousness. Likewise, we know we are not in life when we sense that we do not have peace but conflict, something contradicting and disturbing. By the word *peace* in this verse, the apostle speaks of the inner sense, the inner feeling. If our mind is set on the spirit, we have peace. This is something of a consciousness, a sense.

Life follows the same principle as peace. When we have Christ, we have life, and when we are in life and enjoying life, we have a certain sense. First, we sense strength. The weakest person is a dead person. Physically speaking, a person may be so weak that he cannot even walk or stand, and when he is weak to the extent that he cannot even breathe, he dies. Similarly, when we are not in life, we are weak to the degree that we cannot even pray. If we do not have life, we do not have strength. Some come to the meetings in a weak condition, because the whole afternoon they are in death. If we are strong throughout the entire week, we will come to the meetings in a strong way. Something will energize us to jump up like popcorn and speak. We will not be able to sit silently. This is the first item related to life.

The second item related to life is the life supply. After eating a good meal, we have strength, energy, and satisfaction. In the same way, if we have life and are in life, we are satisfied and full of the life supply. We are not hungry or thirsty. To feel that we are hungry and thirsty in the spirit simply means that we do not have a sufficient life supply.

The third item related to life is that we have light; we are not in darkness. The fourth item is liberty. When we are in life, we have strength, satisfaction, light, and liberty. We should check with our experience. If we are in life, in the spirit, we have peace, which includes joy, rest, comfort, and ease. We also have life, which includes energy, satisfaction, light, and liberty. However, if we do not walk in the spirit, we have death. Death includes all the items contrary to the above eight matters related to life and peace. When we are weak and in darkness, this means we are in death. We can sense whether or not we have life and peace. All these items are a consciousness to us, and we can sense them.

Therefore, the way to experience Christ as life is simple. Romans 8:2 and 6 give us the way. Christ as the Spirit within us has a law. When we are in life, this automatic law always regulates us to sense peace, joy, happiness, comfort, and ease. When we are not in the Spirit of life, this law regulates us to feel that we are in darkness, that we are weak and do not have peace and rest. We must simply go along with the inner feeling, which comes automatically with the law of the Spirit of life. If we are about to say something that is not in the spirit, not in life, right away the automatic law spontaneously regulates us within. This is something within Christians that is wonderful yet mysterious.

How can we know that we are saved? We have been regenerated with a new heart and a new spirit, and the Triune God as life dwells within us. Our longing heart that loves the Lord is a strong proof that we are saved. In addition, with the Triune God dwelling within us, there is a natural, automatic, regulating law, living and spontaneously regulating us. If we have no law regulating us, it is doubtful that we are saved. When I was young, before I was regenerated, the more I quarreled with others, the more I felt self-glorified. Now after having been regenerated, there is something different within me. The more I quarrel, the more I am sorry. How do we know that we are saved persons? It is simply by the inner, living, automatic, spontaneous regulation. Even when we make a small mistake, something within regulates us. It is a law that is delicate and tender, yet deep and strong. Do not despise this law.

We have a spontaneous regulating law within us. This is the simple way to experience life. Sometimes, simply because we do not have this knowledge, we may go to the Lord and pray that He will help and strengthen us. However, if we neglect this law, no matter how much we pray, we will still not be strong. Within us is an automatic law working spontaneously, and this law is unlimitedly powerful.

Praise the Lord, the Triune God as life is within us, and with this life is the automatic law which spontaneously regulates us! If we are in life, this law regulates us to sense life and peace, and when we are not in this life, this law regulates us to sense that we are in death, weakness, and darkness without joy, comfort, satisfaction, and all the items on the positive side. This is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. We should simply receive it and apply it day by day. Then we will realize how powerful the law of the divine life is.

CHAPTER FIVE

THREE LIVES AND FOUR LAWS

Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:10; John 8:44; 1:12-13; Rom. 8:16; 7:18-25; 8:2, 6

In the past four chapters we have dealt with some basic matters concerning the divine life, the inner life. In this chapter we will consider two more basic items that we should know in order to help us to experience life.

THREE LIVES

How many different lives are related to the regenerated children of God? We must know this in order to learn how to have the real experience of the divine life. It is easy to realize that there are at least two different lives related to us. We are created human beings, so undoubtedly we have the human life. Following this, we are regenerated. Regeneration is something more than re-creation, because the word *generation* indicates life. Creation may not include something of life, but with generation there must be life. God may create some rocks, for example, but this is not a regeneration. Regeneration is a re-creation, but re-creation by itself may not involve regeneration.

That God regenerates us means that we have been reborn, born anew. By being born anew we have another life, the divine life. By creation we have the human life, and by re-creation, that is, regeneration, we have the divine life. The human life is the first life, and the divine life is another life. Some of the better writers use the phrases *created life* and *uncreated life*. The first life, the human life, is a created life, and the other life, the divine life, which is God Himself, is the uncreated life. Therefore, with us, the reborn people, there are at least two different kinds of lives. We have the human life as the created life, and we have the divine life as the uncreated life.

Although it may sound strange, we Christians as reborn people also have a third kind of life because three basic things have happened to us. First, we were created. We are created persons, persons who took part in God's creation. After creation and before regeneration, however, something else happened to the human race, to our human being. This was the fall of the

human race. Therefore, before we were regenerated, we were not only the created people but also the fallen people. Praise the Lord, after the fall a third thing happened to us, which is regeneration in God's redemption! These three main things—creation, the fall, and regeneration—have happened to us as Christians. We were created persons and fallen persons, and we are also regenerated persons.

A certain life is related to each thing that happened to us. In creation we received the human life. Then in the fall the devilish life, the satanic life, the evil life of Satan, the life with the satanic nature, was injected into the human race. Finally, in regeneration we received the divine life, the life of God, which is God Himself. By creation we have the human life, by the fall we have the satanic life, and by regeneration we have the divine life.

We are also three kinds of children. First, we are the human children, the children of our human parents in Adam. The Scriptures tell us also that we are the children of the devil. First John 3:10 says that the children of the devil are manifest, and in John 8:44 the Lord said, "You are of your father the devil." The devil, Satan, is a father of the fallen human race, and all fallen human beings are his children. Praise the Lord that we are also a third kind of children! We are the children of God. A number of passages in the New Testament tell us that we are the children of God, such as Romans 8:16, which says, "The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God." John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name."

We have three lives—the human life, the devilish life, and the divine life—because three things happened to us—creation, the fall, and regeneration. Therefore, we are three kinds of children, and we have three fathers: a human father, a devilish father, and a divine Father. We are the children of the human race because we have the human life, the children of the devil because we have the life of the devil, and the children of God because we have the life of God.

FOUR LAWS

The Three Laws of the Three Lives

As we have seen, with any kind of life there is always a law. Therefore, with these three lives there are three laws. With the human life there is the law of the human life, with the devilish life there is the evil law of the devilish life, and with the divine life there is the divine law of the divine life. A law is a natural force. As we have illustrated before, after we eat a meal, the law of digestion operates, and when we throw something into the air, the law of gravity makes it fall again. A prominent, significant law of the cat life is to catch mice, and the law of the dog life makes dogs bark. We never hear a cat barking, but there is no need to teach a dog to bark because barking is something of the dog life. If we bring new hatchlings to a pool of water, some of them will jump into the water, but others will be frightened by the water. Those who jump into the water are little ducks, and those who are frightened away from the water are little chickens. There is no need to teach the ducks to jump into the water and the chickens to run away. They will jump in or they will run away because there is a law with their life. Where there is a life, there is always a law of that life.

In order to experience the divine life, we must know that we have three lives and three laws within us. We are not simple persons. We are very complicated persons because we were created, we became fallen, and we were regenerated. This is the reason why day by day we experience different things contradicting one another. Day by day there is always a conflict within us because we have three different lives with three different laws.

Sometimes when the gospel is preached, we hear that if we receive Jesus Christ, we will have full peace. On the one hand, we do have peace, but on the other hand, after we receive Christ, we have more contradiction within. Before we receive Christ as our Savior, we may not have a feeling of contradiction or conflict, but after we receive the Lord, we often have a contradicting and fighting within. This is because we have an additional life and an additional law. The more lives with more laws we have, the more complications we have. Every Christian is not simple; he is a complicated person. We can never be simple, because we were created, fallen, and regenerated. We have three lives with three laws.

The Law of God

Besides these three laws within us, there is another law, the law of God, which tells us to do certain things and not to do certain things. Therefore,

Christians have three lives and four laws. By being three kinds of children—human children, devilish children, and divine children—we have three lives, and with each life there is a law. In addition to the three subjective laws of the three lives within us, we also have the objective law of God outside of us and above us, telling us what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, what we ought to do and what we ought not to do.

The Law of Sin in Our Members

With this point of view, we may read Romans 7 and 8. Verse 18 in chapter 7 says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but to work out the good is not." The phrase *in my flesh* explains and defines the phrase *in me*. As humans, we have three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. Due to the fall, the body became the flesh. The body was pure when created by God, but this body was poisoned by the nature of the devil, so it changed in nature, becoming the flesh.

We must be careful when reading this verse. It says, "In my flesh, nothing good dwells." This does not mean that there is nothing good in our whole being. In other parts there may be something good. At least in the will there is something good because we have the intention to do good. To will to do good is present, but to perform it through the flesh is impossible. As far as the flesh is concerned, therefore, nothing good dwells in us.

Verse 19 begins, "For I do not do the good which I will." We will to do good; we at least have a desire to do good. Even before we were regenerated, many times we had a desire to do good. When I was young and before I was regenerated, many times I had the desire to be obedient to my mother and to love her, and I willed to do so, but whether or not I was able to perform it was another matter.

Verse 19 continues, "But the evil which I do not will, this I practice." By this word we can realize that in us human beings there are two tendencies. One is to will to do good and not evil, and the other is that we cannot perform it. We will to do good, but we cannot do it; we will not to do evil, but we do it. To will is present with us, but to perform it is another matter.

Verse 20 says, "But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me." In the New Testament there are two verses

that say “it is no longer I” but someone else. Galatians 2:20 says, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” However, we should not think that just because it is no longer I, it is Christ. Before we were regenerated, there was someone else within us, and now even after we have been regenerated, this one is still within us.

In principle, the word *sin* in Romans 7:20 can be capitalized as a proper noun. For sin to dwell in us is different from simply being in us. A table may be in a room, but we cannot say that the table dwells in the room. Only something living can dwell. This very “Sin” is something living, because it dwells within us, and it also reigns, rules, dominates, and exercises its power and authority. It is no longer we that work, but it is a living entity that dwells in us. We can at least say that this living entity is something of Satan, the enemy. It is not something created in us by God. God did not create man with such an item in him. This is something of Satan, something out of Satan, which was injected into the human life. Within the fallen human race there is something living, dwelling, ruling, dominating, and exercising its authority to subdue people.

By these verses we can realize that with humans as a fallen race there are two entities. One is the human himself, and the other is something else called sin, which dwells in people to force them to do something that they do not will to do. Today people like to talk much about independence, but not one human on this earth is independent. Everyone is dependent, either on God or on the evil one. Why do we will to do good, but we cannot do it, and will to not do evil, yet do it? It is because it is no more we. If we were only created persons, we would simply be ourselves. We would be independent and free. However, we have become fallen and complicated, so we are not free, and we can never be independent. We are dependent and complicated. We will to do good, but someone within us does not agree. We will not to do evil, but someone within us does it. Moreover, this someone is much stronger than we are.

This may be compared to marriage. Many times I have told the young brothers and sisters that marriage apparently is a matter of happiness, but strictly speaking and in fact, it is a bondage. To be married simply means that we are willing to be bound and to give up our liberty. When a certain young brother was about to be married, he was so happy. He came to me and said, “Thank the Lord, I am going to marry! After a few days, I will no longer be single.” I said, “Yes, brother, you will no longer be single, but you also will no

longer be free. You will be bound by the dear one you are going to marry." Apparently he agreed with me, but he still thought that my word was too extreme. A short time after the marriage, however, he came back to me with tears, saying, "Brother Lee, you were right. From the time I was a baby, I have always liked to have the windows open at night, but my dear wife strictly insists on closing the windows. I cannot sleep with the windows closed, and she cannot sleep with the windows open. Furthermore, she is stronger than I am, so I am subdued." When we marry, we become complicated. In the same way, when we became fallen, an illegal marriage took place. Now we can never be independent. We may will to "open the window," but sin does not do it. There is something within us other than us that is living, dwelling, ruling, and truly awful.

Verse 21 says, "I find then the law with me who wills to do the good, that is, the evil is present with me." There is a law, a natural force, with us. Whenever we try to do good, there is always a natural force, forcing us to act to the contrary. When I was young and my mother was ill, I said to myself beside her bed, "I have to love my dear mother," but after only two hours I lost my temper with her. I could will, but I could not perform. To will was present with me, but to perform was another matter. I found the law that whenever I tried to do good, evil was present with me.

The Law of Good in Our Mind

Verses 22 and 23 say, "I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members." These verses speak of a law that is the evil present with me and a law in the mind. We have a spirit within, a body without, and a soul as a median. The members in verse 23 are the parts of the flesh, and the mind is the main part of the soul. In the members of the body there is the evil law, the law of sin, and in the mind there is the law of good, the good yet weak law. These two laws war against each other, but the law of evil in the members is stronger than the law of good in the mind.

Whenever we have a mind to do good, we are always defeated by the lust in our members. When I was young, many people in China smoked opium. The more people smoked opium, the more they were clear in their mind that they should not do it. I knew a person who would sell everything he had to

maintain his opium smoking. He realized that his smoking was damaging him and his family; therefore, many times he made up his mind not to smoke any more. He was clear in his mind not to smoke opium, and he hated it, but when the temptation came, he could not withstand it. This was because of something in his body, the lust in his members. He would say to himself with tears, "I should not do this," but even while he was saying this, he was preparing to smoke. On the one hand, he knew he should not do it, but on the other hand, he simply did it. He could not stand against the lust in the members of his body.

In their minds, people are clear that they should not do evil, and they even make up their mind not to do it, but something in the members of their body, as a lust, is much stronger than what is in their mind. Eventually they are defeated. They are brought into captivity to do the sinful things. This is the case today with many young people. They are clear in their mind, and in their mind they make a decision not to do evil, sinful things, which corrupt them physically, psychologically, and morally. However, when the time comes, something in the members of their body as a lust forces them, captures them, subdues them, and brings them into captivity to do what they do not will to do.

By this we can realize that in the human mind there is a law of good, which always tries to do good, and in the members of the body there is a law of evil as a lust, which always fights against the law of good in the mind. This law of evil is stronger than the law of good, so it always defeats the law of good and brings the people who are trying to do good into captivity to do something evil.

The Body of Death

Verse 24 says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" As far as doing good is concerned, our body is a body of death. In 6:6 the body is called "the body of sin," and in chapter 7 it is called "the body of this death." As far as committing sin is concerned, this body is very active, powerful, and positive. Therefore, it is a body of sin. But as far as doing good is concerned, this body is one hundred percent powerless and impotent; just like a dead body, it can do nothing.

The body is dead because it was poisoned by the evil nature of Satan. At the time of the fall, Satan injected his poisonous, evil nature into the human life through the body as the instrument. God did not create a body with something of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in it. However, at the time man took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into his body, the body was changed in nature. Therefore, in the members of this body there is the poison of the enemy. This body was poisoned to be powerless and impotent in doing good, in keeping God's commands. Therefore, it is a body of death. However, Romans 7:25 says, "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Through the Lord Jesus Christ we are delivered from this body of death.

The Law of the Spirit of Life

Romans 8:2 says, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death." Here we have another law, the law of the Spirit of life. The Holy Spirit is dwelling in our spirit, so the law of the Spirit of life is in our spirit. As we have seen, we have three parts in our being: the spirit, the soul, and the body. Man was created as a soul; in the Scriptures human beings are called souls. In our soul we have the human life. Then we became fallen persons, and in our fallen body there is the devilish life, the life of the devil. Finally, we were regenerated, and in our regenerated spirit there is the divine life.

With each of our three parts there is a life, and with each life there is a law. With the human life in our soul, there is the law of good in our mind, a law that always tries to do good. In our mind we always have the thought, the desire, the will, to do good. This is the law of the created life, the human life. We also have an evil law, the law of evil in the members of our fallen body. That is the evil law of the devilish life, and this evil law is much stronger than the law of good in our mind. Whenever we make up our mind to do good, according to the law of good, the law of evil in the members of our body rises up to fight against the law of good. Praise the Lord, now we have been regenerated! We have the third life, the life that is God Himself, the divine, eternal, spiritual, uncreated, heavenly life. With this life there is an all-potent law, which is the law of the Spirit of life. This law is the strongest, most powerful law. The law of evil is stronger than the law of good, but the law of the Spirit is the strongest. It is this law that sets us free from the law of evil. We need to learn to live not by the first life nor by the second life but by the

third life, that is, not by the soulish life nor by the fleshly life but by the spiritual life. In order to live by the spiritual life, we must know the law of the Spirit of life.

We have three natural forces as three different laws. Therefore, it is easy to be three kinds of persons. A brother may spend time with the Lord early in the morning, worshipping, praising, thanking, and fellowshipping with the Lord. He is so much with the Lord that when he comes out of that fellowship, his wife and children realize that he is a man like God. He is a God-man with an appearance that radiates and shines the glory of God. In the afternoon, however, something happens to him, perhaps related to his wife and children, and he becomes angry and loses his temper. At that time someone can hand him a mirror and say, “Look at yourself. You look like a devil.” Many times the best way to stop a person from losing his temper is to let him see himself in a mirror. Then he will realize that he has an appearance that reflects the devil. In the evening, however, he may realize how wrong he was and what kind of mistake he made, so at the dinner table he may say, “Dear wife and children, forgive me. I was wrong.” At that time he expresses the human life. In the morning he was a God-man, in the afternoon he was a devil-man, and in the evening he is a human. This is because in the morning he was in the spirit with God, in the afternoon he was in the lust of the members of his flesh in the devil, and in the evening he is very human, using his conscience. This illustrates that we can be three different kinds of persons.

Sometimes we say that someone is two-faced. However, it is possible for a Christian to have three faces in one day: a God-face, a devil-face, and a man-face. There is no need for you to tell me your history. In principle, I already know what kind of life you have with your wife and children. Because you have three lives with three laws, sometimes you are a God-man, sometimes you are a devil-man, and sometimes you are a human.

Since we were born of the human life, we are very accustomed to the law of good in the human life. We must realize, however, that whenever we accept the law of good, the other law, the law of evil, will fight with us, and we will be defeated. We will be brought into captivity. What then must we do? Simply forget about the law of good. Praise the Lord, we have the third life with the third law, that is, the law of the Spirit of life, the law of God Himself in Christ through the Spirit! To forget about the law of good simply means never to try to do good. Whenever we try to do good, there is another, stronger law to

defeat us. Some may ask, “Should I try to do evil?” No, do not do that either. Simply forget about both good and evil. Good and evil both belong to the tree of knowledge. They are not something of life. They are both contradictory to life. Evil is not life, and good is not life either. Forget about all these things. This is what Romans 7 teaches.

The person in Romans 7 always tries to do good, to keep the law, and to please God. However, the apostle reveals that when he goes to do good, there is another law, which is stronger than the law of good. Whenever we try to do good, this law of evil comes to defeat the law of good. The way to be liberated, set free, and delivered is to forget about these things. Forget about trying to be bad, and forget about trying to do good. Forget about trying to hate people, and forget about trying to love people. We have the third law, which is the law of the Lord Himself. This means that we have the Lord Himself. We must look to Him, worship Him, and keep contacting Him all the time. He will fill us, deliver us, and set us free from the other laws. His is the strongest law, which is able to subdue all the laws. This law is transcendent.

This is why Romans 8 teaches us to walk in the spirit. In chapter 8 we are not told to do good things but to walk in the spirit. Verse 6 says, “The mind set on the spirit is life and peace.” This is not a mind of good but a mind set on the spirit. We need to forget about good. It is very difficult to help Christians to forget about good. Many may hear this message and nod their heads, but when they contact the Lord the following morning, they may say, “Lord, help me to love others. O Lord, I am too proud. Forgive me for my pride. I wish to be humble, but I am weak. Lord, help me to be humble.” I can plainly say that the Lord never answers this kind of prayer. The more we ask the Lord to help us to be humble, the more we will be proud. Furthermore, the more we pray that we will not lose our temper, the more we will lose our temper. We must forget about trying to do good. Rather, we should realize that we are a people reborn with the Lord Himself. We have the Lord as life, and with this Lord, with this divine life, there is the all-potent law, the most powerful, strongest law. We must simply contact this Lord, contact this life, and contact this law. Then everything will be wonderful. This is a matter of the tree of life, not of the tree of the knowledge of evil nor of the tree of the knowledge of good. It is something of life, which is the Lord Himself as life to us. This is very basic.

In order to experience the divine life, we must realize that within our spirit there is a third life with a third law. We must forget about the first two laws

with the first two lives. We are not obliged to either of the first two lives, and we have nothing to do with the first two laws. We forget them. We are not tempted anymore to try to do good. Rather, we realize that now the Lord is in us. What we must do is contact Him, fellowship with Him, and keep the fellowship with Him in the Holy Spirit. What will result is His business. There will be a divine, wonderful issue of this kind of fellowship. This kind of fellowship is simply the abiding of John 15:4: “Abide in Me and I in you.” This fellowship is the abiding in the Lord, and this abiding brings forth all the riches of the divine life as an overflow from within us. Many heavenly, divine things will come out of this abiding life. This is the way for us to experience the divine life.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LAW OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:2; Heb. 8:10; 10:16; Jer. 31:33

In this chapter we need to be further enlightened concerning life and the details concerning the law of life. In the previous chapter we saw that there are four different laws related to us. Three laws are within us, and one law is outside of us. We have the law of good, the law of sin, and the law of life, that is, the law of the Spirit of life. Romans 7 speaks of the law of good and the law of sin in us, and chapter 8 speaks of the law of the Spirit of life within us. The law of good is in the mind, which is a part of the soul. The law of sin in lusts is in the members of our body; therefore, we call the lusts the fleshly lusts. The law of the Spirit of life is in our spirit.

In our being we have three parts, three lives, and three laws. In addition, three things happened to us. Our three parts are the spirit, the soul, and the body. Within each part there is a life. In the soul we have the human life, in the body we have the devilish life, and in the spirit we have the divine life, the life of God. Creation brought the human life to us, the fall brought a pitiful life to us, and regeneration brought the divine life to us. With each life there is a law. With the human life there is the law of the human life, with the devilish life there is the law of the devilish life, and with the divine life there is the law of the divine life. Simply stated, the law of the human life is the law of good, the law of the devilish life is the law of evil, and the law of the divine life is the law of the Spirit of life. We need to live by the third life, the divine life, according to the third law, the law of the Spirit of life.

Besides these three laws within us, there is another law outside of us and above us, which is the Mosaic law, the law of God, the law in letters. Whenever we hear the law of God outside of us, the law of good in our human life within our soul corresponds to it and answers to what the law of God demands. The law of God demands that we honor our parents, and the law of good in our human life right away corresponds with the law of God. We have the intention, the desire, to obey and honor our parents. However, the trouble is that whenever the law of good in our human life answers the law of God, there is another law, a stronger law, the law of evil, which comes in to

intervene, to frustrate and fight against the law of good. Then we are defeated by the law of evil, and the law of God, due to the weakness of the human life, can accomplish nothing.

Praise the Lord, Christ Himself comes into us to be the third life! With this third life there is the strongest law. There is no longer a need for us to exercise or apply the law of good. We need to give that up and forget about it. We must realize that we now have a third law, the strongest law, the law of the divine life, and we must live by the divine life according to the law of this life. All these laws are dealt with in Romans 7 and 8.

BEING DEAD TO THE LAW AND LIVING TO CHRIST IN RESURRECTION

To understand a matter in theory is one thing, but to know how to apply it and practice it is another thing. Many who have the teaching of these things do not know how to apply it. The law of Moses says that we must obey and honor our parents, love our neighbors, be humble and patient, and do as much good as we can. When we hear these laws, we may say Amen, as the people of Israel did to Moses in Exodus 19:8. However, to say Amen to the law is not the proper experience of a person who has been regenerated. To say "Amen, although I am not able to do it" is not the Christian way of speaking. To speak in this way is to stay on Mount Sinai and not come to Mount Zion. Rather, we should say, "Law of Moses, you have many things to say to me, but I am through with you; I have nothing to do with you. You are my former husband, and I now have died to you."

A husband may come to his wife and say, "Dear wife, please cook a big meal for me. I am very hungry!" However, if the wife has died, she cannot answer him; she is finished. In the same way, Romans 7:1-6 teaches that we are dead to the law, and we no longer live to the law. Rather, we are resurrected in Christ, by Christ, and through Christ, and now in Christ we live to Christ. We have left the law; we have nothing to do with the law, but we have everything to do with Christ. Moses is through; we know nothing more of him. Today, however, it seems that many Christians know too much about Moses. Whenever the law says, "Do something for me," they say Amen, not from the spirit but from the soul, in the soulish life in the mind.

After Christians are regenerated, they are tempted many times to say Amen to many good things. They may study spiritual books in their morning watch and say Amen to them. However, many spiritual books are just like the law of Moses, demanding us to do this and that. The natural, soulish life is very willing to answer this kind of demand, but we are dead to the outward law of God. We are finished and through with the other laws, and we are resurrected in Christ. Now we live in Christ and to Christ. Our living is responsible to God; we are no longer responsible to the law. We forget about all the other laws, but there is one law we remember well, that is, the law of the Spirit of life. We forget about the outward law of God, the law of good, and the law of sin. Now the only law left is the law of the Spirit of life.

THE RICHES OF LIFE BEING IN THE LAW OF LIFE

The law of the Spirit of life is not a small matter. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms there are many different lives. With every life there is a law, and all the riches, the contents, of each kind of life are included in the law of that life. Within a small flower seed or a grain of wheat there is a life. When we bury this little seed within the earth, something grows out of the seed. We may say that this is something of life, but in actuality it is something according to the law of that life. There is no need to help the seed to produce something. If we put the seed of a red flower into the earth and let it grow, to be sure, it will grow to be a red flower. There is no need to care for the flower's color. It will not grow up to be white or black, because there is a law in the flower life. In the same way, if we have chicken eggs, there is no need to worry that ducks will hatch from them, because there is a law in the chicken life that regulates it. The reality, the riches, and the content of a certain kind of life are in the law of that life.

We do not need to say to a peach tree, "Little tree, let me teach you. At a certain time you have to put forth green leaves. After this you have to bring forth the right flowers, and then you have to bring forth a certain kind of fruit of a certain size." There is no need to teach a peach tree to bring forth peaches, because there is a law of life in that plant. In the same way, there is a law in our fallen human life. There is no need for anyone to teach us to lie or to commit sins. We have an evil life with an evil law of sin.

I found this matter to be true with children. My wife and I were devout Christians. When we were young, we were afraid that our children would be

influenced by evil things, so we tried our best to keep them at home, away from any evil contact. When our child was a little over one year old, we would tell him not to put his hand into the water basin. However, sometimes when we were absent, he would put his hand into the water. When we came back, he would shake his head to deny it. Before he was able to speak Chinese, he was able to speak lies. He lied without speaking any kind of language. We never taught him how to lie, and we did not know from whom he learned it. By this we found that there is a law of sin within the human life. As long as we have a human life, we know how to sin. There are many teachers, tutors, and professors of mathematics, but who teaches people to lie? On the whole earth there has never been an elementary school of sin, a high school of sin, or a university of sin. However, everyone still knows how to sin because everyone has a human life with a law of sin.

We praise the Lord that today we have another law, the law of the divine life. We have a law of the strongest, highest life, the life on the highest plane. With this life there is the strongest, highest law. To know the law of this life is wonderful. To be a victorious, spiritual Christian, we need to know the law of the divine life.

In addition to Romans 8:2, the law of life is mentioned in Hebrews 8:10, which says, "This is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws into their mind, and on their hearts I will inscribe them; and I will be God to them, and they will be a people to Me." According to these laws inscribed in our heart, God is God to us, and we are a people to Him. Verse 16 of chapter 10 is similar, saying that God will impart His laws upon our heart and inscribe them upon our mind. God imparts His laws in our mind and inscribes them in our heart simply by His being life to us. When God comes into us as life to us, His life has the divine law. Because God's life is within us, the divine law is in our heart and in our mind.

Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16 are quotations from Jeremiah 31:33, which says, "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people." In Hebrews, *laws* is plural in number, but in Jeremiah, *law* is singular. On the one hand, it is one law, but on the other hand, it is many laws that are put within us and written upon our heart. This law is, or these laws are, the very

law of the divine life. We have the divine life within us, and with this divine life there is the law of life. We can never exhaust how rich the divine life is, and all the riches of the divine life are in the law of this life.

THE RICHES OF LIFE BEING BROUGHT FORTH BY THE REGULATING OF THE LAW OF LIFE

As we have seen, a law is the spontaneous, automatic, regulating power of a life, which constantly regulates in order to bring forth all the riches of that life. The more the law regulates, the more the riches of the life are brought forth. If we keep a seed on a table, it has no chance to grow. This means there is no opportunity for the law of this life to regulate. However, if we put this little seed into the earth and water it, it will have much opportunity to grow, and the very law within this life will have the opportunity to regulate. The more the law regulates, the more the riches, the contents, of the life will be brought forth. Whether or not life grows absolutely depends on the regulating of its law. When the law regulates, the life grows; when the law does not regulate, the life does not grow.

Every life works by the regulation of its law. The same is true with the divine life within us. Romans 8:2 says that the law of the Spirit of life has freed us. The regulating of the law of the divine life sets us free from the law of sin and of death. With every life there is a law to bring forth all the riches of that life by its regulation. With the divine life within us, there is the need for the regulating of the divine law. If we stop the regulating of the law, we stop the work, the growing, of life.

There is no need to try to do good. We need to forget about all the old laws—the outward law of God in doctrine, the law of good, and the law of sin—and live by the third life, the divine life. With this divine life there is the strongest law, but it needs the opportunity. A seed has a life within it and a law in its life, but if we keep this seed in our pocket, it will have no opportunity to work. A seed needs a certain circumstance, environment, and opportunity. To put a seed into the earth and water it gives it the opportunity it needs. As Christians, there is no need to try to do good, but there is the need to give the opportunity to the law of the divine life. We have the responsibility of giving the opportunity, the spiritual environment, to the law of the divine life. If we do not give the divine law of the divine life the opportunity to regulate, it can do nothing.

LOVING THE LORD AND STOPPING OUR DOING

What is the way to give this divine law the proper opportunity and environment? We Christians, the chosen and redeemed persons, are called to love the Lord. If we love the Lord, the Lord as life within us has the opportunity to work. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23 clearly tells us that in our whole human being, the heart is the earth into which the seed of life has been sown. There is the need of our heart as the earth. The parable of the sower speaks of four different kinds of hearts, only one of which is the good earth. Whether or not the Lord as life within us can grow depends very much on the condition of our heart.

What is the condition of our heart? In 1938 I was working for the Lord in Beijing, the old capital of China. In those days I met a sister who truly loved the Lord very much, but her heart was not the good earth for the Lord. The more she loved the Lord, the more the law of life could not work within her. This was because she did not know the proper way to love the Lord. She thought that since she loved the Lord, she needed to do many things for the Lord. Therefore, she gave up her family, her husband, and her children, and from early in the morning to late at night she worked for the Lord. Sometimes when she came to the meeting, she was so tired from working that she fell asleep. It was hard for anyone to help her because she thought that she loved the Lord the most. From a certain point of view she did love the Lord the most, but she loved the Lord in a wrong way.

In order to let the Lord grow in us and let the divine law work within us, we must love the Lord, but we must also stop ourselves from trying to do anything. The more we love the Lord, the more we want to do something for the Lord. However, the more we love the Lord, the more we need to stop ourselves. This is not easy. When we do not love the Lord, we do not care about the work of the Lord, and we do not do anything for the Lord. But when we love the Lord, we do, work, and act much for the Lord.

The problem with many Christians is that they simply do not love the Lord; their heart does not come to the Lord, so nothing in them follows. However, once we love the Lord, our heart comes, and everything else follows. When some brothers do not love the Lord, they give up the work, the service, and the concerns of the Lord, and they have nothing to do with the church, but when they love the Lord, their heart comes to the church, and many things

follow, including opinions, activities, and other matters. This is the reason why in the Scriptures we often see the Lord stirring up the heart of His saints to love Him on the one hand, and turning away many other things on the other hand. The Lord simply desires to have our heart, so He rejects everything else. He may say to us, “Simply come with your heart. Never come with anything else.”

We need to love the Lord in the way of stopping every kind of doing. If we love the Lord with our heart yet try to do many things, we spoil the environment for the divine law to work something out. The most precious heart is a heart that loves the Lord very much yet stops everything else. Here is a great lesson.

Are we able to absolutely stop ourselves while we love the Lord? The trouble is that when we do not love the Lord, we have nothing to do; we forget about everything. But when we love the Lord, our heart comes and everything else follows. The Lord is truly bothered by this “everything.” Because the Lord is bothered very much by our loving, we may even say that it is better not to love the Lord. The more we love the Lord, the more we bother Him. We may compare this to certain wives. The more they love their husband, the more their husband is bothered. Such a wife may say, “I love you, so please take this cup of milk,” but the husband may not want it. Many husbands are bothered very much by this kind of love. Some say, “I wish that my wife did not love me in this way. Then I would be released.”

Are we able to love the Lord on the one hand and be absolutely silent on the other hand? If we are, we will have a good heart for the life within us to work out something wonderful. The divine life is within us with a working law to constantly regulate us, but we often bother this law. We either do not cooperate with it, or we cooperate, but many matters follow to spoil our cooperation. We need to love the Lord in a calm, silent way, saying, “Lord, here I am. I love You, but I stop from all kinds of doing.” If we do this, we will be absolutely changed through the divine law of the divine life. The divine law will bring forth all the riches of the divine life by its working and regulating.

We are often too complicated. We may say, “I am clear that I am dead to the law. I am dead to Moses, and I have nothing to do with him. I forget about trying to do good.” However, whenever we have a sincere heart toward the Lord, right away we go back to Moses. Whenever we love the Lord by saying,

“O Lord, I love You, so help me to be humble,” we immediately return to Moses. We are often unable to be silent. We simply cannot stop ourselves to give the divine law within us the opportunity to regulate us.

I recommend that you learn one lesson: Love the Lord, and stop. We should pray, “Lord, I love You, but Lord, I stop.” We do not stop loving, but we stop doing. The more we love the Lord, and the more we stop ourselves from every kind of doing, the more wonderful it is. Then we realize that there is a mighty working within us, which is the mighty regulating of the divine law. It is not easy not to commit any sins, but it is even more difficult not to do any good. Do not try to be proud, and do not try to be humble. Do not try to hate others, and do not try to love others. Do not try to do evil, and do not try to do good. It is easy to not try to do evil, but it is difficult to not try to do good. We often cannot stop.

Thirty years ago, the first time I went to Shanghai, I met a brother there. He loved the Lord very much, and no one could compare with him in this matter. In one sense, he loved the Lord too much. Whenever he came to the meeting, he would always pray because he loved the Lord. At the beginning he prayed, in the process of the meeting he prayed, and at the end he prayed. He had to pray because he loved the Lord. He could not stop from praying. To speak the truth, however, the Lord Himself was bothered by this, and all the brothers and sisters were bothered. Whenever he opened his mouth to pray, others would pray quietly for the Lord to stop him. Several times the responsible brothers made the decision to beg him not to pray anymore. They had a nice talk with him, saying, “Brother, we do appreciate that you love the Lord so much, and we do appreciate that your heart is right. However, you have to take care of the others. We beg you not to pray so much in the meeting.” The brother agreed to this, but the next time we came together, there was a short time of silence after a hymn, so he stood up to pray, “Lord, since no one will open his mouth, I have to pray.” After the meeting the responsible brothers again asked him not to do this, and he again agreed, but in the next meeting he prayed, “Lord, even though the responsible brothers told me not to, I still have to pray.” The more this brother loved the Lord, the more the whole meeting was bothered by him. No one could help him, and no one could stop him. He simply did not know how to stop himself from doing good, and he did not know how to give the inner life with the divine law the opportunity to bring forth something divine by its regulation. He occupied, utilized, and even usurped all the opportunities.

We need to forget about all the other laws. We need to learn, on the one hand, to love the Lord, and on the other hand, to stop from any kind of doing, trying, and working. If we learn this lesson, we will experience a mighty working and regulating of the divine law. If we quiet ourselves like a seed that lies quietly under the earth, the divine law will work out all the riches of the divine life. If we cooperate with the divine law of life in this way, this divine law will constantly expand from our spirit into our mind, emotion, will, and every part of our inward being. Then the inward parts of our entire being will be absolutely occupied by this divine life, which is the Lord Himself, through the mighty working of the divine law.

This is very simple, but we still may not understand the divine way to have the divine law work within us. I say again, we must forget about all the other laws, simply love the Lord, and stop ourselves from every kind of trying and working. Then the divine law of the divine life will have the full opportunity to regulate, to work, within us to the extent that all the riches and contents of the divine life will be brought forth. If we try this, we will have rest. We will see how wonderful the life we have is and how wonderful the working of the divine law within us is. I recommend to you this simple secret. Realize that you have such a divine law, forget about all the other laws, and simply love the Lord. We should pray, “Lord, I love You, so I stop myself from every kind of doing and trying.” Then we will give the opportunity to the divine law within us to work and regulate in us all the time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:1-3, 5-7; 2:27

In the previous chapters we saw the sense of life—the consciousness or inner feeling of life—and the law of life. In this chapter we will see another detail concerning life, the fellowship of life. In order to know life, we must know the fellowship of life. The fellowship of life has much to do with the consciousness of life and the law of life.

The first Epistle of John is a continuation of the Gospel of John. In his Gospel, John tells us that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, came to impart Himself as life to us. When we receive Him, we have the eternal life, which is the Lord Himself as life. In his first Epistle the apostle John reveals something further of life, which is the fellowship of life. The Gospel of John is a gospel of life, and this short yet very important Epistle is an epistle of fellowship. After we have received life in a basic way, we must pay full attention to and practice to maintain the real fellowship of life.

Verse 1 of chapter 1 says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." The Word of life is not doctrine, teachings, or gospel truths but a living person, the Son of God, the Lord Christ. Verse 2 says, "And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us." The person of the Lord Jesus Himself is life, the life was manifested, and the apostles have seen and testified concerning the Lord Himself as the eternal life. Verse 3 continues, "That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The apostles declare Christ as life to us, and the issue is that we have fellowship. Fellowship comes out of life, it is a matter of life, and this very eternal life is Christ Himself, the eternal Son of God. Moreover, we have fellowship with the apostles and with the Father and the Son. The believers, the apostles, and the Father and the Son—man and God, and God and man—have the same fellowship and are in the same fellowship.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE BEING THE FLOW OF LIFE

Fellowship is a current, a flow. Therefore, the fellowship of life is life itself flowing. We may illustrate fellowship with a current of electricity. The flow, the current, of electricity is simply the electricity itself flowing. Electric lights and appliances depend on the flow of electricity. Once the flow stops, the electricity is gone. We may also illustrate it with the current of blood in our body. The current of blood is the blood itself flowing. For the current of blood within us to stop indicates a serious problem, which brings death. The fellowship of the divine life is life itself constantly flowing as a living current. It flows within you, within me, and within every Christian. It flows in the apostles, and it flows in God and Christ.

We are all one in this flow, in this current. A room may have several lamps, but there is only one current of electricity. All the lamps are one in the electricity. Without the electricity they are separated, but in the current of the electricity they are one. Not only so, there may be thousands of lights in other rooms and buildings, which are also one in the same current of electricity. If a lamp does not have the current of electricity, it is not one with the other lamps, but if it does have the current of electricity, it is one with thousands of lamps. We have Christ as life within us, and this life is a current flowing all the time. You are in the current, I am in the current, the apostle Paul is in the current, and even God and Christ Himself are in the current. This is the current of the divine life.

This is not merely a doctrine. We have the reality that there is a real, divine, spiritual, heavenly, and living current always flowing within us. As long as we are regenerated persons, we have this flow. We can prove this not merely by doctrine but by our up-to-date experience. When we are healthy in the spiritual life, the flow within us is pure, fresh, living, positive, and active.

Why do we pray? It is because there is a current flowing within us that urges us to pray. Why do we do certain things for the Lord? It is because the Lord urges us through the flow, the current, within us. The fellowship of life is constantly living and flowing within us. Then when we come together, if you are in this flow, and I am in this flow, there is no need to say anything in particular. Something living and flowing within us simply echoes one another. This is the fellowship of life.

The flow, the current, the fellowship, of life is simply the living Spirit of God as life to us. Moreover, Christ is in this Spirit, and God the Father is also in this Spirit. Therefore, this flow is the Triune God flowing, working, living, and acting within us. This is the fellowship of life. The fellowship of life is nothing other than the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This is tremendous, wonderful, and mysterious.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE

The fellowship of life is life itself flowing, and this flowing life is God the Father and God the Son in God the Spirit—the very Triune God Himself. Now we must see the way the current flows and the way to maintain this flow. First John 1:5-7 says, "This is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." These verses were written by the apostle through his experience, and they can be apprehended only by our experience. To have fellowship with God means that we are in the current with God, and because God is light, to truly be in the fellowship with God means that we are in the light. To be sure, when we have fellowship with God who is light, we are in the light, and while we are in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

At that very moment the blood of Jesus is applied to us because while we are in the fellowship and in the light, we sense our sins. In the light we see the wrongdoings, mistakes, and trespasses that we have committed. Even though we Christians are regenerated and saved, we are still in the old nature, and we still walk and live in this world. Therefore, many times we are defiled. It is when we are in the fellowship that we have the light, and in the light and under the light we see how sinful and defiled we are. It is at this time that we spontaneously confess and apply the blood of the Lord Jesus for our cleansing.

The more we are in the light, the more we see our faults and defilement; and the more we apply the blood of the Lord Jesus, the more we are cleansed. This cleansing keeps us more and more in the fellowship. Then, the more we are in the fellowship, the more light we see; the more light we see, the more we realize our sins, faults, and defilement; and the more we apply the blood of

the Lord, the more cleansing we receive. Following this, we are in the fellowship, we are in the light, we realize our defilement, we apply the Lord Jesus' blood, and we receive the cleansing. We all have this experience.

After the cleansing, the sprinkling, of the blood, we have the anointing of the Spirit. First John 2:27 says, "As for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you." In the Old Testament type, the anointing of the oil always follows the sprinkling of the blood. This is why in this Epistle the blood is mentioned first, and in the second chapter there is the anointing. The anointing always follows the cleansing of the blood, and the cleansing of the blood always brings in the anointing.

This is a cycle in our experience. When we are in the fellowship, we have the light. When we are in the light, we realize our sins. When we realize our sins, we apply the cleansing of the Lord's blood. When we apply, enjoy, and experience the cleansing of the blood, we have more anointing. Then the anointing brings us more into fellowship, the fellowship brings us more into the light, and the light causes us to see more of our defilement. Then we apply the blood more, we have more anointing, and we have more fellowship. Fellowship, light, realization of sin, cleansing, and anointing are a cycle. A car travels by the turning of its wheels, cycle after cycle. In the same way, a Christian grows by cycle after cycle of fellowship, light, realization of sin, the cleansing of the blood, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Fellowship brings more light, more light brings more realization of defilement, more realization brings more cleansing of the blood, more cleansing brings in more anointing, and more anointing brings more fellowship. This cycle is the way to always keep and maintain the fellowship of life. Many positive things will result from this fellowship.

Sometimes we do not sense our wrongdoings because we are careless, but if we would pay attention to the inner fellowship, the fellowship will bring in light. Then in the light we will realize our wrongdoings and defilements. A brother may quarrel and fight and still not sense that he is wrong, but if he would quietly pay attention to the inner fellowship and have a little contact with the Lord, he will be in the light. In the light he will sense that he is wrong in his attitude, motive, intention, word, and even tone of voice. Then he will say, "O Lord, forgive me. I am wrong. Cleanse me, Lord." Following this cleansing, he has a fresher and stronger anointing, and in the stronger anointing he has deeper fellowship. In the deeper fellowship he has stronger

light, and in the stronger light he realizes something further. The Lord may take him back to the previous year, and the brother will confess, "O Lord, forgive me. Last year on a certain day I was wrong with a certain person." Then after confessing and applying the cleansing of the blood, he has more anointing and is more in the fellowship. He senses that the Lord is so dear, pleasant, and sweet because he is much more in the fellowship than he has ever been.

Following this, the brother will have deeper light and deeper realization. Then the Lord may take him back three years. The Lord will "dig" within him, and he will sense something further. He may say, "Oh, I am so sinful. I never thought I was so sinful." After confessing and applying the blood, he receives more anointing, and the Lord may bring him back ten years to catch him, check him, and dig in him some more. This is the way to grow more deeply in the Lord, and this is the way to go on day by day, just as the wheels of a car go on cycle by cycle.

KEEPING OURSELVES IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

However, when we are in the light and we sense our faults and defilement, but we do not confess and apply the blood, the flow within us is stopped. Then we are out of the light; we are in darkness. We do not have the refreshment, we do not have the anointing, and we lose the joy, peace, and satisfaction. Following this, we may do more damage and even commit serious sins, simply because we are out of the stream, the current, the flow, the fellowship. Some brothers and sisters have been out of the fellowship for a long time. They have been far away from this fellowship, and they need help to bring them back to the fellowship.

Sometimes when we are about to do something, we know that we are out of the fellowship. We know we should stop, but we do not stop. After we do such a thing, we may not be able to pray for two or three days. Even if we want to pray, we cannot, because we are out of the fellowship. According to the spiritual law, there must be a consequence for a period of time. The Lord may punish us in this way for one or two days to the extent that even if we want to come back to the fellowship, we are not able. We must come to the Lord and confess our sins to recover the lost fellowship. When we confess our sins, we may feel that the fellowship is recovered, but when the fellowship is recovered

in this way, we still may not feel happy. Even if we try to be happy, we are not able to be. We must realize that this is a punishment from the Lord.

However, if we are always faithful to walk and live in the fellowship, it is easy to be happy and refreshed. We know the smiling of the Lord, because we are in the current, the flow, the stream. By this we can see that after we are regenerated and receive the eternal life, we must learn to keep ourselves in the fellowship of life.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF LIFE, THE LAW OF LIFE, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF LIFE

The fellowship has very much to do with the law of life and the consciousness of life, the inner feeling. The more we are in the fellowship, the more we have the inner feeling, the inner consciousness, and the more tender and delicate we are in feeling and consciousness. Then even if we sin a little, we sense it; we have a very tender, delicate, and keen feeling. This keen feeling comes from the thorough fellowship of life.

The consciousness of life, the law of life, and the fellowship of life are always related to one another. When we are in the flow of the living fellowship, our inner parts are so tender and delicate, and it is easy to have the sense, consciousness, and feeling of life. However, out of ten Christians today it is rather hard to find one who strictly walks, lives, and works in the fellowship of life. Even in one day we may be out of the fellowship many times. What is a spiritual person? A spiritual person is one who strictly walks, acts, and lives in the fellowship of life. Such a person is always able to have the inner sense, the inner feeling. Then the law of life follows the inner sense, the inner feeling, to regulate this person all the time, and by this regulating, all the riches of the divine life are applied to him and are enjoyed and experienced by him.

The consciousness of life, the law of life, and the fellowship of life are very delicate. In order to know the inner life, we need to know these three things. Many times, brothers and sisters have come to me to ask me if they should do a certain thing. I often have answered by asking, “While you are considering to do this, do you have the flow of life within you?” Many times they answer, “While I am thinking to do it, the flow stops.” If the flow stops, that is a sign that we should not go on. If the flow stops, that is the “red light,” but if the flow continues, that is the “green light.” At other times, people have come to

argue with me about a particular matter. Many times I respond, “There is no need to ask me about this. You know the answer. Something within you stands with me; that is the fellowship of life.”

CARING FOR THE INWARD FLOW

To be a Christian is not an outward matter; it is an inward matter. While we are doing something, we should check to see if the inward current is still flowing within us. Many times I have had a certain thought to do something, and I even have spoken with someone about it. After a few words, however, I stopped. Sometimes this surprises people. They say, “Brother Lee, you started to raise a matter, but after two words you just stopped. What happened to you?” I prefer not to explain, but I know I have to stop because the inward flow stopped. I know that I cannot persist.

We must always keep ourselves in the flow of the inward current. There is no need to argue about this. Argument gets us nowhere. Even while we are arguing or doing something else against the Lord, we have the inner sense that the flow within us is stopped. When this happens, we need to stop in order to recover the fellowship. We may have many questions, but to care for the inward flow of life is the one answer that is good for all of them. There is no need to ask about many things. We must simply care for whether or not the current within us is stopped or is flowing.

To be a Christian is very simple, but often people do not believe this. The divine life constantly flows as a current; this is the fellowship of life. To be a Christian with this flow within is simple, but to be a Christian without the inward flow is very complicated. Brothers and sisters, we must practice to be inward Christians, not outward ones. To do this will save us much trouble, and we will understand many things more deeply because we are in the inward flow, the inward fellowship.

We must make the Christian life so simple. We should not check with many persons and talk about many matters. The more we ask and the more we talk, the more we are complicated and confused. We simply lose our direction; we do not know what is “north, south, east, or west,” and our way is foggy. However, if we come back to the inward flow, the sky is clear. We are heavenly clear, eternally clear and transparent. All the “smog” is gone. Try this. Make the Christian life simple in the flow, the fellowship, of life.

We have life. Now we need to be in the fellowship of life. Then we will have the light, we will enjoy the cleansing of the blood, and we will share the anointing. Then the anointing will bring more fellowship, more light, and more cleansing of the blood in a cycle. This is wonderful! This is the way of growth, and this is the proper spiritual way to go on with the Lord. I hope we will not take this message lightly or merely as a doctrine or teaching. May we take this as a direction for our day-by-day exercise.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DISCERNMENT OF SOUL AND SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 5:23; Gen. 2:7; Exo. 1:5; 1 Cor. 15:45; Heb. 4:12; Matt. 16:24-25

In the previous chapters we saw what life is, what the real experience of life is, the first experience of life, the sense of life, the law of life, and the fellowship of life. These are simply the preparation for the practical dealings in the experience of life. In this chapter we will consider another preparatory item—the knowledge, discernment, or distinguishing of the spirit and the soul. This is something that has been neglected by believers today. In order to realize the spiritual experiences of life, we need to know the difference between the spirit and the soul.

MAN BEING OF THREE PARTS

Both in the Western and Eastern worlds, many people have had the thought that man is of two parts, an outward part and an inward part. The outward part is the physical part, the body, and the inward part is the psychological part. Christians call the psychological part the soul or the spirit. The Chinese have a strange-sounding term, *spirit-soul*. The unbelievers know nothing about the spirit. They say that man has only a body and a soul. Whether people call it the soul or the spirit, it is the same to them because they do not know that we have three parts.

It is regrettable that not only the unbelievers but even many Christians today argue that man has only the outward, physical part and the inward, psychological or spiritual part. They believe that the *soul* and the *spirit* are synonymous terms in the Scriptures, that the soul is the spirit and the spirit is the soul. To them, the psychological part is the same as the spiritual part. It is as if they consider that to be spiritual is to be psychological, and to be psychological is to be spiritual. This is ridiculous.

The Scriptures clearly tell us that man is of three parts, not only two. In the New Testament teachings there is a great difference between the spirit and the soul. In this regard, we must never forget 1 Thessalonians 5:23. This verse

clearly adjusts the wrong concept that man is of two parts. This verse says, "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse says clearly that God sanctifies us wholly, in not merely one part of our being but in all the parts, in our spirit and soul and body. In the Greek text *spirit and soul and body* consists of three nouns and two occurrences of the conjunction *kai,* meaning "and." This proves that these three nouns denote three different items. Therefore, the spirit is not the soul, and the soul is not the body. The soul is something different from the body, and the spirit is something different from the soul.

In this verse we have the full, clear revelation that we humans are of three parts, being tripartite, having a spirit, a soul, and a body. Here the Holy Spirit gives us the proper order of these three items. The spirit is first, the soul is second, and the body is last. The inmost part is the spirit, the outer part is the body, and the medium between these two parts is the soul. Genesis 2:7 shows us how God created man in three parts. First, God formed man's body from the dust of the ground. Then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The first material used in the creation of man was the dust, and the second item was the breath of life. God used the dust to form a body, and He used the breath of life to form a spirit within the body. Then, when the spirit within the body mingled with the body, a living soul as a third item came into being.

Man is neither merely a body nor a spirit. Angels are spirits, but we humans are not angels. Likewise, it is ridiculous to call ourselves merely a body. Because man was made a soul, the Scriptures often refer to humans as souls. Exodus 1:5 says, "All the souls who came forth from the loins of Jacob were seventy souls" (lit.). First Corinthians 15:45a says, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." We humans were made in three parts. We were made as a soul with two additional parts. We have an outward body and an inward spirit, and we are the soul as the medium between them. We should spend our time and energy to study this. In some matters we should be simple, but in knowing these things we should not be simple; we should be detailed.

CONTACTING THREE WORLDS BY THE THREE PARTS OF OUR BEING

Because we humans are of three parts, we can contact three worlds—the physical world, the psychological world, and the spiritual world. In our body we have a seeing sense, a hearing sense, a smelling sense, a tasting sense, and a touching sense. With these five senses we contact the material things in the physical world. Besides the physical world, there is also the psychological world. The psychological world includes joy and sorrow. We cannot touch or contact the psychological world with our five senses. We may be full of joy, but we cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or feel joy. It is something psychological, not physical. The English word *psychological* comes from the Greek word *psuche,* meaning "soul." Some Christian teachers use the word *soulish* as the adjective form of the noun *soul.* The psychological world is simply the soulish world, the world of the soul.

Besides the physical world and the psychological world there is a third world, which is the spiritual world. God and the angels do not belong to the physical world or even to the psychological world. God is a spirit, not a soul, so He belongs to the spiritual world.

We contact, or touch, the physical world by the physical part of our human being, the five senses of the body. Likewise, we contact the psychological world by the psychological part of our being, which is our soul. We realize that someone has joy or sorrow by our mind and emotion, which are parts of the soul. Similarly, we contact the third world, the spiritual world, by our spirit. John 4:24 says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness." It is clear that we worship not by the body or the soul, with the mind and emotion, but by the spirit. Because God is the divine Spirit, we must contact this divine Spirit by or in our human spirit. This is our spiritual part, by which or through which we contact the spiritual world.

We may illustrate the three different kinds of contacts—physical contact, psychological contact, and spiritual contact—by the way we contact a brother. When we come together, we shake hands; this is to contact the physical world by our physical part, our body. However, we contact the brother not only by our physical part but also by our psychological part. The brother may have had some problems at home, so while we shake his hand, he appears to not be happy. This may cause us to suspect that he is not happy with us. This kind of suspicion is not in the hand, that is, in the body, but in the mind of our soul. Then when we two kneel down to pray, he may utter something from his deepest part, his inward part. At that time we sense what is in his deepest,

inmost part; we sense in our spirit what is in his spirit. In this way, we come to realize that he was not actually unhappy with us. First, we shake hands with the brother; this is the physical contact. Then we suspect something about him; this is the psychological contact. Finally, we pray together and sense something in our deepest part about what is in his deepest part; this is the spiritual contact.

Now we can discern the three different parts of our being—spirit, soul, and body. The spirit is absolutely different from the soul, just as the soul is absolutely different from the body. Sometimes we have only physical contact with a brother with no psychological contact and, even the more, no spiritual contact. At other times we may have physical contact and some sort of psychological contact as well, and sometimes we may have too much psychological contact with nearly no spiritual contact. I have been taught by the Lord very much for many years; so many times when I contact the brothers and sisters, I simply do not like to contact them much by the psychological part. I mostly contact them by the spiritual part. When we contact the saints, we should try our best not to contact them by our psychology, by our soul—our mind, emotion, and will. Rather, we should try to contact them by our spirit, although we may contact them a little by our body. If a brother says, "Let me shake your hand," we should not refuse him, saying, "I do not want to contact you by the body. I will contact you only in the spirit." We should contact people a little physically, but we must try to contact them mostly in the spirit. We must learn the lesson to exercise our spirit to contact others' spirit.

DIVIDING THE SOUL FROM THE SPIRIT

There is a great difference between the soul and the spirit. As we have seen, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, supported by Genesis 2:7, shows us that we are tripartite, of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. Hebrews 4:12 shows us clearly that the spirit and the soul need to be divided and distinguished one from the other. It says, "The word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." In this verse we see that the spirit and the soul can be divided.

There is the need to divide our spirit from the soul and our soul from the spirit. Hebrews 4 begins to deal with the service of Christ the High Priest.

When a priest offered sacrifices to God, he always used a cutting instrument to divide the parts of the sacrifice. We are the sacrifice to God, and the Lord Jesus is the High Priest. He has the word of God as the sharp two-edged sword, which can divide the human soul from the human spirit. To be sure, if we are with the Lord and in His word, the Holy Spirit will divide our soul from our spirit by the word. He will show us through the word of God what is of our soul and not of the spirit. Through the word of God the Holy Spirit always reveals to us the difference between the soul and the spirit.

We may illustrate this by the way we love the brothers. A brother may pray, serve, work, and travel together with two other brothers, but he may love one brother more than the other. The first brother loves the second, and they are dear to one another; when they meet, they seem to touch something together and they inwardly stand with one another. However, this is not real love. If the first brother is with the Lord in the spirit and in the word, the Holy Spirit will show him that his love is not something in the spirit. It is something in the human life; it is something of the soul, the self, and not something in the spirit. When he realizes this, he will even condemn his love. When he is with the Lord in the morning, he will say, "Lord, forgive me. I have a love in my self, from my self, and for my self. It is a false love, a love in my human self and soul and not from the spirit."

Sometimes when a brother ministers in a meeting, he may notice someone shaking his head in disagreement and may become disgusted with him. In 1942 there was a church in one of the biggest seaports in northern China, and one of the leading ones sometimes ministered to the people there. His high-school-aged son was saved, but he was still very naughty. Once when the father was ministering in the meeting, his son sat in a corner expressing his disagreement with him. The father simply had no patience with this. He stopped ministering, turned to his son, and said, "I will deal with you at home!" This was not something from the spirit. It was something from the father's human life, his human soul and human self.

If we are in fellowship with the Lord, the Holy Spirit many times will show us that we have something which is good, about which there is nothing wrong, but it is not of the spirit but from the self, in the self, and out of the self. As we have illustrated, we may love a brother and stand with him, yet we love him by our soul, by our self, and out of our self. Human love is good, yet often it is merely human, soulish, and of the self. While we are in fellowship with the

Lord, many times, even all the time, the Holy Spirit will show us what is from our self, what is good yet merely human. He will show us that it is something in the soul and of the soul but not in the spirit.

THE SOULISH MAN AND THE SPIRITUAL MAN

There is a great difference between the soul and the spirit, and the soul can be divided and should be divided from the spirit. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 shows us that unless the soul is subdued by the spirit and submissive to the spirit, the soul is against the spirit and contradicts the spirit. These verses say, "A soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually. But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one." *Soulish* implies the meaning of "natural" or "psychological." A soulish man is a natural man, a man living in the soul. The soul is absolutely impotent in spiritual matters.

In these two verses we can see two kinds of persons: the soulish man and the spiritual man. The soulish man, and the soul itself, cannot understand or receive the spiritual things and even considers the spiritual things foolish. The spiritual man, however, discerns the spiritual things and likes to receive the spiritual things. It is by the spirit that we understand and discern the spiritual things, and it is in the spirit that we desire to have the spiritual things. If we are soulish, we simply cannot understand the spiritual things, we do not like anything spiritual, and we even think that the spiritual things are foolish. Thus, the soul itself is a contradiction to the spirit. We can realize this by our experience.

DENYING OUR SELF

Within our body we have two parts, the soul and the spirit. The soul in itself does not desire anything spiritual, it cannot receive or understand the spiritual things, and it is very much contradictory to the spirit. Moreover, Matthew 16:24-25 shows us that the soul is the self. These verses say, "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." Verse 24 says, "Deny himself," and verse 25 says, "Loses his soul-life." The soul-life in verse 25 is the very self in verse 24. We may say that our soul contradicts our

human spirit, the inmost part of our whole being, where the Holy Spirit dwells, or for the sake of further understanding, we may say that it is our self that contradicts our spirit.

The self, that is, the soul, the soulish life, is comprised of three parts—the emotions, the mind, and the will. The emotions include matters such as love and hatred. The mind is the mentality with its thoughts, considerations, opinions, ideas, and concepts. In the self there is also the will to make a decision, choice, or determination. If we realize that these three parts—the emotions, the mind, and the will—are the three parts of the self, the soul, then we will realize that to deny our self is simply to deny these three things. Many times we say that we need to deny our self; to deny our self is simply to deny either our emotions, our mind, or our will.

What is it to be soulish? It is simply to be in the emotions, in the mind, or in the will. Therefore, to deny the self is simply to deny the emotions, the mind, or the will. Sometimes we say that a certain man is very strong in his will. No one can convince him because he is so strong-willed. Sometimes we may also say that a brother is too deep in his opinions and thoughts, or that a sister is too emotional. What then is a soulish person? A soulish person is either an emotional person, a mental person, or a strong-willed person. The more emotional we are, the more we are soulish. To be in our mind too much and to exercise our mind first, or to be too much in our will is also soulish. Therefore, for a strong-willed person to deny his self is to deny his will. For a brother who is too deep in his thoughts to deny his self is to deny his mind, his mentality; it is to “lose his head.” Likewise, for an emotional sister to deny her self is to deny her emotions.

If we pay attention to these matters and spend time to consider them, we will see that many persons are of three categories. Some, especially the sisters, are emotional. I sometimes tell people that in order to convince a sister, you should not argue with her; that does not work. You simply need to drop two tears; that is the best weapon to fight the battle. If you drop some tears, all the sisters are captured because they are mostly emotional. When something happens to a sister, she will most often exercise her emotions first. What then is a spiritual person? A spiritual person is an emotional sister who has been delivered from her self. Whenever something happens to her, she first exercises not her emotions but her inmost part. When someone comes to her with tears, she is not moved by the tears. Even as a sister, she does not

exercise her emotions. Rather, she exercises her inmost part and denies her emotions even in the presence of tears. She does not regard the tears but exercises her spirit, in which the Lord dwells. This is a spiritual sister, not an emotional sister. However, to say this is easy, but to practice it is very difficult for the sisters. The sisters should take the brothers as their head, but nearly all the sisters take their emotions as their head. If the sisters would put their emotions under their feet and exercise their spirit, making their spirit the head of their being, they will be spiritual.

With the sisters the problem is emotions, but with the brothers the problem is the mentality. Most of the brothers have a big head, always thinking and considering. Many brothers are great teachers in their own opinion. The brothers have many thoughts, opinions, considerations, and ideas. When anything happens to a brother, the first thing he spontaneously does is exercise his mind. If we ask a brother to pray for the meeting, he may ask, “Do you think we need to?” Sisters often have weeping eyes, but brothers have rolling eyes. While their eyes are rolling, their minds are exercising, thinking, and considering. It is difficult to convince the brothers in their thoughts and considerations, so we often must reason and argue with them. They need a strong reason to be convinced, because they are more in the mind.

A small number among the saints are persons of will. Such persons do not understand emotions or considerations. They simply know to set their will, and once their will is set, no one can change them. It would be wonderful if this kind of strong will could be connected to the spirit. These strong persons can be very faithful because they have a strong will, but there is the need to submit their strong will to their spirit. We will see more concerning the spirit and the soul in the following chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SPIRIT WITH THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25; Lev. 11:43-44; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:6; 1 Cor. 2:11; 2 Cor. 7:13b; Acts 19:21

THE SPIRIT AND THE SOUL

Thus far, we have seen that the spirit and the soul are two distinct parts of man's being (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; Luke 1:46-47). The body is man's outermost part, and his spirit is his innermost part (John 7:38). Between these two parts is the soul as a medium. A human being is tripartite, of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. The Bible also reveals that the soul is something quite contrary to the spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 we are told that "a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually." The soul cannot understand the things of God. It is the spirit that knows, that discerns the things of God. These two parts within us are absolutely different. We cannot understand the things of God merely by the soul, because the soul by itself has the ability to know psychological things, not spiritual things. The soul is not able to know the things of God, but it is the spirit that knows the things of God. Many Christians do not know the difference between the spirit and the soul. Some Christians even insist on saying that the spirit and soul are synonymous, but in the Scriptures we are told that the spirit and soul are two absolutely different and distinct entities.

DENYING THE SOUL

Matthew 16:24-26 shows us that the soul is something we have to reject, to deny. "Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (v. 24). The self has to be denied, renounced, rejected. "For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it" (v. 25). If you gain the whole world and lose your soul, what is the profit?

THE SOUL BEING THE SELF

Luke 9:23-25 says, “He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake, this one shall save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?” In Matthew it says, “Forfeits his soul-life” (16:26). In Luke it says, “Forfeits himself” (9:25). This proves the soul is the self.

The Old Testament also clearly tells us that the soul is the self. Leviticus 11:43 says, “You shall not make your souls abominable with any swarming thing that swarms, nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, and so become defiled by them” (lit.). Then Leviticus 11:44b says, “And you shall not defile yourselves with any of the swarming things that move upon the earth.” “Yourselves” in verse 44 is “your souls” in verse 43. The Lord told us clearly that we have to deny the soul. The soulish man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, so we have to give up, reject, and deny the soul.

DENYING THE MIND, EMOTION, AND WILL

The soul is comprised of three parts—the mind, the emotion, and the will (see *The Economy of God*, ch. 6). If you deny your mind, your emotion, and your will, there is nothing left but the spirit. The self is gone. To give up your mind, emotion, and will simply means to give up yourself. To deny yourself is to deny your own thought, your opinion, your idea, your concept, your love, your wish, your will, your decision, and your choice. To deny all this means to deny the self.

A man of the mind is a man of the soul. A man of the emotion is a man of the soul. A man of the will is a man of the soul. How do you classify yourself? Are you a man of emotion, mind, or will? Brother Watchman Nee once told us, as an example, that if a person were to walk directly into a wall, the first part of his body to hit the wall would be his nose, the prominent part. If you are a man of emotion, in any matter your emotion will “hit the wall first.” If you are a man of the mind, your mind comes first. If you are a man of the will, your will comes first. Nearly all the sisters are so prominent in the emotion, and most of the brothers are so prominent in the mind. Some of us are so prominent in the will. We have to admit that much of the time we are soulish

people because we are so emotional, thoughtful, and willful. We have to learn the lesson to deny the self, the soul, with its emotion, mind, and will. To deny the self is to deny the emotion, mind, and will. After we deny the self, we have the spirit. If we deny the emotion, mind, and will, we give the opportunity, the ground, to the spirit.

PRACTICING TO DENY THE SELF

If you denied your natural thought, the spirit within you would rise up. Because we are so much in the soul—in the mind, emotion, and will—our human spirit does not have the chance, the ground, to do anything. We must practice continually to deny our mind, our emotion, and our will. When I love a brother so much, that may be natural love. If I give up that love, my spirit will have a chance to express something of the Lord. If I give up something in my soul, then my spirit will express something of the Lord. This is why the Lord tells us that we have to deny ourselves. We have to deny our soul, to lose our soul, because we regenerated persons have another part, an inmost part, which is the quickened, regenerated spirit with the Holy Spirit of God indwelling it. We have such a wonderful part of our being, a spiritual part, a living part, a quickened part, yet we do not know it and do not give it the chance or the ground to do anything.

If you are not happy with a certain brother, it is simply because you are in the self. If you deny yourself, you will love that brother very much. At other times, however, you love certain brothers so much simply because you are in the emotion, in the soul. If you would deny your emotion, deny your self, your love toward that brother would be transformed from the soul into the spirit. The lesson for us to learn today as Christians in order to experience life is to learn how to deny the soul. The soul is the self, and the self consists of three things—the mind, emotion, and will. To deny the soul simply means to deny your mind, emotion, and will.

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

We should live in the spirit. Galatians 2:20 says, “It is no longer I.” “I” is the self; the self is the soul, and the soul consists of three parts. “No longer I” means no longer the mind, emotion, and will but “Christ who lives in me” (v. 20). Christ lives in me, in my spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). We have to learn how to deny the “I,” the self, the soul, and live by Christ in the spirit.

THE LIFE AND FACULTIES OF THE SOUL

Some might think that if we deny the soul, we will not be able to live. But we must realize that there is a difference between the life of the soul and the faculties of the soul. The life of the soul is one thing, and the faculties of the soul are another thing. An illustration might help us to see this difference. I knew a married couple in China. The brother was so spiritual, and the sister, as a wife, was so submissive. Whenever you went to their home or met with them, you had the sense that the husband was the life to the wife. The wife had her own life, but she gave up her own life and took her husband as the life. She never said anything on her own. She always said something according to what her husband said. If you asked her, "Sister, do you like this piano?" she would say, "My husband likes it." Perhaps you would ask, "Do you like this meeting hall?" She would respond, "My husband says it is wonderful." With her, it was always "my husband, my husband," yet she spoke. She gave up her life and took her husband as the life, yet she still used the faculties of her soul.

We brothers always thought the sister was wonderful because she always took her husband as her life. She just lost her own life. She gave up her own life, but she still used her faculties. She still used her mind, emotion, and will, but she gave up her own life and took another life as her life.

GIVING UP THE NATURAL LIFE

The natural life, the life of the soul, has been crucified on the cross (Gal. 2:20). Now we have to take the Lord as our life. We must give up the natural life, the life of the soul, and take the Lord in the spirit as our life. This does not mean, however, that we must give up the faculties of our soul but the life of the soul. All the faculties of our soul still remain as the organs to be used by the Lord in the spirit.

AN UPLIFTED UNDERSTANDING

The more you are one with the Lord in the spirit, that is, the more spiritual you are, the more keen you will be in your mind. Before you take the Lord as life, you are quite dull in your thinking, but if you deny yourself and take the Lord as your life, you will be very keen in your thinking. In China quite a number of older sisters never had any kind of education, yet they loved the Lord to the uttermost and knew how to give up themselves, taking the Lord as

life. After two or three years they became very keen in their mind, in their understanding, especially in the things of the Lord. They became experts. But with those who have little love for the Lord, even if they have a Ph.D., there is little comprehension of spiritual things. When you talk with them about the things of the Lord, they say, "What is this? I cannot figure it out."

A SPIRITUAL EMOTION

It is the same thing with the emotion. Do not think that the Lord demands that you give up the organ, the faculty, of your emotion. The Lord demands that you give up the life of the emotion, but you have to exercise the emotion more and more. If you do love the Lord and are really filled with the Lord's Spirit, you will be very emotional. A man who is not emotional can never be spiritual. A spiritual person is a very emotional person. If you never know how to love, if you never know how to weep, if you never know how to be happy, and if you never know how to be sorry, I am afraid that you are not a proper Christian.

The most spiritual person is the most emotional, yet his emotion is under the control of the spirit. The apostle Paul was very emotional. He tells us that at times he wept with tears (Phil. 3:18; Acts 20:19, 31). He was quite tender in feeling, in love, in mercy, and in compassion. He was tender, but he was not naturally emotional. His emotion was a spiritual emotion under the control of the spirit.

A STRONG, RENEWED WILL

A spiritual person is, on the one hand, so keen in the mind and emotion and, on the other hand, so strong in the will. Not one spiritual person is like a jellyfish, without any backbone. Naturally emotional people are like jellyfish. All the spiritually emotional persons are so tender in their emotions and strong in the will. The more you are in the spirit, the stronger you will be in the will.

FACULTIES TO EXPRESS THE LORD

A spiritual person is one who is so keen in the understanding of the mind, so emotional in his love and affection, and so strong in his will. The faculties of the soul are organs used by the Spirit to express the Lord. The Lord is so

wise and full of thought (Psa. 139:17-18a). A spiritual person is not a thoughtless person. The more spiritual you are, the more thoughtful you are in the spirit. I can testify that the more I am in the spirit, the richer I am in thought. But whenever I am so much in my self, I am poor in thought.

We must realize, therefore, that it is not the mind, emotion, and will that have to be destroyed. It is the life of the soul that we must give up. This natural life, the soul-life, has been put to death on the cross already (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6). Now you have to take Christ, your Husband (2 Cor. 11:2), as your life. You must take the divine life as your life, but the faculties of the soul still remain as organs to be used by your spirit to express the Lord Himself.

THE SPIRIT BEING CRUCIAL TO BE THE SOURCE

Two brothers may be very thoughtful. One, however, is thoughtful naturally, but the other is thoughtful spiritually. With the first brother, you do not sense anything of the Lord. But with the other brother, whenever he speaks, you sense something out of the spirit, something of the Lord. Suppose these two brothers are ministering. With one brother you do not sense anything of the Lord, but the other brother is so rich in his thought, yet so strong, so fresh, in his spirit. While he is uttering something through his thought, you realize the richness and freshness of the Lord. The one brother is a person so much merely in the mind, but the other is in the spirit through the mind. With the first one, the source is the mind. With the second one, the source is not the mind but the Lord in the spirit. Something comes out of the Lord in the spirit through the mind.

THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:6 says, “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.” Your mind is a part of the soul. It could be with the flesh and become a mind of the flesh, or with the spirit and become the mind of the spirit. This means that your mind will be used by the spirit, be under the control of the spirit, and be directed by the spirit. This is the mind of the spirit. The mind is not the life of the soul but one of the faculties of the soul to be used, controlled, and directed by the spirit.

UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SPIRIT

We must learn the lesson to deny the natural mind, emotion, and will and to put them under the control of the spirit. We deny the life of the soul and take the Lord as our life in the spirit to control and direct all the parts of the soul in order that they might be used to express the Lord Himself.

KNOWING, REJOICING, AND PURPOSING IN SPIRIT

First Corinthians 2:11 says, "Who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?" The spirit of man knows through the mind. The mind is an organ to be used by the spirit to know something. Then 2 Corinthians 7:13 says, "We rejoiced more abundantly over the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you." The spirit of Titus was refreshed with joy. This shows that the spirit joys or rejoices through the emotions. The spirit knows something through the mind and rejoices through the emotion. Then Acts 19:21 says, "When these things were fulfilled, Paul purposed in his spirit to...go to Jerusalem." This means Paul exercised his will in the spirit. He made a decision in the spirit to take a trip. This does not mean that he was a man of the will but a spiritual man exercising his will. Paul was a man so much in the spirit with the uplifted faculties of the soul. His thoughts, emotions, and decisions were all in the spirit.

TAKING THE LORD AS LIFE

As Christians, we have to reject our mind, emotion, and will. We must reject ourselves and take the Lord Jesus as our life. This is done by returning to our spirit and sensing what is there in our spirit. Suppose a brother comes to talk with you. While you are listening, you must reject yourself. You must reject your natural thinking, your emotion, and your will. You have to take the Lord Jesus as your life in this particular matter by returning to your spirit, your innermost part, to sense what is there. This is the right way for us to act as a Christian, but most of us do not act in this way. Whenever a brother comes to talk with us, we exercise our mind independent of the spirit. We sometimes forget about the Lord Jesus and forget that we have a spirit. The way for a normal Christian to act, however, is to always deny the natural mind, will, and emotion and to take the Lord Jesus as his life. In everything we should return to the innermost part of our being to sense what is there.

THE INNER ANOINTING

If you do this, your spirit, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, will rise up to impress you with something. Then you will have a clear understanding. You will understand this brother thoroughly. Your spirit will rise up and spring up, and some living water will flow out to others. We must continually learn to take care of the inner anointing, the inner registration, the inner sense, the inner feeling, the inner consciousness. If we go along with this anointing, we will be a person walking in the spirit. Then all the faculties of our soul will be renewed, transformed, revived, strengthened, and improved. The life of the soul will be crucified and renounced, but the faculties of the soul will be ennobled.

SERVING BY THE EXERCISE OF THE SPIRIT

When you come to a church meeting, do not exercise your mind, but exercise your spirit to sense the inner life. When you are going to choose a hymn or pray, do not consider but sense with the spirit. When you stand up to speak, do not consider what you are going to say or what you have to say, but sense what the Lord's mind is that you have to say. There are two ways to meet: one way is in the soul, and the other way is in the spirit.

When you come to the meeting, sometimes you are really happy, but maybe tomorrow you will come with sorrow. You have to leave all these emotional feelings outside the door. When you come to the meeting, you must exercise your spirit to sense something within your spirit. Then you should utter something from your spirit despite your feeling. We must learn the lesson to serve the Lord not by exercising the mind, emotion, or will but by exercising the spirit to sense something of the Lord. This is the right and normal way for us to walk and to serve in the Lord and for the Lord.

CHAPTER TEN

DEALING WITH THE FLESH

Scripture Reading: Rom. 7:18; 8:6-7; Gen. 6:3; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; Gen. 2:7; 12:5; 46:27; Rom. 2:9; James 5:20; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24; Rom. 8:13

The Scriptures speak much concerning the flesh, perhaps even more than concerning the soul. Romans 7:18 says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells." Romans 8:6 says, "The mind set on the flesh is death," and verse 7 says, "The mind set on the flesh is enmity against God." In order to know how to experience the inner life, we need to know the things related to the flesh.

What do the Scriptures mean by the word *flesh*? It is not easy to give a proper, definite, and adequate definition of the flesh, because the flesh is very complicated. Genesis 6:3 says, "Jehovah said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, for he indeed is flesh." Here the word *is* may be translated "has become." Because man became flesh, God gave him up, and the Holy Spirit of God would no longer strive with him. This indicates that before this time the Holy Spirit had been striving with man, but at this point God made the decision to give man up because man also became flesh.

THE PROPER ORDER OF THE PARTS OF OUR BEING

We need all the Scriptures to give us the proper meaning of man becoming flesh. We have seen clearly that man was made of three parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body. At the time man was created, man had the flesh of his body, physically speaking, but he did not have the flesh as spoken of in Genesis 6. As we shall see, the flesh came into being through the transmutation of the body.

Man was made with a spirit, soul, and body, but man himself is neither a spirit nor a body. In all the Scriptures man is called not a spirit or a body but a soul. Genesis 2:7 tells us clearly that the man whom God created is a living soul. Genesis 12:5 also says, "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son and all their possessions that they had gathered and the souls that they had acquired in Haran." The many people Abraham acquired in Haran are

referred to as souls. Genesis 46:27 says, “All the souls of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy” (lit.). Man is called a soul in not only the Old Testament but also the New Testament. Romans 2:9 speaks of “tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man who commits evil, both of Jew first and of Greek,” and James 5:20 says, “Let him know that he who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save that one’s soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” A person is a soul, not a spirit or a body, yet this soul has a spirit to contact God, the spiritual world, and a body to contact the physical world. Man is a soul with two additional parts.

The soul is the very self, the very being of a person. God’s intention is that this soul would choose God as life and take God as life by man’s spirit through the Holy Spirit so that God will be in the spirit within the soul, that is, in the spirit of the person, to be the highest authority. Thus, the soul comes under the control of the spirit, in which God dwells. Then the soul is controlled, governed, and directed by God through the spirit, and it becomes the very person to act, express, and do things through God. In this way, God is expressed through the very person. This is God’s intention, and this is the right order of the three parts of man—spirit, soul, and body. The spirit must be first with God in it as life. The soul must stand with the spirit to take God as life and to submit to the spirit, to be controlled, directed, and governed by the spirit with God as life, so that under the direction, government, and control of the spirit, the soul expresses God Himself through the actions of the body. The body is under the direction of the soul, and the soul is under the direction of the spirit with God in it as life.

THE FLESH BEING THE TRANSMUTATION OF THE BODY

Man, however, became fallen, and the fall of man turned the proper order around and upside down. The fall damaged the spirit, the soul, and even the more, the body. By the fall man’s spirit was deadened; it became dead and out of function. Then the soul in itself became the primary part of man. If we read the history of Cain, the second generation of the human race, we can realize that man came to be led absolutely by his soul and was no longer under the control of his spirit. The soul rose to the top to live by itself, and it had nothing to do with the spirit and was not under the control of the spirit. Then gradually the soul, which had been damaged by the fall, was subdued by the body, which after the fall had become transmuted.

According to Romans 7, something very fallen and sinful, which was not a part of God's creation of the body, came into the body and transmuted it. This fallen and sinful element is the poison of Satan. The life and the nature of Satan have come into the body of the human race by means of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of which man partook, is something of Satan that has been taken by man into his body. We can never say that we have eaten something but that it has not come into our body. We must be careful what we eat, because whatever we eat comes into our body. At the time man took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, something of Satan, the satanic poison, which is the very sinful life and nature of Satan, came into man's body. Something of Satan has been injected into the body so that the body has been transmuted, changed in nature. Since this time, the Scriptures tell us that this body, which changed in nature, is called the flesh.

The body, as something created by God, is pure, having nothing sinful, filthy, or bad. In the fall, however, something of Satan came into the body and was added to the body, so the body has been transmuted, changed in nature, into the flesh. Romans 7:18 says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells." This chapter goes on to say that sin and the law of sin dwell in the members of our body. Here *sin* may be considered as a proper noun. Because sin dwells in the members of our body, our body is no more pure; it has been defiled and transmuted in nature to become the flesh. Therefore, the first meaning in the Scriptures of the word *flesh* is the transmuted body, the fallen body, the body that has changed in nature. The body is the item created by God, and the flesh is the body transmuted in its nature.

MAN BEING SUBDUED AND CONTROLLED BY THE FLESH

Genesis 6:3 says that man is flesh, not merely that man has the flesh. At the very moment of the fall, man's body became the flesh, but at that time man himself was not flesh. Strictly speaking, even by the time of the second generation of the human race, the time of Cain, man was not flesh. It was at the time of Genesis 6, shortly before the flood, that man not only had the flesh but also became flesh. That man became flesh means that man was subdued and controlled by the flesh.

As we have seen, in the original, proper order of man's being, the soul stands with the spirit, takes the spirit as the authority, and is controlled by the spirit. But due to not one step alone but step after step of the fall, the soul gave up the spirit as the authority and came under the control of the flesh. The soul has been subdued by the flesh, so the soul, as a person, is living under the control of the flesh. Because of this, the whole person and being of man have become the flesh. Because man's entire person, his entire being, lives according to the flesh, acts by the flesh, and does things by the flesh, and his entire life is under the influence and control of the flesh, man eventually is called flesh.

According to Genesis 2:7, the created man in the Scriptures is called a soul, and according to 6:3, the man fallen to the uttermost is called flesh. God created a soul, not a flesh, but man who was a soul was transmuted by step after step of the fall into the flesh. Man became flesh because he was subdued, controlled, and influenced by the transmuted, fallen flesh. Now man lives not according to the spirit or even according to the soul but according to the flesh. What the flesh desires, man does. As the flesh lusts, man acts. Man became the flesh, one who lives by the flesh, according to the flesh, and in the flesh.

The first meaning of the flesh in the Scriptures is the transmuted body, the body that has transmuted in nature, and the second meaning is the whole being of the fallen man. A fallen person is flesh. Romans 3:20 says, "Out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him." In this verse *flesh* simply means a person. That no flesh is justified means that no person is justified. Galatians 2:16 says, "Knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law, because out of the works of law no flesh will be justified." The first part of this verse speaks of man rather than flesh, but the latter phrase speaks of flesh. Flesh denotes man, not the created man but the absolutely fallen man. In the first part of the verse the man mentioned is the man who believes in Jesus Christ. In the last part there is no more man but flesh, saying that no flesh can be justified by the works of law.

We have a body, but we are not a body. In the same way, we have a spirit, but we are not a spirit. Rather, we are a soul. Are we then the flesh? We may say that we were flesh, but now we are no more flesh. However, I question this. Whether or not we are flesh depends on whether or not we are living, acting,

doing things, and walking under the control of the flesh. If we are not still under the control of the flesh, we are not flesh. That a person is a soul is according to God's creation, but that a person is flesh is according to the man who has fallen absolutely, who is living, acting, doing things, and walking under the control and direction of the flesh, according to the lusts and desires of the flesh. Such a person is called flesh.

THE FLESH BEING THE OLD MAN LIVED OUT

Galatians 5:24 says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts," and Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. On the one hand, the flesh is the old man, but on the other hand, they are not exactly the same. Romans 6 speaks of the old man, but Romans 7 speaks of the flesh. In the same principle, chapter 6 speaks of Christ, but chapter 8 speaks of the Spirit. If we see the difference between the Spirit and Christ, then in principle we can see the difference between the flesh and the old man. The Spirit is none other than Christ, but Christ is the Savior objectively, and the Spirit is the Savior subjectively. If we talk about the Savior in an objective way, we speak of Christ, but if we talk about the Savior in a subjective way, we speak of the Spirit. Who was crucified on the cross? It was Christ. Who is now dwelling in us? It is the Spirit. The One who was crucified on the cross objectively is called Christ, and the One who is now dwelling within us subjectively is called the Spirit, and this very Spirit is the very Christ. In the same principle, objectively speaking, it is the old man, but subjectively speaking, it is the flesh. The old man is the very person, and the flesh is this very person lived out.

If we did not have the Holy Spirit, we could never know Christ; Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is Christ lived out. In exactly the same principle, if we did not have the flesh, we could never know the old man. If a brother sits before us and never does or says anything, it is hard to say if he is a new man or an old man. What he is depends on his living, acting, doing, and working. If he acts according to the flesh and walks under the influence and control of the flesh, we will see that he is the old man expressed through the flesh. When we act, live, and walk in a fleshly way, the old man is one hundred percent expressed as the flesh.

Romans 6:6 says that our old man has been crucified with Christ, but Galatians 5:24 indicates that we need to crucify the flesh. Romans 6:6 is in the

passive voice, but Galatians 5:24 is in the active voice. That the old man has been crucified on the cross is an accomplished fact, but now we need to apply this accomplished fact to our flesh in our daily walk. Therefore, we need to crucify this flesh. As the old man, it has been crucified already—this is an accomplished fact—but as the flesh, we need to crucify it in our experience and daily living. This means that we must apply what Christ has accomplished on the cross to our daily experience.

Now we know the proper meaning of the word *flesh* in the Scriptures. First, it is the transmuted body, the body that changed in nature. Second, the flesh is a person who lives, acts, walks, and does things always under the control, direction, and influence of the flesh and according to the flesh. Third, it is the old man in our daily living, in our walk.

DEALING WITH THE FLESH AS THE PRACTICES OF THE BODY

Now we must see what it means to deal with the flesh. As we have seen, Galatians 5:24 says that they who are of Christ have crucified the flesh. In addition, Romans 8:13 says, "If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." The practices of the body are simply the flesh. To deal with the flesh is to put to death the practices of the body, to deal with all the sinful deeds of the body. To gamble is a practice of the body because one gambles with his hands. To be drunken is also a practice of the body. It is difficult to commit sin practically without using our body.

Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled." Since the fall, our body has been called the body of sin because this body is now possessed and indwelt by personified sin. Our body has become the residence of sin, so it is a body of sin. The meaning of the Greek word for *annulled* is "unemployed, jobless." A living person's hands can be used to gamble and do many sinful things because his body is possessed and indwelt by sin and is always used by Satan. The best way to stop his body from committing sin is to put it to death. When the body is put to death, it is jobless. As far as committing sin is concerned, it is out of employment. The old man has been crucified so that the body of sin may be unemployed, jobless. All the sinful things we do are

through the body, by some member of the body, so to deal with the flesh, we must first deal with the sinful deeds of the body.

Second, to deal with the flesh means to deal not only with the sinful deeds of our body but with our whole being, our whole person, because in the fall our whole being became flesh. A person as flesh can never please God or be accepted by God, no matter what he does. It is needless to say that with sinful deeds this flesh can never please God; even with good deeds, this flesh, this person as flesh, can never please God. Therefore, we must deal with our whole being.

Third, we need to deal with our fleshly living. There is a certain kind of living that is the very expression of the flesh. We need to deal with the sinful deeds, our whole being, and our fleshly living.

In order to know how to walk in the spirit and experience the inner life, we must know the dealing with the flesh. This is a great subject in the Scriptures. If the Holy Spirit would enlighten us, we will see that today many Christians are living in the flesh. Very few have experienced deliverance from the flesh. Therefore, we must know what the flesh is and how to deal with it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DEALING WITH THE SELF (1)

Scripture Reading: Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Rom. 6:11; Matt. 16:24

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE SELF

The Problem of Spiritual Knowledge without Experience

All spiritual experiences begin with a certain amount of knowledge, but once we have the knowledge of spiritual experiences, it is easy to consider that we have the experiences themselves. This is especially true for young believers. To have knowledge is one thing, but to have the experiences of life is another. If we hear a person testify with spiritual knowledge, we may think that he has the experiences of the Christian life, the church life, and the Spirit. In the first stage of the Christian life, however, what we mainly have is knowledge. Our knowledge needs to be tested by failures, trials, temptations, and many troubles. The more knowledge the Lord affords us, the more He will put us on the test.

In just one year, a believer can gain much spiritual knowledge. Then he may think that he has everything. He may believe himself to be the most wonderful, advanced, and spiritual believer. What he has, however, may be ninety-five percent knowledge in his intelligence, not experience. According to knowledge, he may seem to have been in the Lord for many years, but in actuality he has little real experience. When the Lord puts such a one on the test, he finds that what he has is nearly all knowledge.

There are many different ways the Lord puts us on the test. One is that at a certain point He withholds His hand from us and lets us fail. After we are saved, the Lord's hand sustains us, but at a certain point He will withdraw His hand. He will leave us to ourselves, and we will be sure to have a failure. That seems terrible, but in actuality it is not. The Lord is very wise. In this way we see that what we thought we had was not real.

Another way the Lord puts us on the test is to give us trials. The number of ways that the Lord has to give us trials is inexhaustible, including physical matters, family matters, and many others. Moreover, trials often do not come by themselves; one trial follows another. The Lord gives us many trials to test us. Then we are in the "fire" to be "burned," and in this burning we come to know how much of what we have is merely knowledge in our mentality, and how much is real experience. Then we discover that we have little real experience, perhaps only five percent or even one percent of what we thought we had. Little by little we find that the greater part of what we have is merely knowledge in our mind.

We should be advised and warned to be in fear and trembling and to have no trust in ourselves. If we have any trust in ourselves, it is easy to be tempted. This temptation is another kind of test. Temptation comes to us when we have some trust in ourselves. Because our heart is deceitful, the trust we have in ourselves is often in secret. Sometimes we do not even admit it to ourselves. The only way for the Lord to prove that we have a secret trust in ourselves is to allow temptation to test us. When we are tempted, we realize that we have self-trust and self-confidence. These temptations prove to us that we are not competent, that we are not good enough to trust ourselves, and that we are not good enough to meet the situations. Whenever this kind of temptation comes, we always fail. Even if we try our best, we simply cannot make it, because the Lord's hand is withheld from us in order to allow us to meet the situation alone and prove that we are not competent for anything.

By all these tests we will realize how little we have and that what we mostly have is knowledge in the mind. Then something real will come out of this burning, and we will begin another stage. We will be equipped and further nourished with spiritual knowledge. We will know things in a deeper, fuller way. Then even though we have learned the lesson of the first stage that knowledge is not real experience, we will once again consider that we have much and have become rich. We will once again enter into a dream that we are spiritual and have acquired much. Then in the same principle, the Lord will put us on the test again. This is the process of the Christian experience.

The process of Christian experience can be compared to a potter with his clay. First, the potter paints a design on the clay, making it look beautiful. After being painted, however, the clay must be put into the fire to be burned. The Lord as the Potter always paints us first and then puts us through the fire

to be burned. Day after day He operates according to the same principle in order to work something of Himself into us, first by spiritual knowledge and revelation and second by testing. This is the reason that many of the Lord's children, after hearing a message and gaining some knowledge and revelation, are put into testing. The more we are clear about this process, the more we will be saved from troubles. This will humble us.

The Problem of Introspection in the Self

A person with spiritual knowledge may be very introspective. It is more difficult for this kind of person to be delivered from the self than it is for others. Such a person may be slow and cautious, and he looks at himself and analyzes himself. Some believers are at the opposite pole; they are careless. An introspective person, however, is very capable to take care of himself in the best way, but this is his problem. It is hard for such a one to forget about himself. He "sticks" to himself all the time and cannot get away from himself. It is hard for the Lord to work on such a person.

For a person to overcare for himself is to always look at, think about, and consider himself. This is not to care about his living, eating, and drinking; rather, it is to always consider whether he is proud or humble, whether he is really with the Lord, whether he is proper, or whether he has offended anyone. With such a one, ninety-nine percent of what he has may be his self, and one percent is the Lord. He is mostly occupied with the self to care for the self. For this kind of person, many failures become his helpers. Failures make a person bankrupt in caring for his self.

Many believers need to care for their character, but an introspective person should forget about his character. The more he builds up his character, the more he is in the self. This kind of character building simply helps him to analyze himself more. Day by day he checks to see if he is genuine and real. This becomes a very serious hindrance to his spiritual growth. Rather, spiritual growth depends on the denial of the self, and the denial of the self simply means to forget about the self.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF THE CROSS

The Accomplished Fact of Our Crucifixion with Christ

The cross refers to the blood of Christ and to the death of Christ. The blood is for cleansing, but the death is for dealing with negative things. There are three aspects to the work of the cross. The first is the accomplished fact seen in Romans 6:6, which says that our old man has been crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20 also indicates that we are crucified with Christ. This is a fact accomplished by the Lord. To see the fact is the first aspect, or the first step, in the experience of Christ's work of the cross.

The Realization of the Accomplished Fact

The second aspect of the work of the cross is the realization of the fact. The Lord as our Savior died for us, and we died with Him. Along with His crucifixion for us was our crucifixion with Him. We can see this in the type of Noah's ark. The ark passed over the judgment of the flood with eight persons. In this way the ark suffered the judgment for the eight persons, but it also suffered the judgment with the eight persons, because the eight persons were in the ark. If the eight persons were not in the ark, how could the ark suffer the judgment for them? The ark could suffer judgment only for the people who were in it. In the same way, the substitution of Christ's death for us depends on our identification with Him. If there is no identification, there is no substitution. Christ's death is for us because we are identified with Him and are in Him, and because we are in Him, we have died with Him.

When we receive the Lord Jesus as our Savior, we recognize that He died for us and also with us, and because He died with us, we died also. Therefore, we hand ourselves over to the cross. This is the meaning of Galatians 5:24, which says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." They who are of Christ Jesus recognize and realize the fact that they have died, so they put their flesh to death. With respect to the accomplished fact, we simply need to say, "I am crucified with Christ." To realize, recognize, and admit what the Lord has accomplished is the second aspect, the second stage or step, of the experience of the work of the cross.

This is the experience spoken of in Romans 6. On the one hand, verse 6 tells us that we have been crucified with Christ, and on the other hand, verse 11 tells us to reckon that we are dead. To reckon is to recognize a fact, just as we recognize that three plus two is five. As we recognize that we have been crucified on the cross, we are released from the bondage and dominion of sin (vv. 18, 22).

Continually Bearing the Cross to Deny the Self

The third aspect of the work of the cross is to always bear the cross. Several times in the Gospels the Lord tells us to bear the cross (Matt. 16:24; 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). At the time we received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, we recognized that we died with the Lord, and we sealed this realization by handing ourselves over to the cross, by putting ourselves on the cross. From that time on, we should not come down off the cross. Rather, we must bear the cross. To bear the cross is to always keep ourselves in the death of Christ, to always appropriate the Lord's death.

The Lord bore the cross first, and then He was crucified on it. We, however, were crucified first, and then we bear the cross. Christ accomplished His death on the cross, and we were nailed on the cross in Christ and through Christ; this is a fact. Then at the time we believed in the Lord, we recognized the fact of our death on the cross, and we sealed our realization by being baptized. From this time on, we should never come down off the cross; we must always keep ourselves in the position of death. Seeing the accomplished fact, recognizing and receiving it, and bearing the cross are the three steps for us to experience the death of Christ.

As we have said, when we recognize that we have been crucified on the cross, we are released from the bondage and dominion of sin. As fallen persons, however, we have not only the problem of sin but a bigger, more serious problem, which is the self. Sin and self are the two main elements of the fallen person. Sin is the nature of the fallen person, and the self is the life of the fallen person. Nature is related to our desires; since we have the sinful nature, we have the desire of sin. Life is the energy, strength, and power to do things according to the nature. When we recognize that we have been crucified on the cross, we are set free from sin, released from the bondage of the nature of sin, but we still have the self, which is the biggest problem.

To bear the cross gives us a real deliverance from the self. We must always keep ourselves under the death of the cross. This puts the self to death. To bear the cross has very much to do with the denial of the self. To bear the cross is simply to put the self, the soulish life, to death. The way of deliverance is not introspection, to look at oneself. It is to bear the cross all the time, recognizing that we, that is, our self, have been put to death. The cross is

applied to the self, so we have no more hope in the self; we never look at it, we never analyze it, and we have nothing to do with it. This is the way of deliverance.

The daily and practical way to apply the cross is simply to recognize that we have been crucified. If we have a large debt and someone pays it, we should recognize this fact and stand on it; that is all. In this regard we can tell a sinner, "Friend, the Lord Jesus is your Savior. He died on the cross for all your sins." There is no need for the sinner to analyze. He should simply receive Christ as his Savior and accept the fact that He died on the cross. It is just as simple for the believers. There is no need for us to analyze. We can say, "Lord, You died for me on the cross, so I am through. I am finished. I also was crucified on the cross, and I put my seal on this. Now I am on the cross, and the cross is on me. From this time on I stand on this fact." This is the real denial of the self.

If we recognize that we died and were buried, we should not look at ourselves. We should stand on the fact and then bear the cross. Do not give any ground to the self again, because the self is on the cross, and the cross is on the self; that is, the self bears the cross. Without bearing the cross in this way, we cannot have the real denial of the self. In fact, to bear the cross is to deny the self, and to deny the self is to bear the cross.

To always keep ourselves under the death of the cross is to deny our soulish life—our thoughts, our desires, and our will. We should not allow the desires, thoughts, or will of the natural life to do something. Whenever we have a thought, desire, or will to do something, we must not forget that the cross is on us and we are on the cross. To stand on this fact is to bear the cross, and this is to deny the self.

To be released from sin, we simply need to reckon that we were crucified, but to deny the self requires that we always keep ourselves in the death of Christ. To be crucified on the cross is once for all, but to bear the cross is not once for all. We must bear the cross all the time. Therefore, it is easy to be freed from sin, but it is rather difficult to be delivered from the self. As soon as we give up the death of the cross, we will live by the self.

As we shall see, the real bearing of the cross for the denial of the self must be in the Spirit, not of ourselves. By the power, strength, and energy of the

Spirit we can always keep ourselves under the death of the cross. The more we realize that we are under the death of the cross, the more we are filled by the Spirit. For this purpose, we need to cooperate with the Spirit. Without our cooperating, the Spirit cannot work. In the following chapter we will emphasize this in more detail.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DEALING WITH THE SELF (2)

Scripture Reading: Matt. 16:21-26; Luke 9:25

We have seen what the flesh is, but it is more difficult to see what the self is. In Matthew 16:24 the Lord says that we must deny our self and bear the cross. Apparently, we are very familiar with a scriptural term such as *self*, but if we go into its details, it is hard to find a proper definition.

THE SELF BEING EQUIVALENT TO THE SOUL

According to Matthew 16 and Luke 9, the self is equivalent to the soul. Matthew 16:26 says, "What shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life?" Similarly, Luke 9:25 says, "What is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses or forfeits himself?" If we compare these two passages, we can see that according to the Lord's word, the self in Luke 9 is the soul in Matthew 16. However, if the self is exactly the same as the soul, it seems that there is no need to have two terms. Therefore, there must still be a definite meaning of the term *self*.

As we have seen, the flesh in its full meaning is the fallen man as a whole. In this fallen man there are three parts—the fallen body, the fallen soul, and the fallen spirit. All three parts of the human being are fallen to the extent that the whole person becomes flesh. Man becomes flesh simply because his whole person is under the control and influence of the flesh. The fallen body is the main part of the fallen flesh. The next part of the fallen being is the fallen soul, and the least part of the fallen being is the fallen spirit. According to the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, the fallen spirit has very little to do with the flesh, the fallen man as a whole. The fallen spirit is simply dormant, sleeping, and dead. The fallen body of the fallen person, on the other hand, is very active. If we look at today's society, the human community, we can see how active the fallen body of fallen man is. Within the fallen body is the most evil matter, which is sin. Romans 7 tells us that sin dwells in the members of the body.

It is easy to explain what the body and sin are. The body is the form, the vessel, made by God, but sin is something from Satan other than the body that came into the body. The Scriptures do not say that sin is equivalent to the body. However, they do reveal that the self is equivalent to the soul. Therefore, it is difficult to explain the difference between the self and the soul.

With the fallen soul there is another evil matter, which is the self. With the fallen body there is sin, and with the fallen soul there is the self. Therefore, with the fallen man as a whole, as the flesh, there are two problems: sin and self. Sin is in the body; self is in the soul. If we could eradicate sin and self from the fallen person, he would be pure. After we become Christians, we need to deal with sin, and we need to deal with the self. We must be released from sin, as taught in Romans 6, and we must deny the self, as taught in Matthew 16:24.

To say that we deal with the body means that we deal with sin. Likewise, to say that we deal with the soul means that we deal with the self. There was nothing wrong with the created body. The body created by God was good. What made it wrong was that sin and lust came into it from Satan. This was something other than what God created. In the same way, there was nothing wrong with the soul as created by God. The soul created by God was good, but within the soul there is now the self, which makes it wrong. God created a soul, but God did not create a self.

When the soul is under the control of the spirit and dependent on God, it is a pure and right soul. This is the condition of the human soul as created by God. Due to the fall, however, the soul created by God declared independence from God. In the fall, man took the fruit of the tree of knowledge into his body, but before that, he took the thought, suggestion, opinion, and idea of Satan into his soul. In this way, man declared independence from God in his soul. If man had kept his soul dependent on God, he would never have disobeyed God and taken the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Because man's soul became independent of God, the soul became the self.

OPINION BEING THE MANIFESTATION AND INCARNATION OF THE SELF

God clearly told man that he should not take the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but man made the decision to take it. This shows that the soul is

especially independent in the opinion and in the will. Since man became independent in his mind and will, his soul became the self. If five brothers come together to coordinate, one brother may be very strong in his will, strongly making decisions in certain matters. The other four brothers may not agree with his decision and may even be forced to argue with him. This brother is very much in the self and full of the self, but the others may also be in their opinion.

We should not think that to be a Christian coming together with others is easy. In 1922 Brother Watchman Nee and another young brother were the leading ones in Foochow, Brother Nee's hometown. On one winter day they wanted to have a gospel meeting. Brother Nee came to the meeting place before the meeting started, and seeing that the weather was very cold, he closed the door. After a while, the other brother came to look around the meeting place. He thought it was awkward to have the door closed, so he opened it. After another short time, Brother Nee saw the door open and closed it again, but after one or two minutes the other brother came and opened it again. The other brother insisted on having the door open even though the weather was cold and the wind was blowing. This was his opinion. Eventually Brother Nee said, "I will let it go. I do not care if it is open or closed. Brother, let us go to pray." To come together to practice the church life is not easy if we do not learn the lessons.

The opinion is the manifestation, the incarnation, of the self, and the self incarnated is the opinion. Whenever we have an opinion, we should be on the alert and remember that this opinion is the self incarnated. The opinion and the will are dangerous. The self within us is expressed sometimes by the will but most of the time by opinions. We have opinions as the manifestation of the self simply because we are independent from God. If we were dependent on God, we would not have opinions; all our opinions would be gone. The more we are independent of God, the more we have opinions as the manifestation of the self.

SELF BEING THE VERY ESSENCE OF SATAN IN THE SOUL

Matthew 16:21-26 is a good illustration of the self. Verses 21 and 22 say, "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!" Regardless of what God's will was, Peter loved the Lord and did not agree with His dying. This was Peter's love for the Lord, but it was his love in his self-opinion. Verse 23 continues, "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." This indicates that whenever we have an opinion, we have Satan. This is terrible! Peter did not set his mind on the things of God. He did not have a dependent mind. Rather, his mind was independent of God. The independent mind is the opinion and the self. Verses 24 through 26 say, "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. For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?"

If we read this passage carefully, we can realize that in the soul there is the self, in the self there is the mind, and in the mind there is the opinion. Just as sin is something of Satan in the body, the self is something of Satan in the soul expressed mostly through the opinions. If we learn this lesson, whenever we come together, we will be afraid to have opinions. This is not only so in the church life but even in the family life. There is trouble today in families simply because the husband has the husband's opinion, the wife has the wife's opinion, and within both of the opinions there is Satan. The result is sometimes separation, then divorce. If all the wives would learn the lesson to depend on God and give up their own opinion, do you think there would be divorce? How nice it would be if all the husbands also would give up their opinion and depend on God. The trouble is simply due to the fact that each one expresses an opinion, everyone is independent of the Lord, and everyone is full of the self, opinion, and reasoning.

If we learn the lesson in our family life of being dependent on God, when anything happens, the husbands, wives, and all the members will not express an opinion. Rather, they will say, "Let us go to God. Let us seek the Lord's mind." In this case, there will be no trouble. This is the right way. If we learn this lesson in the family, when we come to the church life, we will act in the same way. We will say, "Brothers, let us go to the Lord. Let us pray and wait

on Him." We will all be subdued by the Lord and dependent on the Lord. We must not say, "I feel," "I think," or "In my opinion." This is the self.

Self is a dangerous matter. In Matthew 16 there are four items—the mind, the soul, the self, and Satan. The mind is of the self, the self is of the soul, and within these is Satan. In the mind, or in the opinion, of the soul there is Satan. Before verses 21 through 26 Peter had been under the revelation of the heavenly Father (vv. 16-17), but just a short time later he was utilized by Satan. In one moment he spoke something from the heavenly Father, and a moment later he spoke something from Satan.

Now we can see the meaning of the self. Self is the very essence of Satan in the soul, making the soul independent of God to express its self-opinion and self-will. This is the best definition of the self. Whenever we are independent of God and have an opinion or will, we have the self with Satan, who is in the self. If we realize this meaning, and we apply it to our daily life, we will see that day by day this is the problem with every one of us. Why are children disobedient to their parents? It is simply because their soul, their mind, their will, is independent from the parents. They have their own opinion, and they even have their own will. That is the self, and Satan is in the self.

THE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE SELF

There are two problems with fallen man: sin in the body and the self in the soul. After we have been saved, we need to deal with these two matters. Here we will see how to deal with the self. First, we need to have the revelation that our old man has been crucified on the cross. The soul is the life of the old man, and the self is in the soul. Our old man, that is, the soul-life, our self, has been crucified on the cross. We need to see, to have the revelation of, this fact. Second, after we have seen that the old man has been crucified on the cross, we recognize and accept the fact. We say, "Lord, praise You, I have been crucified!" We even tell the enemy, the devil, "Satan, I have been crucified!"

However, this is not all. Third, we need to apply to ourselves the death of Christ that He accomplished and that we have recognized. This is the correct meaning of bearing the cross. When we recognize that we have been crucified on the cross, we receive this fact. Now, because we have been put on the cross, we receive the cross and put it on us. In this way we bear the cross day by day to put the self to death.

This application must be carried out in the Holy Spirit. It is in the Spirit that we bear the cross. When we are living and walking in the Spirit, the Spirit applies the death of Christ to us. Step by step, day by day, moment by moment, and even event by event we check our self, opinion, will, thought, and concept by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit checks us all the time, and when we are checked by the Holy Spirit, we are willing to put the self under Christ's death, that is, to put the cross upon the self, to apply the Lord's death to the self. This application of the cross is always in the Spirit and by the Spirit. This is why we must contact the Lord and fellowship with the Lord. When we are in the fellowship, we are in the stream, and when we are in the stream, we are in the Holy Spirit.

With the Holy Spirit there is always the death of Christ. Do you realize who the Holy Spirit is? The Holy Spirit is the very One who became incarnated and lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years, who was crucified, resurrected, ascended, and exalted to the heavens. From this very One the stream of living water, the Spirit, flows out. Now within this living water, who is the Spirit, there are many elements, including incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, the human nature, and the divine nature. All these elements are in the Holy Spirit, that is, in the stream of living water.

We may compare the Spirit to a drink. In one drink we may add many items. We may put in juice, sugar, and other ingredients. Then from the pitcher the drink flows out into our cup. Now in the cup are all the ingredients. The Lord was incarnated, He lived on this earth, was crucified, resurrected, and ascended. After all this He came to us as the Spirit, and within this Spirit are the many elements. Divinity is in this Spirit, humanity is in this Spirit, and the elements of His all-inclusive death, resurrection, and ascension are in this Spirit. Therefore, to be filled with this Spirit is to be filled with divinity, humanity, the effectiveness of the death of Christ, resurrection, and ascension. This is wonderful!

The Spirit can be compared to a dose of medicine with many ingredients. The Holy Spirit is a "dose," and within this dose are many elements. Our experience bears witness to this. When we are in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we have the effectiveness of the death of Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the transcendence of His ascension. Many things come to suppress, depress, and oppress us, but when we are in the Spirit, we experience resurrection power. Nothing can suppress us. The more pressure

there is, the more release we have. Likewise, if we are in the Holy Spirit and we allow the Holy Spirit to have His way, we sense that we are transcendent because within the Holy Spirit is the transcendence of Christ. We sense that we are on high; we are on the top. No one can touch us, and all the enemies and evil spirits are under us. When we are in the Spirit, we feel that we are in the heavenlies.

In the same principle, when we are in the Holy Spirit, we experience that we are dead; we are through. We are dead to the self, dead to our opinion, and dead to our will. We need to be in the Holy Spirit because it is by the Holy Spirit that the effectiveness of the death of Christ is applied to us. It is in the Holy Spirit that the application of the cross is prevailing. This is why we insist so much that we go to the Lord. We must contact the throne and have the flow of living water from the throne flowing through us.

If we have problems, we should not argue with one another. To argue is awful; arguments get us nowhere. We can argue for many days and nights, but the more we argue, the more reasonings we have. Our reasonings cannot be exhausted; rather, they will increase. The more we argue, the more we are in the self, and the more we are under the influence of Satan, even the control of Satan. What then must we do? Whenever there is an argument, we should stop and say to one another, “Let us go to the Lord and pray. Let us contact the Lord.” However, we must not pray in our reasonings.

To deal with the self is to live and walk in the Spirit; it is to always apply the Lord’s death by the Spirit to our opinion, will, and self. This is to deny the self, which is to bear the cross, to put the death of Christ upon our self.

To deal with the self is not a once-for-all matter. We must deal with the self day by day and moment by moment. Once we are out of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we are in the self again. Whenever we do not apply the death of the Lord, we are in the self. We need to be very watchful. To deal with the self is more difficult than to deal with sin. For Christians to be released from the bondage of sin is easy, but it is very difficult to deal with the self. This self is a very subtle enemy. I cannot adequately express how much damage the self has caused the church.

We must learn the lesson that to experience the Holy Spirit we need the full knowledge of the cross. Many people say that they experience the Holy Spirit,

but they do not have the full knowledge of the cross. They do not know how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and to realize that with the Holy Spirit there is the application of the Lord's death to their very self. Whenever we have an opinion, a thought, a will, or a desire to express or insist upon, we need to pray. We need to contact the Lord. We must check the opinion, will, thought, and desire with the cross. We must check, "Has this thought, opinion, will, and desire passed through the cross?" We must make the cross a "checkpoint" for the will, thoughts, opinions, and desires. If we check in such a way, we will be delivered from the self. This is to bear the cross and deny the self.

Our two problems—sin and self—are our two practical enemies, enemies not in theory but in practice. We need to reckon ourselves dead on the cross; then we will be released from the bondage of sin. We also need to apply the death of the cross to our self in our daily life and apply this death to all the items of our self. This is the way to deal with the self. If we do not know how to deal with the self, and if we do not practice to deal with the self, it is hard for us to have any improvement in the spiritual life. It is hard for us to grow even a little in the spiritual life. We must pray about this and remember that the way to practice the dealing with the self is by the cross in the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE

Scripture Reading: Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 2 Cor. 1:12; Rom. 9:1

In the previous chapters we saw the dealing with the flesh and with the self. In order to learn the way of life, that is, in order to grow in life, we need to also deal with our conscience. The New Testament contains a number of passages concerning the conscience. Acts 23:1 says, "Paul, looking intently at the Sanhedrin, said, Men, brothers, I have conducted myself in all good conscience before God until this day." In 24:16 Paul said, "Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men." First Timothy 1:5 says, "The end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and out of a good conscience and out of unfeigned faith," and verse 19 says, "Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith." Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" In chapter 10, verse 22 says, "Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Second Corinthians 1:12 says, "Our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in singleness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you." Lastly, Romans 9:1 says, "I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit."

After reading the above passages, we can be clear about the importance of the conscience. The apostle Paul said that his conscience bore witness for him in the Holy Spirit, and he had the testimony of his conscience concerning his manner of life. He always exercised to have a conscience without offense not only before God but also toward men. Moreover, we must have a purged and pure conscience, a conscience without offense, accusation, or condemnation, so that we may have the peace and assurance to serve the Lord. Paul also tells us that in order to come near to God to contact Him, we must have a heart

sprinkled from an evil, wicked, or defiled conscience. If we have a pure conscience without offense or accusation, we are at peace, and we have the assurance of faith, the boldness, to contact God and serve the Lord. By all this we can see how vital the conscience is regarding the relationship between us and God.

THE CONSCIENCE BEING A PART OF OUR HUMAN SPIRIT

In the past few chapters we saw that in order to grow in the Lord as life, we must deal with our flesh and our self. Fallen man has sin in his body and the self in his soul. Sin in the body together with self in the soul comprises the flesh. To deal with the flesh and the self is to deal with the sinful body and the soul. These two dealings are very subjective, but in our experience dealing with the conscience is even deeper than dealing with the flesh and with the self, because the conscience is the main part of our human spirit. We can prove this by comparing Romans 9:1 with 8:16. The first verse says that our conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit, and the second says that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit. That the conscience bears witness in the Spirit and the Spirit bears witness with our spirit proves that the conscience must be a part of our spirit. Since the conscience is a great part of our spirit, to deal with the conscience is to deal with our spirit, which is much deeper than our soul. We may have dealt with our flesh and our self, so at this time we may not be wrong related to the flesh and the self. However, we still may have a questionable standing before God due to a problem in our conscience.

THE OPERATION OF THE CONSCIENCE THROUGH THE INTUITION OF THE SPIRIT

In our spirit, besides the conscience we also have another function, which is to directly sense the thought and will of God. To sense something is deeper than to see it. We may come into a room, for example, and sense a certain atmosphere even if we cannot see, smell, or touch it. In our human spirit there is a function that senses the will and mind of God directly. We call this function the intuition. Many times we have no problem with the flesh or the self, yet we still have a problem before God in our conscience because the conscience in our spirit always speaks something to us for God through the intuition of the spirit.

Sometimes we may make up our mind to do something, but in our spirit there may be the deep sense that the Lord wants us to do something else. At that time, if we insist on our own opinion, our conscience will speak something for God to show us that we are wrong. Many times we have had this experience. We have no sins, we have dealt with all things, and we are not wrong in any matter of the flesh or self, but we sense that there is a problem before God deep within us. That is the conscience speaking something for God through the intuition of the spirit.

This is deeper than dealing with the flesh and dealing with the self. It is something deeper in our spirit, which no one but we ourselves can comprehend. When we do something, others may not know what is deep within us, but in our spirit there is the intuition, which senses the will and mind of God directly, apart from our reasoning. We may try several times to do something, but we still may not have the anointing. There is something within us speaking to us that we should not do it. We may not know the reason, but we do realize deep within that there is the sense not to do it. This is the direct sense through the intuition of the spirit, and the conscience speaks for God according to that sense.

OUR CONSCIENCE AND THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

Please note, however, that our conscience is troubled not only due to the intuition from God in our spirit. If there is anything wrong with us, our conscience will speak something for God. If, for example, we do something wrong toward a brother, right away the conscience within us will speak for God to tell us we are wrong. Then our conscience demands that we do two things. First, we must confess to the Lord to ask forgiveness from Him, and second, we must go to the brother and say, “Brother, forgive me. I was wrong in that matter.” Why must we confess to the Lord and go to the brother? It is because the conscience demands that we do.

We all know from our experience that if we do not confess and ask forgiveness, something in our conscience accuses us, and we lose the rest, peace, and assurance of faith. Then we do not have the boldness to come to the Lord. There is a barrier, a separation, a wall, between us and the Lord. This hinders our prayer life very much. As long as we have an accusation in our conscience, it is impossible for us to contact the Lord to pray in a living

way. We simply cannot pray, because there is something between us and the Lord, damaging our conscience and hindering us.

Our assurance of faith has very much to do with a good, pure conscience. An offense, an accusation, in our conscience is like a hole in a vessel, out of which all the water leaks. As long as our conscience has an offense, our assurance of faith will leak out because our conscience is breached. An accusation in our conscience makes it impossible to have the assurance of faith. We simply cannot make ourselves believe in the Lord.

It is not necessary to have a big problem for our conscience to be troubled. Sometimes it is the small matters that trouble our conscience. Sometimes it is just a wrong or inaccurate word. After we speak such a word, we sense that we are wrong. Then, if we do not take care of our conscience, we will have constant accusations. We will have an evil conscience. It will be not pure, so we will not be at peace, and we will lose the assurance of faith. To be sure, if there is an offense in our conscience, our assurance of faith, our peace, and our boldness will be gone. Therefore, if we are going to contact God and serve the Lord, we need to take care of our conscience.

THREE KINDS OF GOVERNMENT

When the conscience speaks something for God, there is a strict regulation within us. In these days we have seen that the kingdom of the heavens is the heavenly rule, but the heavenly rule has much to do with the conscience. If we lose the rule of our conscience, we do not know what the heavenly rule is, because without the conscience we cannot know whether we are right or wrong. It is the conscience that regulates within us to always tell us what is right and what is wrong. Without the conscience we do not have this kind of sense.

We need to see how our conscience came to have its present position. According to the Scriptures, the spirit of man became deadened in the fall of man. After man committed sin, sin deadened and damaged the human spirit. However, after the fall the function of the conscience in the human spirit became more active than it was before the fall. On the one hand, the human spirit was deadened, and sin damaged its functions of fellowship with God and intuition from God, and on the other hand, the function of the conscience in the human spirit became more active and positive. This is because in the

fall man took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this knowledge of good and evil caused the function of the conscience to become more developed.

After the creation and before the fall, man in his original condition was sinless. In other words, man did not know the difference between good and evil. Good and evil were like a foreign language to him. If we could have asked Adam, "What is good, and what is evil?" Adam might have said, "I do not know what you mean. I did not know there are such words as *good* and *evil*." When man was sinless, he had no knowledge of good and evil. This was truly wonderful. When we have the knowledge of good and evil, it is so easy to do evil. If we never knew what stealing is, we would probably never steal. Once we have the knowledge of stealing, we may do it. In a sense, the knowledge of good and evil is evil in itself. It is better not to have this knowledge. After the fall man received the knowledge of good and evil, so the function of his conscience was much developed.

At the time when man was sinless, he was directly under the divine government, the government of God. After the fall, however, man came under the government of the conscience. Then, after a certain period of time, man had a further fall in that he would not take care of his conscience. At that time, after the flood, God told Noah to set up a human government; man needed to be governed by other men. To be governed by God directly is the divine government, to be governed by our conscience is self-government, and to be governed by others is human government.

Today all the worldly people are under the human government. After we are saved, however, we come under another government, but we should not quickly say that we are under God's government. Many brothers and sisters are at least fifty percent under human government. As a Christian, a young man in school is not altogether without human government. He still needs the school authorities to govern him, but as such, he is a defeated Christian. A normal, sound, fundamental Christian should no longer need human government. After we are saved, if we are normal, we are governed by our conscience. Therefore, we must deal with our conscience. If we are not governed by our conscience, we are to some degree under the government of man. After being saved, many young people still need human government. Even many older believers still need human government. This is because they are not strong in their conscience. If they were strong in their conscience, the

conscience would rule and govern them. There should be no need for others to govern them.

I have discovered that in many places the young people are afraid of me. Such ones are not strong, normal Christians. If they were normal Christians, there would be no need to be afraid of this brother. Why do we Christians still need human government? Do we not have a regenerated, renewed, and enlightened conscience? We must be governed by our conscience. We must exercise to maintain a good conscience before God. Many children, however, after being genuinely saved, do many improper things, for which they are afraid of their parents. This shows that they are not normal. They are abnormal and wrong. They are saved, but they are not under the control, the government, of the conscience. To be sure, it is difficult for such ones to fellowship with the Lord in a nice way, and it is also hard for them to pray. They simply do not have the ability to pray. They do not have the assurance, the peace, to pray because there are many problems and accusations in their conscience.

With some Christians, the accusations in their conscience are many. Because of accusation after accusation, their conscience becomes absolutely dark. Then, as far as fellowship is concerned, they are finished. It is simply not possible to have fellowship with the Lord, because their conscience is offended. When the conscience is full of defilement, offense, and filthiness, it no longer functions, and when the conscience does not function, the entire spirit is out of function. Then it is impossible to have fellowship with the Lord. In order to exercise our spirit, we must exercise always to have a good conscience.

Between human government and divine government is the stepping stone of self-government through the conscience. The government of the conscience is the stepping stone to be delivered out of the human government and translated into the divine government. Therefore, we must exercise ourselves to maintain a good conscience, and the more we exercise, the better. Always keep a good conscience; then we will arrive at a condition in which we are directly governed by the Holy Spirit. After exercising our conscience for a period of time, we will come under the divine government.

Why do we need a good conscience, a conscience without offense? It is because we need to be translated into the presence of the Lord to be directly

under the divine government. But as long as there is some offense, some accusation in our conscience, we are separated from the Lord, and we do not know how to be governed, directed, and ruled by the Holy Spirit. It is when we care for our conscience, always maintain a pure and good conscience without offense, and always have peace, rest, boldness, and assurance of faith in our conscience that we can be directly governed by the Holy Spirit.

If we still need our conscience to speak to us, we are wrong. A city may always have a police station, but if the police need to come into function with us, this means that we have done something wrong. We do not like to see a policeman come; that is a bad sign. We like for the police to always be jobless regarding us. That means that we are right and have nothing wrong. In the same way, as long as we need our conscience to govern us, there is a little distance between us and the Lord. If we were to have no distance from the Lord, the function of the conscience would not be necessary; the conscience would be jobless. If we are wrong in nothing and are so much in the presence of the Lord, there is nothing for the conscience to do, because we are directly under the divine government. However, not only when we do something wrong but even when we only intend to do it, we need the conscience, which then comes in to check us.

If we have never dealt with our conscience, it has many offenses and accusations, and it does not work; it is out of function in a negative way. Then, as far as fellowship is concerned, we are far from God in our experience, although in fact the Lord is still with us. There is a great distance between us and the Lord, so we must deal with our conscience. If we do not deal with our conscience, we can never come back into the presence of the Lord. It is the conscience that brings us into the presence of the Lord. This is the stepping stone, the bridge, to bring us from one kind of control to be under the divine control.

Perhaps the majority of the saints have never dealt with their conscience in an adequate way. I beg you to take this word and try to deal with your conscience. Then you will see what a problem it is. When we go to the Lord to deal with our conscience, many things will come out for us to deal with. We will need to adjust and correct many matters.

DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE BEING NECESSARY

FOR THE GROWTH IN LIFE

In order to grow as Christians in the spiritual life, there is no other way to take. There is no shortcut. We must deal with our flesh, deal with our self, and deal with our conscience. If we do not deal with our conscience, we can never be persons living in the presence of the Lord. Many saints are far from the Lord regarding their fellowship. They are not in the fellowship and presence of the Lord because of many problems in their conscience. What we have learned and what we always tell the young believers is that we must deal with the conscience. This is a must.

If we have never dealt with our conscience, we have never grown. We may think that we have some growth, but it is only growth in doctrine and knowledge and not in the real experience of life. The real experience of the growth in life depends upon our dealing with our conscience. However, in Christianity today this matter has been neglected very much. We can go to many places of meeting and listen to hundreds of messages without hearing one message that tells us to go to the Lord to deal with our conscience.

Thirty years ago I was helped by the Holy Spirit to learn the lesson to deal with the conscience, and for all these years I have kept this lesson. Sometimes when I have written a letter to someone, I have had to tear it up four or five times. If I wrote one sentence too much, there was an accusation in my conscience, and I had to start over. Then I would be careful, but I often would need to tear up the new letter. It is very difficult to speak things rightly. When we deal with our conscience, we find out how inaccurate we are. When people have asked me to pass on a certain word to others, I have often made a mistake. Then I had to come back, confess, and ask forgiveness. Because of this I learned the lesson that whenever people ask me to pass something on to someone, I have them write it down clearly. Because I often have needed to go back to confess my mistakes, I have learned that it is better not to speak anything. It is better to be silent, because whenever we open our mouth, within five minutes we need to confess.

I have learned these lessons in a strict way. Once in a conference of co-workers, we did not have many rooms to stay in, and I was put into a room with a certain dear brother. The room was very narrow and had two beds. Since we did not have a bathroom to wash in, we had to wash in our bedroom. I tried to be very careful to not splash water on the brother, but day by day I

needed to confess my mistakes. I felt that I had done something wrong. Perhaps some would say that there was no need to confess, but at that time I had learned the lesson of dealing with the conscience. If I was only a little wrong, I had no peace in my conscience.

A certain co-worker who is now with the Lord also learned this lesson of dealing with the conscience. When he went to visit anyone, he would never enter the house until he was invited in. If he were to go in without an invitation, he would not be at peace in his conscience. Then, even after being invited in, he would not sit down unless someone asked him to. Some may say that this is too legal, but in order to be normal Christians, we need to learn all these lessons. Those who say that this is too legal are too careless, and a careless Christian cannot have even a little spiritual growth. He may have some kind of growth—in knowledge, doctrine, or other matters—but it is not the real growth in life. The real growth is the growth in the spirit, and the growth in the spirit depends very much on our dealing with our conscience.

In dealing with the conscience, we can never be loose. Whenever we are loose in our conscience, there is the danger that we may commit the worst sins. Our protection and safeguard is a pure conscience. The times when we are loose with our conscience are the most dangerous times.

If we go to the Lord to deal with this matter, we will see, on the one hand, what kind of a problem it is and, on the other hand, what kind of help we will receive. Then we will sense the presence of the Lord in a fresh, sweet way as we never have before. We will experience something new. This depends very much on our dealing with the conscience. If you deal with your conscience, you will know what I mean. If, however, we have never dealt with our conscience, we have never had any real growth in the spiritual life. This is a serious matter.

We should go to the Lord and say, “Here I am, Lord. Enlighten me, expose me, and bring me into Your presence. I wish to be purged and pure in my conscience.” If we go to the Lord in this way, and if we obey the Lord to deal with our conscience, we will see what problems we have. We may need ten days and ten nights to deal with all the matters. We may have problems we have let remain for many years without dealing with them. How can we grow with a conscience full of offenses? With so many holes in our conscience, how can we have the assurance of faith? It is impossible. We need to deal with our

conscience; then we will have a new start in the Christian life. We will see how much help we will receive and what kind of strength and blessing we will enjoy, including the Lord's presence, the anointing, and much strengthening. That will be wonderful!

Try to deal with your conscience before the Lord. There is no need to reason or argue with people. Simply go to the Lord to deal with your conscience. Then you will see where you are, what kind of problems you have, and what kind of help you need. To deal with the conscience is a very serious, vital, and deep matter. We must not have any trust in ourselves. Even when dealing with the self, we may be subtle, but we can never be subtle in dealing with the conscience. If we deal with our conscience, we will be brought into the presence of the Lord in a living, prevailing way, a way that we have never had before.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DEALING WITH THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:2; Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4; 1 John 2:15-17

In this chapter we will consider our dealing with the world. Ephesians 2:2 says, "In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience." To walk according to the age of this world has very much to do with the ruler of the authority of the air, that is, Satan. The world may be compared to a nation, and the ages are like the states; the world is a whole, and the ages of this world are the parts of the world.

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father." First John 2:15-17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and its lust, but he who does the will of God abides forever." The world itself is opposed to God the Father, and the things of the world are opposed to the will of God.

The world as a whole is the satanic organized system, a systematized organization. Within this organization, this system, there are ages. The age is the part of the world we contact. Fifty years ago, women wore their hair long and high; that was according to that age. Today modern women wear their hair very short; this is another age. During the First World War, when I was about twelve years old, we would often talk about the armored tank, which was just invented. That was according to the age at that time. In the Second World War, however, other things became modern. This was another age. Therefore, the age is something modern. In Romans 12:2, to be fashioned according to this age simply means to be modernized. Galatians 1:4 tells us that the Lord died for our sins that He might rescue us not only from sins but out of the present evil age.

THE INVENTION OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION

In order to deal with the world, we must first ask what the world is. It is difficult to give a proper, adequate definition of the world. Strictly speaking, in the first step of the fall of man there was no such problem as the world. There was only the problem of sin. The world in the sense we are speaking of was not created by God. Rather, it was invented by Satan at a certain point in human history. When Cain, the son of Adam, the second generation of the human race, was driven out of the presence of God, he lost God. It was then, in Genesis 4, that Cain and his descendants invented the first human civilization. Before that time there was no such thing on the earth.

For human beings to exist, we need to eat, drink, marry, protect ourselves, and have some kind of pleasure or amusement. Before the fall, when man was living before God, God was everything to man. God was like a parent who prepares everything and fully takes care of his children. He was the protection to safeguard man, and He Himself was man's pleasure. When we have God, we have the real pleasure; there is no need for another kind of amusement. However, man fell in several steps. In the first step man fell into sin, and in the second step man fell into the world.

Adam fell into sin, and Cain, the second generation, fell further into the world. Because he was driven out of the presence of God, he was afraid that he would starve or be killed by others (Gen. 4:14). He was afraid that there would be no protection or safeguard for him. Moreover, because he sensed that he had lost God, he lost his pleasure and amusement. Therefore, among the descendants of Cain, one invented the way to produce food, one invented the way to amuse people with music, and one invented the way to protect himself with weapons (vv. 20-22). This became the first human civilization.

Even after all this time, human civilization is still for producing food, protecting ourselves, and amusing ourselves. Our economy is simply the means to maintain our living. In addition, we have the national defense for our safeguard and protection, and we have many amusements. Today America provides other nations with economic aid for food and with military aid for protection. Besides these, we also have amusements, such as going to the movies and the beach. If we take away economy, defense, and amusement from the world, there will be nothing left.

THE WORLD BEING A SATANIC SYSTEM

Food, protection, and pleasure are necessary for human existence and living, but because humans have lost God, they now care for their own living, protection, and amusement. Humans sense the need for these things, and without a doubt we do need them. The problem, however, is that the enemy of God, Satan, came in to take advantage of these needs to organize a system, a *kosmos,* which is the world. The world is a satanic system, an organization systematized by Satan. Satan has systematized all these needs and organized them in order to systematize people.

Being That Which Is More Than We Need for Our Living

The world is that which is more than we need for our living. This brief definition is adequate. The enemy utilizes the needs of human life and adds something to them.

We may illustrate this with marriage. Marriage in itself is not something of the world. Rather, it is ordained by God for human existence. In all the Scriptures the best example of marriage is that of Isaac and Rebekah. In this case there was only a marriage and not a system of marriage. Isaac married Rebekah due to the need for human existence, but there was no system in that marriage. Today, however, there is a system of marriage. In China, for example, as part of the agreement of marriage, a woman may demand that fifty tables be prepared for the marriage feast in a large rented hall that can seat five hundred people. Then a veil and a long wedding gown to be borne by several small girls must be prepared. Moreover, one family may have to pay one thousand dollars, and the two families may bargain for a greater or lesser amount. Many times the families come to a deadlock until after two months they restart the arguing and bargaining. These are some of the terms and conditions of the marriage agreement. Isaac and Rebekah never talked about such matters. They simply were married without any system. Now we can see what the world is. Marriage is not the world; the system of marriage is the world. The enemy has utilized the necessity of marriage to create a certain kind of system, and many young people today, both in the West and in the East, have been systematized by marriage.

Eating is also necessary for us to live. Eating in itself is not sinful or worldly, but today a system has been added to eating. Many people prefer particular foods and drinks and certain places to eat. For some, a five-dollar meal is not good enough; their meals must cost over ten dollars. This is the system that is added to eating.

In principle, clothing is the same. A human must be clothed, which in itself is right, but today a great system has been added to clothing, and many people are systematized by it. In the Far East many women are bound by the matter of clothing. Day by day they know nothing but dressing. A woman may spend only twenty dollars for eating but five hundred or one thousand dollars for dressing. Without the system of clothing, many department stores would close.

In the same way, we need a house to live in, but a terrible system has been added to housing. In the West there is the western system, and in the East there is the eastern system. People have been very bound by the matter of housing. If someone is poor, he has nothing with which to be systematized; he is not rich enough to be systematized and bound. The richer someone is, however, the more he is bound. Many rich men have become bondservants to their house. If we ask people to serve the Lord, to have a Bible study, or to pray, they may say that they do not have the time. However, they have much time to be bondservants to their house. This is the system added to the necessities of human life.

Being That Which Possesses and Usurps Us

If something that is necessary for our life—even our wife, husband, children, or parents—becomes more to us than God, it is the world. In order to exist as humans, we need to have parents, marry, have children, eat, and drink, but at a certain point all these necessities may become something more than the Lord to us; then they become the world. This is why the Lord told us to follow Him to the extent that we give up not only the surplus of the necessary things but also, at times, the necessary things themselves.

The world is something that possesses and usurps us. Man was made purposely as a vessel for God, so he must be possessed by God and used for God. But because we are used by something else, we are usurped. Anything that usurps us is the world. Even buying a Bible can be the world to us. It is

possible that we are far off from God in this matter. We do not care about the will of God; we simply like collecting spiritual books, but even spiritual books can be the world to us. Anything other than God Himself that possesses and occupies us is the world.

We realize that sins are very bad, but we may not realize how serious it is that the world usurps us. To us, the world may be a more serious problem than sins. One young man may have committed some sins, but another young man is very occupied by certain good yet worldly things. Because the second young man never does sinful things, many people may admire and appreciate him. They may say that he is a fine and wonderful man. However, he may be one hundred percent usurped, occupied, and possessed by something other than God.

We Christians today often neglect many words of the Lord. We read the word of the Lord concerning forsaking the world, but we may give up nothing. It seems to some that to be a Christian is to be a happy, healthy person. They may never realize that to be a Christian we need to give up many things. The gospel preached in Christianity today is very different from that preached by the Lord. Today some preach the gospel by telling people that when they become a Christian, things will be very nice and happy. In this way the preachers simply fool people. However, the Lord never fooled us. When He preached the gospel, He told us clearly that in order to follow Him we must forsake everything and come and follow Him (Matt. 8:19-22; 19:21). What must we forsake? It is the things other than God Himself. However, it is regrettable that among Christians today there is very little forsaking and giving up.

The worldly matters differ from one person to another. Perhaps with one person a Bible is a necessity; it is something of God and not the world. However, with someone else it is entirely an item and habit of the world. To one mother her child is not the world, but to another mother her child may be the biggest world. This is because that child is everything to her. That child is number one in everything, and the Lord is number two.

A certain Christian mother and father had three sons. The mother loved the Lord very much, and she was very zealous in gospel preaching and other matters. However, one day she told the most clever of her three sons that he should study medical science. Then she told the second, less clever son that he

should study commerce. To the least clever one she said, “I have offered you to the Lord. You must go study at a Bible institute.” In doing this, the mother proved herself to be very worldly. To her, all her sons were nothing but the world. If we would check ourselves in this light, from this point of view, we will find how much the world is with us.

BEING CLOTHED WITH THE SPIRIT BY DEALING WITH THE CONSCIENCE AND WITH THE WORLD

To deal with the conscience and to deal with the world are two serious tests. Many Christians today are powerless because inwardly their conscience is full of offenses, and outwardly they have many worldly things. They are inwardly damaged in their conscience and outwardly usurped, possessed, and occupied by the world. How can such persons be powerful? Many Christians today talk about the baptism and outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be clothed with power from on high, but where is the power? If we would simply deal with our conscience and deal with and forsake the worldly things, we will have power. If we deal with our conscience and the world, there is no need to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps at the very moment that we deal with the last item of the old, worldly things, we will be clothed with power from on high. At that very moment the Holy Spirit will come upon us.

Before the day of Pentecost, the one hundred twenty believers were a group of people who gave up the world entirely. If Peter still went fishing, John still mended his nets, and the other Galileans did their jobs and took care of their worldly affairs by day and came together to pray in the evening, would the Holy Spirit have come down upon them? Because they were in the upper room with nothing of the world in their hands, the Holy Spirit was certain to come down upon them. We may appreciate the experience of the day of Pentecost, but we must pay the price that those one hundred twenty paid in their time. We appreciate the power from on high, but will we come up to the upper room? Our shortage in dealing with the world is a problem.

Many people are desirous to have power, but who will pay the price? Who will deal with the conscience, and who will deal with the world? Some may say that we need to have our living. That is right; we do need to have a living for our existence. However, we must still go to the Lord to be checked through thorough prayer, to “pray through.” If we go to the Lord to deal with the conscience within and the worldly things without, we will see what kind of

Christians we are. We will see in how many things we need to be dealt with. We will realize that we have many things that are the world, things that are something other than the Lord Himself.

Two things simply put us to death: a conscience full of offenses within and the world, usurping, occupying, and possessing us without. We may not be cleansed from all the offenses in the conscience, and we may not be free from the bondage of the world. We may speak about the inner life and the outpouring of power, but as long as we do not deal with our conscience and the world, we will talk but remain the same for years. However, if we go to the Lord to deal with the conscience within and the world without, we will be powerful Christians. We will have an impact. This is not a matter of knowledge but a matter of dealing, a matter of paying the price.

There is a spiritual illness in our conscience; our conscience is not healthy. Moreover, there is something usurping, possessing, and occupying us all the time. We are not free; we are under the bondage of the world. Therefore, we need cleansing and purging in our conscience, and we need deliverance from the worldly things. There is a real battle here. The world is a strategic point to the enemy, and he does not want to give up this point. As long as the enemy can usurp us by the world, that is sufficient for him. Therefore, we must go to the Lord and pray.

I have seen many people speak in tongues, but I have not seen the real power. I have seen many people gain the so-called Pentecostal experiences for their own enjoyment, but I have not seen the real power. Where is the real power? As long as our conscience has not been purged, and as long as we have not been delivered from the world, no matter what kind of experiences we have, we will be powerless because we are damaged. We need cleansing, and we need deliverance. There is no need to speak in tongues. If we simply deal with our conscience and give up the world, we will see what kind of power we have. Then to speak in our own tongue is good enough; we will save many people for the Lord, and we will be powerful. Go and test this way.

Here we sense the need for real, prevailing prayer. We do not need more knowledge. What we need is something real and practical. This requires us to pray much concerning our dealing with the conscience and our dealing with the world.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DEALING WITH THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Psa. 51:10; 2 Tim. 1:7; Gal. 6:1; 1 Pet. 3:4; Prov. 16:19; Matt. 5:3; 2 Cor. 7:1

THE NECESSITY OF ALL THE DEALINGS

In the previous chapters we saw the dealings with the flesh, the self, the conscience, and the world. Christians today speak much about spiritual gifts and power, but even though we love, follow, and serve the Lord with a sincere heart, we can only realize the spiritual gifts and spiritual power in a real way through all the above dealings. We can say this with all assurance. If we do not know how to deal with the flesh, if we do not practice dealing with the self, if we neglect our conscience, or if we do not pay the price to deal with the worldly matters with us and in us, then no matter how seeking we are, we can never realize anything real in the spiritual realm.

The real growth of the spiritual, inner life depends one hundred percent on our dealing with the conscience. If we neglect our conscience, we may gain much self-knowledge, but we cannot have even a little spiritual growth. We must have a good conscience, a conscience without any kind of accusation or offense. Our conscience must be pure, good, and in a condition of constant peace and rest with God. If we have a problem, accusation, or offense in our conscience, it is very difficult to advance in the life of the Lord.

While we are dealing with our conscience, we must also keep our flesh and self under a strict dealing. Otherwise, we can never advance in the spiritual life. This includes many lessons of the application of the cross of the Lord. In order to deal with the flesh and the self, we need many lessons on applying the crucifixion of the Lord in our daily life. However, all these dealings with the flesh and the self depend upon our dealing with the conscience. If our conscience is not good, pure, and without offense, it simply does not function well, and many times we will not know whether or not we are in the flesh. We may be in the flesh, speak in the flesh, act in the flesh, and even serve the Lord in the flesh, but we do not have the sense, the knowledge, that we are in the flesh, because our conscience is not functioning well.

When light shines, it is a regulating power; where there is no light, there is confusion. If we are in a room without windows, we are in darkness; we can see, know, and realize nothing around us. In such a case there is no regulating power. In this sense, the conscience is a spiritual window, a window to our spiritual life. If we are in the light of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual light is a regulating power, regulating us all the time and pointing out to us what is of the flesh and of the self. This spiritual consciousness comes from a conscience that is pure, good, and without any kind of accusation.

In addition, there is the problem of the world. Dealing with the flesh, the self, and the conscience have very much to do with the growth of life, and dealing with the world has very much to do with power. Today people speak much about the power of the Holy Spirit, the power from on high, and people seek speaking in tongues and the Pentecostal experiences. However, true spiritual power comes from dealing with the world. The more we sacrifice the worldly things, the more we are powerful. Our gospel preaching must be prevailing and powerful, but the way to preach the gospel in power is to sacrifice. The more we sacrifice, the more we give up and deal with the worldly things, the more we are empowered. If we give up all the usurpation of the worldly things, we will be released, and we will be clothed with power from on high.

OUR SPIRIT BEING IN DIFFERENT CONDITIONS

We have seen the difference between the spirit, the soul, and the body and that our human spirit is the innermost part of our entire being, through which, in which, and by which we contact God. Therefore, dealing with our human spirit is even deeper than dealing with our conscience. We need to deal with our flesh, our self, our conscience, and even the more with our spirit as our innermost part.

To learn how to deal with our spirit is very important because the spiritual ministry, the spiritual service, and even the spiritual flow of life depend upon our spirit. What we minister to people must be something spiritual, that is, by the spirit and in the spirit. Ministering by the spirit can be illustrated by serving a drink. Before we serve someone a drink, we must wash our hands and wash the cup, because if our hands or the cup are dirty, we will make the drink dirty. This is a picture of dealing with the flesh, the self, and the conscience. However, after washing our hands and the cup, we also must

purify the water itself. Our hands and the cup may be absolutely clean, yet the water itself may be dirty. Dealing with the water is a picture of dealing with the spirit. After we learn how to deal with the flesh, the self, and the conscience, we must learn how to deal with the spirit itself. Our spirit must be pure because what we minister to people is from the spirit. If the spirit is not pure and right, no matter how clean we are in other matters, there still will be something defiling.

If we read the Scriptures carefully, we will notice that there are many different conditions of the spirit. Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, / And renew a steadfast spirit within me." Our spirit must be steadfast. It may be that we have no problem with the flesh, no trouble with the self, and no offense in the conscience, but whether or not our spirit is steadfast is another matter. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness." The spirit here is not the Holy Spirit; it is our human spirit. It is a spirit of power toward the enemy, a spirit of love toward others, and a spirit of sobermindedness toward ourselves.

Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, even if a man is overtaken in some offense, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness." A spirit of meekness is a certain condition of the spirit. Our spirit must be powerful yet meek. First Peter 3:4 speaks of "the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God." Proverbs 16:19 says, "It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor, / Than to divide the spoil with the proud." A lowly spirit is another condition of the spirit. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." This is not to have a poor spirit but to be poor in spirit. Finally, 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We must be cleansed from all filthiness not only of the flesh but of the spirit. There are many passages concerning the spirit, but this selection is sufficient to show us that the spirit may be in different conditions. Therefore, there is the need to deal with our spirit to keep our spirit in a right condition. Our spirit must be steadfast, and it must be a spirit of power, of love, and of sobermindedness. It must be meek, quiet, lowly, and cleansed, and we must be poor in spirit.

THE PASSAGE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE SOUL AND THE BODY

The human spirit has been defiled, influenced, damaged, and spoiled by the soul and by the flesh, but in itself it is not sinful as the flesh and the soul are. Our great problem is not in the spirit but in the soul and the flesh. As we already have seen, we have sin in the flesh and the self in the soul. Sin and self are the two biggest problems we have with God. We cannot trace, however, that there is a direct problem with our spirit. The only verse that might indicate this is 2 Corinthians 7:1, which speaks of defilement of flesh and of spirit. However, the defilement of the spirit is not the defilement of the spirit itself. It is something of the soul and the flesh, which influence the spirit. Because our human spirit is under the influence of the soul and the damage of the flesh, it is defiled.

We may compare this to a fountain with a flow of water. The fountain and the water themselves may be clean, but the water has to flow through a passage. If the passage is clear and clean, the flow of the water will be clean. However, the water can be dirtied by the passage. The passage is the problem. By now we are clear that the spirit is the innermost part of our whole being, but in order for us to release our spirit, our spirit needs to pass through our soul and body. In this way, the soul and body become the passages of the spirit.

The body is a dwelling place, a residence, for the soul, and the soul is a vessel for the spirit. The spirit is contained in the soul, and the soul dwells in the body. Therefore, when the spirit is released, it passes through the soul and the body. Even though there is no problem with the spirit, there are many problems with the passages of the spirit. When our soul is pure and there are no problems of the flesh, the spirit is released in a proper way.

THE SPIRIT BEING

THE REALITY AND SINCERITY OF OUR BEING

The spirit is the innermost part of our whole being. It is the very center, the very reality, of the human being. We often speak of the sincerity of the heart, but the real sincerity is not in the heart. The spirit is even deeper than the heart, so the real sincerity is in the spirit. When we contact others with our

emotions or mind, we are not sincere with them. Because we feel happy with others, we may treat them well; this is to contact them with our emotions, which is not sincere. Sometimes we may contact others with our mind or reasonings, but this also is not sincere. We contact others in sincerity when we contact them in the spirit, because this is a contact from the innermost part of our whole being.

The best time to realize that a person is contacting someone from his spirit is when he loses his temper. For someone to lose his temper is the most sincere contact, because it is easy to release the spirit when we lose our temper. If we can control ourselves, we can always pretend and say, "O brother, I love you." This is a pretense. It is a love in word, or at most in our understanding or our emotion. But when one day we lose our temper, whatever is truly within us is released.

It is difficult for people to release the spirit. We can speak many things from the emotions and the mind without the release of our spirit. Sometimes a brother ministering from the platform ministers only from his mind or his emotion, and there is almost nothing released from his spirit. As ministers of the word and those who serve the Lord, we must learn how to release the spirit. Even in a prayer meeting, it is sometimes difficult to utter a prayer because we have too many considerations. We have self-consciousness, considerations about others, and problems with language, grammar, composition, and content, among other things. We are so much in our considerations that we are hindered from expressing a prayer. Sometimes we can express a prayer only in a timid way, saying, "Lord, I am so weak. Help me, Lord." This may be merely out of our mouth and mind, having nothing from the spirit.

This is why many times we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When the outpouring of the Spirit comes upon us, we release our spirit and pray from the depths of our whole being. We may only say, "Lord, be merciful to me," but our spirit is released by this prayer. However, we should not think that to shout and pray loudly are to release the spirit. The spirit can be released without much emotion.

DEALING WITH THE SPIRIT TO HAVE A PURE AND CLEAN SPIRIT

In order to serve the Lord and to practice the church life, sooner or later we will find that the biggest lesson to learn is the dealing with the spirit. We may illustrate this in the following way. A brother may receive a certain light from the Scriptures. This causes him to be very happy and rejoicing, and when he comes to the meeting, he is excited and can barely control himself. The first chance he gets, he stands up and releases his revelation. There is no doubt that he has heavenly, spiritual light, but he delivers his message with an impure spirit, a spirit that is not purified and is full of human excitement and the human essence and element. His message is one of heavenly light; it may even be a great and unprecedented revelation, something the church has never before seen. However, it may be released with a proud spirit.

We may go to a brother to speak something very spiritual, yet we may speak it in a spirit that is not meek, not humble, and not of love. Our message may be entirely right, good, and necessary, but our spirit is wrong. Now we can see what it means to deal with the spirit. If we do not deal with our spirit, we can never give people a pure flow of the pure, divine water. We can never be a pure channel for a pure flow of the pure inner life. In order to be a pure channel, we need to deal with our spirit. We may say that there is nothing wrong with our message. Our light is not wrong, and we are not sinful. However, what kind of spirit do we have? It may be a spirit that is not meek, not pure, not humble, and not of love.

Sometimes our spirit may not be one of sobermindedness. It may be a spirit of a foolish mind. When some brothers speak something in the meeting, they have the release of the spirit, but their spirit is one of foolishness; they have a foolish mind with the spirit.

KNOWING A PERSON'S REAL BEING BY THE SPIRIT

Someone may ask us how we feel about a brother, and we may reply that he is a good brother and that we have no problem with him. If a person knows how to sense the human spirit, however, he will be able to realize that we actually have many problems with that brother. If someone asks me if I am Chinese, I can say no, but he should recognize that my tone and accent are Chinese, just as Peter's Galilean accent gave him away (Matt. 26:73). This illustrates that when we listen to a person, we should listen not only to the words but to his "tone," that is, his spirit. A number of times someone has said, "Let me fellowship with you about a certain brother. I have no problem

with him, and I have not come to accuse him." At that point we may discern that he is accusing. His word is not accusing, but his spirit is. If we have a spirit of hatred, even though we may say one hundred times that we love a brother, the spirit of hatred is still there.

Someone cannot be sure that I am Chinese until I say something. In the same way, it is hard for someone to know our spirit if we say nothing. The wisest way not to expose our spirit is not to open our mouth. The more we express ourselves, the more our spirit is exposed. One secret of dealing with people is not to stop them from speaking. Let them speak much. The more they speak, the more we are clear about them, because the more they speak, the more they expose their spirit. If we listen not merely to their words but to their spirit, to their spiritual "tone" and "accent," we will know where they are in the spirit. This is the way the spiritual man can discern all things.

What we are is not in our word but in our spirit. What kind of spirit we have is what we are. We may say, "I am speaking humbly," but we can still have a spirit of pride. If we do not deal with the spirit of pride, we can never be truly humble. On the other hand, if we do not have a proud spirit, if we have dealt with the spirit of pride, we can even say, "I am too proud," but others will sense that we are very humble. In word we can be proud, but in reality, in the spirit, others can see we are humble. Sometimes a parent may tease his child and say, "I hate you," but the more he says that, the more the child comes to him, because the child senses that the parent actually loves him. On the other hand, a certain person may say, "I love you," but in truth there is no love. The more he says he loves us, the more we sense that he has no love for us. It is not a matter of word; it is a matter of the spirit. Therefore, we must deal with our spirit.

MINISTERING BY A RIGHT AND PURE SPIRIT

In order to help people, to serve the Lord, to minister something of the Lord to others, and to practice the church life, there is the real need to deal with our spirit. If our spirit is right, we can do everything. We have the full liberty, the full freedom, when our spirit is right. But when our spirit is not right, we should be careful not to say anything to others. If we say nothing, then the wrong thing within us will be hidden, like a bomb about to explode, but as soon as we express something, the hidden matter comes out.

If there is nothing wrong in us and our spirit is right with others, there is no need to be so careful. We can speak something freely with others. But if we have a problem with a brother and we are unhappy with him, he can sense the problem with our spirit as soon as we greet him. Therefore, we must deal with the spirit. Whenever we sense that there is something wrong in our spirit toward a brother, we need to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, deal with me. What is wrong with my spirit? Why do I not have the freedom, peace, and boldness to contact my brother? Why must I be so careful in contacting my brother, and why am I afraid to contact him?" The answer is that we have something wrong with our spirit, and we must deal with it.

In order to deal with our spirit, we must deal with our motives, intentions, and desires. We may, for example, have a desire to exalt ourselves. We may have the desire to let the brothers know that we have received a great revelation, yet we pretend to be humble. If the responsible brothers come to us and ask, "Do you have something to speak?" we may pretend and say, "I am not certain." This is a lie, because within our heart we desire to use the entire time for our message. This is a problem with our desire. In this case, our spirit can never be clear, clean, and pure. We may say that we are seeking the Lord's mind, but our spirit will never be clear about the Lord's mind because it is so perplexed by the desire in our heart, in our emotion, to find the opportunity to exalt ourselves. Then even if we pretend, we still have a wrong spirit.

To merely be humble does not work. We must deal with our desire. This desire must be put on the cross and pass through the cross. We need to apply the cross to this desire by saying, "Lord, I thank You that You gave me this light, but I realize that there is a desire within me to utilize the light You gave me. I simply apply Your cross to this desire. Lord, if it is not of You, I will not speak one word about the light You have given me." Then even if the brothers ask us if we have something to say, we will say no. This is the truth, not a lie, because we have something, but at the present time we have no desire to utter it. Then the Lord may gradually prepare the opportunity for us to say something, and the indwelling Spirit will give us the inner anointing, the inner guidance, to speak something not for ourselves but for the Lord. We will speak and release a revelation not to exalt ourselves but to edify the saints by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When we minister in this way, the ministry will be a pure flow. Not only will the water of life and light be pure, but even the channel will be pure. We may minister a message that is very spiritual, right, and heavenly, but we may be a person with an impure spirit, a spirit of pride, of self-desire, of self-love, of self-intention, and of self-exaltation. Then, if someone has learned the lesson of dealing with the spirit, he will sense that our message is spiritual and heavenly, but the spirit is defiled. We can give people something heavenly and spiritual yet not pure. This is due not to the self but to our spirit.

We must learn to deal with our spirit. Today the Lord needs some spiritual brothers and sisters who know how to minister the spiritual things to people, that is, how to minister Christ the Lord Himself to others as their everything. However, there is a need to minister in a pure spirit, in a spirit that has been dealt with by the cross. If we have any wrong intention, ambition, or human motive in our ministering to others, we may minister something right, spiritual, heavenly, and eternal, but it will be in a wrong spirit. If we have a self-intention, self-ambition, self-exaltation, self-interest, and an undealt with, impure motive for self, and if our desire has never been crucified, we may do many right and spiritual things, and we may seem to minister something of Christ, but we will minister in a wrong, impure spirit.

Here is the need to be purified in our spirit. Our spirit has to be purified in its motives, intentions, desires, ambitions, will, and interests. If we are sent by the Lord to do any kind of work, or if we are committed by the Lord with any kind of commission, we must perform it in a right way and, even the more, in a purified spirit with a pure motive, a pure intent, a pure desire, a pure will, and a pure interest. Then we can minister a pure flow of the pure divine life to people. This is what the Lord needs today for His church, for the church life, and for the building up of the church.

We can speak many things, but what matters is the spirit in which we are speaking. We can serve, work, and practice many things in the church, but we need to check with what motives, intentions, desires, will, and interests and for whose exaltation we are doing these things. We need the checkpoint of the cross. If we deal with all these things, the passage for the spirit to flow out will be cleared and purified. We will have a clear and purified passage for the spirit to flow out something pure of the Lord. The life, the flow, and the channel will all be pure, and we will minister a pure flow of the pure life to the Lord's children. Then the church will truly be built up. Dear brothers and

sisters, this is not merely a matter of right or wrong, or good or evil; it is a matter of motives, interests, intentions, and desires. It is a matter of the purification of the passages of the spirit to allow the flow of living water to be released. This is the greatest checkpoint of the cross through which we must pass.

This is the final item of dealing. We must learn to deal with the flesh, the self, the conscience, the world, and the spirit, and to deal with the spirit simply means to deal with our motives, intentions, desires, will, and interests.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE ANOINTING

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:27

In the previous chapters we saw the dealing with certain negative things. In this chapter we will consider the inner anointing, which is even more practical on the positive side. First John 2:27 says, "As for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him." The Christian life is a life under the anointing, the Christian walk is a walk guided by this anointing, and Christian service must be a service guided by this anointing. Moreover, in order to preach the gospel, we must preach not only in power but also by the anointing. Verse 27 is all-inclusive, saying that the anointing teaches us all things so that there is no need for any man to teach us. This anointing takes care of all the matters of the Christian life, walk, work, and service.

THE ANOINTING BEING THE MOVING OF THE SPIRIT WITHIN US

This verse uses the word *anointing* as a gerund, a verbal noun. In some versions this word is translated as *unction*, which also implies a motion or action. It is not merely a substance but a substance in motion. That we have received this anointing and it abides in us means that a certain kind of motion or action abides within us. We cannot say that this is the Holy Spirit alone, because the Holy Spirit is not an action. Rather, the anointing is the working of the Holy Spirit. If we have the action, the motion, of the Holy Spirit, then to be sure we have the Holy Spirit Himself. Likewise, if we do not have the Holy Spirit, we cannot have the motion or action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells in our spirit is moving and acting all the time. This working, moving, acting, or motion of the Holy Spirit is the anointing.

If we rub an ointment on our hand or face, we sense the moving, the motion, of the ointment on our skin. Similarly, in our spirit there is such an anointing, a constant moving and action. This is why verse 27 says that this anointing

not only is in us but abides in us. To abide in us means not only that it remains in us but also that it works, moves, and takes action in us. The Holy Spirit constantly works in us by moving, acting, and living within us, that is, by anointing us. We have received such an anointing, and such an anointing now abides in us, anointing, working, living, moving, and acting all the time.

Even if we learn all the foregoing lessons in these messages, we must still realize that the most practical lesson for us as Christians is to be taught and guided by the inner anointing. We may even say that the unique lesson to learn as Christians is the lesson of the inner anointing.

REALIZING THE ANOINTING THROUGH FELLOWSHIP IN THE EXERCISE OF OUR SPIRIT

We can learn and realize the anointing only through our fellowship with the Lord. As we know, the book of 1 John is a book of fellowship. In the first chapter of this Epistle there is the fellowship of life. The apostles proclaim the divine life, that is, the eternal life, to us, and when we receive the life, we have the fellowship of life. The fellowship is the current of the divine life.

We fellowship with the Lord not only when we close ourselves in a room to spend time with Him. This is a good time to fellowship with the Lord, but we must always keep ourselves in fellowship with Him. Even when we are working at our job, cooking in the kitchen, walking on the street, or driving in our car, we need to keep ourselves in fellowship with the Lord and contact Him. To keep ourselves in fellowship with the Lord is simply to exercise our spirit, because it is in our spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells and communicates with us. Therefore, we must contact the Lord by exercising our spirit.

We should not care too much for our emotions or our mind. We need to take care of our spirit. If we are happy emotionally, we should forget about that. If we are disturbed in our mind due to many different thoughts, we should forget about that also. We should learn always to forget the things of the emotions and the mind. To not live by our self, our emotions, or our mind is a big lesson.

The Lord is the Spirit who is dwelling in our spirit today, so we seek to live by the Lord in our spirit. However, some bad news may come to us. As a rule, when people receive bad news, they are troubled, sometimes in the emotions

and sometimes in the mind. Sometimes they are troubled to such an extent that they cannot sleep at night. As Christians, we need to learn how to forget about the troubling matters; we must learn always to give them up and forget about them. Otherwise, the entire world will be utilized by the enemy to bring many things our way. Because the enemy Satan sends us many troubling matters day by day, we need to learn how to give them up.

Giving these things up may be compared to washing our hands, which we do a number of times every day. We have to wash our hands time after time because many dirty things come our way. To be a Christian we must learn always to give up our emotions, our mind, our thoughts, and all the bad news. When bad news comes to us, we do not care about it. When certain thoughts come to us, we do not care about them. When things make us sorrowful or happy in our emotions, we also forget about them. We only care for the inner anointing. We must always try to keep ourselves in contact with the Lord by giving up all the things of our emotions and mind.

This is very practical, but it is not easy. Let us consider today, for example. How much have we been disturbed in our mind or perplexed in our emotions today? Perhaps for the entire day we have spent only a little time in the spirit. Most of our time has been wasted in the mind with its thoughts and in the emotions. If this is so, we have not been victorious today. We have been defeated simply because we forgot the lesson to not care for the things in the mind and the emotions and to care only for the inner anointing.

If a brother comes to say something to us, it is easy to deal with him in our mind and in our emotions. If the brother comes to tell us something nice, we may be very happy, but this is wrong. When a brother comes to tell us something, there is no doubt that we should listen to him, but after we listen, we need to give up our mind and emotions and come back to the inner anointing. Even when teaching and doctrine come to our thoughts, we may need to listen to them, but eventually we must take care of the inner anointing.

We need to check whether or not we have the inner anointing. We do not care about what we hear, about what people tell us, or about our thoughts, opinions, and emotions. We care only for the inner anointing, and we simply go along with the inner anointing. This is a simple and brief word, yet it is very difficult to practice.

To be in the spirit and not in the soul is simply to go along with the inner anointing. To be sure, if we go along with the inner anointing, we are in the spirit, and to not go along with the inner anointing means that we are out of the spirit and in the soul. This is simple and practical.

When we speak, we should check whether or not we are speaking in the anointing. Many times when I minister, I thoroughly check with myself in this way. To taste, or sense, the inner anointing is the only way for me to decide what to minister. We need to sense all things by the inner anointing. With the inner anointing there is a certain inner sense, inner feeling, and inner consciousness, which we must follow. There is something within us as a living consciousness, registration, or feeling. We need to take care of that feeling and go along with it.

ADDING THE ELEMENT AND ESSENCE OF THE TRIUNE GOD INTO US

The anointing is the working of the Triune God. The more we have this anointing, the more we enjoy our portion of the Triune God. The more we have this anointing, the more the Triune God is applied to us, and the more the very essence of the Triune God becomes ours.

We have often illustrated the anointing with painting. The more we apply paint to a wall, the more the element of the paint is on it. In the same way, the more anointing we have, the more of God we have. While the anointing of the Holy Spirit is working within us all the time, the very essence and element of God is applied and added to us. In this way we have more of God. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is not merely to let us know what is God's will and what is not. The main purpose of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is to apply the very element of God into us. The more constantly the Holy Spirit works within us as the anointing, the more the Spirit brings God's essence into us. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit, more of the essence and element of God are added and increased within us all the time.

If we paint the same wall every day for a year, there will be much of the element of the paint on the wall. There will be a thick layer of paint. In the same way, the more anointing of the Holy Spirit that we have, the more God is applied and added to us, and more of the element and essence of God is within us. God is increased in us by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we may meet a brother who apparently loves the Lord and seeks Him very much, yet we can sense very little of God within him. He is light and not weighty. Sometimes, however, we may meet a brother who apparently is not very active, yet we can sense something weighty of God within him. We sense that this person is full of God; the essence and the element of God are fully within him. This is simply because the anointing of the Holy Spirit has worked within him for many years. The more we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the more the element of God is increased within us, and we become spiritually weighty; we become weighty with God.

The primary purpose of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is to bring more of the essence and element of God into us, and the secondary purpose of the anointing is to let us know the will of God. Knowing the will of God by the anointing is like knowing the color of a wall by its paint. The more we paint a wall, the more clearly the color can be seen. We can see whether it is green, red, brown, or something else. It is by the painting that the color is made known. In the same way, it is by the anointing of the Holy Spirit within us that God's will is revealed to us. If we have much of God within us, we automatically know what the Lord's will is, what we must do or must not do. The "paint" is so thick that the "color" becomes very clear and prominent.

If we add only a little paint to a wall, we may still not know whether its color is red or brown. The color is not clear, simply because there is not enough paint. The more we paint, the more the color becomes clear. That is, the more we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the more we have the essence and element of God, and the more we are clear what the Lord's mind is. Why are we often not clear about the Lord's mind and will? It is simply because we have too little anointing, too little "paint." If we add more "paint," the "color" will be clear. We will see what is red and what is brown.

SPEAKING ACCORDING TO THE SENSE OF THE ANOINTING

In order to experience the Lord, we need to go along with the inner anointing and care for it. The anointing always gives us a certain inner feeling, sense, consciousness, or registration. To go along with that sense is good enough; we do not need to analyze, think, and consider. We should not even study too much. Some believers are overloaded with study, like a person who has eaten too much food but digested little of it. We should not care for our

mind, thoughts, opinions, ideas, concepts, or other matters. We need to forget about these and simply take care of the inner feeling, the inner sense, the inner consciousness, and the inner registration of the anointing.

I would challenge the brothers in this way: Can you give a message without thinking too much? Simply speak from the inner sense. Then when you speak to a certain extent and have no further inner sense, just say, "I do not have the inner sense, so I will stop." This kind of speaking is wonderful. We must not speak from our memory, thoughts, or concepts. We simply must speak from our inner sense and inner consciousness.

Many times people ask me why I do not speak with printed materials in my hand. I tell them that if I speak in that way, I simply kill my speaking. However, it is not easy to speak only by the anointing. When we speak, we often take care of our thoughts, considerations, and other matters. This kills our speaking. If we exercise and practice to speak something in the spirit according to the inner registration of the anointing, then we will see the result. We must learn the lesson to go along with the inner feeling, registration, and sense that is from the inner anointing. If we do not have the sense from the inner anointing, we should just be quiet. We should not move, speak, or act any further.

APPLYING THE CROSS FOR THE INNER ANOINTING

There are three major items we must realize related to the anointing. The first is the fellowship, of which we have already spoken. The second is the application of the cross. In order to always go along with the inner anointing, we need to apply the cross to ourselves. The inner anointing is always against our flesh and our self. In order to take care of the inner anointing, we need to definitely and specifically apply the cross in particular matters to an adequate extent. If we do not apply the cross to ourselves, we simply will not be able to go along with the inner anointing. To be sure, we will only go along with ourselves, and we will give up the inner anointing.

The more we apply the cross to ourselves, the more sense of the anointing we have. Here is the need of the application of the cross. We can realize the anointing only in fellowship with the Lord, and we can go along with and take care of the anointing only by the application of the cross. Day by day we need to apply the cross.

This is the point at which we learn the lesson of the application of the cross. We may already know that we have been crucified with Christ, but we apply the cross only when we are in fellowship with the Lord and we sense the anointing. Therefore, the more we learn the lesson of the anointing, the more we experience the cross in a very practical, real, and living way. Then the cross is something not merely in teaching, doctrine, thought, or concept. It is very real in our experience. We apply the cross to ourselves for the sake of the inner anointing.

APPLYING THE LORD'S BLOOD FOR THE INNER ANOINTING

The third major item concerning the anointing is the Lord's blood. The more we intend to learn the lesson of the inner anointing, the more we will appreciate how much we need the blood. Likewise, the more we experience the cleansing of the blood, the more anointing we have. The types in the Old Testament show us that the anointing is always applied based on the sprinkling of the blood. In the Old Testament times, when the priests came to be anointed, they first needed to be sprinkled by the blood. Where the blood is sprinkled, there the anointing is.

If we do not have the cleansing of the blood, we do not have the ground for the Holy Spirit to anoint us. The anointing is available only on the ground of redemption by the Lord's blood. The redeeming blood of the Lord is for cleansing, and the Spirit of the Lord is for anointing. We first must be cleansed by the blood of the Lord, and then we can be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord.

Many times when we sense the anointing, we also sense how rebellious, unsubmissive, sinful, and dirty we are. At that very time we spontaneously say, "Lord, cleanse me with Your blood." Then we may point out specific matters to the Lord and say, "Lord, cleanse me in this matter. I have a wrong attitude toward a brother. I have a wrong motive. In my ministry I have a motive that has never been purified. Lord, cleanse me."

It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that brings light and revelation to us and even brings us into the presence of the Lord to be exposed. If we simply take care of the inner anointing, we will be absolutely and thoroughly exposed by the Holy Spirit. All the hidden matters, hidden thoughts, secret motives,

and secret intentions we have or had in the past will be exposed and revealed to us. Then we will see how crooked, how subtle, and how sinful we are, and we will need the cleansing of the blood. It is when we are exposed that the blood is so prevailing, dear, and precious to us. We sense and realize how precious the blood of the Lord is to us, because without the blood we can never be cleansed, and we can never be at peace in our conscience under the enlightenment of the anointing.

Perhaps in our actions we are not crooked, but in our motives and intentions we are crooked. Even we ourselves do not know ourselves. As Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things / And it is incurable; / Who can know it?" We cannot perceive by ourselves how deceitful our heart is. We may consider that we are sincere, faithful, and straight persons, but when the anointing of the Holy Spirit brings us into the presence of the Lord and absolutely and thoroughly exposes us under His enlightenment, we see how crooked, subtle, sinful, and deceitful we are in our motives, intentions, desires, and will. At this point we spontaneously need the cleansing of the blood. We prostrate ourselves before the Lord and say, "Lord, cleanse me" many times. Praise the Lord, the more we say, "Cleanse me," the more we are anointed! The more we say, "Lord, cleanse me with Your precious blood," the more we sense the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Then we have comfort, peace, inner satisfaction, inner rest, and refreshment. On the one hand, we are sorrowful for our subtlety and crookedness, but on the other hand, we are refreshed and satisfied with the anointing.

OUR NEED OF CONSECRATION FOR ALL THE DEALINGS AND FOR CARING FOR THE INNER ANOINTING

The fellowship, the cross, and the blood are all related to the anointing. In all things we need to care for the inner anointing and always go along with the inner anointing. To go along with the inner anointing is simply to follow the Lord, obey the Lord, submit to the Lord, and always keep ourselves in the presence of the Lord. It also means that we are walking according to the spirit and in the spirit. This is the Christian walk and the Christian life, and it is a requirement for Christian service and work. We have no freedom, no liberty, to act by what we feel. We have only the liberty, the freedom, in full to act by what we sense of the inner anointing.

This lesson of the anointing goes along with all the dealings that we have seen: dealing with the flesh, dealing with the self, dealing with the conscience, dealing with the world, and dealing with the spirit. It would be wonderful if we would learn the lessons of these dealings and take care of the inner anointing! There is no need of great numbers. If only a small number of brothers and sisters would learn the lessons of the dealings and care for the inner anointing, the whole world will be turned upside down. The almighty, omnipotent God will have a free way to get through. Those who learn the lessons of the dealings and learn how to care for the inner anointing will be the fire that burns in our current situation. The power, the impact, and even the authority depend upon these dealings and the inner anointing.

May the Lord be merciful to us. Let us have a real consecration, telling the Lord, “Lord, in these days I consecrate myself to You to learn all the lessons of the dealings with the flesh, the self, the conscience, the world, and the spirit. Moreover, I wish to pay any price to go along with the inner anointing.” If we do this, we cannot tell how far the Lord will go through us, and we do not know what wondrous things will come out through us in these last days.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TRANSFORMATION (1)

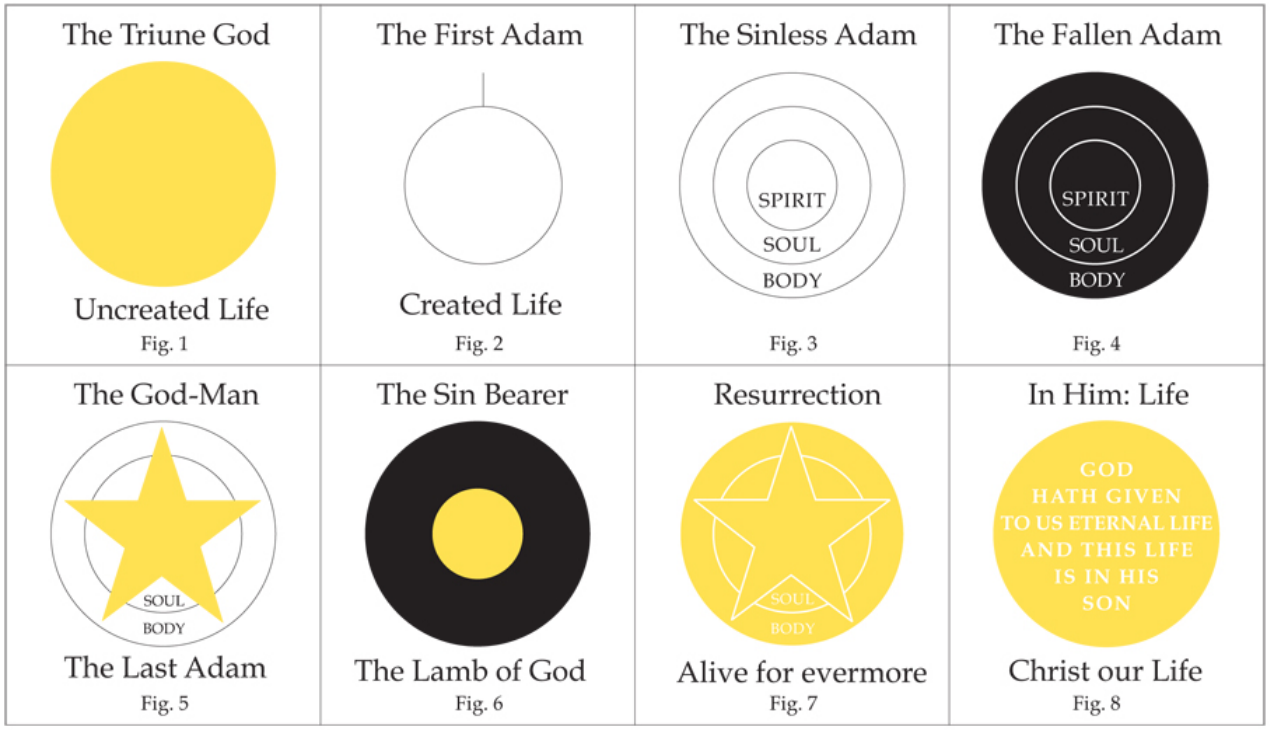
Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Thes. 5:23; Matt. 27:45-46; Col. 3:4; 1 John 5:11-12; Col. 1:13; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:1-2; Rom. 8:19

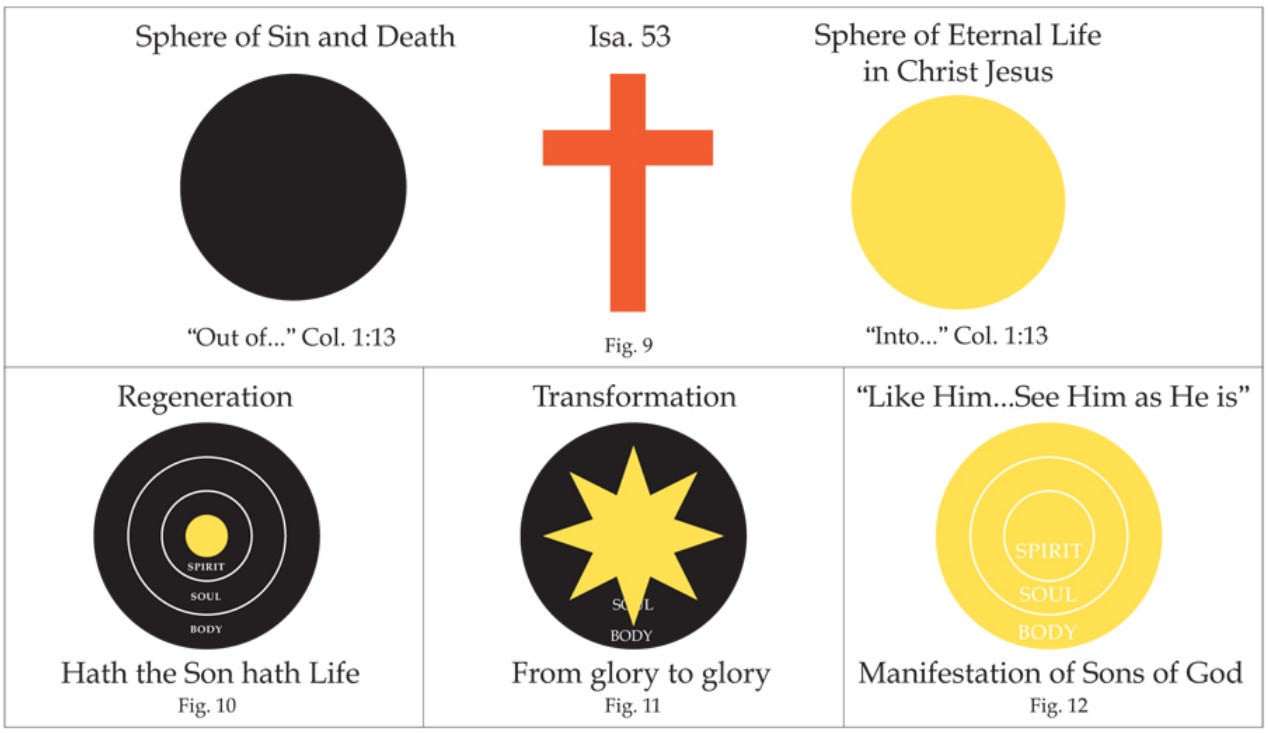
In this chapter we will present a brief outline of what we have seen so far concerning life. For this purpose, we will use the twelve charts arranged on the following page. To my realization, these charts are the best of their kind in all the publications of Christianity. They were prepared by an American sister named Mary E. McDonough, who only recently left to be with the Lord, for her book *God's Plan of Redemption*. It is remarkable that we cannot find this book in almost any Christian bookstore in this country. Shortly after this book was written in 1922, it was translated into Chinese. However, the translator was not clear about the way of life, so we did not agree with his translation. About fifteen years ago we retranslated it into Chinese, and we published it in our bookrooms in Shanghai and in Taiwan. This book was eagerly accepted and familiar to all the brothers and sisters in the Far East, and they received much help from it. I myself have used it in North China, in Shanghai, in Taiwan, and in the Philippines to help people several times. The charts presented here are very revealing, giving us a clear vision and impressing us with God's plan, His way in His redemption, and the way of life.

THE TRIUNE GOD AS THE UNCREATED, ETERNAL LIFE

The first chart, Figure 1, contains a golden circle. In its spiritual meaning a circle denotes something eternal, something without beginning or end. If someone puts his finger on a point of a circle, he cannot say what part of the circle comes before it and what part comes after it. With God there is no limit of time and space. Therefore, this circle signifies the eternal life. In the types in the Scriptures, gold signifies the nature of God, that is, God Himself. This is very clear with the types in the tabernacle. Many of the furnishings in the tabernacle, such as the Ark and the showbread table, were made either of gold or of acacia wood overlaid with gold. These are types of the Lord Jesus with His two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. The acacia wood represents His human nature, and the gold represents His divine nature. The

divine life is the Triune God, and this life is the self-existing, eternal, uncreated, and unlimited life, without beginning and without end.





MAN AS THE CREATED AND FALLEN LIFE

Figure 2 signifies that the Triune God created a man. God created man because God desires to express Himself through man. The Scriptures clearly tell us that man is a vessel to contain God in order to express God. Man is not eternal; he has a beginning in time, signified by the vertical line at the top of the circle. As we know, this man is the first Adam (1 Cor. 15:45a), who is the created, limited life with a beginning and an end. This life, as it was created, was good, pure, and sinless.

Figure 3 shows us that the man created by God as a vessel to contain God has three parts—a spirit, a soul, and a body (1 Thes. 5:23). The spirit is the inner content to contain and contact God, who is Spirit, and the body is the outward appearance to contact the physical world. Between the inward spirit and the outward body is the soul as a medium, which is the personality of man. With this tripartite man there was no sin.

Figure 4 requires little explanation; we are clear just by looking at it. Every part has become dark; this is the fallen Adam. Man was made as a vessel to contain God, but before God came into him, something else came in. That was Satan, the enemy of God, personified sin. In the universe a particular creature, Satan, rebelled against God and became the enemy of God. Now Satan is the very sin in the universe. Satan came into the created life, so the whole person of man—body, soul, and spirit—was corrupted, damaged, and spoiled by Satan as Sin. The fallen man became filled with sin and possessed by Satan, and his every part is full of darkness. We all know how much corruption has come out of this corrupted human being. He is truly dark—corrupted in body, corrupted in soul, and corrupted in spirit.

THE INCARNATED, CRUCIFIED, AND RESURRECTED GOD-MAN BECOMING OUR LIFE

Figure 5 shows us another man. The first Adam was the first man, who became corrupted by the fall. The second man is the last Adam, who is Christ (1 Cor. 15:45b). What kind of man is Christ? Christ is a God-man, a real man, yet the incarnation of God. Since this second man is a real man, He also has a spirit, soul, and body. He is the same as the created man, but there is still a difference. Within the created man there was nothing of God, but within this God-man is God Himself, as represented by the golden star. This man is the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very meaningful figure.

Figure 6 shows how this God-man, at the time that He was crucified on the cross, became the Sin-bearer. At that time He bore all our sins as the Lamb of God. According to the record of the Gospels, a change came over the universe at the third hour of His crucifixion (Matt. 27:45). All the sins of mankind were put upon the Lord Jesus for a period of three hours, from noon until three o'clock in the afternoon, when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (v. 46). When the Lord was on this earth, He said that the Father was always with Him; the Father never left Him alone. During these three hours, however, the Father forsook Christ because He put all our sins upon Him as the Sin-bearer. In this way, the God-man, God incarnated, bore our sins and dealt with them.

After Christ's crucifixion He was resurrected, and in resurrection He is living forever. If we compare the resurrected Christ (Figure 7) with the incarnated God-man (Figure 5), we can see that in His resurrection He was transfigured in His entire being with the divine nature. When Christ was incarnated, He took upon Himself the human nature, and in resurrection He transfigured, or transformed, His entire human nature with the divine nature. By becoming the God-man He brought God into man, and by being resurrected He brought man into God. By incarnation He joined and mingled God with man, and by resurrection He joined and mingled man with God. Every part of His being still has the human nature, yet it is now in the divine nature. He has a human spirit, soul, and body that are mingled with the divine nature. Divinity and humanity are mingled as one. As such, He is the model, the example; each one of us gradually will be exactly the same as this One.

Figure 8 shows that in Him, that is, in this incarnated, crucified, and resurrected One, there is life. Life is in Him, and this life is none other than Christ Himself (Col. 3:4). First John 5:11 says, "God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son." This Son is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected God-man, who is life to us.

A TRANSFER THROUGH THE CROSS

Figure 9 is not simple. Here are two spheres, the sphere of Adam on the one hand, and the sphere of Christ on the other hand. In the sphere of Adam there is nothing but sin and death, and in the sphere of Christ there is the eternal life. Between these two spheres is the cross. If one is on the left side of the

cross, he is in the sphere of sin and death; if one has passed through the cross, he is in the sphere of life.

We have been delivered out of the sphere of sin and death and have been transferred into the sphere of life (Col. 1:13). We can say this because we believe in the One who was crucified on the cross for our sins, and we have accepted all the wonderful facts that have been accomplished by the Lord Jesus on the cross. Therefore, we have passed through the cross and are no longer in the sphere of sin and death. Rather, we are now in the glorious sphere of the eternal life. However, how much are we in this sphere? We may be in this sphere in only a small part of our being.

REGENERATION

We have now been regenerated in our human spirit (Figure 10). At the very time we received the Lord Jesus as our Savior, He came into our spirit as the Spirit and gives life to us. First John 5:12 says, “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” Praise the Lord, if we have the Son, we have the life, because the Son is life! However, at the time of regeneration we received life only to a small degree. We received the divine life in only a limited part of our being.

TRANSFORMATION

After we are regenerated, we need to be transformed from darkness into glory (Figure 11). For this, we need to give a free way for the divine life to spread throughout our entire being. The more the divine life spreads, the more we are transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). After being regenerated for a few years, we are transformed a certain amount, but each additional year we are gradually transformed more and more. Eventually, our entire being is transformed from glory to glory.

Transformation is more subjective than positional sanctification, to which many Christians pay their main attention. First Timothy 4:4-5 tells us that even our food is sanctified through the word of God and intercession. A piece of bread in the supermarket is common, not sanctified, but if we buy it, put it on our table, and pray and thank the Lord for it, it is sanctified. This sanctification is a positional matter. It is to be separated from the world unto

God. Transformation, however, is something more. It is a change in nature as well as in form.

Freedom from sin (Rom. 6:18, 22), sanctification (v. 19), and transformation are three different matters, but many Christians today confuse them. We may be freed from sin but not yet experience our sanctification, and we may be sanctified but not yet transformed. A person who is regenerated may realize that he is still under the bondage of sin, so he reckons that he has died on the cross with the Lord (v. 11). In this way he is released from the bondage of sin by the power of the resurrected Lord. However, he is still not absolutely sanctified, separated from the world unto God. Perhaps after another year he consecrates himself absolutely to the Lord and experiences separation from the world unto God. However, he is still not transformed. He needs another change, that is, transformation in his soul. Moreover, when the Lord comes back, he will experience another type of transformation, the transfiguration of the body of the old creation into a body of glory. This demonstrates that sanctification is something more than release from sin, and transformation is something more than sanctification. There is a relationship among these three matters, but there is also a clear distinction between release from sin and sanctification, and a further distinction between sanctification and transformation.

In order to know the way of life, we must know transformation, because transformation is a matter of life. At the time of our regeneration we receive a little of the divine life, but if we cooperate with God and give Him the way, the Holy Spirit will work within us to spread, to increase, the divine life within us. First, the Spirit fills our spirit with the divine life, and gradually, He saturates our soul—our mind, will, and emotion. Eventually, when the Lord comes back, our entire body will be transformed from the old creation into the new creation to be a body of glory.

At the time we are saved, we are regenerated in our spirit. After that, we need to be transformed mostly in our soul. At times this spreading from the spirit to the soul influences our body. Sometimes we overcome our physical weaknesses by realizing the divine life in our body, as mentioned in Romans 8:11. Then when the Lord comes back, our whole body will be transfigured, transformed from the old creation into the new creation to be a body of glory. At that time we will be like Him (Figure 12). We will be exactly the same as the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ (1 John 3:1-2). Every part of

our being—spirit, soul, and body—will be filled, saturated, permeated, and mingled with the divine life. This will be the manifestation, the revelation, of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). We will be wholly, absolutely like the Lord Christ in spirit, soul, and body. This is wonderful!

This is not a matter of reformation or regulation. Of course, we should not be loose; rather, we need to realize that after we are regenerated, what we need is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to give Him the way to fill, saturate, and transform us. This is a matter not of conduct or behavior but of transformation in life. The fallen man, who is absolutely in darkness, does not need reformation, regulation, or improvement; he only needs another life to come into him to regenerate him. Then from the time of his regeneration, his only need is to be transformed.

Transformation is not regulation from being proud to being humble. Whether one is proud or humble, he is still dark before God. Human pride and humility, and human hatred and love, are all equally dark in God's eyes. Therefore, we should not try to regulate ourselves. If we say, "I am too proud, so I need to learn to be humble," we are still in darkness. Even if we are the most humble persons, we may be in darkness the most. We may be full of human love, sacrificing everything for others, but we are still as dark as one that murders others. What we need is not regulation, reformation, or improvement but transformation in nature with the divine life. We need to be transformed into glory, into a glorious condition.

The accompanying charts are truly impressive and revealing. May the Spirit impress us so that we may know where we are, what we are, and what we need.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TRANSFORMATION (2)

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:22-24; 1 Cor. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2, 4-5; James 1:21; Matt. 16:25

As we saw in the previous chapter, we experience three matters as part of a process. These are release from sin, sanctification, and transformation. Some people call release from sin "victory over sin." However, we cannot find such a term in the Scriptures. Instead, Romans 6:18 and 22 speak of release, or freedom, from sin and the slavery of sin. After we are regenerated, we must experience the release, the freedom, from sin.

Romans 6 also tells us that sanctification follows our release from sin (vv. 19, 22). One aspect of sanctification is separation from the world, from all things other than God unto God, and another aspect of sanctification involves a transformation in disposition, which is more subjective. As we pointed out before, we may be released from sin yet still not experience our sanctification. In relation to many things we still may be in the world. In our experience we may not have been separated from the worldly things unto God. To be set free from sin is one thing, but to be separated from the world is another. We must deal with sin, and we must deal with the world. To deal with sin is to be set free from it, and to deal with the world is to be separated from it.

We may illustrate this with a cup that is dirty and is sitting under a table. Before we use the cup, we must cleanse it and free it from all the dirt. However, in addition to being dirty, it is also in the wrong position. Besides cleansing the cup, we must move it from its old position to a new position so that it can be used. This is a picture of positional sanctification. Matthew 23:17 and 19 say that gold is sanctified by the temple and the offerings are sanctified by the altar. When gold is outside the temple, it is common and worldly, but if the gold is separated and brought into the temple, it is sanctified. Likewise, when cattle remain in the herd, they are common and worldly, but if we separate one of the cattle and put it on the altar, it is sanctified. This is a change of position. Sanctification, in this sense, is positional; it is a separation from the world unto God, and we experience our change of position by dealing with the world.

TRANSFORMATION BEING A CHANGE IN NATURE

However, we may be separated from the world but not transformed. The cup in the prior illustration has been cleansed and moved to a new position. However, it has no change in its nature. The cup may be made of opaque clay, but if it is transformed into glass, it will be transparent. The gold and the precious stones in the New Jerusalem are transparent, like clear glass (Rev. 21:18-19). In the New Jerusalem, God is the light, and the Lord Jesus as the Lamb is the lamp (v. 23). If the materials of the city were not transparent, how could the light shine through them? This indicates the need of transformation. Transformation is not a matter of a change in position. It is a matter of a change in nature.

After sanctification, we need transformation. It is regrettable that in Christianity very little has been taught about transformation. It is hard to find an article or message dealing with transformation. However, the Scriptures clearly and definitely speak about it. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." The Lord is the Spirit (v. 17), and the Spirit is the Lord. It is by the Lord as the Spirit that we are being transformed from glory to glory into the Lord's image.

TRANSFORMATION TAKING PLACE IN OUR SOUL

As we know, man is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body. We were regenerated, born of God, in our spirit. Our spirit was renewed and became a new spirit at the time we believed in the Lord Jesus (Ezek. 36:26), but from that time the work of God's salvation is to transform our soul. After being regenerated, we must be transformed in the three parts of our soul—the mind, emotion, and will. Then when the Lord comes back, our body will be redeemed, changed, transfigured, from a body of humiliation to a body of glory.

Therefore, regeneration is in our spirit, transformation is in our soul, and transfiguration is in our body. At the time we believe into Christ, we are regenerated, and at the time the Lord comes back, we will be transfigured in our body. Between these two there is the process of transformation, which is accomplished in our soul.

TRANSFORMATION BEING BY THE RENEWING OF THE MIND

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." The word *transformed* is the same Greek word as in 2 Corinthians 3:18. In 2 Corinthians 3 transformation is by the Lord Spirit, and in Romans 12 transformation takes place in our mind. This shows that transformation is accomplished by the Spirit through the renewing of our mind. If our mind is not renewed, we cannot be transformed.

Overthrowing Reasonings and Taking Captive Every Thought unto the Obedience of Christ

Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "As we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ." Many people may never have realized that there is such a phrase in the New Testament as *overthrow reasonings*. Have you ever overthrown your reasonings? Every day we have many reasonings; even at this moment we may have reasonings. To overthrow reasonings and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ is the real renewing of the mind.

Ephesians 1:18 says, "The eyes of your heart having been enlightened." The eyes of our heart involve our understanding, which is a function of the mind. With our understanding there are eyes, not the physical eyes but the inner, mental eyes, and these eyes need to be enlightened. This means that our mind, our understanding, needs to be transformed by being renewed.

In order to be renewed in our mind, we must first learn to overthrow our reasonings. Day by day there are reasonings and imaginations in our mind. These imaginations are like dreams. In our imaginations we can travel all over the world. We may travel to Japan in our mind, and two minutes later we are back in the United States. If we check with ourselves, we will see that we have many imaginations. It is difficult to quiet and stop our mind. We must learn the lesson to overthrow our reasonings and imaginations. We also need to take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. We do not realize how rebellious we are in our thoughts. We need to be subdued in our thoughts.

Our thoughts need to be taken captive. We need to practice and exercise to do this.

Putting Off the Old Man by Being Renewed in the Spirit of the Mind

Originally, our soul was something in the old creation, but the Lord's salvation transforms it into something of the new creation. Most of this transformation is in our mind. Our natural mind is too old. Because we have the mind of Adam, our mind is as old as Adam, which is six thousand years old. Even a young brother has an old mind. In addition, our mind is a mind of our own national culture. Therefore, we need a change of mind. First Corinthians 2:16 says that we have the mind of Christ. By our old nature we have the mind of Adam, but by the new birth we have the mind of Christ. After we are regenerated, we need a change of mind. This change of mind is the meaning of repentance.

Ephesians 4:22-24 says, "That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality." Putting off the old man and putting on the new man depend on our being renewed in the spirit of our mind.

The old man is mainly the soul, and the mind is a part of the soul, so the mind is a part of the old man. The old man has been crucified on the cross. Now we need to recognize this fact and put off the old man. This is simply to put off the old mind with its thoughts. If we recognize the fact that we as the old man have been crucified on the cross, we must act on it by rejecting and giving up the reasonings and thoughts of our old mind, reckoning that our mind has been crucified. If we do this, the Holy Spirit will do His part; He will renew what we put on the cross. To renew is simply to resurrect. If we put our mind on the cross, the Holy Spirit will renew it by resurrecting it from death.

We must learn the lesson to reject our reasonings and our old thoughts. We do not realize how much we are controlled, directed, and governed by our mind. The more we think about a brother, for example, the more we may be unhappy with him. We need to learn the lesson to give up these thoughts and put them on the cross. We must realize that we, the old man, the self, the soul,

have been crucified, so our mind and our thoughts have to be put on the cross. If we do this, the Holy Spirit within us will renew our mind. He will come into our mind and take possession of it, causing it to be renewed. At this very point, the Spirit will even fill our mind. Our mind will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

We cannot understand the Scriptures with our old mind. Moreover, because our mind is wrong, we often misunderstand the ministry of the word. Therefore, when we come to read the Scriptures, we must learn the lesson to reject our old thoughts and our old way of thinking. We do not realize how much we bring our own thoughts into our reading of the Scriptures. To come to the Word with an old mind means that our mind has not been renewed.

I once stayed in the home of a brother and sister. This couple loved the Lord, but they were not of one mind, because it was hard for the sister to submit to her husband. One morning I asked the sister what she had read in the Bible. She said that she had read Ephesians 5. I asked what help she had received, and she replied that she received the light that husbands should love their wives. I turned to the brother and asked the same thing. He said that strangely he had read the same passage and had received the light that wives should submit to their husbands. No doubt, the sister already had the thought in her mind that husbands should love their wives, and when she came to the Scriptures, she brought her thought with her to get a confirmation. It is the same in principle with the brother. He had the thought in his mind that his wife should submit to him, and he came to the Scriptures to get a confirmation. This demonstrates that people come to the Scriptures with their old mind.

Because our mind is occupied by all our human thoughts and reasonings, it is difficult to understand the Word. It is difficult to get something new, heavenly, and spiritual. We cannot get something from the Scriptures, because we bring something to them. This is because our thoughts and mind have not been renewed. This is our problem. After we are regenerated, we need to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. Then when our mind is renewed, our mind influences our emotions and our will. If our mind is transformed, our whole soul, including our emotions and our will, also will be transformed.

In the same principle, we must learn the lesson to reject our natural will and emotions. Many times when someone comes to us or when something

happens to us, we cannot control our emotions. We are so influenced and directed by our emotions that we are beside ourselves. We must learn the lesson to reject our natural emotions. Then something will happen in our emotions. They will be renewed by the working of the Holy Spirit. It is the same in principle with our will. We need to learn the lesson always to subdue and reject the natural will.

The mind, emotions, and will are the parts of the soul, and the soul is the old man, which has been crucified on the cross. We have to realize this fact and reject the old elements of the old man. If we do this, the Holy Spirit will honor what we do. He will renew our mind, will, and emotions, which we have rejected. This results in transformation. The Holy Spirit with the divine life, which is the Lord Christ Himself, will take possession of our mind, emotions, and will. He will heal our entire soul with Christ as our life. Then the element of Christ will be not only in our spirit but also in our inward parts, our soul. Christ will be the infilling factor in all our inward parts. The Holy Spirit will fill our inward parts with Christ Himself. This is the transformation in our soul.

TRANSFORMATION BEING GROWTH UNTO SALVATION

First Peter 1:23 says, "Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God." Chapter 2 verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation." After being regenerated, that is, born again, we become newborn babes who need to grow. Following this, verse 4 speaks of coming to the Lord, and verse 5 speaks of being built up as a spiritual house. To be born again as newborn babes is one thing, but to grow in order to be built up is another matter. The more we are transformed, the more we grow. The way to grow is by transformation, and the way to be transformed is the renewing of the mind, because the mind is a great part of the soul, which very much directs and governs our soul.

TRANSFORMATION BEING THE SAVING OF OUR SOULS

Transformation is the salvation of our souls. Our spirit was saved at the time we were regenerated, but by transformation our soul also will be saved. James 1:21 says, "Putting away all filthiness and the abundance of malice,

receive in meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Implanting is like grafting, as a branch of one tree is grafted onto another tree. Have you ever noticed that there is such a phrase in the New Testament as *the implanted word*? This is a wonderful, special term. James 1:21 likens the word to a living plant that is planted into our being and grows in us to bring forth fruit for the salvation of our souls. If we receive the implanted word, it is able to save our souls.

Romans 11:17 and 24 speak of grafting as the uniting of two lives, a poor life and a glorious, fruitful, and better life. In the same principle, when we receive the word of God, the word is grafted, or implanted, in us with the life of God. In the word of God there is the divine, better, uncreated, and eternal life, which is implanted in us. This implanted word with the divine life will save our soul. Our soul is a poor soul, but if we receive the implanted word of God, this word will deliver and save our soul from a poor condition into a glorious condition. For our soul to be saved means that it is renewed.

In Matthew 16:25 the Lord said, "Whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it." To lose the soul-life is to deny and reject the soul. If we deny our soul for the Lord's sake, our soul will be renewed. When we reject our self, our soul—our mind, will, and emotions—we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to take possession of our soul. Our soul is put to death, but the Holy Spirit comes to resurrect it. In this way our soul is renewed, saved, uplifted, and divided from the spirit. It becomes spiritual and not natural, full not of natural thoughts but of spiritual thoughts. We also become full of love, desire, and other emotions, not natural emotions but spiritual ones.

To deny the soul does not mean that we lose the faculties of our soul; it means that we save our soul. The more we deny our mind, the more our mind is renewed. The more we deny our emotions, the more our emotions are developed in a spiritual way. This is the meaning of transformation.

OUR NEED TO COOPERATE WITH THE SPIRIT

From the time we are regenerated until the time the Lord comes back, there is a long period for the process of transformation. We must constantly be transformed, but this transformation can be accomplished only by our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is dwelling within us, and

our old man has been crucified by the Lord's cross; the Spirit helps us to realize this fact. Then if we cooperate with the Spirit to deny the natural mind, will, and emotions, He will take the opportunity and the ground to take possession of our soul, to occupy it, and to fill it with the Lord Jesus. In this way we are renewed in the soul. Our soul is renewed, developed, and uplifted. This is the meaning of transformation, and this is also the meaning of growth. Moreover, if our growth is up to the highest standard, it is maturity. To be transformed up to the highest standard is to be matured in the spiritual life.

We have seen the dealings with the flesh, the self, the conscience, the world, and the spirit. Here we have seen the transformation of the soul. Our spirit has been regenerated and renewed. Now our soul needs to be transformed in life and nature. Then when the Lord comes back, He will transfigure our body. This is our full salvation. We have God's salvation in our spirit, but this salvation must work through our soul, and it will reach even to our body when the Lord comes back. Today, however, we are responsible to be transformed by cooperating with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is now dwelling within us to do the work of transformation, but He needs our cooperation.

What I have presented to you is not mere doctrine. Rather, these messages point out to us the way to grow in the Lord and be matured. I look to the Lord that we will put all these things into practice. We must try day by day in all our daily life to reject our natural soul—our natural mind, emotions, and will. In this way we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity, the ground, to transform our soul by the renewing of our mind.