

THE BRIDGE
AND CHANNEL
OF GOD

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE BRIDGE AND CHANNEL OF GOD

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PREFACE

This book is a collection of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Taipei, Taiwan, and Manila, Philippines, in 1953. It contains eight chapters. The first four chapters are words of fellowship given to the brothers and sisters in college concerning how to know God's work, how to know the Lord's leading, and how to know the way of the church, as well as certain life matters closely related to young people, such as consecration, the pursuit of education, and service.

Chapters 5 and 6 are words of fellowship related to the prospect and goal of the work in Southeast Asia and concerning how man is God's bridge and God's channel. Chapter 7 speaks of how God is the center of human life and how He regulates and balances man. Chapter 8 is a word of fellowship given at the conclusion of the co-workers' training in 1953 concerning the proper exercise and learning of those who serve the Lord.

CHAPTER ONE

KNOWING THE WORK OF GOD

THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION AND THE INWARD PRINCIPLE OF GOD'S WORK

In this universe and in every age God works according to His intention. God's work seems to be different outwardly in every age; actually, it is absolutely the same in principle inwardly. The Old Testament age and the New Testament age are absolutely different, and God's work in the two ages is different. However, intrinsically God is the same God in both ages. This may be likened to the fact that the clothes I wore yesterday and the clothes I am wearing today are different, yet I, who wear the clothes, am the same. In every age God is the same God, and the work He does in every age is for the same goal, although the way His works are manifested outwardly is different. Hence, as those who pursue God walk on His way, they should not pay too much attention to the outward manifestation of His work; rather, they should focus on knowing God's way and God Himself inwardly. It is difficult to say what God's way of working in every age is, and it is even more difficult to say what the outward manifestation of His work in man and through man is. These matters are entirely controlled by God's hand and cannot be determined by man.

For example, in the four hundred years that have passed since the Reformation carried out by Martin Luther, God has passed through many people. Surprisingly, however, those whom God has passed through and worked on have had different outward manifestations. There was one kind of manifestation with George Müller, another kind with D. L. Moody, and yet another kind with Charles Spurgeon. Not only have the outward manifestations of God's work in every person been different, but the outward manifestations of His work in every age also have been different. Therefore, we should not insist that we must do a certain thing in order to touch God's desire. For example, in China the Lord used Brother John Sung primarily for the gospel. God's work in him was manifested in a particular way with a particular appearance. Some felt that his work was fruitful and therefore sought to imitate, to copy, his way. In the end, however, that way did not work

for them. We all have a certain appearance, yet none of us can guarantee what the children we beget will look like, for their appearance is not under our control. The children we give birth to are not bronze statues, stone sculptures, or wax figures. Only man-made objects, such as bronze statues, stone sculptures, and wax figures, can be alike. The children we give birth to have life and are living.

There are two ways of looking at God's work throughout the ages. Apparently, the outward manifestation, the outward form, of God's work is completely different in every age. Intrinsically, however, the principle, way, content, and purpose of God's work are absolutely one and the same. God worked in Christ, in the apostles, and in the spiritual saints throughout the ages, and He is working in us also. The goal and direction of God's work are absolutely the same. This is similar to the fact that although we may wear Chinese-style clothing in China, kimonos in Japan, and Western-style clothing in Europe, we, the persons, are unchanged regardless of what we wear outwardly. We are who we are whether we are in China, in Japan, or in Europe. Likewise, what God did in Job, David, John, Martin Luther, and George Müller was outwardly different but inwardly the same. Throughout the ages God has never changed His work.

Whether in the Old Testament age or the New Testament age, in China or abroad, at present or in the future, the outward manifestation of God's work may be diverse, but there is only one content within. Because we have received such a revelation from the Bible, we have no desire to imitate others in their outward forms, nor do we want the churches to imitate one another in outward form. God's work is manifested in the church in Taipei in one way, in the church in Taichung in another way, and in the church in Kaohsiung in yet another way. This is referring to the outward appearance. However, the work that God is doing is intrinsically one; God's work in Kaohsiung is also His work in Taipei, and God's work in Taiwan is also His work in Southeast Asia.

GOD'S UNIQUE WORK THROUGHOUT THE AGES

BEING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO MAN

It is a great blessing for college students to be saved while they are still young. Furthermore, the situation of the churches today is much richer than it was thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, even if we had used all our money to buy spiritual publications, it would still have been impossible to find in them

the light that we have today. Now that we have passed on the light of these truths to you, you must clearly see that there is only one work God desires to do throughout the ages. The unique work that God has been doing throughout the ages is to work Himself into man. God desires to make man a God-man, one who is God yet man. A God-man is one who has God within him, one who has the element of God. This may be likened to a cup of water becoming a cup of tea-water after the addition of the element of tea. We were originally only human, but today God has been added into us. God has not only been added into us, but He is also mingled with us. This mingling reaches the point where we become God-men, but we do not share the Godhead.

God's work throughout the ages has been only to work Himself into man. This is the work He did in Job, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Old Testament prophets. Throughout the ages God did not do another work in these persons. If we read the book of Daniel without seeing Daniel's character, it will be difficult for us to understand the content of the book. If we do not know the character of Isaiah and Jeremiah, it will be difficult to understand the contents of the books they wrote. Every book written by the prophets in the Old Testament can be compared to a famous person's biography. If we cannot see the prophet's character, we will not be able to sense the flavor of God produced by the work that God did in that prophet or understand the portion of the Scriptures that he wrote. This is the secret. Therefore, not only the New Testament reveals that we are in Christ, but even the Old Testament reveals the same principle. The one thing that God has been doing throughout the ages is to work Himself into man. This is God's goal.

SPIRITUAL THINGS

NOT TO BE IMITATED OUTWARDLY

When God works Himself into us, what we manifest, what we express, is different from individual to individual. When God worked Himself into George Müller, what was manifested through him was the establishing of orphanages. When God worked Himself into Charles Spurgeon, what was manifested through him was the powerful preaching of the gospel. God's work in each person is manifested in a different way. The same God is working, but He is manifested in different ways through different people. Thus, we cannot

imitate spiritual things but can only follow the inner principle. All imitations of outward forms are wrong.

Our study of biographies and histories is not for seeking out the outward manifestations of historical figures in order to reproduce them; rather, it is for seeking out the way God took in them and the work He did in them. When we say that God's work in recent ages has been to build His church, our understanding may not be precise enough. Many Christians probably think that in recent ages the way God has been taking is the way of the gospel, that He is for the spreading of the gospel. They may become very zealous concerning the gospel and go forth to the whole inhabited earth. We dare not say that this is wrong, but this is at most the outward appearance. The way in which a person will be used by God is not determined by man.

When God came to Job in the Old Testament, Job was touched by God, and in him there was a manifestation, an operation, which produced a result. The results produced by God's working in different people are not the same. We have no way of telling the young brothers and sisters what God has set out to do in this age. If we told them, it would only show that we do not know the principle of God's work. No one knows how God will manifest His work in all the young people in five years. However, according to the Bible and the experiences of the saints who have gone before us, we know that there is one thing God has been doing throughout the ages—working Himself into us. What we do not know is what God will manifest through us after He works Himself into us.

GOD DESIRING TO WORK HIMSELF INTO MAN

In the past two thousand years those who have paid attention only to how God works have been destined to fail and err. The New Testament clearly shows that God desires to work Himself into us, yet this matter is beyond our natural thought. We think only of being zealous, working for God, being spiritual, receiving power, and so forth. This is especially true of those in Christianity. As soon as a person is saved, he has all these natural thoughts. The matter of God working Himself into us is beyond what we could even dream of. Within us we have neither the light nor the revelation. Even if this matter were placed right before our eyes, we would not be able to have any response within. We may be like rocks, which cannot have seeds planted in

them or have ink written on them. We do not have any concept at all concerning God's unique work.

Even the brothers and sisters who have been saved for many years and have heard numerous messages in the church may still desire to improve themselves before God every time they think of Him. We need the Holy Spirit within to open our eyes to see that improvement is not what God desires from us. Even if we were to become a million times better today, God would not want this. What God desires is to work Himself into us. This is what God has been doing in every age.

The nature of God's work is the same in every age; the design, measure, and plan of God's work has not changed at all—He desires to work Himself into us. The outward form, the outward manifestation, of this work is different in every person. If we would all cooperate with God, only God knows what will happen on this earth in the next five years.

COOPERATING WITH GOD— CONSECRATION, SUBMISSION, AND DEPENDENCE

That God desires to work Himself into us is a clear light among us. However, the question is, do we actually allow God to do this? Do we allow God to take this way? This is the responsibility we should bear. Are we willing to let God do what He desires to do? Here we need to consider the matter of consecration. What is consecration? Consecration is to let God pass through us. Although God's desire is to work Himself into man, very few in the last six thousand years have been willing to allow God to do so. If our eyes are opened, we must tell God that we are willing to consecrate ourselves. It is wrong to teach people to consecrate themselves to become spiritual giants. To teach people the proper consecration is to help them to see that the great God desires to pass through man and issue out of man. When you are willing to let God work, you should tell Him, "O God, You can do whatever You want." From this day on, what God requires of you is your submission. Whenever you feel that God is touching you concerning a certain matter, what you should do is submit. In this way you will gain a little more of God's element within you. This is our responsibility before the Lord.

Christianity always teaches people how to make plans, how to work, and how to be zealous. However, those who have truly been enlightened and led

by God would not teach people in this way. God is doing only one thing in the universe, which is to work Himself into man. What God requires of man is man's consent and continual cooperation. This consent and continual cooperation include two things: consecration and submission. Consecration is to go through the gate. It needs to be followed by submission and then dependence. If you are willing to let God work, there will definitely be a day when God will have a manifestation through you. It is useless to desire to do something for Him. Desiring to do something for God is a concept of degraded Christianity. A person with revelation sees that God desires to work Himself into him and then work Himself out through him. What is needed is that we cooperate by letting God pass through us.

It is a pity that hundreds and thousands of people keep God outside the door and do not let Him in. They all say, "This road is blocked—please detour." We must say, "Lord, I allow You to come through." This is our responsibility today. If someone rises up in this way, God will have a way and will be able to do His work. Some brothers have the heart to consecrate themselves but have not found the way. Consecration is not merely something to talk about. What is the way for us to consecrate ourselves? Do we need to receive a special calling from God? These are important questions; if we could touch and enter into them, many problems would be solved.

SPIRITUAL MATTERS

NEEDING TO BE INITIATED BY GOD

Everything in this universe is initiated by God. The Bible opens with these words: "In the beginning God." God is the beginning of everything in the entire universe; this is true both spiritually and physically. The old creation was begun by God, and the new creation also was begun by God. If God does not call us, how can we answer His call? If God does not shine on us, how can we be enlightened by Him? God is first, and we are second. God must shine on us, and then we can see. God must make a demand, and then we can obey. Never forget this sequence. God first sent Jesus, His Son, to preach the gospel to people; then people could believe. Next, from among those who believed, God sent out twelve apostles to preach the gospel. After others heard and believed, some of them also were sent. Then more people obeyed and accepted the gospel.

In the universe God has always had a spiritual operation, a spiritual work, which is initiated by Him and then answered and accepted by people. In all the thousands of cases in which people have met God, it has always been that God first came to seek and shine in them, and then they answered Him. God then shone on them again, and they responded again. This sequence should never be reversed. Spiritual operations are always initiated by God. God must first do something in man before man can answer and obey.

OBEYING THE INNER SENSE

In our experience of salvation we always receive God's shining and God's demand. According to this principle, no Christian can truthfully say that he does not have any call, demand, or feeling from God. This call, demand, and feeling are all God's shining. The question is, when we sense the demand and hear the call, are we willing to go and answer this call? Having heard the call, seen the light, and sensed the demand within, if we are willing to accept it, we will enter into the way of following and touching God. This will bring in a cycle in which God calls us and shines on us, we obey Him, and then our obedience and response bring in God's greater call and greater shining.

After people are saved, they are touched by the Lord for the first time and know that it is the Lord's calling. However, because some ignore this calling, the feeling and the light within them cease. When others receive a call, they answer it right away, and when they receive light, they follow it immediately. As a result, more calling and more light come. There is such a cycle within us all the time, much like a child drawing circles that become larger and larger. In time, those who experience this cycle within will become completely transparent; they will be like the four living creatures, which are full of eyes, as recorded in the Bible (Ezek. 1:18; Rev. 4:6). Conversely, there are Christians who do not have a single hole; they are like walls of brass and iron, being completely in darkness. This is because since the time they were saved, they have never obeyed the inner sense or accepted God's shining.

If a Christian answers right away when God calls and obeys immediately when he has a sense from the Lord, he will have a hole, an opening, through which God can work Himself into him. Some people are full of openings; thus, it is easy for them to be enlightened in the Lord's light. This is our way. Simply put, what God desires is to work Himself into us and then work out through us. Our responsibility is to work with God through consecration and

submission, allowing Him to have a way to work Himself into us and then out through us. In practice, from the day we are saved, we should learn to be enlightened in God's light, to obey the inner sense, to respond to the inner call, and to answer the inner demand. This is a serious matter, and it is also a simple one.

THE NATURAL LIFE HAVING NO PLACE

Some boast that they love the Lord, but in their daily life they do not answer God's call but rather ignore His voice. They say that they love the Lord only when they are emotionally excited. For example, when they wish to see a movie, a sense within forbids them to go, but they go anyway. They know that they should not commit big sins, but they are unconcerned about the small things. When praying in the meetings, they can even testify that they are touched by the Lord's Spirit. There are many Christians who are like this. Actually, loving the Lord in this way is useless. Recently, I have been very much influenced by a word spoken by a certain brother: "The natural voice is the natural life, and the natural life is the life that is not real." Someone may pray with you, indicating that he truly desires to serve with you in coordination, yet immediately after praying, he may lose his temper toward you.

A certain sister may be so zealous for the Lord that ten brothers combined cannot match her. When she speaks about loving the Lord, those listening to her may be touched to tears. Incredibly, however, when such a sister gets angry, no one is able to stop her. The natural life is the unreal life. One day all that is of the natural life must be broken. We need to be truly touched by the Lord to see that our enthusiasm, our zeal, our love for the Lord, and our service to the Lord are all natural and short of God's element. Regardless of how many layers of brass and iron walls we have, and regardless of whether it is the outer gate, the middle gate, or the inner gate, all of these must be opened one by one to the Lord according to the sense within. We will then realize that in our expressions of enthusiasm and zeal we cannot see the Lord Himself. Only when we are touched by the Lord to the extent that He can be released from within us will we bear much fruit as mentioned in John 15; the fruit on the tree comes from the life within (v. 2).

Loving the Lord is not a matter of being zealous; it is a matter of touching the Lord from deep within and submitting ourselves to His love. From now on,

we do not need to care for how much love we have for the Lord; we need to care only for whether we are willing to submit ourselves in the matters in which God has touched us within. We must pay attention to our relationship with the Lord. If the Lord touches us, how should we respond? If the Lord gives us a sense, how should we obey? We may pray in the morning, “Lord, I do not love You enough; I hope I can love You more today and be more zealous,” but I am afraid that this kind of prayer is of religion, not of revelation. We need to care not about how we behave before Him but about whether we have met Him and have sensed and obeyed His feeling. He may touch us, asking us how we could treat our wife or husband in a certain way or how we could wear certain kinds of clothes. We must then submit to Him, taking care of His feeling within. We do not need to care about what we should do for Him. We simply need to care about His demand and what He desires to do within us and then cooperate with and submit to Him.

OF REVELATION AND NOT OF HUMAN EFFORT, AND BEING SUBJECTIVE AND NOT OBJECTIVE

According to this principle of cooperating and submitting, if God does not move, we should not move. We should move only when He moves. This is to work according to revelation and not according to religion. Caring for what one must do for God is a man-made religion produced out of man’s strength and effort. Some may point out that the Lord Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” However, what is seen here is Peter’s response to the Lord’s demand for love, not Peter first loving the Lord. Peter did not love the Lord enough; he loved fishing. But when he was fishing and ignoring the Lord, the Lord came and appeared to him. The Lord’s appearing was a revelation to Peter. Under such a light the Lord asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” The Lord’s appearing caused Peter to respond to the Lord’s demand (21:1-17). This is the God who is living and who gives light.

Man’s concept is that if God desires to give us a revelation, He will speak to us outwardly and objectively. In fact, it is exactly the opposite. When God desires to give us a revelation, He does it by coming into us, clothing Himself with us, bringing us along, and giving us a certain feeling so that we sense that the revelation is from within us, yet it is of God. We can say that when God gives us a revelation, He actually mingles Himself with us. God mingles Himself with us to the extent that even if our will wants to rebel against the

Lord, we are not able to; we realize that our being rebellious is of ourselves. We must know that revelation is not objective but subjective. All the outward harassments are Satan in disguise.

Something happened at the time I was in the southern part of Fukien Province. There was a brother who had gone to the United States to study medicine. When he came home, he denied that the Lord Jesus had come in the flesh and that He was the Son of God. This was the work of evil spirits. God's revelation to man is not from the outside but is exceedingly subjective. If the circumstances and feelings obviously contradict the Bible, they are manifestations of Satan. Even the apostles and the churches in the past went through times when they lost the revelation because many circumstances and situations made it difficult for them to know God. Revelation is subjective; it is God coming into us and becoming one with us. He clothes Himself with us, mingles with us, and holds on to us from within. Eventually, everything that we do, while apparently of ourselves, is actually of God. If we have this kind of understanding, we will no longer aspire to know God merely objectively.

CHAPTER TWO

KNOWING THE LORD'S LEADING AND THE FUNCTION OF LIFE

KNOWING THE LORD'S LEADING

Question: How do we know the Lord's way? How do we know which way is of the Lord's arrangement?

Answer: The meaning of the phrase *the Lord's way* is very broad. We may understand it literally but not actually know what it refers to. It can be compared to the phrase *the vast expanse of the ocean*. The phrase itself is easy to understand, but it is difficult to know what it refers to. We can say that the Lord's ways are even greater than the vast expanse of the ocean. In the Bible the matter of the Lord's ways is exceedingly broad. For example, Romans 11 says, "How...untraceable His ways!" (v. 33). It is impossible for man to measure and search God's ways. Hence, the longer we follow the Lord, the less we dare to say what it is to know the Lord's way. In the narrow sense, which is perhaps easier to understand, to know the Lord's way in a particular matter is to know the Lord's leading. The meaning of *the Lord's way* is too broad, but *the Lord's leading* is something that everyone can easily understand. Knowing the Lord's leading and the Lord's guidance is comparatively practical.

Spiritual matters are great, but we are not great. Therefore, when a person desires to follow the Lord, he should not say, "I want to touch the Lord's way," or "I want to know the Lord's way." The Lord's way is a great matter that we cannot touch immediately; rather, we must approach it slowly.

It is relatively simple for us to know, to understand, God's leading and guidance to us personally. To illustrate, if someone wants to go to Kaohsiung, which way should he take? The way that he takes to Kaohsiung will be according to the steps to which he is accustomed. He must go there step by step. He first stands up and then walks out of his house. He makes a few turns on the street, not knowing whether to go south or north and thus asking for directions along the way. Then people tell him that the safest way to

Kaohsiung is by train. Therefore, he walks to the train station, buys a ticket, waits for the train on the platform, and finally boards the train to Kaohsiung. This all sounds very bothersome, but actually, each of us who follows the Lord must be practical and solid, not vague or careless. Sometimes the Lord gives us a feeling, touching us to follow Him. If we simply follow Him, everything will be fine, but many times we instead like to consider how we should know and understand the Lord's way. It is as if we are trying to go on ahead of the Lord. Since the Lord wants us to follow Him, we should not try to go on ahead of Him, rushing to know or understand His way. We should simply follow Him.

ALL ACTIVITIES NOT OF GOD AND VOID OF GOD BEING RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

The difference between believing into Christ and believing in religion is that in believing into Christ it is God who seeks man, whereas religion requires man to seek God. What is religion? Religion is man's belief in and reverence for God; it is man's consciousness that there is a God and his consequent desire to worship Him. Man believes in a religion because in his consideration there is a God, and he is thus determined to serve Him, worship Him, probe into Him, study Him, survey Him, and be zealous for Him. However, believing into Christ is not like this. Believing into Christ is God's coming to seek man, desiring to enter into man, and desiring man to serve Him.

According to the common concept, people often ask, "What is the difference between Christianity and religion?" Or they may ask, "Is Christianity a religion?" To answer this question cautiously, we must say that Christianity is not a religion. The Lord Jesus never used the word *religion* during His ministry on the earth. Likewise, the apostles never used the word *religion* in their preaching of the gospel. Although Christianity is considered to be one of the five major religions in the world, the fact is that believing into Christ is not believing in a religion. We also can explain this by saying that those who truly believe into Christ are Christians, not followers of the Christian religion.

What does it mean to believe in a religion? People believe in a religion because they feel that there is a God and that they need to revere and serve God. However, those who believe into Christ are not like this; they are not like those who worship God out of their own initiation because they sense that there is a God and feel that they should worship Him. Every instance of man's

believing into Christ is initiated by God. It was God who came to seek Moses while he was shepherding the flock (Exo. 3:1-6); it was God who came to seek Saul while he was kicking against the goads (Acts 26:13-15); and it was God who said to Peter and Andrew while they were fishing, “Come after Me” (Matt. 4:18-20). It is wonderful that in the entire Bible, whenever a person has contact with God, it is always because God has contacted him first. God first came to find Job, and then Job served Him (Job 38:1—42:6); God first came to find Moses, and then Moses served Him (Exo. 3). There is no case in the Bible where a person served God because he first had the thought of serving God.

The entire Bible speaks only of God coming to find man. One day Isaiah saw a vision and heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?” Therefore, he answered, “Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:1-8). After seeing a vision, Jeremiah rose up to prophesy to the Israelites the words that Jehovah had commanded him (Jer. 1:4-19). Daniel also saw a vision before he rose up to fast and pray, beseeching Jehovah to restore Jerusalem (Dan. 7—9). The entire Bible shows that God first comes to find man before man serves God. Those who believe in a religion take the initiative to serve God; those who believe into Christ serve God after they have been prompted and touched by God.

For this reason we say that one should not rush forward to serve God. We should serve God only when He touches us to do so. If we serve God without God first touching us, we are in a religion. Figuratively speaking, many people today hang the sign “Christian” outside, but they are engaging in a religious enterprise inside. They are Christians in name but religious people in reality. What is it to be a Christian? A Christian is one who has Christ stirring within him through the Spirit and who thus becomes restless and has no choice but to serve God. A religious person, on the other hand, is one who initiates his service to God, desiring to do many things for God. This is the situation of many Christians today. They do not wait for the Lord to move in them and then follow Him accordingly. Instead, they themselves are the initiators, and the Lord is merely a spectator. However, in the experience of genuine Christians, the Lord is the One who initiates, and they simply say Amen. The Lord is the Initiator, and they are the followers. This is completely different from the way of religious people.

If you sense that the Lord is moving in you, you should ask, “O Lord, what do You want me to do? Lord, what do You want to do in me? Do You want to come forth out of me?” When you calm down in this way, the Lord will have the opportunity to let you know little by little how to act and how to submit to Him. In this way you will touch the Lord’s leading. In a broader sense you will touch the Lord’s will for you, or we can say, you will touch the Lord’s way. In your heart you will sense the Lord’s heart’s desire; then you can continue to fellowship with the Lord and be moved by Him further. You can then follow this moving immediately and seek Him, saying, “Lord, what do You want to do? How do You want to work it out through me?” Waiting quietly for the Lord is the proper way.

The principle here is to not move until the Lord moves in us. However, most Christians are not this way. In the past, when pursuing fame and position in the world, they were accustomed to rushing ahead. Now that they have been saved, the moment the Lord touches them a little, their old habit is manifested again. They rush ahead to organize a Christian fellowship to carry out a work on a campus, and they plan to invite a few great pastors and host a great evangelical meeting. All these matters are initiated by themselves. Hence, they become religious people who do not allow Christ to move in them and live out through them.

What does it mean for you to be a Christian? It means that when Christ moves in you, you follow His moving. If one day He says, “My child, come to Me,” you then should ask, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” After Paul met the Lord, the first words he spoke were, “Who are You, Lord?” The Lord then told him, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute. But rise up and enter into the city, and it will be told to you what you must do” (Acts 9:5-6). From the first day Paul met the Lord, he learned a lesson, realizing that all the things he did formerly were merely religious activities. He was zealous for the Lord, going to the high priest and asking for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, he could bring them bound to Jerusalem (vv. 1-2). Going to Damascus was something determined by Paul. However, when the Lord met him, he fell down, saying, “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10). All his actions from then on were of the Lord. When the Lord moved in him, he moved; when the Lord did not move, he did not move. All his moving outwardly was the Lord’s moving inwardly.

As Christians, we have One who is moving in us. When He moves, we move. Nevertheless, we are not puppets, having no feelings, thoughts, affections, or opinions. We are living beings; we have a mind, emotion, and will, as well as inclinations and preferences. Thus, we are not passive; instead, we are cooperative and submissive. To be submissive is to go along with the One who is moving in us. This is our oneness with the Lord. It is only when the Lord moves in us that we move. This is the way a Christian should be. In this way we are led by the Lord. In other words, we understand the Lord's will and know the Lord's way in us. *The Lord's way* is a great and broad expression, but as we follow the Lord, we will gradually understand it in our experience.

Our greatest problem is that we desire to be today's Paul and today's Moses. Please remember, it is not by our aspiring to be Moses that we can be Moses, nor is it by our aspiring to be Paul that we can be Paul. It is God who chooses and calls people to become Moses and Paul. Today we have no way to imitate them. Our first problem is that we desire to be a spiritual giant. Our second problem is that we desire to do a great evangelistic work. We think that we must at least do a great evangelistic work on the campuses. To have such desires is to go beyond God. If we initiate something on our own without the Lord first moving in us, we go beyond God. This is our problem.

THE WAY TO DEAL WITH SUFFERINGS

BEING THE LORD HIMSELF

Question: As we follow the Lord, what great difficulties will we encounter in the way ahead?

Answer: In principle, a Christian should not predict that he will have difficulties. However, once he senses that there are difficulties, he should face them. The Lord said, "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its own evil" (Matt. 6:34). Someone said, "Do not borrow tomorrow's troubles for today, and do not save today's blessings for tomorrow." We should not make predictions, much less have expectations. You must know that all difficulties come from Satan. When there are no difficulties, do not expect them. When difficulties come, push them away. The first step is to not hope for or expect to have difficulties. The second step is to push them away if you can. Never say that you welcome difficulties because you are learning the discipline of the Holy Spirit; neither should you begin to seek the Lord's way only after you have

failed to reject the difficulties. For example, if after hearing about the discipline of the Holy Spirit you take a rickshaw, and it costs only three dollars but the driver asks for ten, it is not right for you to give him ten. He is extorting money from you; you should speak with him according to reason. To speak is to attempt to solve the problem; if he is reasonable and agrees to back down, you should give him three dollars. It is wrong to expect sufferings, and it is foolish to blindly accept them. Hence, sufferings should not be predicted or expected.

However, when sufferings do come, how should we deal with them? The Lord said, “I am the way and the reality and the life” (John 14:6). Our way is the Lord Himself; thus, the One who deals with the sufferings should be the Lord Himself. There is no way for us to handle sufferings by ourselves. Only the Lord Himself can pass through sufferings. For example, if a young brother marries a sister and later cannot tolerate her, and then he comes to ask what he should do, we can only tell him, “Brother, you must meet the Lord in this matter; the Lord is your way. You need to fellowship with the Lord, bring this problem to the Lord, and touch the Lord. When you touch the Lord, however the Lord moves within you, move accordingly. In this way the difficulty will pass.”

In the experience of encountering persecution, no two persons are alike. One person can escape persecution, whereas another person must go through it. Because the Lord’s work in each one is different, the Lord’s leading in each one also is different. The Lord may use a very wonderful way to lead someone to escape persecution, but He may use persecution to kill someone else’s naturalness. The Lord’s leading is different in every person. Therefore, the way to deal with difficulties is the Lord Himself. If a difficulty were to befall you today, it would be useless to complain that it was caused by a certain person. You must submit before the Lord and say to Him, “Lord, I have no choice; I have no way; I have only You. Lord, You are my choice and my way. You desire that my weeping would be You and that my joy also would be You.” In this way you will experience the Lord bringing you through. Whatever way a Christian has is simply the Lord Himself. The Lord said, “I am the way.” He is our way and He is our method. Our fear should be that we would depend on ourselves, on others, or on methods and thus break our fellowship with the Lord. The Lord Himself is the way for us to face difficulties.

SUBMISSION BEING THE FUNCTION OF LIFE

Question: We desire to submit and yet cannot submit. Exactly how can we gain the power to submit?

Answer: It is true that many times we desire to submit to the Lord and yet cannot submit. You must realize that God's life contains God's element; God's element is in God's life. Furthermore, this life is transmitted into us through His word. God's word is the seed of life; once it comes into us, God's life comes into us. Here we see three things: God, life, and the word. The element of God Himself is in His life, and this life is in His word. Every time the Lord speaks to us, His word is life (6:63), and in this life is God Himself. Thus, whenever we receive God's word, we receive God's life with God's element.

Just as we do not have the power to do good, neither do we have the power to submit. In ourselves we are powerless. But thank the Lord that we have the Lord's word. When we have God's speaking, there is a power that brings us into submission. For instance, you initially do not believe in the Lord, but one day God sends someone to say to you, "You need to repent." Once God's word is spoken, the Holy Spirit speaks God, life, and His word into you, along with repentance, faith, and prayer. After returning home, you are compelled and driven from within to repent. The power to repent is not repentance; the power to repent is life. The next day the Lord's word comes again: "You need to believe." This word compels you from within so that you cannot help but believe. As a result, something further—faith—comes into you. The day after that, the word comes once again: "You need to pray." You do not want to pray, but there is a voice within you saying that you should pray. This is God's speaking.

God's word is transmitted into you by the Holy Spirit. This word, this speaking, is like a seed planted into you through the Holy Spirit. In this seed are life and God. God is in His word as a seed. In the same principle, when you hear messages and draw near to the Lord, you hear a word from the Spirit, perhaps through the ministry of the spoken word, the Bible, a spiritual book, or a sense within. This word within will demand something of you and at the same time supply you with power to fulfill its demand.

There are two levels to a spoken message. On the first level, in the minds of the listeners the speaking may be a failure. On the second level, however, the

speaking may be carried out with the exercise of the spirit and through the spirit. As the brother is speaking in this way, his spirit moves so that not only his voice but also his spirit enters into people. Once a word spoken with the spirit enters into a listener, there is always a power that enables him to submit without his own effort. Even if a person is stubborn, the Lord will continually work to conquer him until one day he submits. In this submission it is God who causes man to submit, not man who submits by himself. This is our spiritual experience.

For example, I know many young brothers and sisters who were a great source of pride to their families when they entered the university. After they believed in Jesus, however, they were inwardly compelled to consecrate themselves and give up their future. But because they did not want to disappoint their parents, they continued to study hard. However, the compelling within occurred again and again, persuading and urging them to surrender themselves. After a time it grew even stronger until it subdued them. They were not subdued the first year, the second year, or the third year; it was not until after they graduated from the university that they were finally subdued. Even after they had obtained a doctoral degree, they had to yield themselves completely without any recourse.

As another example, perhaps a message has subdued you. You heard the speaking, and something began to happen in you that could not be removed or rejected. This is the power of submission. No one can please God, just as no one can obey the law of God. Thank God, however, that He is the living God. His life is in His word, and His word has been received by us. We may use a florist as an illustration. Suppose the florist has a pile of small, ugly seeds placed next to some brilliant, beautiful flowers. Everyone who looks at the flowers will ask enviously, "How did you grow such flowers?" The florist would point to the ugly seeds on the side and say, "Those seeds grow into such flowers." Every function of life is hidden within a seed.

Every function of God's life is hidden in the word of God that enters into us. We have no power in ourselves. But there is power in Him who is life, and this life is in the word. One day this word, like an unrefined, round, and shapeless seed, is ministered into us. The speaking of most ministering brothers seems to be unrefined, but what matters is whether there is life in the speaking and whether it is the word of God's life, the word of God. If it is the word of God's life, the word of life, even if it does not seem good outwardly, all the riches of

God hidden within it will one day develop and grow. This is the grace of our submission.

Some are subdued more quickly, whereas others are inclined to be slower. Hence, God's word issues forth from some people quickly, but from others it issues forth slowly. Regardless of whether we are quick or slow, it will eventually issue forth from us. With some, however, it is as if the seed falls into rocky ground in which nothing can grow. This proves that the spiritual power is not with us but with the Lord Himself and with His word that enters into us. When we hear the Lord's word, the function of life begins to take place within us.

CHAPTER THREE

SPIRITUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONCERNING HOW TO KNOW THE WAY OF THE CHURCH

Question: In recent days many religious activities and even many heretical and confusing things have happened in the church of God. How can we be watchful? What kind of attitude should we take?

Answer: This is a very important question. From the very beginning of the two thousand years of church history, the church has had these kinds of problems. The first occurrence of such a problem as recorded in the Bible is in Philippians 1, where Paul says, “Some preach Christ even because of envy and strife, and some also because of good will, these out of love...But the others announce Christ out of selfish ambition...What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truthfulness, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice” (vv. 15-18). What Paul said does not mean that he approved of such a situation; rather, he showed that he was not walking on the way taken by his opposers.

Religious confusion has not come in only today; rather, when the church began two thousand years ago there was already confusion. Before the departure of the first generation of apostles, the situation of the church had already become corrupted because of human weakness. At that time, however, there was a group of people who were pure in heart in following the Lord; they had no problems and continued to follow the way taken by the apostles. On the other hand, those who had unclean hearts and impure motives had their own way apart from the Lord’s way. In taking their way, they used the name of Christ outwardly, called themselves the church, spread the gospel, and preached the truth, but they were not on the way of the apostles. This was the situation when the apostle Paul was still living on the earth, and it has been like this in the two thousand years since.

In the beginning of the fourth century the church on the earth had evolved into the situation of the Roman Catholic Church. At that time the majority of Christians did not take the way ordained by the Lord. However, there were some who did not follow the Catholic Church. When we study church history,

we may think that it was not until the time of Martin Luther, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that the protests against the Catholic Church were initiated. In fact, as early as the fourth century, under the new Roman government there was already a group of believers who rose up to protest. These believers purely followed what was recorded in the New Testament and walked in the footsteps of the apostles. From then until now this line has not been broken. The purer and the more spiritual such believers were and the more closely they followed the apostles' footsteps, the more they avoided making themselves known outwardly. Instead, they remained hidden. Sadly, man's eye is usually directed toward the outward appearance and the outward form. It is therefore natural for students of world history to pay attention only to the outward appearance when studying the history of Christianity. Because those who were pure in heart and who lived before the Lord were unwilling to make a name for themselves publicly, they have been overlooked by writers and historians in the world.

In Western Christian countries there are a great number of Christians in the denominations. However, the majority of them are nominal Christians; not many are genuinely saved. What then is a denomination? A denomination is a Christian organization that takes a name other than the Lord's name. For example, a university student may be asked by a classmate, "Do you believe in Jesus?" If he answers, "Yes," the next question to him may be, "Which group do you belong to?" This shows that the common concept in the world is that every Christian gathering should have a name. However, the problem is that once the church is denominated, it is in degradation. The church may not be degraded as far as the life within is concerned, but the fact that it has denominated itself shows that it has become degraded.

In every age in the past two thousand years there were many who loved and feared the Lord and who saw that they belonged only to Christ. As those who belong to Christ, at most we should call ourselves Christians. We should not call ourselves by the name of Wesley, nor should we call ourselves by the name of Luther; we should use only the name of Christ. We should not be denominated Christians. If we are denominated, we are wrong. In the last two thousand years there has always been a group of Christians who desire no other name but the name of Christ. If someone thinks that a name is only a small matter, I would ask such a one, "If others addressed your wife as Mrs. Lee although your surname is Wu, would you be happy? Or if she tells others that she is Mrs. Chang, would you not be angry?" A name is a great matter

because it represents a person. If you show people your photograph, they may not know who you are, but once you give them your name, they immediately know who you are. Never think that it does not matter if we call ourselves the Wesleyan Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Lutheran Church, and so on. In the eyes of God this is very serious.

In the Bible a name is a great matter. Referring to the Lord's name, Acts 4:12 says, "There is salvation in no other, for neither is there another name under heaven given among men in which we must be saved." Romans 10:13 says, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Matthew 18:20 says, "Where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst." John 14:14 says, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." Hence, salvation is obtained in the Lord's name, and the church is gathered into the Lord's name. Furthermore, even baptism is involved with the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). By reading the New Testament, we can see that a name is a great matter.

In the Old Testament, Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; / The righteous man runs into it and is safe." Deuteronomy 16:2 says, "You shall sacrifice the passover to Jehovah your God...in the place where Jehovah will choose to cause His name to dwell." Isaiah 12:4 says, "Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon His name!" Thus, we desire no name other than the Lord's name. We are saved in the Lord's name, and we baptize people and gather into the Lord's name. For this reason, when we were raised up in China over twenty years ago, our meetings were called meetings in the Lord's name. Throughout the ages there have been many believers who have met in the Lord's name. In 1828 the Lord raised up many Christians in England who met in no other name than the name of Christ. They were a group of hidden Christians. In 1850 they already had more than one hundred eighty meeting places in London. They have continued to meet in the same way to this day.

In France also there was a group of Christians who did not publicize themselves; they simply loved the Lord purely, were dealt with by the Lord, submitted themselves to one another, and lived absolutely in the Lord. Because they had little outward organization, the world paid no attention to them. Thirty years ago God began this work also among the brothers in China. Some brothers were raised up, saw this light, and took this way. Today by the Lord's mercy we are willing to take this way. Because we are taking this way,

there are many aspects in which we differ from formal Christianity, causing others to think that we are somewhat peculiar. This is because Christianity has given the world the wrong concept.

How can we know the way of the Lord's testimony, and what should our attitude be toward those who take another way? On the surface, others have pastors and we do not, and others have a name for their fellowship and we do not. However, these things cannot be considered as the basis for distinguishing between the two ways. The basis comprises only three points. First, there is the question of name. We must first ask other Christians if they take a name other than the name of Christ. As long as they have a name other than Christ's, the life in these Christians is questionable. In terms of life, their way of service is certainly not the way of the Lord's testimony. This is like a Mrs. Hwang putting a sign outside her door that reads Chang Residence. How could this maintain the family identity of the Hwang family? No matter how she explains herself, at the very least the sign on her door is wrong. If we have this light, we will see that many Christian activities are problematic. I hope that the brothers and sisters will be clear regarding this matter. The moment we have another name among us, we are taking the wrong way. Although this is an outward matter, we should not pass over it lightly.

Second, there is the question of truth. What is the question of truth? It means that we must accept the entire Bible; we cannot accept anything more or anything less than the Bible. We accept both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and we accept all the words of the Bible, including every sentence, verse, and chapter. We do not desire more or less. To have more is heretical, and to have less is to be lacking. When we examine a Christian group, first we must use the name as a test, and second we must use the Bible as a test. We need to find out whether what the group advocates is more than the Bible or less than the Bible. For instance, if the Presbyterian denomination insists on the practice of baptism by sprinkling, this is something less than what is in the Bible. In terms of the Bible, the Presbyterian churches do not measure up; in terms of themselves, they have added something more. Hence, we must measure ourselves according to the truth itself and see whether we fall short of it or go beyond it.

We must never focus only on a single truth. For example, the Baptist denomination emphasizes baptism, taking baptism as its base. It is the same with other denominations, such as the holiness churches and the Pentecostal

churches. We recognize that there are such things as the spiritual gifts, baptism, and holiness, but we should not emphasize these matters more than others. For example, we practice the breaking of bread, yet we do not call ourselves the “Church of Bread Breaking.” We call one another brothers and sisters, yet we do not call ourselves the “Church of Brothers and Sisters.” Although it is right to practice these things, we must not emphasize them more than other truths. We must emphasize the truths in the entire Bible equally.

Among Christians today, problems that arise include the gifts and the truth. Hence, we cannot emphasize anything that is less than the truth in the Bible, nor can we emphasize anything that is more than the truth in the Bible. Neither can we uplift any particular truth in the Bible.

Third, besides the matters of name and truth, there is the question of fellowship. Our fellowship is in the Lord. As long as a person is saved, we can fellowship with him, regardless of whether he meets with the Presbyterian denomination, the Baptist denomination, or any other denomination. As long as he belongs to Christ, we should fellowship with him in the Lord. However, this kind of fellowship can be only in the Lord. Therefore, we cannot receive nominal Christians to break bread with us. In many so-called Christian groups there are only a small number of people who are genuinely saved. Conversely, we cannot participate in their so-called Holy Communion. Since they do not have the life of Christ, we cannot partake of their bread, nor can we say that their so-called communion is in Christ.

We have seen three bases of examination—the name, the truth, and the fellowship. Suppose there is a group of Christians that does not have a special name, that accepts every truth in the Bible, and that receives only those who are saved and does not receive those who are not yet saved. Would this not be enough? No, there is still the question of whether this group is the unique expression of the church in that locality. Once a local church has been established in a particular locality, others cannot come along later and set up another local church in the same locality that is independent from the first. According to the truth, there is only one church in the universe. Therefore, no matter where it appears, there can be only one expression of the church in a particular locality. To have a second expression of the church in a locality is wrong. Hence, after we examine the three basic items of name, truth, and

fellowship, we must still investigate the matter of the unique expression of the church on the ground of locality.

For example, when you go to Kaohsiung, you may find a group of brothers and sisters meeting there. You may find that they are proper with respect to the matters of name, truth, and fellowship and that they are the first ones to meet there as the expression of the church standing on the ground of locality. At the same time, they have fellowship with the other local churches. This is sufficient. Their immaturity or even their weaknesses are not ground for us to deny them. I hope that we would all be clear that the first three items to examine involve a group's footsteps, whereas the last item to examine involves their uniqueness as the church's expression. If they are a true local church, they are a group of people who belong to the locality and to Christ; they serve there and recognize all those who serve in this way elsewhere and have fellowship with them. Therefore, they are those who take the Lord's way.

Question: If there is a church that is standing on the proper ground as the unique expression of the church in their locality but has no fellowship with other local churches, what should we do?

Answer: This is a very serious problem. If a group comes to a place first, does not have any peculiar name, faith, or fellowship, and yet rejects all Christians besides themselves, this kind of situation indicates that they are an independent sect in that locality. On one hand, the Bible shows that after a church appears in a locality, the administration of that local church must be maintained from that time forward. For example, neither the church in Tainan nor the church in Taichung can interfere with the administration of the church in Taipei. On the other hand, no local church is independent. If any local church is independent, it is a local sect. For example, if a certain local church one day decides to change their meeting hall, they are not required to send an announcement to the church in Taipei. However, they should not think that since they are not required to send an announcement, they are independent. If they consider themselves independent, they become a sect by declaring their independence from all the other churches. If a church did this, there would apparently be more than one church in the universe. However, if every local church recognizes the local churches elsewhere and fellowships with them, there remains only one church in the universe, and none of the local churches will be a local sect. Hence, in addition to determining whether a group of believers was the first to meet as the local

church in a particular locality, one must also consider the fellowship of that local church with other churches.

Question: If a certain group that meets as a local church passes the tests of name, truth, and fellowship, yet because they did not realize that there were already other believers meeting on the ground of locality in their city, they began meeting separately as the church, what shall we do if we go to that city?

Answer: If some brothers in a city are pure in motive but are unaware of others who are also serving in a pure way in another part of that city and therefore fail to fellowship with them, one cannot say that these brothers are wrong. However, if after learning about the others, these brothers still refuse to fellowship with them but insist on standing on an independent ground, they are wrong. There is a difference between not having fellowship and not wanting fellowship. Logically, if the brothers are pure in motive, the Holy Spirit within them will urge them to have fellowship with all who are standing on the ground of the church. If there is a group of believers serving God in Taipei, and they are aware that other believers like them are also serving God in Taipei and yet refuse to fellowship with those believers, they would be a sect. If they go so far as to declare that they are independent locally, they are no doubt sectarian.

We all admit that the church is a great test and trial. Suppose you make a suggestion in Taipei, and it is rejected by the elders. It would be wrong for you to say, "Forget it; I am leaving. I already learned all these matters when I was in Shanghai, so I will go and set up another church myself. You are doing something big, and I am going to do something smaller, but it will be exactly the same as what you are doing. You do not have a name, neither do I; you follow the Bible, I will do the same; I will recognize all the churches, including yours, even though I am actually not happy with you." No matter how right you are, how good your ideas are, or how effective your methods are, the ground has already been taken by others. You cannot deny the fact; you simply cannot remove the ground from under their feet. They are rightfully the church; perhaps they are short of sight and experience, but they are still the church. They are already the church standing on the ground of locality. Hence, your speaking is not only wrong but is also full of the self. The church is truly a great test to man.

To desire to be free is to be in the self. From man's perspective, being free with no outside interference may be all right. From God's viewpoint, however, this is not acceptable. In the universe there is only one church, and in this one church there should be no human preferences; there should be only God's preference, God's perspective, and God's view. Hence, whether or not a person can live in the church depends entirely on whether he can be broken by God. For instance, the brothers and sisters in the church in Taipei have received my help very much and accepted almost all my suggestions and ideas. After some time, however, if the brothers were to change their attitude and completely ignore my ideas, what should I do? Is it all right for me to go elsewhere and establish another "church"? If I were to do that, I would become sectarian, and it would also prove that I am an unbroken person and that I am building up myself.

If one day the brothers in Taipei were to reject my opinions, I would have nothing to say. Whenever I came to Taipei, I would still have to meet, break bread, and serve with them. Whatever opportunity the brothers would give me, I would simply take it. If they would reject my ideas, that would not be a problem to me. If they would not allow me to speak in the fellowship meetings, that would be up to them. Even if the Lord were to lead me to work in Kaohsiung, whenever I returned to Taipei, I would still need to come to worship and serve in the church there. It would not be permissible for me to establish another meeting simply because my opinions were different from others'; this would be sectarian. Perhaps some of the brothers and sisters in Taipei would fight for me, saying, "How can the brothers treat Brother Lee this way? Brother Lee, since they abandoned you, let us all go elsewhere to release the light in the Bible properly." Please realize that no one who truly knows the Lord would do anything before Him to cause division in the church and damage the ground of the church. There should never be such a thing. Because I have learned this lesson, I would definitely tell these brothers and sisters, "No matter what, we must recognize the church. Their ground is still correct, and you must be at peace in serving and meeting together with them. This is the church; we cannot take the lead to establish another church." Whether or not the brothers and sisters agree with me is an insignificant matter.

THE ATTITUDE WE SHOULD HAVE TOWARD OTHER CHRISTIANS

The church is a great matter. If we are clear about this matter, the next matter, which concerns the attitude we should have toward Christians outside our testimony, can be resolved easily. As long as a person is saved and has no apparent sins that should not be tolerated, such as idolatry, fornication, or teaching heresies, we must endeavor to help him. However, if he is in a denomination or a sect, we absolutely cannot acknowledge the ground on which he stands. He is truly a child of God and our brother, but he is standing on the wrong ground, which we can neither acknowledge nor participate in. If we were to stand on that ground, we would be violating the oneness of the church. However, we should not reject the person himself.

**OUR DESTINY BEING IN GOD’S HANDS,
AND WE AS CHRISTIANS NEEDING TO BE ABSOLUTE**

Question: We have the heart to serve God, but our condition and qualifications are insufficient; what should we do? Please give us an honest word so that we will not waste our time.

Answer: First, we must see that for all of us who are saved, the time from our being saved to our going to meet the Lord is the time for us to learn to serve Him. Our real and eternal service will be in the new heaven and new earth in the future. As an illustration, your education today is your learning; it is only after you have worked a few years that you will have truly entered your profession. Likewise, today is the time for us to learn to serve God. However, this does not mean that a person can serve only after he has finished learning. Time is for our learning; we learn to serve by learning and serving at the same time. No one should say that he will wait to finish learning before he begins to serve.

Second, since the time between our salvation and our meeting the Lord is for our learning to serve Him, our primary concern should be serving the Lord, not eating, exercising, or being entertained. Of course, as we serve the Lord today, we still need to eat and survive, and we should therefore take a job. However, as long as we can earn enough for our living, that is sufficient. We are different from the people in the world. They want to maintain their daily living, but they also want something more. They want fame and fortune, and they want to be great. We Christians are different; we have left Egypt and have come out of the world.

We know that Paul was a very talented leader who could have done something great in the world, yet he worked with his own hands to make tents (Acts 18:3). According to our way of thinking, tentmaking was a suffering to Paul because his gift was spiritual. When the Lord made provision for him, he did not need to make tents, but when there was no provision, he humbly made tents as his livelihood. I must speak a frank word: no one who desires to follow the Lord can be a great success in his career. In order to follow the Lord, you must give up everything. But thank and praise the Lord that this way is restful and the burden is light. Thus, in our living we need to earn only enough for our needs. Our primary concern must be to serve God.

Third, although we do not have the call of Saul of Tarsus or Peter, please realize that God calls us in the same way that He called Saul and Peter. Have we not sensed the Lord's call at least once? Apparently, the Lord's calling of us might not have been in the same way as His calling of Saul or Peter, but we have sensed the Lord's call. I deeply believe that among us there are quite a few brothers and sisters who have sensed the Lord's call within. For now, it does not matter whether it was great or small and whether this call was strong or weak; what matters is only that it was clear. The Bible says that as long as we have faith, it is sufficient, even if it is as small as a mustard seed (Matt. 17:20). God does not require our faith to be great. It is the same with our calling—simply to have it is enough. Can you honestly say that you have never had a feeling of being called by the Lord? Since you have had such a feeling, you must answer it. The more you answer this feeling, the clearer it will become. If you do not answer it, you will remain wavering.

Fourth, we must see that everything today is temporary. If the Lord arranges the environment for me to have something, I thank the Lord; if the Lord does not arrange the environment for me to have something, I also praise Him. I often ask myself, if the Lord wanted me to die, how could I not die? If I wanted to graduate from college, but He did not allow me, what could I do? Many things are not in our hands. The Lord can raise up all kinds of circumstances around us to reach His goal. Regardless of whether we answer Him quickly and generously or whether we refuse to answer Him, answer Him stingily, or give Him some trouble, the result will still be that He will effortlessly do what He desires to do. We are the ones who suffer, who are dealt with a little more, beaten a little more, and put under pressure a little more. Hence, nothing that relates to man is within man's own control; no one can choose his own way.

Every step we take is determined by God. Can we really be the kind of person we want to be? Because our destiny is in God's hands, we might as well count the cost and answer the Lord's call generously. I have been taking this way for twenty-five years, and I have never regretted it. Do not think that I am taking this way blindly. No, I have certainly counted the cost, but I have never regretted it. Every instance of looking back and considering causes me to bow my head and say, "O God, the way on which You lead me is the way You have destined for me. When all things are manifested in the future, I will know that choosing Your way was not only better but also the best." In that day we will all say that the cost that we paid was only dung.

It is clear that in the two thousand years of church history, those who have followed the Lord have all bowed their heads, especially in their old age, and said, "Lord, it was You who led me to take this way." All those who did not take this way regretted it in the end. Some regretted that they were touched once but did not answer the Lord's call, and others regretted that because they were greedy in the matter of their livelihood, they did not take the Lord's way. In the past two thousand years there have been many people with this kind of regret. Conversely, everyone who was pure in heart in following the Lord bowed his head at the end of his course and thanked and praised the Lord. I hope that the young people here will count the cost. Thousands have gone before us, and their footsteps are truly a testimony.

Every one of us should consider what kind of person we want to be. Do we want to be a half-saved person, a "gray" Christian, or a Christian who loves the Lord absolutely? Everyone in the world knows that the most absolute ones are the most profitable ones. We cannot be both stone and wood, nor can we be both male and female. If we desire to be worldly people, we should be worldly people absolutely; if we desire to be Christians, we should be Christians absolutely. Those who are wishy-washy are the least profitable and the lowest. No matter what we do, we must be absolute in doing it. The only requirement for a Christian is absoluteness. We should either not follow the Lord or follow Him absolutely. To be a Christian we must be absolute.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPIRITUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONCERNING TAKING THE LORD'S WAY

HAVING AN ABSOLUTE CONSECRATION

WITH NO BACK DOOR FOR OURSELVES

Question: What is consecration, and what does it mean to take the Lord's way?

Answer: A believer's genuine consecration is to allow God to come into him and to work in him. In order to allow God to work in this way, you must learn to follow the sense in your spirit. When you sense in your spirit that God has a demand on you, you must go along with Him. When you sense in your spirit that God wants you to get rid of something, you must obey Him. When you sense in your spirit that God wants you to be broken in a certain aspect, you need to accept His breaking. This is consecration, and this is what it means to take God's way.

It is not difficult to know God's way. It is only when we truly want God to work in us and desire to take His way that we feel troubled. We human beings are crooked by nature. Whenever there is a demand within, we usually reject it. When there is a certain feeling, we consider it awhile and then annul it. When a lesson comes to us for our breaking, we put it off and then escape it. Some believers have many such experiences. Some do not let God pass through them or work in them even one day of the entire year. Perhaps some have never let God pass through them or work in them in all their Christian life. Some brothers and sisters consecrate themselves often, and their consecration is genuine. However, whenever they encounter a demand from God, they push it away by making excuses.

More than ten years ago a brother who was also a co-worker asked me, "Do you see any problem in me?" After carefully looking at him for a moment, I said, "Do you want me to tell you the truth?" He smilingly nodded. I said forthrightly, "You have one problem, and it is reasoning." He said, "I admit I have this problem, but..." I immediately pointed at him and said, "This 'but' of

yours is your problem. It is seldom that you truly receive into you what others say to you. On the surface you receive it, but eventually you have a 'but,' 'yet,' or 'however.' This is your problem. Rarely have you absolutely received God's speaking and obeyed any feeling He gives you. On the surface you agree with Him, but eventually you always have a 'nevertheless' or 'however.' You receive whatever leading God gives you, but in the end you always have a 'however.' Your reasoning is your big problem." He replied, "Brother Lee, I admit this, but..."

It is very difficult for a person's natural problems to be broken before God. That day I spoke with that brother for at least two hours, but in the end he still said, "Brother Lee, I admit that all you have said is right, but..." At the end of every admission there was a "you are right, but..." After talking for two hours, he was still saying "however," "but," "nevertheless," and "yet." I hope that this illustration gives you some light to realize how difficult it is for us to be broken.

Many brothers and sisters desire to walk on the Lord's way, but when the time actually comes to walk on it, they almost always have a "but," "nevertheless," "however," or "yet." As a result, they are finished. That day I finally said strongly, "Brother, you are like a smooth pebble. When you are touched on this side, you roll to the other side; when you are touched on the other side, you roll to this side. There is not a single hammer that can hold you in place. Others are square and can easily be broken. You are the only one who is round. Regardless of the light you have received, you can always roll away with a 'nevertheless' and then roll back with a 'but.'"

Some saints have been before the Lord for many years but have never been dealt with and have never submitted themselves. It seems that they really mean business to take the Lord's way, but whenever they encounter a demand, they roll away. Their rolling is not intentional. For example, if I have a cubic piece of stone, it will remain in place no matter what I use to strike it from above. But if I have a marble, it will roll away after I strike it only once. The marble's rolling is not up to the marble itself; it rolls simply because it is round. The saints who are like marbles may say that they are willing to be dealt with, but once a practical situation arises, they automatically avoid it.

In principle this is a problem that many of us have. It is difficult to find a brother or sister who can genuinely say, "O Lord, go ahead and strike me; I

will always remain here. Even if Your striking is wrong, I will still accept it.” Very few Christians are like this. Most Christians would ask, “When we follow the inner sense, is it not possible for us to make mistakes? Should we not consider carefully before we follow the inner sense?” When you begin to consider, you open a back door for yourself. As you consider further, the back door becomes wider. Indeed, it is not easy for you to consecrate yourself on the altar and accept the breaking, because when God comes to lead you and break you, you have many considerations. Actually, these considerations are simply “nevertheless,” “but,” or “however.”

A person who truly consecrates himself does not have considerations once he has a sense within. His only consideration is that he is afraid of losing God’s feeling. Madame Guyon’s autobiography is very helpful in at least two points. Most people recognize that she accepted the work of the cross, but there is another point. She not only accepted the cross but also welcomed it. Today when most Christians have a certain feeling, they consider and reconsider, claiming that they fear the difficulties that might arise if they make a mistake in obeying the feeling. This kind of consideration apparently comes from a fear of making mistakes, but it actually comes from a fear of difficulties. We have only a small fear of obeying wrongly and thus offending God; our great fear is that if we obey wrongly, we might have sufferings. Most of our considerations are not a result of our being afraid of losing our fellowship with God if we make a mistake; rather, they are a result of our being afraid of suffering loss to ourselves if we make a mistake.

Madame Guyon’s most worthy point before the Lord was that she was not afraid that her feeling would be wrong; she feared only that her self would not suffer loss. If we have this kind of motive, we will not have considerations when God’s feelings come. All the leading brothers should see that although many saints are perhaps genuine in their consecration, when God’s leading truly comes, they shirk it. This kind of shirking is very easy, just as losing God’s presence is very easy. There is only one “wall,” but there are many “back doors”—“but,” “however,” “perhaps,” and “yet.” May we all exercise to shut the back doors.

HOW TO DISCERN WHAT IS OF MAN AND WHAT IS OF GOD

Question: What is the difference between our thoughts and God’s shining?

Answer: Many Christians have the question of how to know whether a feeling is given by God or a leading comes from God. In other words, how can we clearly tell that a certain leading we have is of God? The principle in the preceding section also applies here. The center and goal of God's work in the universe is to work Himself into man. Thus, any leading He gives man is not outward and objective but rather inward and subjective. Moreover, He leads man by being mingled with man and by having man mingled with Him. Those who study chemistry know that when water passes through sulfur, it becomes sulfur-water. Although it is sulfur-water, its main component is water. It is water, but it contains the element of sulfur. Likewise, when God enters into us, He not only mingles Himself with us but also includes us in Him. When God enters into us, He gives us feelings from within us. Hence, the feelings He gives definitely contain the human element. For this reason it is difficult to discern what are our thoughts and what are feelings from God.

It is difficult but not impossible to make this distinction. We can discern first by knowing what is of our own thinking. That which is purely from our own thinking does not contain the element of God. However, that which comes from God's feeling is understood by us in our spirit through our mind. No matter how God leads us, He will always wait until we have the understanding in our mind. In other words, before it becomes His leading, the sense that God gives us in our spirit must become our understanding in our mind. Therefore, we can see that sometimes our thought is simply our thought, but at other times our thought is the result of God's feeling passing through us. This kind of thought is not merely our own thought, but it also has God mingled with it. Any leading that comes from God, whether it is in our thinking or it is a sense given by God, always passes through God and contains the element of God. This is certain.

There is yet another way to make this distinction. Because our thoughts are simple, whatever is from our mind often comes in spurts; it comes and goes. However, the sense that God gives is from our spirit and goes through the understanding of our mind to make it a spiritual mind. This sense does not go away easily but rather leads us continually within. An idea that comes from our own thinking goes away quickly. However, if a sense comes from the Holy Spirit, it does not let us go easily. If God gives us a sense today and we obey, it will pass, but if we do not obey, it will come again tomorrow. If we still do not obey, it will come again the next day and the day after that.

Moreover, we must realize that whereas our thoughts are shallow, the feelings from the Holy Spirit are deep. Hence, we may analyze and make the distinction in this way: any thought that comes from us is momentary and shallow, but any sense that comes from the Spirit is lasting and deep.

Strictly speaking, however, there is no need for this kind of analysis. If we have fellowship with the Lord within, it does not matter if we make a few mistakes. For example, when you go somewhere for the first time, it is normal if you take the wrong way, because you are not familiar with the route. If you dare not go out alone for fear of taking the wrong way, you will never become familiar with the routes. However, if you go out every day, regardless of whether you take the right way or the wrong way, you will eventually become very familiar with the streets and roads. Many brothers and sisters never take a step because they are always afraid of making a mistake. Consequently, after ten years they still do not know which way is right and which way is wrong. But if your attitude is that you will correct yourself after you have made a mistake, it is certain that the more mistakes you make, the more familiar you will be with the streets. After taking the wrong way several times, you will gradually become familiar with the roads. If someone intentionally takes the wrong way, that is degradation. For example, if your destination is National Taiwan University, yet because your heart is set to go to Grass Mountain, you purposely go in the direction that leads to the mountain, of course you will not arrive at the university. Intentional mistakes are wrong, but inadvertent mistakes are helpful to you. Therefore, you should not be afraid; rather, you should simply go.

We must know that everything is controlled by God and not by us. How could you have known that you would come to Taiwan? How could you have known that you would not be going to the United States? Proverbs 16:9 says, “A man’s heart devises his way, / But Jehovah directs his steps.” A man may devise and choose his own way, but the One who controls his steps is Jehovah. God directed your steps to Taiwan and mine to the United States. He directed you into business and me into ministering the word. All those who have known me for some time know that my original burden was in northern China. The saints in China said that Brother Lee was starting the “Three Norths Company of China,” the three norths being the north, the northeast, and the northwest. Truthfully, I never even dreamed that I would come to Taiwan, and even less did I have the intention to go overseas. Nothing is up to us. All

that matters is our heart's intent; whether or not we make mistakes is secondary.

If your intention is not to make mistakes, you should not be afraid to be confined under God's hand. For example, how do you know that it is right for you to live in the dormitory? Also, how do you know whether you should stay indoors or go out? Perhaps there is a boy outside who will just happen to throw a stone that hits you. Wherever your circumstances arrange for you to be, you should simply remain there and not be concerned with whether or not it is right. Whether or not an accident will befall us is not in our hands. We should simply trust the Lord.

We must emphasize again that the most important thing is our intention. If my intention is to fear the Lord and seek the Lord's way, even if I make a mistake, it will become right because my desire is to take the Lord's way. In terms of reasoning, this may be wrong, but in terms of principle, it is right. Someone who is wrong in principle but right in reasoning may be compared to a blind cat that catches a dead mouse. Christians should not be right in reasoning; they should be right in principle. To be right in principle means that in our heart we want only God and that we therefore obey any feeling that comes from God. It does not matter if we make a mistake in a certain matter, for our principle is right.

Our fellowship regarding these questions is very precious. I hope that you young people will faithfully take this way and not merely gain some doctrinal understanding.

**GRACE BEING REALITY,
AND GIFTS NEEDING TO BE EXPERIENCED
TO BECOME MINISTRIES**

Question: How do we go from a living of grace to a living of reality? How can gifts become ministries?

Answer: The principle in both these questions is the same. This principle concerns how we can go from an unstable, superficial living into the depths of stability. In other words, it concerns how we can go from the surface into the hidden place.

Grace is reality. This reality is mentioned in John 1:17, where the Greek word is translated in the Chinese Union Version as “truth.” This version says that grace and truth both came through Jesus Christ. According to the Greek, however, the word should be translated “reality.” Most Chinese have the understanding that *truth* denotes a true doctrine, a doctrine without anything false. However, in Greek this word means “reality, the opposite of that which is unreal.” John 1:17 says that when the Lord Jesus came, He brought to us grace and reality. According to the truth, the Lord Jesus did not bring us two things, for grace and reality are actually one. In fact, Christ, life, grace, and reality are one.

What is grace? Grace is reality. There is a Chinese idiom that is translated “trying to satisfy hunger by drawing cakes.” You may draw cakes all over a sheet of paper, but they are all unreal. If I give you a real cake, the moment you see it, you will realize that the cakes on your paper are cakes in doctrine, but the cake that I have given you is the reality. Here you must see two things: first, that this real cake is given to you and is grace, and second, that this cake is reality and is different from the cakes on paper. Grace and reality are one.

Before the Lord Jesus came to the earth, man’s knowledge concerning God could be compared to drawings of cakes on paper. There were many theories, teachings, and revelations concerning God, but they were all “cakes on paper.” One day God was incarnated and became a man named Jesus. When Jesus came, God came (vv. 14-17). Formerly, all that man had could be compared to a cake on paper, but one day this cake came in reality. This cake came and delivered itself into you. This is grace. At the same time, this cake was the reality of the cake that was drawn on paper. The God portrayed in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament was only the cake in picture. The Lord Jesus who has now come is the cake in reality.

Grace is God Himself. Hence, we must see that grace and reality are one and that there is no difference between a living of grace and a living of reality. This is to say that if there is a living that is the living of grace, that living is also the living of reality. This is the first point.

The second point is that the so-called living of reality is the second level of living that believers have. The first level of living is one in which you somewhat exert your own strength. In other words, it is a living of self-struggle. For example, if you get up in the morning, spend some time

having morning watch, and in your daily living pray several times throughout the day, you will think that this is quite proper. However, in such a living you spend your energy to live a life of struggle. This is the first level of living. The second level is the living of grace, that is, the living of reality. In living a life of struggle, you use your own strength to enjoy God's grace. When a saved person has this kind of living, he will be revived. This is how one always feels in the initial stage of revival. In this stage, if you meet someone who speaks a few unpleasant words to you, you will patiently bow your head. If you were not living a life of struggle, you probably would lose your temper then and there. This kind of living is a man-made living of piety.

However, after frequently having this kind of struggle and exertion, you will gradually come out of this stage and enter into the stage of spontaneity. To illustrate, one who has learned to ride a bicycle knows that in the beginning he quickly learned to ride in a straight line, but he simply did not know how to make turns easily. Every turn required much effort. But after he rode the bicycle for a certain period, one day making turns became very spontaneous. Apparently, he exerted his effort, but in reality, he rode by a spontaneous strength. Learning to apply the brakes is in the same principle. One who has learned this knows that in the beginning applying the brakes was not his spontaneous power at all, but it required that he use his own strength to struggle to learn. Gradually, as a person practices to ride a bicycle, he spontaneously rides faster and faster and more and more steadily.

This spontaneous strength is like the laws spoken of in Romans 7 and 8. A law is a principle that operates spontaneously or automatically. For example, when we eat something, we do not need to continually chant, "I must digest." The food we eat is digested automatically, because there is a law within us. The activities throughout our body are the functioning of laws. When our hand moves, we do not need to command our little finger to move backward or forward; the little finger automatically cooperates and moves. Biologically, the movement is controlled organically. However, the movement itself occurs automatically as a result of the operation of a law.

When you come out of the struggling stage and enter into the stage of living by a spontaneous law, you will be living in grace and in reality. Then when others want to argue with you, there will be no need for you to bow your head and restrain yourself with much effort; rather, you will naturally not have any improper reaction.

The question you should ask is: How can one come out of a life of struggle and self-effort and enter into a living of spiritual spontaneity? The answer to this question is that you need to have all your spiritual struggles interwoven with life and joined to life. Then at a certain stage you will spontaneously be joined to the automatic law of life. In Romans 8 this law is called “the law of the Spirit of life.”

The second question concerns how gifts can become ministries. I am afraid that some of you do not really understand what gifts are. Gifts are abilities given to us through the moving of the Holy Spirit in coordination with the Word of God. For example, a brother may speak for eight days regarding dealing with the flesh by the cross. The Spirit, together with the Word, touches and enlightens him, enabling him to speak for eight days consecutively. But please realize that this is only a gift, for he himself may not have the experience of what he is sharing; he may have merely received an inspiration from the Spirit and enlightenment from the Word.

What then is a ministry? A ministry comes into being when, after you have been enlightened, you live under that shining every day until you eventually become that kind of person. For example, the light concerning dealing with the flesh by the cross may be constituted into your being through your daily experience to the extent that one day you become a person whose flesh has been dealt with by the cross, that is, whose entire being has been dealt with sufficiently by the cross. At this point, when you stand up to speak, your speaking is not the manifestation of a gift. Rather, your speaking is a ministry. A ministry comes into being when we are what we preach.

For instance, older professors who have taught at a university from the time they were young have reached the point of “ministry.” Suppose I am asked to teach English. I could force myself to give a lesson that would be considered to be quite good by the students. This would demonstrate a gift. What then is a ministry? Suppose I not only taught English at a university but also had been teaching it for thirty years so that I had English even in my blood cells. It would be as if, at the age of fifty, I did not need to do anything, because my being would be an “English being.” This illustrates what a ministry is. Here we can see the distinction between gift and ministry.

A person with a genuine ministry does not need preparation. Whenever he stands up to speak, he speaks what is in him because it is his very being. For

example, I am Chinese, and I speak Chinese; it is my mother tongue and even my constitution. Although I can also speak English, my speaking of English is only a gift, but my speaking of Chinese is a “ministry.” Hence, when I write something in English, my writing is a gift, and it may take me twenty minutes; however, if I write it in Chinese, my writing is a “ministry,” and it may take me only two minutes. The Chinese language has been constituted into me, but the English language has been given to me as a gift. If you asked me to say a few words in English, I would first need to take some time to think about what I would say. If, however, you asked me to say something in Chinese, I could do it without a second thought, because Chinese has been constituted into my being. Therefore, that which requires effort is a gift; however, that which does not require a second thought but rather comes out spontaneously is a ministry.

According to this principle, you may give a message and make a considerable effort to do it, but no matter what you say, you are merely exercising your gift. You are exercising a gift if what you speak is merely a doctrine and has not become your constituent. However, once your speaking becomes your constituent in your living, it becomes your ministry. Thus, entering into a ministry is not a matter of one or two days; it takes time.

HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN STUDYING AND SERVING

Question: What should I do if I have the heart to serve but am still in school and feel that my studies are a distraction?

Answer: This is a difficult question. The Bible says that as Moses was educated in the palace in Egypt, he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Can we say the same thing of ourselves? Of course, at the time Moses was being educated, he had not been saved or consecrated himself to the Lord, nor was there a church meeting hall in the Egyptian palace. He simply focused on his studies in order to finish his education properly; he was not called until later. Hence, he did not have the problem of the so-called distraction of studying. Many young brothers and sisters today, however, have been saved, revived, and called before graduating from a university.

This is not a difficult matter for a believer who desires to remain in the world. After all, such a believer has already been saved and will not go to hell. He may be likened to an Israelite who lived in Egypt and loved the world, but who remained an Israelite and therefore could not be hurt by the plagues. In the future this world-loving believer will not go to hell, and in the meantime he has a university education and a Ph.D. Is this not a double gain? Some brothers and sisters do have this kind of wishful thinking. No matter how you try to persuade them, they will always tell you to do your own accounting and let them do theirs. I am afraid that sometimes you may even be persuaded by their speaking and will think that it is reasonable.

For those believers who plan to live in the world, studying in a university is not a problem but rather has many benefits. First, such believers may have no vices; they may not gamble, smoke, or drink. Many people have become successful in the world in this way. They are Christians and have been saved, but they still live in Egypt. A Christian who is in the world and who loves the world may be a most clever and successful person. For this kind of person, studying has many benefits. There are even some people who believe in Jesus after hearing a gospel that includes salvation and success in the world. This is not bad; it was the same in the case of Moses, who was an Israelite and at the same time studied in the palace in Egypt and obtained a successful career.

Another kind of person who has no difficulty studying in a university is a believer who consecrates himself absolutely. For such a believer, education is not a problem because he always puts serving God first. If God gives him permission to study, he studies diligently; if God does not permit him to study, he stops his studying. If God allows him to become successful in his studies, he is successful; if God does not allow him to be successful, he is not successful. This kind of person always takes God into consideration; he does not insist on anything of his own.

The most difficult kind of person to be is someone who has been called by God to come out of Egypt but whose heart still desires to remain in the palace. Being this kind of person is the most difficult thing. On the one hand, such a person thinks, "If I leave Egypt and enter into the wilderness, I will have only manna to enjoy. Furthermore, this manna comes only from heaven; therefore, I will have to rely on God for everything." On the other hand, he also feels that if he does not consecrate himself absolutely, he will be troubled within.

Genuine Christians are generally divided into these three categories. It is not difficult to be on one side or the other side; what is difficult is to be in the middle. It is not difficult to be either black or white; the most difficult thing is to be gray. The Christian who suffers the most is one who does not love the Lord and yet has a desire to love Him, one who does not love education and yet is not able to give it up, one who is not willing to abandon the world completely and yet is afraid of not being qualified to enter into the kingdom in the future. To those who consecrate themselves absolutely, nothing is a suffering because they consider everything as God's arrangement. No matter how difficult and trying their environment is and regardless of whether others get a promotion or a raise in salary, they are not affected; they simply follow the Lord absolutely.

A hundred years ago it was said that if John Nelson Darby had not been a Christian, he would certainly have been successful in some way or another. Perhaps in literature or politics he could have been quite accomplished. This shows that if a person who genuinely consecrates himself were to instead be in the world, he might have no ordinary future. Yet because such a person treasures the spiritual things, serving God is more important and precious to him than any future he could have in the world. For example, Moses did not give up Egypt thoughtlessly. He chose to be ill-treated with the people of God, considering the reproach of the Christ greater riches than his position and future in Egypt (Heb. 11:25-26). He did this after he had counted the cost. When we go to a store to buy something, we always count the cost, considering whether it is too expensive or whether it is worth the price. The reason Moses could abandon everything in Egypt was that he had properly counted the cost.

Similarly, Paul considered all things as refuse (Phil. 3:7-8) after he had carefully counted the cost. He placed Christ alongside all things, weighing and comparing them both. After his calculation, one was found to be precious and worth the price, and the other was counted as refuse. Hence, he abandoned one and treasured the other. Two things must be compared and weighed before we can choose between them. Therefore, consecration requires paying a price, and forsaking something also requires paying a price. On the one hand, within us there is a demand of life; the spiritual life within us gives us a demand, requiring us to consecrate ourselves to the Lord. On the other hand, we must count the cost and be willing to forsake everything other than the Lord.

It is indeed wonderful for a believer who has been called by the Lord to be successful in his studies, but if he does not consecrate himself to the Lord, he will not feel comfortable within. There are some who will not feel at peace or at rest if they do not consecrate themselves. There are others who calculate, thoroughly weighing and comparing the Lord against the things of the world. In other words, they place Christ alongside the world and weigh the two, considering whether they want a future in the world or the spiritual reward. Many are in the church today because they have calculated in this way.

There was a prominent British politician named William Gladstone who was also a Christian. He served as prime minister and achieved great success in politics. Near the end of his life, someone asked him how he felt about his success. He replied, “Although I have been an important person, have become a pillar in the platform of British politics, and have spent much time and energy for England, my heart aches for the past days. If I had three lives today, I would spend each life by going out to preach the gospel.” This is the comparison that he gave.

A future in the world is valuable, but a spiritual future is even more valuable. We must weigh them both carefully. However, this does not mean that if you pursue the Lord, you should not study. You should study diligently and do your duty properly within the measure of the Lord’s leading. Hence, you must resolve this question of education in your consecration. For instance, there are two saints in the Philippines, one who studied at a famous medical university and the other at the best engineering school. However, because of the Lord’s need, today both of them are willing to let go of their education. This is their calculation, but it does not mean that everyone should do the same. We have no intention of asking the saints to give up their studies. Rather, we are saying that all the saints must resolve the question of their consecration; if they will do this, all other problems will spontaneously be resolved. No one can imitate another person; we can only learn to be held accountable to the Lord.

THE DEPUTY AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH NEEDING TO BE SPIRITUAL

Question: If our consecration is due to the church’s arrangement, does this arrangement represent spiritual authority?

Answer: This question must be approached from another angle. For you to submit to the church's arrangement, the church must be spiritual. If the church is in fellowship with the Lord, it will be spiritual. If the church is not spiritual, the arrangement will obviously be questionable. In a normal situation the church's arrangement should be the leading of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the church should also follow in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. In other words, the church's arrangement should be but a spiritual confirmation of whatever the Holy Spirit is doing in you. If you accept this arrangement, you will be benefited. On the other hand, you should not care only for the church's arrangement without asking the Lord what His will is. Before the Lord you must make a proper decision and have a living fellowship with Him. In this fellowship you should have a feeling from the Lord and a decision from the Lord. But in order to avoid making a mistake, it is best to have the confirmation of the church.

From another perspective, we always need to learn spiritual lessons. To accept the church's decision is certainly good; however, if your personal decision is not in accord with the church, yet you insist upon it, you have not learned the lesson. More specifically, you have not submitted to authority. To accept the church's leading is to submit yourself to authority. This will cause you to learn a valuable spiritual lesson. Even if the church's arrangement is wrong, as long as your heart is to submit to the Lord's authority, you will still learn a valuable lesson. The unique cause of our spiritual problems is our self. God has established His authority in us so that we can lose our self and have no authority of our own. Spiritual authority is for dealing with our self.

What does the self refer to? What is the definition of the self? The self refers mainly to our opinions. Matthew 16 reveals that the self is related mainly to our opinions. The Lord speaks of not setting the mind on the things of God but on the things of men (v. 23). Then He goes on to say, "If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself" (v. 24). This shows that the self is in the expression of one's opinions, because to not set the mind on the things of God but on the things of men is to express oneself through the opinions in one's mind.

In order for you to progress, there is an authority in you that causes you to lose your opinions; it causes your self to be broken. The church's arrangement for you may be wrong, but the authority is right.

The more the arrangement is wrong, the greater the breaking of the self will be. Generally, none of us has a problem submitting to the arrangement of a spiritual person. But when someone who is not spiritual makes the arrangement, we find ourselves unable to submit; our self comes out immediately. If we are able to submit even to a wrong arrangement, our self will be severely broken.

Question: Sometimes the feeling we have within is unclear. Is it wrong to take the environment or the church as our confirmation?

Answer: Some people are very clear concerning what is right and what is wrong. Both the feeling within and the leading without seem to indicate a “yes”; the two are about the same. For some the “yes” may be very clear, but for others the “yes” may be very hazy. The end result, however, should be the same. When one is unclear, it is right to give oneself to the environment or the church. Some people are truly unclear and therefore can decide only according to what the environment or the church says. If you ask which kind of person is better, I would say that both are good. Whether or not you are clear, you should allow the environment and the church to determine your arrangement.

On the other hand, your being unclear within is an indication that you are not strong enough before the Lord; this is why you do not know or understand. Under these circumstances you have no alternative but to give yourself over to the church or the environment. Of course, this is the right thing to do, but from the standpoint of your spiritual condition, this is not so good. We should always learn to be in the Lord more.

REGARDING WHETHER IT IS ALL RIGHT FOR CHRISTIANS TO KILL ANIMALS

Question: There is a religion that teaches people to love all creatures. Is it all right for Christians to kill animals?

Answer: To not kill animals is a thought from Buddhism; it is a human concept. Strictly speaking, it is something from Satan. Before man's fall there were two things that were different from today. First, before man's fall God ordained that man would eat vegetables, not meat. Second, the other creatures did not harm man; in other words, there was no mutual killing.

However, from the time man fell and sin entered into the world, God told man to eat meat (Gen. 9:3) and kill animals as sacrifices (3:21; 4:4). At the same time, animals began to kill one another. Hence, eating meat was something that came in after man's fall.

To eat meat signifies that man is fallen and needs redemption. If man had not fallen, there would be no need for him to eat meat. It would suffice for man to eat only vegetables. In the Bible both meat and vegetables have a symbolic meaning. Meat denotes redemption. Redemption is a basic concept; it is a dispensational application that God has for fallen mankind. Satan created a religion specifically to counter this. The people who follow this religion believe that not killing animals is a virtue, not knowing that this kind of teaching is used by Satan to contradict God's redemption. God says that, in principle, redemption requires the killing of animals, but Satan says that we should not kill animals. The religion created by Satan teaches moral cultivation, which depends on works; therefore, this religion advocates vegetarianism. Christians depend only on the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22); based on this, Christians eat meat. The satanic religion declares to God that man will not depend on the blood but will depend on works. This is why Paul says in 1 Timothy 4 that the commandment to abstain from certain foods is the teaching of demons (vv. 1-5), which is of Satan. Eating only vegetables signifies man's dependence on his own works. Religion discourages people from eating meat and encourages people to eat only vegetables; this is Satan's idea.

The universe is filled with symbols of Christ (Col. 2:16-17). Thus, when the Lord Jesus ministered on the earth, He could use different things as figures of Himself. Religious people do not know that the teaching of not killing animals is a teaching from Satan, and they even consider that to abstain from killing animals is a good deed. Actually, this is Satan's strategy to contradict God's principle of redemption.

In Shansi Province there was once a sister who was demon-possessed. Under no circumstance would she eat meat, but she was very zealous. One day someone brought us a letter asking us to contact her. We asked her why she did not eat meat. She said that she simply would not. We told her that 1 Timothy says that abstinence from foods is the teaching of demons. She had no way to dismiss this proof from the Bible, but she still would not eat meat.

While she was abstaining from eating meat, we could sense that there were demons in her when we contacted her. When we meet a person who prays frequently, we can sense the measure of spirituality in that person. When we contacted this vegetarian sister, we could detect an atmosphere of confusion and darkness around her. If these two kinds of persons are praying in the same room, when we enter the room, we will sense a chaotic situation. On one hand, we will sense a spiritual atmosphere, but on the other hand, we will sense a dark situation. When we go to a place where a group of spiritual people is meeting, we immediately sense the warmth. This is not a psychological reaction; there is truly a spiritual element in this. When everyone is meeting together in a room to pray and sing, we will feel warm the moment we enter. Hence, we must realize that the religious teaching to not kill animals or eat meat is from Hades and the demons.

Question: What should our attitude be toward blood?

Answer: The Bible says that we should not drink any kind of blood (Gen. 9:4) except our Lord's blood (John 6:53-55) because only the Lord's blood can save us. Blood is for redemption. Drinking the Lord's blood signifies that we need redemption. Only the blood of the Lord Jesus can redeem us. The blood of animal sacrifices can only cover sins; it cannot take away sins (Heb. 10:4). This commandment regarding not drinking blood is still in effect even in the New Testament age. Blood has a symbolic meaning, signifying that Christ is our redemption. It is a mistake to drink the blood of animals, thinking that any kind of blood can save us. This is wrong. The proper receiving of the blood is the drinking of the cup at the Lord's table meeting, which indicates that we acknowledge that only the Lord's blood can save us.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE PROSPECT AND GOAL OF THE WORK
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A FEW IMPORTANT POINTS
FOR PRAYER CONCERNING
THE SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS
AND THE WORK

We should pray before the Lord for these special fellowship meetings and the work. As we pray, we should pay particular attention to several points. First, we need to pray that the Lord will lead these meetings. For these meetings we should unconditionally submit ourselves to the Lord, open to the Lord, and allow the Lord to freely move and lead us. We should ask the Lord to enable us to correspond with His leading and guidance.

Second, we need to pray for all the brothers and sisters. We should ask the Lord to prepare their hearts and work in their environment so that they can readily receive the Lord's grace and His speaking and at the same time willingly answer His call and meet His need.

Third, we need to pray before the Lord for our circumstances, our families, and even the weather, asking Him to cause all these things to work together for our good and not become distractions to us in the meetings.

Fourth, we need to earnestly ask the Lord to raise up some saints and gain some who will be for Him. We should ask the Lord to gain some who will have a part in the work; some who will do business and make money for His kingdom; some who can administrate, lead, and shepherd in the church; and some who can truly coordinate and serve in the church. All this needs our prayer. We also need to be led to pray, whether in the meetings or in private, for a certain one or a few individual saints.

Fifth, we hope that in these meetings the Lord will lead us concerning the way to spread His work. If He chooses us and delights in us, we would ask

Him to give us the burden and leading concerning the spreading of the work, not only in the Philippines but also throughout Southeast Asia. We are looking to the Lord that He would lead us in this matter; therefore, we should pray specifically for this.

These points are exceedingly important. I hope that we can all prepare and open our spirits to receive the burden of prayer. As we pray together, our words must be clear, and our voices must be loud. Furthermore, we should try to keep our prayers short.

THE LORD'S WORK IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Concerning the Lord's work, we do not want to initiate any kind of movement or stirring up; that is the world's way of doing things. We do not wish to follow the way of the worldly people, and even less do we wish to initiate any work by ourselves or stir up any matter. We have received grace before the Lord to serve Him as slaves. He is our Master, and we are the slaves whom He has bought. Hence, we are willing to prostrate ourselves before Him and wait for Him to express His heart's desire to us. If He would have mercy on us and use us, we must tell Him from deep within, "Lord, here am I; send me." This is not a movement or a stirring up; much less is it something that we want to initiate. Rather, we are waiting before God because He has an eternal intention. He is Jehovah of hosts (Isa. 6:1-8).

For many years we have had a strong feeling within that in Southeast Asia, including Taiwan, although the Lord's name has been preached for a hundred years and there are many believers among the Chinese, the Lord's work in this region has not had a proper beginning, nor have the Lord's churches been properly established. Concerning the preaching of the gospel, we cannot say that it has been done well. Concerning the service of the church, we cannot say that it is strong. Concerning the overcomers in the church, we cannot say that there are many. All these situations have caused us to deeply feel that in order for the Lord to come back to the earth, this region must have a new beginning.

Perhaps some would ask, are we not the group of people whom the Lord would use? Is this region not the area that the Lord is blessing? Would the Lord give up all the people in this region? Indeed, these questions that we

have within us are difficult to answer. Naturally, this causes us to feel that we should pray to the Lord, “Lord, we are here. If You work, we will follow.”

SEEING FOUR MATTERS

If the Lord is willing to work among us, or perhaps we should say, if we are willing to let Him work among us, there are four matters that we must see and that must have definite results.

Answering the Lord’s Call and Receiving the Lord’s Commission

First, all of us must be truly touched by the Lord. It is not simply a matter of being revived by the Lord through His grace; even more, it is a matter of truly being subdued from within and broken by the Lord. We must once again answer His call and say before Him, “Lord, we are willing to place our lives and our futures unconditionally in Your hands.” In order for the Lord to have a way to advance among us, we must let Him do a thorough work in this matter. If He cannot work thoroughly in this matter, regardless of how much we pray and hope, He will still have no way to go on among us.

The Bible shows a great principle, that no matter who sees the Lord’s need and the burden of the work and comes to pray before the Lord to ask Him to work, the Lord has only one answer: “You do it.” The Lord wants the praying one to receive the burden himself. After Isaiah saw the Lord, he had a desire before the Lord, and for this he beseeched the Lord to send people out to speak and work for Him. Consequently, the Lord sounded a call for Isaiah to hear. The Lord said, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?” At this point Isaiah prostrated himself before the Lord and said, “Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8). We should never pray, “Lord, You do the work; You send someone else.” Such prayers can rarely be found in the Bible.

On the contrary, the Bible shows that whoever asks the Lord concerning a need will be sent by the Lord to meet the need. The disciples asked the Lord, “This place is deserted and the hour is already late. Send the crowds away that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” The Lord answered them immediately, saying, “You give them something to eat” (Matt. 14:15-16). Whoever asks of the Lord will be asked by the Lord to bear the responsibility. On the day of Pentecost approximately one hundred and

twenty were praying for the Lord's kingdom and looking to the Lord. The Lord did not choose or call people outside this group, nor did He thrust out or send others to work for Him. After they prayed before the Lord, the Lord's burden and commission fell upon them, and they picked up this burden without any excuses. In the end these one hundred and twenty rose up collectively and did the work for which they had prayed (Acts 1:15—2:14). This principle can be seen many times in the Bible.

This shows that he who prays for the Lord's work will be the one who is sent by the Lord. If there are several thousand or even tens of thousands of believers in Southeast Asia today, yet only a hundred or more of us have received the Lord's mercy to lay everything aside and take the time to sit together before the Lord, opening our hearts, preparing our spirits, looking to Him, and depending on Him to do the work, this will prove and show that we are those whom the Lord desires to use. We cannot expect that the Lord will choose others outside of us; this is not in keeping with the principle in the Bible. The fact that we are here looking to the Lord proves that His desire is to use us. If we want the Lord's work to have a free way on the earth, we must first let Him have a free way in us. If we would not let the Lord accomplish this matter in us, we do not know how much longer the Lord's work in all Southeast Asia will be delayed.

The Lord Needing to Thoroughly Gain the Church in Manila

Second, we need to ask the Lord, by His grace and mercy, to thoroughly gain the church in Manila. It is not sufficient for Him to gain only us; He must also gain the church in Manila. In terms of the churches in the countries of Southeast Asia today, Manila is the center; it is an important place. For the past few years the saints here have been the greatest in number, and they are the most blessed and have the strongest desire for the Lord. Hence, in order to spread the work in Southeast Asia, we must ask the Lord to gain the church in Manila. If the church in Manila cannot rise up, the Lord will immediately encounter a crisis. If we cannot get through in this matter, the Lord's work will have no way to be carried out. This is a principle. Only when the Lord had gained Jerusalem could He spread outward. When the spread reached a certain extent, Antioch was gained, and only then could there be a spread to the Gentile places. In the same way, Ephesus had to be gained before there

could be a spread outward. When the spread reached a certain extent, Corinth had to be gained in order for the spread to continue. Church history shows that the Lord's work was able to spread in all directions only after He had completely gained Rome.

Because there has not yet been a central location, a base, in the islands of Southeast Asia that has been completely gained by the Lord, the Lord's work still does not have a way to spread here. We have clearly seen that this base cannot be anywhere else but in Manila. Therefore, if the church here does not allow the Lord to gain it thoroughly, the Lord's work will not have the way to spread much. In other words, the extent to which the Lord is able to gain the church in Manila determines the extent to which the Lord's work can spread in Southeast Asia.

Spreading the Lord's Work in the Philippine Islands

Third, we need to ask the Lord to give us a definite leading concerning the spread of His work in the Philippines, a country of islands. We have worked in this country for more than twenty years, but we can see clearly that our spread has been too slow and its scope has been too narrow. If the Lord has mercy on us, I hope that from today we can spread the work of the Lord's gospel in this country, on the one hand, to the Chinese, and on the other hand, to the Filipinos. May the Lord grace us so that some among us will rise up, receive this burden, and go to the different parts of the Philippines. Some may go to the Chinese, and others may go to the Filipinos for the preaching of the Lord's gospel and the producing of the Lord's churches. At the same time, they should coordinate and serve together with the saints from other places. In this way there will be the service that expresses the Body of Christ in these islands.

Spreading the Lord's Work in the Various Regions of Southeast Asia

Fourth, if the Lord enlarges our capacity, there should be a leading and a burden among us to care for the churches in the various regions of Southeast Asia. West Malaysia, Indonesia, East Malaysia, and Thailand are regions. Ceylon [presently Sri Lanka] also is a small region. There are already

meetings in all these places, but they need to be strengthened, and the Lord's work needs to be formally initiated. Hence, some of us must have this burden and receive this leading.

If the Lord works thoroughly in these four matters, what praise we will have before Him! This is our desire as well as our goal. We do not want to push, stir up, or use a movement to initiate these matters. However, we desire to wait before the Lord and let Him walk among us and work in each one of us until all of us rise up within and are subdued and gained by the Lord. In this way the Lord can raise up churches in all the regions of Southeast Asia. If the Lord's work can spread in us, the work can spread also in all the regions of Southeast Asia.

RAISING UP FIVE KINDS OF PEOPLE

Once we see these four matters, we must have much waiting and prayer before the Lord. In our prayers we need not only to pay attention to these four main matters but also to see that within them there are many detailed items.

Raising Up Workers

First, we must pray that the Lord will raise up people to be workers who will consecrate their time to the Lord, lay aside their careers, abandon their future, and give themselves wholly to Christ. After being raised up by the Lord, these people will truly live for Christ and work for Christ, not wanting position, the world, knowledge, or fame. They will care only for the Lord Himself, for His work, for His gospel, for His churches, and for human souls, while setting aside everything else, including their entire future. In order for the Lord's needs to be met in this large region, there must be a sufficient number of people who are raised up by the Lord to answer His call in this way. We should pray definitely for this.

Raising Up Those Who Would Offer Material Riches for the Lord's Work

Second, we should ask the Lord to raise up people who can recognize the needs of the Lord's work, some who can see that this work requires finances and financial support. May the Lord raise up this kind of people who have

lofty ambitions, boldness, and courage to work for the Lord and make money in many ways so that the Lord's work will not be limited financially.

Today there is a great need for workers, and there is also a great need for money. Everyone knows that in this day and age it is impossible to do anything without workers and without money. Without workers, there is no way to do things; without money, there is no way to move. The need for money cannot be met with only a little offering, nor can it be met by the giving of the brothers and sisters according to inspiration. Rather, it requires a group of brothers and sisters to see the need, receive the burden, and tell the Lord immediately, "Lord, since You have raised up this work and have many brothers and sisters responding by setting aside the world and laying down their future to work solely for You, I must stand up and do business for this need, making money and gaining material possessions to supply the need of Your work." This must be considered a work, not merely an offering that comes from an inspiration. Rather, it is a responsibility, a job. This way of earning money for the Lord and doing business for the Lord must become a job to some.

People in the world are all earning money for their family, doing business for their children, and making plans for their own future. Everyone in the world is like this. Here among us there should be brothers and sisters rising up to do business, doing it even more successfully and making more money than the people in the world. However, this absolutely must not be for themselves, for their families, for their children, and certainly not for their own future; rather, it must be for the Lord's work, for men's souls, for the gospel, for the churches, and for the Lord's coming kingdom. The Lord must raise up such people. If there is not this kind of cooperation, we can say that the Lord's work has absolutely no way. Of course, we deeply believe that if the Lord performs a miracle, He can work things out, but the Lord must use man. If the Lord so leads, we must pay more careful attention to this matter in the fellowship from now on.

Raising Up Elders

Third, we should ask the Lord for gifted ones who will administrate the church, shepherd the church, love the brothers and sisters, and love God's children more than their own families, their own children. If the Lord raises up such people, all the churches also will be raised up. I hope that in every

place where the church is, such people will be raised up. These people are what the Bible calls elders. Such elders must be raised up. If there is merely a gospel work but not the administration carried out by the elders, there is no way for a church to become strong. If the elders cannot be raised up, there is no way to push the work forward, for the work is carried out steadily step by step, locality by locality. For example, if the gospel reaches a certain place, some people are saved, and a church is raised up, this church must be handed over to the elders, and the spread will continue. If the elders' administration is not proper, the work ahead will be easily shaken and dragged down, and there will be problems later on. If the administration in the churches is strong locality by locality, the work ahead will not be dragged down but rather will be strengthened.

For instance, because in the past two or three years the brothers in Taiwan have had sufficient strength, we can go forward and spread the work. We can go forward smoothly because there are not too many problems behind us. If there are problems in Taiwan, we will not be able to go forward; we will only be able to take care of the existing churches. We need the Lord to have mercy on us to help us see that elders must be raised up in the local churches; we need to ask the Lord to truly raise up such people.

Raising Up Deacons

In addition, there must also be deacons; there must be many such brothers and sisters raised up by the Lord. This is the fourth kind of people. They love the church, love the brothers and sisters, serve the church, and serve God's children in the church. This kind of person must be raised up in great quantity—the more the better. According to our observation, there have not been enough of these people in the church in Manila up until now. The more of these people the church has, the better.

Raising Up Many Young People with a Heart for the Lord

Fifth, we should also ask the Lord to raise up young people who have a heart for the Lord. Such young people must be raised up by the Lord as a group willing to be led, trained, and have a part in the coordination of the Lord's work.

In the development of the Lord's work every one of these five kinds of people is indispensable. There must be workers raised up for the Lord, moneymakers raised up for the Lord, elders raised up for the Lord, deacons raised up for the Lord, and many young people raised up for the Lord. Such people all have the heart to pursue spiritual things, the burden to consecrate themselves, and the desire to serve the Lord. They are willing to be led and trained so that they may be in the church's coordination. If these five kinds of people all come forth, it will cause us to give the Lord the full praise. Hence, these four main matters and these five kinds of people are the target of our prayers.

We have heard enough messages. Today I hope we can work out some definite things, which should include the carrying out of these four main matters and the producing of these five kinds of people. May the Lord have mercy on us that in these days we would pray for these nine points, praying and waiting on Him again and again. We need to pray at every time and in every place, unceasingly praying and waiting on Him in this way. The One in whom we believe is the true and living Lord. The Bible says that the day of the Lord's coming is near. If we believe that this is true and trustworthy, our attitude must change completely. You and I must pay attention to these nine points, allowing the Lord to have a clear way, allowing the Lord's work to prosper, allowing ourselves to be broken, and allowing Him to gain us fully. This is the desire and attitude each one of us should have.

CHAPTER SIX

MAN BEING THE BRIDGE AND CHANNEL OF GOD

LOOKING TO AND AWAITING GOD'S WORKING

We look to the Spirit of the Lord to move freely and work particularly so that our meeting will be filled with Him. We do not want to have set practices. Rather, we are willing to hand everything over to the Holy Spirit, who is among us and is moving in all of us, that we may have the inspiration to pray, to testify, to release the Lord's word, or to admonish. We give all this over to the authority of the Holy Spirit. However, we also ask the Lord to restrict man's activities so that we can live under the Holy Spirit's authority and give the Holy Spirit absolute freedom. Perhaps a brother who is a co-worker will be inspired to testify, release the Lord's word, or give us some fellowship in the matter of following the Lord. We are all willing to look to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In our gathering at this time we do not want to encourage any of you to do something, nor do we want to propose something. Rather, we have a burden before the Lord and desire to come before God with all the saints to wait and fellowship together. We do not know what the Lord desires to do or will do in this time of waiting and fellowship, but we are willing to open ourselves unconditionally to the Lord and give Him a free opportunity to do what He desires to do. Perhaps He wants to touch us inwardly one by one, turn us over one by one, or break us one by one, subduing us so that we will have a thorough dealing and consecration. This would be the best, and this is our greatest desire.

Perhaps the Lord desires to do an unprecedented work of revival in the church in Manila and gain the brothers and sisters here in a thorough, penetrating, full, and powerful way. Perhaps He desires to entrust us with the burden of spreading the work so that we will spread His gospel in every part of the Philippines. Perhaps He desires to give us an even broader commission to spread His work in every country and region of Southeast Asia. Whatever He desires to do is what we are hoping for and willing to receive. Hence, we have not made any decisions and are willing to humbly bow and wait before the Lord.

As those who belong to the Lord, we have received His salvation and have His life and His Spirit in us. Therefore, we should give the Lord sufficient opportunity to move so that He can work more in us. Hence, from this meeting on, we should all wait before the Lord and look to Him, opening ourselves to Him and telling Him, “O Lord, when You spread Your work, please also bring me on. When You move on, please do not leave me behind. Lord, may You bring me on as well.” We should all have this desire; this should be our constant prayer.

We do not want to give you too many messages, and hopefully you are not expecting to hear many messages. We should all come before God together, looking to the Lord, waiting for the Lord, giving the Lord the opportunity to move among us and have a way in us. We do not have any set goals, much less any agenda. We are simply looking to the Lord to manifest His desire and have His own way among us to attain the goal that He wants to attain. We do not know what the Lord intends to do; we have no assurance of how much He intends to do, nor do we have any idea which brothers He will actually gain. We only desire to come together with the brothers and sisters, looking to the Lord, waiting for the Lord, giving Him the opportunity, and letting Him work so that He may speak freely, take the way He desires to take, and gain what He needs to gain so that His desire may be carried out through us.

MAN BEING THE BRIDGE AND CHANNEL OF GOD

Recently, the Lord has shown us a principle concerning man’s unique status in the universe. We have clearly seen that for God’s plan in eternity past to become His accomplished goal in eternity future, it must pass through man. Man is the bridge between the two eternities. For God to walk from eternity past to eternity future, He must pass through man. Man is the way and the bridge. If God can go smoothly on this path and this bridge, God can go on His way quickly, God’s purpose can be accomplished early, and the day of the Lord and the kingdom of God can come soon. Conversely, if God encounters problems and obstacles on this bridge and cannot have His way in man, He will be brought to a halt, will be stopped, and will not be able to go on. God will have to wait. He will have to wait not for Himself to work, not for Himself to move, but for man to answer His call, to be touched, and to agree with Him and open the way for Him.

The Bible has given us this light. Before His ascension the Lord told us clearly to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel (Mark 16:15). Furthermore, the Lord prophesied, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). This shows that the coming of the end is the coming of the Lord’s kingdom, which depends on whether or not the gospel has been preached in the whole inhabited earth. If the gospel is preached in the whole inhabited earth, the end will come, and the Lord’s kingdom will come. When the Lord ascended two thousand years ago, He wanted the disciples to preach the gospel in the whole inhabited earth (Acts 1:8). Would the Lord not want us to preach the gospel in the whole inhabited earth within ten years? Would the Lord not want us to preach the gospel in the whole inhabited earth in this century? I believe that we all would say that the Lord is desirous and willing. However, although twenty centuries have passed, until today the gospel has not been preached in the whole inhabited earth. Why is this? If the Lord is willing, why has the gospel not been preached in the whole inhabited earth? It is because the Lord cannot find a way, a bridge, on earth; He cannot find a channel for the gospel.

Man is the Lord’s way, the Lord’s bridge. The Lord has no way to go on today because no one is willing to be the Lord’s bridge, the Lord’s way. In Acts 10 the Lord sent an angel to tell Cornelius to invite Peter to preach the gospel to him (vv. 3-5). Here we must consider that if the Lord could ask an angel to speak this word to Cornelius, could He not have sent an angel to preach the gospel to Cornelius directly? Why did the Lord need to go through such trouble as to contact Peter? He only needed to tell an angel to announce some part of the gospel to Cornelius. Any part of the good news would have been acceptable; it would not have mattered. However, the Lord did not do this. Why not?

In His purpose God has established a very formidable rule. It is a great matter in the universe that God’s eternal plan is not accomplished through angels. God did not give this grace to angels; He did not entrust this to angels. In His plan God wanted man to be His way, His channel. God’s eternal plan must be accomplished through man. God desires to cross from eternity past to eternity future through man. Man is the way, the course. Hence, for the past two thousand years it has seemed that the Lord is not omnipotent; many times it seems that there are things He cannot do. In fact, He is limited by man. Our Lord is the One who “spoke, and it was” and who “commanded, and

it stood” (Psa. 33:9). He can accomplish anything, whether small or great, in an instant. However, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world is the only thing that He has not yet been able to accomplish in the past two thousand years.

From the record in the Bible we know that God created the small earth in an instant, yet for two thousand years His gospel has had no way to be preached fully on earth. The reason for the slowness and the delay lies not with Him but with man. God is willing, but man is unwilling; God desires to move, but man would not move; God desires to spread, but man does not think it is necessary. God desires to work, but man does not have the burden; God commands, but man would not obey; God gives man the commission, but man would not accept it. Hence, for two thousand years the work of the gospel has had many starts and stops. It seems that it has started, but then it stops; it seems that it has begun running, but then it slows down again. The reason for this lies not with God but with man.

The church in Manila has been here for over twenty years, yet until this day the gospel has not gone forth from us very much. We live in the Philippines and among the Filipinos, yet we have not preached the Lord’s gospel to them. We have not only failed to preach to the local people, the Filipinos, but we have also failed to preach even to our own countrymen, the overseas Chinese. Our countrymen are everywhere, but the gospel is not everywhere. No one goes out to preach the gospel and establish churches. Is this because the Lord is not willing? Please remember, it is not the Lord but we who are unwilling. Does the Lord not desire to work? Yes, the Lord does desire to work, but He has encountered a problem, a limitation. This problem, this limitation, is man, because man will not cooperate.

GOD’S HEART EARNESTLY DESIRING TO GAIN MAN

God’s eternal plan, which He designed in the beginning, is to be accomplished through man. After God created man, He gave His purpose over to man’s will for man to choose and to agree with. If man agrees a little, God works a little. If man accepts a little, God accomplishes a little. If man has a little of God’s mind, God completes a little. If man moves with God a little, God advances a little. From Genesis to Revelation the entire Bible shows the principle that no one ever seeks out God; rather, it is God who seeks out man. No one chooses God; it is God who chooses man. God not only loves man, but

even more, He desires to gain man. The reason God desires to gain man is that He loves man; the reason He loves man is that He desires to gain man. Why does a husband love his wife? It is because he desires to gain his wife. Why does he desire to gain his wife? It is because he loves his wife. In the universe there is a law: When God created man, He said that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). This means that a man must have a counterpart, a wife. However, this word is merely a type; it has a spiritual significance. It signifies that in the universe it is not good for God to be alone. God must have a counterpart, and this counterpart is man. God is seeking a counterpart, and man is the counterpart whom God seeks.

One day God became flesh, coming down to earth from heaven. What did He come for? It is not wrong to say that He came to be the Savior. John the Baptist did say, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). However, John also said, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom” (3:29). The Lord Jesus came not only to be the Savior to save sinners but even more to be the Bridegroom to marry His beloved bride. Who is His beloved bride? It is man. God loves man in the way that a man loves a woman. The sweetest feeling that God has within is when He gains man. What God loves the most is that man can be His counterpart, His companion, being of the same mind as He and walking with Him. In this way the two—man and God, God and man—can become one. Paul says that he betrothed us, the saved ones, to present us as a pure virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). We are Christ’s counterpart, and Christ desires to gain us. The Bible says that when the New Jerusalem comes in the future, the bride will have made herself ready, and the Bridegroom will marry the bride (Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9-10). This Bridegroom is the God who created man and redeemed man. The God who created and redeemed man is the universal Bridegroom, and the bride is the man whom God created and redeemed. The man whom God created and redeemed is His bride, His counterpart.

GOD SEEKING MAN TO BE HIS WAY ON EARTH

Thus, we see how much God needs man. In the universe, God is a God who lacks nothing, yet He has the greatest lack—man. God lacks man. He lacks you and me, and He lacks every sinner. For this reason He came to work by calling, seeking, saving, leading, and guarding. He worked in many ways and in a thorough manner, and His only goal is to gain man. Here we must see clearly that God’s only lack is man; therefore, He desires to gain man. We have heard

God's voice not only in the New Testament but even in the Old Testament, when He spoke from heaven, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" (Isa. 6:8). This word is very clear. God in heaven desires to bring His work down to earth, but He needs a channel, a way, on the earth. This channel, this way, is man. This is where man's function lies.

Who is willing to be the Lord's channel today? Who is willing to be His way to match Him and to be of the same mind with Him? Who is willing to move with Him and work with Him? History has proven that the Lord's move advanced and spread any time there was a person, a few persons, or a group of people, regardless of the age, place, or ethnicity, who were gained by the Lord to be of the same mind as the Lord, to move and work with the Lord, and to desire the Lord's purpose and work to be fulfilled. As long as there was this kind of cooperation with God, regardless of the age, place, or kind of people, God was manifested immediately, and His work, His purpose, was fulfilled to a greater extent.

This is a great principle, a great law. God needs man; He needs to gain man as His counterpart, as one who is of the same mind as He and is willing to be His co-worker. Without man it is difficult for God to move an inch. In eternity past God was omnipotent, but in time He cannot move without man. Without man, God does not and cannot do anything. Likewise, if the Lord cannot gain a group of people in the Philippines, His gospel and work will have no channel on earth. If the Lord cannot gain some people in the countries of Southeast Asia, if He cannot gain you and me, we should not expect that He will be able to do His work and have His way here. For Him to do so would violate the principle, the law, of His work. Our God is a law-abiding God, a principled God. According to His law, He gave Himself over to man. Man can either impede, limit, bind, and hinder God, or he can complement God, help Him, move with Him, be of the same mind as He, labor with Him, and be His channel, giving Him a way, even a smooth way. Everything depends on man's attitude toward God.

THE HIGHEST MEANING OF MAN'S SALVATION

Genuine salvation is not only for us to gain a little peace, some blessings, or some benefits; it is not even merely for us to reach a certain condition in the future. None of these things are the highest meaning of salvation. The highest meaning of salvation is that we become God's counterpart, being of the same

mind as He, moving with Him, and becoming His co-workers, even to the extent that we become Him and He becomes us, that is, that He enters into us and we live in Him. In this way He and we, we and He, become one. He is still God, but He has gained man; we are still human, but we have gained God. We live before Him and in Him, and at the same time He has found a way, a channel, and a bridge in us for Him to be lived out through us.

I hope that we can see that each one of us is God's channel, God's bridge, God's way. If you and I do not sympathize with God and rise up to answer God's call to follow Him, God will have no way to move. If within us God encounters a wall and cannot move on, we instantly become God's hindrance and limitation. However, if each of us is gained by Him, responding to Him from within as His counterpart, being of the same mind as He, moving with Him, being His co-workers, and being one with Him, then through us He can do what He desires to do and gain what He desires to gain. If this is truly the case, the church in Manila will be shaken, miracles will happen, grace will be poured out, and blessing upon blessing will flow out.

As long as there is someone who is willing to be God's channel, a channel that is connected to the heavens, God will be able to obtain a way that is connected to the heavens. Conversely, if we are all closed toward God, ignoring God, not answering God, and putting God aside, God will have no way to advance. If we listen to messages, attend meetings, pray to the Lord, and read the Word, yet we put God aside, ignore His voice, reject His demands, and cast His word behind us, God will have no way to gain a channel. If we remain in ourselves and have no relationship with God, if we belong to Him in name but not in reality and live apart from Him, we will become a hindrance and a limitation to God. Among us God will have no way to pass through. Although we are God's children, He will not be able to find a channel among us.

To this day the principle is the same. The Lord said, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" Yes, who is willing to rise up and answer the Lord's call, placing himself in the Lord's hands thoroughly and completely, without conditions, without reservations, and without choices, desiring only the Lord Himself and rejecting the world, position, and everything that is natural and worldly? If there are some, and even if there is only one, God will have a bridge, a channel, a way.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE LORD

We look to the Lord to give us this grace that He may walk among us and that we may be shown mercy, so that whomever He goes to, that one will give Him a free way, and whomever He gives a demand to, that one will bow his head and say, “Lord, here am I; send me. Lord, regardless of what You want me to do, and regardless of what You want to do in me, I am willing. Lord, pass through me and gain my entire being. I have no conditions, no choices, no views of my own, and no future of my own; all I have is in You. Lord, You are my choice, my view, and my future. I desire only what You desire; I choose only what You choose; I would do only what You would do. Lord, my being here is Your being here; You are in me and I am in You; You and I are one.” This is the way to be blessed. It is a great grace and a great blessing to us. Only in this way can genuine grace and blessing be manifested. May the Lord have mercy on us to prepare our hearts that we may receive Him in such a way.

We must pray before the Lord for ourselves and for the other brothers and sisters. May the Lord gain a smooth way in us and among us in which no one will reject His grace, no one will deny Him a free way, and no one will hold Him back. Each one of us should bow down and tell the Lord, “O Lord, since it must be so, I am here. Gain me. I want You to be able to get through. Lord, concerning my life and my future, I would put the self aside. Please come in. Lord, it is You, not I. From now on, my all is in Your hands; my all is in You. I am willing to give You a way, and I know that I am Your way, Your channel. Lord, without me, You have no way and no channel. For this reason I am willing to answer Your demand.” This should be our prayer deep within.

In the Bible those who served God usually not only prayed but also fasted, and it was during these times that the Lord appeared to them. We too need to fast and pray, but it must be spontaneous, not forced. It must be according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Whoever has the feeling to do so can fast together. You can pray either with several others or by yourself. At the same time, I hope that the elders and co-workers will bear a greater burden in this matter. Because this concerns the Lord’s gospel work in all Southeast Asia, we must be more watchful.

A FURTHER WORD

We look to the Lord that His Spirit will move among us in many ways, giving us a burden and the words to pray. May we all receive the burden to pray, opening our spirit to the Lord so that the Holy Spirit can find a channel. Hence, no matter who we are, if there is the inspiration, we can pray in a released way. However, our prayer must have a focus. We must ask the Lord to gain man, to revive the church in Manila, and to revive everyone here. This should be the focus of our prayer. We must ask the Lord for a genuine and thorough revival.

When we pray together, our voices must be raised, but we should not pray too long. It is sufficient to release the feeling within. At the same time, we must give the Holy Spirit absolute freedom and remove all the hindrances so that our spirit can be uplifted.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD BEING THE CENTER OF HUMAN LIFE

Scripture Reading: Psa. 42:1-2, 5; 43:3-5; 73:1-2, 17, 25-26; Phil. 4:11b-13

INDEPENDENCE FROM GOD BEING A SIN

The Bible reveals that the relationship between God and man is very intimate; it is intimate to the extent that man cannot leave God and cannot be without God. Since this is the case, we need to consider what influence God has on our life and what His relationship is to us in our living. The Bible shows that the relationship of God with man is so crucial that any time man leaves God and does not have God, he will have problems. Adam and Eve in Genesis are the best illustration of this. When they became independent from God, they fell into sin. The meaning of being independent from God is that one loses God in his living; he loses his relationship with God in his life. Whenever man is independent from God, he will suffer within and be full of problems. Furthermore, such independence is equal to sin.

We should not think that only doing something wrong is a sin. Even when we do something good, we are independent from God if what we do is done apart from God, has nothing to do with God, does not have God's promise, and does not have God in it. If we do something in this way, no matter how well we handle the matter, God considers it to be a sin because we are independent from Him.

Mankind fell when Adam and Eve sinned the first time, when they ate of the wrong fruit. The source of this matter was in their acting apart from God. Their acting in this way was their independence from God. If eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge had been God's command, it would not have been a sin. The first sin of mankind should not be viewed from the perspective of morality. Of course, after man fell, he did numerous immoral deeds. God detests everything that is immoral. Every immoral thing is the result of man's leaving God. However, man's first sin was not a matter of morality. The sin that Adam and Eve committed was not fornication, murder, or harming others; it was eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We must see that the significance of the first sin of mankind is in man's doing something apart from God. When man sinned, his relationship with God was absent. Man did something by himself; there was no element of God, no relationship with God, and nothing of God's influence.

HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND BEING REGULATED BY GOD

Hence, in our living we should often remind ourselves, "Do I have a relationship with God? Does God have an influence on the way I conduct myself?" We should not ask whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, we need to ask whether God is in it or not. If it is done with the element of God, in a relationship with God, and under God's influence, it will definitely be good and proper. Many times something may appear to us to be good on the surface, but actually it has the element of sin within it. Satan adopted this method when tempting Adam and Eve. On one hand, Satan told Eve that in the day she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, her eyes would be opened, and she would become like God, knowing good and evil. On the other hand, he showed her that the fruit was good to eat, good for food, and pleasant to the sight. Thus, Adam and Eve ate the fruit (Gen. 3:5-6). Apparently, the fruit was bright and good, but within it were countless sins. Every sin issued from the eating of that fruit. May all the saints see that whatever man does apart from God is done independently from God, and even if it appears to be bright and good outwardly, it has Satan's element and is full of darkness and sin inwardly.

A spiritual person may contact a very wide scope of people and things, yet in all his daily living, what he pays attention to is his relationship with God and God's influence. If a person is empty and does not have God, he will have no way to go on and will not be able to do anything. When we quiet down before God and examine and consider our situation, we cannot but acknowledge this fact. In our dealings with others our temperament is easily exposed. If we are put in a slightly higher position, we become proud; if we are put in a slightly lower position, we complain. Rarely do people fail to have problems with one another after being together for a number of years. Husbands and wives have problems getting along, and after they have children, their arguments increase. This is true also among colleagues and schoolmates. After being together for a while, everyone begins to complain.

In our dealing with others there will always be problems, sometimes more and sometimes less. Our humility causes problems, and our pride causes even more problems. If others treat us with pride, we are not able to handle it; if others treat us with humility, we still are unable to bear it. After getting married, many saints have a similar experience. On one hand, they say that marriage is very good, but on the other hand, husbands and wives always make demands on each other—the husband demands something of the wife and the wife complains about the husband. Man is thus difficult to deal with. Man himself is a problem. The source of this problem is that man has a lack—God. In our dealings with others we need to take God as the regulating factor and the center. If we have God in us as our center, our living will be balanced.

Anyone who drives a car knows that for the car to go faster or slower, there is the need for the driver to regulate the car. Without regulation, the car will get into an accident. In the same way, if man is not regulated, he becomes very peculiar. He will lean one way or the other, and it will be very easy for him to become extreme. For example, when a husband is not regulated, he may either love his wife to an extreme or loathe her. Our life can be compared to music. In order for music to have a pleasant sound, it must be suitably regulated; the fast and slow speeds and the high and low tones must be harmonized. If a piece of music has only one rhythm, it will sound monotonous and unpleasant. A regulated life is like a musical piece that is pleasing to the ear; it is graceful and harmonious. God is man's regulation. Those who have God are regulated in their living. A living that has been adjusted by God is like a beautiful and pleasant song. Its tempo and pitch are just right. When a person who has God likes something, he is regulated; also, when he dislikes something, he is regulated. His life may be compared to a beautiful musical piece.

When a person who is not regulated loves his wife, he may love her to an extreme. Similarly, when he does not love her, his hatred can reach an extreme. This indicates that his living lacks regulation and balance. Consequently, this person veers off in either one direction or the other. However, the regulation in one's living should not be by one's own effort. Man needs God to regulate and balance his living. Many Christians can testify from their experience that whenever they had God, their living was balanced. Whenever they did not have God, their living became imbalanced. If our living has God in it, it will have God's balancing and regulating. It will be like

a steady car, running neither too fast nor too slow. This kind of living is like a soothing musical piece that sounds very graceful and pleasant. Conversely, a day in which we do not have God in our living is a day in which we have many problems.

For example, young people are all concerned with the matter of marriage. Marriage is something that God ordained and even takes delight in. However, we must realize that if God is not the center, our marriage will be imbalanced and will lose its regulation. Sooner or later this kind of marriage will have problems. We have seen many young people who initially loved each other very much and got married. Although they loved each other deeply, because neither of them had God within, it was not long before their love lost its balance and became unregulated. This kind of love is like a horse without a bridle or a car without brakes; it is extremely dangerous. If a husband and wife do not have God's balancing and regulating, their marriage relationship will be both unpleasant and dangerous. For the sake of appearance, they may not talk about divorce, but they will suffer very much inwardly. This is because they do not have God as the center, balance, and regulation.

In principle, the relationship between a husband and a wife should have God as its center. As a husband loves his wife and as his wife loves him, both of them should pass through God. This passing through God is the balancing, the regulating. A husband may ask, "Exactly how should I love my wife?" When loving his wife, a husband should pray, "O God, do You agree with my loving her in this way?" Before loving our husband or wife, we must be examined and purified by God. Love that has passed through God is pure; it is not only regulated but also balanced. Conversely, if our love has not passed through God, our love may turn into hatred one day. The degree of our love today may be the degree of our hatred in the future. The measure of our love today may be the measure of our suffering later. This may happen because our love has not passed through God, does not have the element of God within it, is not carried out in a relationship with God, and does not have God's promise. Young people, no matter whom you marry, you must bring this matter before the Lord. You must allow God to have a part in your marriage, and you must develop a relationship with Him. In this way your marriage will be balanced and regulated.

ALLOWING GOD TO PASS THROUGH

EVERYTHING IN OUR LIFE

God is our balance and our regulation. Without God, we become extreme, leaning too much either to the right or to the left. Whenever we allow God to be the center, our person will immediately be balanced. For instance, if a poor person is without God, he suffers very much. Never think that it is a bad thing to be rich and a good thing to be poor. We should know that just as riches cause people to sin, so also poverty causes people to sin. Many immoral things and many acts of robbery are motivated by poverty. This is because man does not allow God to regulate and balance him in his poverty. On the other hand, we have also seen many poor saints who fear God and have God within them. Those who contact these poor saints do not sense a flavor of deprivation but smell the fragrance of God within them. This is because they are influenced and regulated by God. Of course, the rich also commit many sins. If God's regulation has a place in man's wealthiness, many sinful things will not be done. Rich people are extravagant, indulge in pleasure, and waste their money because they are empty and do not have God as their inner regulation.

There was a couple who dearly loved the Lord. They had a son who loved the Lord very much and was about to be married. This family had originally planned to give a great banquet at the wedding and invite many relatives and friends. However, because they belonged to God, they brought this matter before the Lord to inquire whether God was happy with their plans. After they had prayed a little before God, they immediately felt that what they were planning to do was excessive. God showed them that there were still many saints who were lacking in basic needs, such as food and clothing. Therefore, they reduced their estimated costs for the wedding to one-third of what it was originally, and they gave one-third to the poor saints and the other third to the printing of gospel tracts. This example shows that even the matter of our children's marriage must be brought before God and be carried out in a relationship with God in order to bring in the real blessing. If wealth does not have God's balance, it will definitely be harmful. The world today is evil because the poor as well as the rich all commit sins; everyone lacks God's regulation and does not take God as their center.

Once a person loses God, he does not have a center. Hence, whenever we encounter something unpleasant, we must bring it before God; then we will immediately experience God coming in to balance us. God will do a regulating work in us. The general practice when someone's parents pass away is that his

relatives and friends come to comfort him. At such a time it is very difficult to restrain one's grief. However, as Christians, we can bring our grief before God and let God balance it. If we do this, God will not allow us to grieve excessively. Likewise, if something pleasant happens to us, we must bring it to God and let Him regulate us. This will keep us from being overly excited. We have observed some people who are too happy and are carried away by their success. Eventually, something adverse happens and their joy is turned to sorrow. Hence, we must have God in all our joy and sorrow so that our life will not lose its regulation.

I once had to travel a long distance and go over many mountains with some others in order to reach a rural area where I was to preach. In those days because there were no cars or trains, we could only hire someone to pull a cart. When we were going up a mountain, the man pulling the cart had to exert much effort. Because we saw that it was very strenuous for him, we walked up the mountain ourselves. It was summertime, and after we had used our strength to climb up to the top of the mountain, we were covered with sweat. After we got back into the cart, the journey down the mountain was a terrifying experience. The cart did not have brakes, and although the man pulling the cart tried to stop it, he was not able to do so. The only thing he could do was to run down the mountain. It was truly frightening. After that, we decided not to ride in the cart when going either uphill or downhill. Because some people do not have brakes in their lives, when times are bad, they become despondent to an extreme and may even want to commit suicide. When they are happy, it goes to their head, and they want to indulge in eating and drinking. This is because they do not have God. If Christians do not allow God to be their center, they will go to an extreme when they encounter joy or sorrow.

Some people often lose their temper when eating at home. If the food tastes good, they complain that there is too little; if it tastes bad, they complain that there is too much. They may become so angry that they even turn the table over. Do not think that man can restrain himself from losing his temper. Only rocks and wood never lose their temper. Every normal person has a temper, but it must be regulated. If we allow our temper to pass through God, our temper will be within measure. Some ask, "How can we not lose our temper excessively?" The only way is to turn to God and wait awhile, allowing Him to balance us whenever we are about to lose our temper.

Even in trivial matters in our living, such as our attire, we should have God within us regulating, balancing, and passing through us. We should never consider that attire is a matter of personal choice. When we buy clothes, the material, the color, and the style should all pass through God. If the way we dress is before God, our dress and attire will be balanced and able to benefit others and cause them to be blessed. Sometimes our fashionable attire, which we think is very attractive, actually causes others to feel uncomfortable and uneasy. If this is the case, we have not benefited from our attire, nor have others felt pleasant about it.

One time when Dr. John Sung was preaching the gospel in Hankow, a very fashionably dressed young woman came in. After hearing the gospel, she was very touched and wanted to discuss the matter further. However, when she approached Dr. Sung, he strongly rebuked her and sent her away. On one hand, this young woman was very sad, for she had truly been touched; on the other hand, she was very angry. She thought, "How could a servant of God rebuke someone based simply on her appearance?" She went home venting her anger and crying, and she prayed, "O God, You do not look at the outward appearance; You look at the heart." However, as she was praying, she had a clear feeling from God, which told her, "You have turned your heart to God inwardly, but why would you not turn your being to God outwardly? Why would you not make your outward appearance match your heart?" Therefore, she stopped crying, changed her appearance, and went to see Dr. Sung again the next day. When Dr. Sung saw her, he warmly welcomed her.

God can balance everything that happens in our living. To allow God to balance us results in a beautiful living. If a person is balanced by God, whether in joy, anger, sorrow, or delight, his living will be smooth and relaxed. When he should be angry, he will be angry; when he should be happy, he will be happy; when he dresses, he will dress suitably; when he eats, he will eat appropriately. Everything will be within the proper limit. This kind of living cannot be achieved by man himself but requires man to allow God to work within him.

There was once a servant of the Lord in the United States who had to move from his hometown to another city. When he had arranged the furnishings in his new house, he invited his elderly father to come and inspect the situation. His father said that everything was very good, but one thing bothered him. The son was curious and asked him what it was, and he answered, "When

people come into the house, they will not be able to tell whether a son of God or a child of the devil lives here.” This old man feared God very much. This shows that to have God in what we do is a very great principle. When we decide to do something, we must consider whether God is in it. If the element of God is in our determination, we will require whatever we do, even the furnishing of our house, to have God in it.

TAKING GOD AS THE CENTER OF OUR HUMAN LIFE

Perhaps some will ask, “How can I let God influence my life and regulate my living?” The answer is very simple: we need to take God as the center of our human life. Although a believer is saved, he may not fully realize that God is in him and that he needs to serve God. Such a person does not have God’s feeling and does not recognize that God should be his unique center. We need God to be the center of our human life. Perhaps the young brothers and sisters are focused on their studies, but they need to realize that the center of their entire life should not be their books; it must be God. If books become their center, the books will do them more harm than good in the future.

Those who love money will be harmed by money and will come under its bondage sooner or later. Even though a person may be joined to many good things, if God is not balancing him inwardly, his situation will be very dangerous. In the church we encounter certain saints who often criticize others. This is very negative. In their criticizing there is no element of God. They impart no benefit to others; rather, they inflict much harm on others. If one has God in his living, he will be a benefit not only to his family but also to his society and country. If a Christian has God as his center, his manner and attitude will be normal and proper, and his actions and conduct will be appropriate.

A FEW MATTERS REQUIRING OUR ATTENTION

Since God is the proper center of the human life, there are five things that we must do. First, we must take God as the center of our life. If we do this, regardless of what field we eventually work in, we will perform our work very well. Conversely, if we do not take God as the center in our occupation, we can potentially harm ourselves, our society, and our country. I hope you will grasp this point firmly and accurately.

Second, we must love God. We must see that if we love anything apart from God, the thing we love will become a problem to us. Loving God is the only thing we can do that will not become a problem. All man's love should be poured upon God. All our hearts should love God.

Third, we must consecrate ourselves to God. At least once we should pray to God thoroughly, offering ourselves completely to Him and allowing Him to be the center of our life. We should never be afraid that if we consecrate our life to God, our future will be difficult. Such a fear is unfounded. If we consecrate ourselves to God, our human life will be a balanced life. We should allow God to come into us and be our everything.

Fourth, we must contact God in all things. In our daily walk we should obey the feeling that God gives us within. If He prohibits us from doing a certain thing, we should not do it. If we have the feeling that He wants us to do something, we should do it properly. We need to diligently obey every feeling we receive from God.

Fifth, we must spend time to get into His Word, to labor on the Bible. We must study the Bible properly from its first word to its last. We need to see not only the facts but also the principles, the life, and the truth contained therein.

If we exercise in this way, we become like transparent glass. Whatever comes to us will not be a problem, because God will regulate us from within. We can see in the New Testament that Paul was such a person. He knew how to be abased and how to abound, how to be filled and how to hunger. In everything and in all things he had learned the secret (Phil. 4:12). Neither suffering nor joy could press him down. He had the secret, which is Christ. Paul took Christ as his center in everything. Hence, when he was in prison, he was able to endure sufferings that would be unbearable to others. He could do all things in Him who empowered him (v. 13).

A person like Paul is shining and released. All those who approach this kind of person will be helped. Even the face of such a person reflects God's salvation. He has been saved to the extent that he is not only saved within, but even his face expresses God's salvation without. His face is a mirror reflecting God's salvation. God is regulating and balancing within this kind of person. May God have mercy on us that we would bring every matter to Him and let

every matter pass through Him. In this way we will have God as our center and regulation in everything in our living, whether great or small.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EXERCISE AND LEARNING NEEDED FOR OUR SERVICE TO THE LORD

We need to worship the Lord for the leading and training He has given us recently. In our worship we should also have a proper consecration. In the Old Testament whenever God's people began a move, they first had a corporate consecration. When the move ended, they had another corporate consecration. It is through consecration that we respond to the leading God has given us.

SERVING THE LORD BEING OUR LIVING

The brothers and sisters who attended the recent training, whether they attended the classes formally or audited them, must all have a desperate heart before the Lord to be willing to take the way of serving the Lord and to take this way their entire life. This does not mean that from now on they should become speakers who minister the word full time. What this actually means is that they should serve the Lord in the church. This differs from becoming a preacher like those in Christianity. These are two entirely different matters.

In Christianity being a preacher has become a kind of profession. However, serving the Lord is the living of a Christian; it is not a profession. If the Lord arranges our circumstances so that we have sufficient means to live without the need to acquire more material things for our enjoyment, we should use all our strength, effort, time, and energy on matters pertaining to the spreading of the Lord's gospel and the building up of the church. This kind of living is a living of serving the Lord. However, even if the Lord does not make provision for our food, clothing, shelter, and transportation and we therefore need to use our time, energy, and strength to earn money to make a living, our living should still be for and focus on the Lord's gospel and the church. Hence, regardless of what our job is, our conduct and existence must all be for our service to the Lord. This is the proper living of a Christian.

Regarding whether we should hold a job, how much we should work, or what kind of job we should have, we should follow the Lord's leading in our

environment. There is no need for us to struggle and strive. Whatever our job may be, it should not affect our serving the Lord. I hope that all the brothers and sisters who joined the recent training can have this kind of view and this kind of living.

BEING HUMBLE, NOT PROUD

Furthermore, all the brothers and sisters who have attended the recent training should realize that spiritual matters are not shallow and simple. After these sixteen weeks of classes I believe that many of you feel that reading the Bible is not simple, speaking for the Lord is not simple, knowing life is not simple, and being a minister of the word for the Lord's use is not simple. You should not, however, be content simply because you know that these things are not simple. According to our present situation, we are still quite short. The riches of Christ are inexhaustible, and the spiritual things of God are inexhaustible. You should never think that it is sufficient to hear what you have heard and see what you have seen. No, this is never the case. Even though everything you heard in these sixteen weeks of classes is God's truth, and almost everything you saw is spiritual, you need to realize that what you heard, what you saw, and what you touched in the past sixteen weeks are but a small portion of the spiritual riches of God. The training should not cause you to be proud; rather, it should cause you to be humble before the Lord. We should never be content with or boast in what we have learned. We should not be proud because of what we have learned; rather, what we have heard and learned should cause us to be humble.

BEING LOWLY AND ACCOMMODATING BUT NOT BASE

When the brothers and sisters return to their respective localities to serve, they must be lowly in all things but not low in their moral character. This means that as we serve in the churches, we should not lower our moral character in any matter or in any aspect. In addition to this, we should be lowly before those whom we serve, accommodating ourselves to them in every matter and in every aspect. We should not be a person with low character, a base person, but we must be a lowly person. Being humble is acceptable, but being base is not. Being lowly is good, but being low is not. We should absolutely be lowly and accommodating toward others, and we should humble ourselves and not become proud because of what we know. However,

we should never lose the proper Christian character in order to cater to others. As far as moral character is concerned, we should never be low. Once we lower our character, it is very easy to become base and pitiful. This is not permissible.

Some may ask what it means to not have a base character. It means that when we meet someone who has money, power, and position, we do not regard him too highly, and when we meet someone who is in a lower position than we, we do not look down on him. To be base is to treat people in a way that is too high or low. We should be humble and accommodating toward others, but we should not have a base character. Most of today's social organizations solicit contributions and invite people to donate money. In such situations it is common for them to regard some donors with special respect. This is base and mean. We would rather starve and have the work delayed than lower ourselves in these matters. In serving the church we should lower ourselves and not be proud in anything, but we should never lower our moral character. This kind of lowering is not being lowly; it is being base. Please remember well that someone who serves the Lord must not be base or play politics. We do not have a throne; we have only our moral character. We should be lowly and accommodating in everything, but we should never be loose in our moral character.

KEEPING THE ORDER IN THE SERVICE AND COORDINATION OF THE CHURCH

Furthermore, when we serve in different places, we should not serve in a disorderly and impractical way. In our service we first must see the Lord's sovereignty. Wherever the Lord has arranged for us to serve, we should serve singleheartedly, serving the saints and the sinners. Second, we must come to know our position in the coordination with the saints; we must come to know the order among the saints. Among all the brothers and sisters we need to know who is under us and who is above us, who is our authority. Third, after coming to know the order and learning who is above us, we must immediately pray and place ourselves under that person's hand. We can pray in a definite way to place ourselves under his hand. In particular, the young brothers and sisters must find someone who is above them to supervise them. This should not be arranged, because outward arrangements may not be fitting. This requires us to properly seek before the Lord. When we are clear, we must

learn to be restricted under authority. Any brother or sister who has been asked to be an authority should first go before the Lord to pray and find out if the Lord wants him or her to bear the responsibility of overseeing a number of others, and then properly lead them, be responsible for them, and restrict them. Those who serve as authorities should take the matter seriously, and those who are under authority should submit to it from their heart.

OUR SERVICE NEEDING TO BE SYSTEMATIC, NOT AIMLESS

Each of us needs to seek before the Lord as to which area the Lord has commissioned us to serve in. It may be the area of the gospel, visiting people, ministering the word, or handling general affairs. This requires us to have much prayer individually and to seek together with the brothers and sisters with whom we are coordinating. After becoming clear in our seeking, when we serve, we should serve in a proper way. For example, if we are ministers of the word, we should pick up the burden properly. We should not speak randomly about one thing today and another thing tomorrow. We must not do this. We should pray properly and through our observing of the saints bring the needs of the brothers and sisters before the Lord, asking Him to give us a clear word. If we do this, we will have a way to minister the word and serve the church.

Whether we have served in the church for one, two, three, or many years, we still must learn not to serve in a random way. For instance, if we feel to do more visiting, we should not do it aimlessly. On one hand, we should be willing to contact every brother and sister. On the other hand, we should be led by the Lord to see which brothers and sisters particularly need care and contact at the present time. Once the Lord burdens us for these brothers and sisters, we must pay special attention to them. When they come to the meetings, we should fellowship especially with them. While fellowshipping with them, we need to take note of their spiritual condition. Have they consecrated themselves? Have they dealt with their sins? If not, at the proper time we should lead them to consecrate themselves and deal with their sins. After they have dealt with their sins, we should lead them to deal with the world. After two weeks we need to lead them to learn another lesson, and then after half a year, yet another lesson. In addition, we should pay attention to the development of the spiritual gifts that God has given them. We need to

determine whether they are suitable for the preaching of the gospel, for serving as deacons, or for the ministering of the word. In whichever area of service they are most suitable, we should instruct them, on one hand, to be led in life and to go on little by little, and on the other hand, to be perfected in their function. In this way the church will not only be strong but also produce many useful people.

We should all learn to do this. Regardless of whether our service is in ministering the word or visiting people, we should all serve in a well-planned way, not aimlessly. If it is arranged for some to spread the gospel, they should first survey the areas to which they are going. For example, if some areas have factories and some have schools, they should first consider the situation systematically and then begin the gospel move. They should not do it aimlessly. This is a very serious and important point. Serving in this way will cause us all to learn a very good lesson. We must learn to work step by step in a systematic way. We should not have a good, strong start but then fail to see it through. We should all pray before the Lord properly that each one of us can find our part in the work and faithfully do our part. In this way we will have good results, whether we serve in edifying the saints, in visitation, or in the gospel. We need to pray this word into us and treat it very seriously.

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING WHETHER WE SHOULD SERVE BY HOLDING A JOB

Some have asked whether we should hold a job as we serve. This question can be approached from three angles. First, we must determine if we have learned enough to serve full time. If our spiritual learning, our spiritual experience, and what we have spiritually is not sufficient for us to serve with all our time, we should hold a job as we serve. If, however, we have much learning and experience and we need all our time to minister to others, then undoubtedly we should serve full time. Hence, the first thing we need to determine in deciding if we should hold a job is whether we have sufficient spiritual capital to serve with all our time.

Second, if we have much to minister spiritually, but God has not arranged for us to have some kind of business in our hands to support ourselves, and the church also is unable to take care of us, then we should still learn to hold a job. This was Paul's principle in holding a job. He had no savings or business and therefore needed to do some temporary work to provide for his living.

Third, this is an age in which all the saints serve together. In deciding whether or not you should hold a job, you should not act individualistically but should be in fellowship. If all the brothers and sisters feel that you should serve full time, and you also feel the same way, then you should serve full time.

Thus, the three principles to determine whether you should serve full time are, first, if you have many spiritual riches and need to minister them with all your time; second, if the Lord has made some arrangements for your living; and third, if all the brothers and sisters serving together say Amen. If you meet these three requirements, you then can serve full time. However, if even one of these three requirements is not met, you should hold a job, but this should not change your burden or your service.

THE PROPER SITUATION ONE SHOULD HAVE WHEN BEING LED BY THE LORD PERSONALLY

Regardless of whether or not we are currently holding a job, we should all aspire to reach a stage at which we truly live for the Lord and let Him live out from us. If we are able to reach this stage, we will be joyful to see the Lord when we come before His judgment seat. However, if we are clear that the Lord does not want us to hold a job, we should drop our job and go on boldly in faith to serve the church properly.

Likewise, if we are clear inwardly that the Lord wants us to hold a job in order to earn some material riches to support the Lord's work, we should go on faithfully and diligently, doing much business and earning money to care for the Lord's work. This also is a kind of service in coordination. In other words, it is not bad if some among us remain in a career and do business. If no one does business for the Lord's work, how can the needs of the Lord's work be met?

As for all you brothers and sisters who have participated in this training, if you are led to serve full time, you should go on boldly; if you are clear about staying in your career, you should do business faithfully. Besides these two groups who serve full time or run a business, there are many other saints whom the Lord may not necessarily lead to serve full time or run a business. Such people need to hold a job, supporting their own living to serve the Lord. This is very good, since it allows them to serve the Lord well while not

burdening the Lord's work. In other words, they do not need to be supported by others, nor do they need to support others. They can coordinate together in the service self-sufficiently.

There should be these few kinds of situations among those who serve and coordinate in the church life. One situation is that some serve the Lord full time, and another is that some do business properly for the Lord's work. Yet another situation, in between the first two, is that some do not need the supply of others, but they do not have much capacity to supply others. According to the Lord's arrangement, they should serve while holding a job to support their family's living. This also is good. Determining which kind of serving one we should be requires us to receive the leading from the Lord. In this matter we do not want to have any definite arrangements, and even less do we want to have any kind of organization. We are here simply giving this fellowship to you and allowing you to be led by the Lord personally.

Presently, besides the forty or fifty full-time serving ones, we have approximately twelve brothers and sisters who have come in recently and are willing to serve full time. There are also some brothers and sisters who need to hold a job while serving. If we all go on in the Lord's grace, after some time more people will come forth to serve full time. In our present situation we do not want to work too quickly, and we do not want to have any human arrangement. We do not want to have any kind of organization to recruit people to serve. Rather, we are hoping that the brothers and sisters can go on properly before the Lord. First, we must be clear concerning the Lord's leading; second, our personal gift must be manifested; and third, we must receive a confirmation from all the saints. In this way, when the time comes, we will spontaneously be the proper kind of person. However, regardless of whether we serve full time or serve with a job, we must go on faithfully. One day the Lord will manifest to us more people who should serve full time.