

Christ
as the
Spirit
in the
Epistles

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT IN THE EPISTLES

by Witness Lee

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CONTENTS

1. Christ as the Spirit in Romans for the Divine Sonship
2. Christ as the Spirit in 1 and 2 Corinthians for the Building Up of the Body of Christ
3. The Spirit of Life, the Spirit of the Divine Sonship, and the Spirit of the Building Up of the Body of Christ
4. The Spirit as the Blessing of the Gospel in Galatians
5. Christ as the Spirit in Ephesians through Hebrews
6. The Spirit in James through Revelation

PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee in Los Angeles, California, from August 28 through September 2, 1965.

CHAPTER ONE

CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT IN ROMANS

FOR THE DIVINE SONSHIP

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:3-4; 8:26-30, 14-17; 5:10; 8:2, 9-10

From Romans to the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3, the New Testament Epistles reveal that Christ is the life-giving Spirit. Christianity has made a mistake in saying that Christ is Christ, the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and They are separate. Instead, in the New Testament, especially in the Epistles, it is hard to divide and separate Christ from the Spirit.

Christ as the Spirit is revealed to us in many aspects in the Epistles. The all-inclusive Spirit is nothing less than Christ or more than Christ; He is simply Christ Himself. Romans is the entrance to this field of Christ as the Spirit in an all-inclusive way to us.

THE SEED OF DAVID DESIGNATED THE SON OF GOD

ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

Romans 1:3 and 4 says, “Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” In reading Romans, many people neglect these verses and do not see their connection with chapter 8. As the seed of David, Christ is a man in the flesh, a descendant of man, the Son of Man. Through resurrection, this Christ was designated to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness.

The title *the Spirit of holiness* is different from *the Holy Spirit*. In the Greek text of a number of verses in the New Testament, the term *the Holy Spirit* is literally “the Spirit the holy.” Hebrews 3:7 and 10:15, for example, say in Greek *to pneuma to hagion*, “the Spirit the holy.” The Spirit Himself is the holy. Holiness is nothing other than the Spirit Himself. To speak of the Spirit as “the holy” is like calling Jehovah “the Eternal.” *Jehovah* means “I am who I am.” He is the One who was, is, and will be, the One without beginning or

ending. As such, Jehovah Himself is the Eternal. In the same way, the Greek term for *the Holy Spirit* indicates that the Spirit Himself is the holy.

Romans 1:4 speaks of the Spirit of holiness. This refers to a condition or situation of holiness. Holiness here is a situation, condition, realm, or sphere. The condition, situation, and appearance of Christ before His resurrection was that He was the Son of Man, the seed of David. Through His resurrection, however, He was designated to be the Son of God according to a different situation, condition, realm, and sphere, that is, according to the Spirit of holiness.

When Christ was in the flesh, He appeared to be only the seed of man, but through His resurrection He was designated the Son of God according to another condition, situation, realm, and sphere, which is the Spirit of holiness. That was Christ's transformation from one condition into another. In contrast to "the Spirit of holiness" we may speak of "the flesh of common man." As the seed of David according to the flesh, He appeared to be in a common condition. As Christ was being transfigured on the mount, He was according to the Spirit of holiness, but as a carpenter in Nazareth, He was among ordinary men according to the flesh of common man. If we had seen Him at that time, it would have been very hard to recognize that He was different from others. After His resurrection, however, He was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. Every bit of His being had been transformed from one form and condition into another to designate Him as the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness.

The Spirit of holiness in verse 4 is in contrast to the flesh in verse 3. As the flesh in verse 3 refers to the human nature of Christ in the flesh, so the Spirit in verse 4 does not refer to the person of the Holy Spirit of God but to the divine essence of Christ. This divine essence of Christ, being God the Spirit Himself (John 4:24), the divinity of Christ, is of holiness, full of the nature and quality of being holy.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CONFORM US TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON OF GOD

Among the Epistles, it is Romans in particular that says that Christ as the seed of David was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. There is a connection between Romans 1:4 and Romans 8. Verses 26

through 30 of chapter 8 say, “In like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Here we have the work of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of conforming us to the image of the Son of God, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. As the Son of Man designated to be the Son of God, He is the Firstborn. Now we, the many sons of men, are being transformed and conformed to His image to be the many sons of God. Christ’s transformation from the flesh of common man according to the Spirit of holiness is being worked out in us by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life (v. 2; 15:16).

Verses 14 through 17 of chapter 8 say, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship in which we cry, Abba, Father! The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him.” The Spirit mentioned in this chapter is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, who works to transform the sons of men into the sons of God. We all are sons of men, but we will be designated the sons of God according to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life.

Jesus was the seed of David who was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. Now we are the sons of Adam who will be designated the sons of God according to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life. Eventually God will have many sons, and Jesus Christ, who is the seed of David designated to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness, will be the Firstborn among many brothers.

REDEMPTION IN THE FIRST PART OF ROMANS

BEING FOR SONSHIP IN THE MAIN PART OF THE BOOK

However, there is a difference between Christ and us. With Jesus Christ there was no need of redemption, because He was sinless; He knew no sin. We, on the other hand, are sinful, so there is the need of redemption. That is why the first part of the book of Romans, from 1:1 to 5:11, speaks of redemption. Only after the portion on redemption is there the main part of the book, from 5:12 onward, which speaks of sonship, that is, of the sons of men being designated the sons of God by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life.

The book of Romans is a general sketch of the Christian life. In another sense, however, Romans is a book of sonship. Martin Luther said that Romans is a book on justification by faith, but that comes mostly from the portion up to 5:11. Justification by faith does not take up the entire book, and it is not the main point of the book. It is only the first and preparatory point of the book. Justification by faith is for redemption, and redemption is for sonship.

God's goal and intention is to have the sonship. Sonship means that God will have many sons. For His expression, God needs not only one Son but many sons, who are the same as the firstborn Son of God. These many sons are His corporate expression. In the Bible God's goal, His intention, to have many sons is referred to as the sonship. God's original and eternal intention is to have this sonship to beget many sons to be a corporate expression of Himself. However, Satan came in and caused trouble. Therefore, we need redemption, which is for sonship. The first part of Romans, especially chapters 1 through 3, is a record of how fallen and sinful we were. Christ came to die for us, and by His death He accomplished redemption. However, that is not all. Redemption is for sonship.

REDEMPTION BEING BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST, WHEREAS SONSHIP BEING BY THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Redemption is by the death of Christ, whereas sonship is by the life of Christ. Romans 5:10 says, "If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." The death of Christ in the first part of Romans is for redemption, and His life in the second part is for sonship. By His death we have redemption, and now by His life we have the sonship. We have been

redeemed and reconciled by His death, but now much more we will be saved in His life. To be saved in His life is to be saved from all things that are against the sonship. Sin, self, the world, the flesh, and all negative things are against the sonship, but the life of Christ saves us from all of these.

Chapter 5 speaks of “His life,” and chapter 8 speaks of “the Spirit of life” (v. 2). His life saves us, and the Spirit of life sets us free. This life of Christ is simply Christ Himself, and the Spirit of life is also Christ Himself. Christ Himself is the life, and Christ Himself is the Spirit of life. It is by this Spirit of life, that is, by Christ Himself as life to us, that we are being saved more and more from all the things that are against the sonship.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE AND THE SPIRIT OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP TO PRODUCE THE BODY AS THE TOTALITY OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP

Romans reveals the Holy Spirit in three very special ways: the Spirit of holiness (1:4), the Spirit of life (8:2), and the Spirit of the Son of God who is mingled with our regenerated human spirit (vv. 14-15, cf. Gal. 4:6). The Spirit of life is the Spirit of the divine sonship. Christ is in us as the Spirit of life for the purpose of sonship. The more He works within us, the more He designates us according to the situation and condition of holiness. By His work He makes us not common, that is, He makes us sanctified not only positionally but dispositionally. This means that the more He works within us, the more He changes and transforms us. We are being changed not only in position but also in form, disposition, and nature.

This Spirit works out holiness in us. This means that He works out transformation. We were originally sons of men, but eventually we will be transformed to be sons of God by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, who is the Spirit of the divine sonship. This takes place through the process of death and resurrection. The Spirit of life brings us into death and through death to get rid of all the negative things, and He brings us into resurrection to enter into holiness. In this way we are fully sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God. Then we will be the sons of God in full as a company of sons to be the corporate expression of God. Therefore, the book of Romans is a book of sonship by the Spirit of life and the Spirit of the divine sonship.

Moreover, this Spirit is nothing less or more than Christ Himself. Romans 8:9 and 10 speak of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and Christ interchangeably. Verse 9 says, “The Spirit of God dwells in you” and “have the Spirit of Christ,” and verse 10 says, “Christ is in you.” Anyone who reads these two verses will have the realization that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is Christ. It is so clear in the book of Romans that Christ is the Spirit. Moreover, the Spirit in this book is revealed as the Spirit of life, the Spirit of the divine sonship. The Spirit of life comes into us to impart Christ within, and because Christ is the very Son of God, this Spirit is the Spirit of the divine sonship. Then this Spirit of the divine sonship works within us according to holiness to sanctify, transform, and change us, not only in position but also in form and nature so that we may have the full image of the Son of God. Eventually, we will be conformed to the image of God, wholly sanctified and transformed to be the sons of God in full.

When Christ becomes the first Son among many sons in full, He and all the sons will be a corporate expression of God. That is why in chapter 12 the Body begins to be spoken of. The Body is the corporate expression of God, the totality of the sonship, worked out by Christ as the Spirit of life and the Spirit of the divine sonship. I hope that by this fellowship the “old” book of Romans has become a new book to us.

CHAPTER TWO
CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT
IN FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS
FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 6:17-20; 12:3-7, 13; 14:12; 15:45; 2 Cor.
1:22; 3:6, 17-18; 4:7, 16

We have seen that Christ as the Spirit in Romans is the Spirit of life and the Spirit of the Son for the divine sonship. Following Romans are the Epistles to the Corinthians, which reveal Christ as the Spirit in further aspects.

THE SPIRIT OF BUILDING
FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Spirit Indwelling Us for the Building

First Corinthians 3:16 and 17 say, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.” To say that this passage speaks merely of the indwelling Spirit is the natural and religious concept. There is no need of much revelation to say this, since the passage clearly says, “The Spirit of God dwells in you.”

Verses 9 through 15 say, “We are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s cultivated land, God’s building. According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it. For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone’s work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

After carefully reading this portion of the Word, the main impression we receive is one of building. We are God's cultivated land for God's building. Paul, as a wise master builder, laid a foundation, and others build on it, but we must be careful with what materials we build. We must build with gold, silver, and precious stones, not with wood, grass, and stubble. Finally, we are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in us, so we must be careful not to destroy the temple, the building. If we read this portion properly, we will understand that the Spirit who dwells within us is not merely for indwelling. The indwelling Spirit is the Spirit of building. If we see that the Spirit in 1 Corinthians is the Spirit of building, this book will be a new book to us. The Spirit mentioned throughout the entire book of 1 Corinthians is the Spirit of building.

The Spirit Joined to Us for the Building

Verses 17 through 20 of chapter 6 say, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin which a man may do is outside the body, but he who commits fornication sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body." Paul's word that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit is based on the illustration of a man being joined to a woman, as verses 15 and 16 say: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Absolutely not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute is one body? For He says, 'The two shall be one flesh.'" We are joined to the Lord just as a wife is joined to her husband. Genesis 2:21 through 23 and Ephesians 5:25 through 32 show us clearly that the wife signifies the church as the Body of Christ, and the husband signifies Christ the Head. In this portion of the Word, therefore, the Spirit is for the Body.

Although these verses speak not of the Body of Christ directly but of our own bodies, verse 15 says that our bodies are members of Christ. This proves that the Spirit who dwells in our bodies is for the building up of the Body of Christ. Similarly, verse 17 tells us that he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit, just as a wife who is joined to her husband is one body with him. As we have seen, the wife typifies the church, which is the Body. We are the wife who is joined to the Lord as the Husband, and we are the Body of Christ joined to the Head as one spirit. Our being one spirit with the Lord and the

Holy Spirit's dwelling in our bodies are both for the building up of the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells in us to make us the members of the Body of Christ, He builds us up as the Body, and He dwells within us to join us all as one spirit for the purpose of the building up of His Body. Therefore, the Spirit spoken of here is the Spirit of building, the Spirit who works to build up the Body.

Our being joined to the Lord as one spirit is not only for each person individually to be one with the Lord. It is for all of us to be one with the Lord. It is a corporate matter, a Body matter, not an individual matter. Again, therefore, the Spirit mentioned in this part of the Word is the Spirit for the building, the Spirit of building.

First Corinthians Being a Book of Building

As the continuation of Romans, 1 Corinthians is a book of building. Romans brings us to the point that we are the Body, but it is the following books that tell us how the Body is built up. In order to know the Bible in a deeper way, we must drop our preoccupations and old concepts. We should not be frustrated by the old concepts concerning speaking in tongues or other matters in 1 Corinthians. Verse 12 of chapter 14 says, "So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church." We need to seek those things that are good and profitable for the building up of the Body. In no other Epistle does the apostle speak so clearly about the building of the Body. In this book he tells us that he is the wise master builder, that Jesus Christ is the foundation, and that we need to build with certain materials. Therefore, 1 Corinthians is a book of building, continuing from Romans to show us how the Body of Christ is built up.

In this book the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who builds up, the Spirit of building. In chapter 3 the Spirit is clearly related to the building up of the Body of Christ. The word *building* in verse 9 is a noun in Greek, meaning "house," while the word *dwells* in verse 16 is a verb from the same Greek root. Then in chapter 6 the Spirit dwells in us for the purpose of making not only our spirit and soul but even our body the members of Christ. This fits together with Romans 12, which says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (v. 1). We present not only our spirit and our soul but also our body for the building up of the Body of Christ. Both our human spirit and our human body must be completely separated unto the Lord to be holy (1 Cor. 7:34). However, without

the work of the Holy Spirit our bodies could not be the members of Christ. It is not merely by presenting our bodies to the Lord that they are fit for the purpose of building up. We also must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes our bodies fit to be the members of Christ. The Holy Spirit who indwells us is for the building up of the Body of Christ. Therefore, He is the Spirit of building.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

First Corinthians 12:3 says, “I make known to you that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed; and no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit.” This demonstrates how closely the Holy Spirit is related to the Lord Jesus. Then verse 13 says, “Also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.” This shows us once again that the Spirit is for the Body; He is the Spirit of building.

Verses 4 through 7 say, “There are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord; and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.” Here we see another aspect of the Spirit—the manifestation of the Spirit. Just as the Spirit of life is for the divine sonship, the manifestation of the Spirit is for the building. Romans is a book of sonship, and 1 Corinthians is a book of building. First Corinthians follows Romans to show us how to be built up. In the Spirit of building we were all baptized into one Body, and all the differing gifts given by this Spirit are manifested for building up the Body of Christ.

Someone may point out that in this chapter some of the gifts are the supernatural ones. However, in order to build up the Body, what we need the most is life. In some cases people need gifts in order to apprehend life. However, gifts by themselves can never build the Body. It is life that builds the Body.

THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT TO RECOVER LIFE FOR THE BUILDING

Verse 45 of chapter 15 says, “So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul’; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” We have said that in the book of 1 Corinthians the Spirit is the Spirit of building. However at the end of this book we are told that Christ is the Spirit who gives life, the Spirit of life, as in Romans. To understand the Bible is not an easy thing. We must never try to understand it lightly. Chapter 15 indicates an abnormal situation in the church in Corinth. If the church there had been normal, there would have been no need for chapter 15. This chapter was written because the Corinthians practiced the gifts very much, but they did not believe in the resurrection. Resurrection is a matter of life. This means that they stressed gifts but neglected and even doubted life. They were short of life and abnormal in the matter of life. For this reason, after Paul spoke about the building, he had to come back to life to recover something that was lost and make up the shortcoming.

Chapter 15, therefore, is a chapter of recovery, speaking once again about life. Paul was saying to the Corinthians, “Christ became the life-giving Spirit. You Corinthians have stressed the gifts so much, but rather you need to know this life-giving Spirit.” This is the right way to understand this portion of the Word. This proves, strengthens, and confirms that building and the manifestation of gifts by the Spirit are based on life. We must first have Romans with the Spirit of life and the Spirit of the divine sonship, and then we can go on to 1 Corinthians for building up by the Spirit of building with the Spirit’s manifestation.

THE SEALING SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT AS THE PLEDGE

Second Corinthians 1:22 says that God “has also sealed us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” We must never forget this verse that speaks of the sealing Spirit and the Spirit as the pledge. To be sealed with the Holy Spirit is to be marked with the Holy Spirit as a living seal. The word *pledge* in Greek has the meaning of foretaste or firstfruits. Whereas the seal marks us out as God’s inheritance, God’s possession, the Spirit as the pledge is an earnest, guaranteeing that God is our inheritance and possession.

THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE

Following this, 3:6 says, “Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” Here again we have the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit who gives life.

THE LIBERATING SPIRIT AND THE TRANSFORMING SPIRIT

Verses 17 and 18 continue, “And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” Here we have the liberating Spirit and the transforming Spirit.

Verse 7 of chapter 4 says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.” This corresponds to the concept of transformation in 3:18. There is no need for the treasure to be transformed, but there is a real need that the earthen vessels be transformed to correspond with the treasure. The treasure is something precious, but the earthen vessels need to be transformed. Verse 16 of chapter 4 says, “Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” This also confirms the concept of transformation.

Throughout the entire book of 2 Corinthians, the main thought is transformation. In this book almost every chapter is a record of the process of suffering for the purpose of consuming the outer man and renewing the inner man day by day. This is to be transformed day by day through all the sufferings.

In 2 Corinthians, therefore, we have the Spirit as the sealing Spirit, the Spirit who gives us the foretaste of all that God is to us, the Spirit who gives life, the liberating Spirit, and the transforming Spirit. If we look into all of the Epistles with the point of view that Christ is the Spirit, these books will become so interesting, meaningful, and even new to us.

THE BUILDING REQUIRING TRANSFORMATION IN LIFE

Why do we need 2 Corinthians to follow 1 Corinthians? As we have seen, the first Epistle is a book of building. All the ministries in 1 Corinthians are

for the building, but the building requires not wood, grass, and stubble but gold, silver, and especially precious stones. Originally we are not precious stones; we are clay, earthen vessels that need to be transformed. Therefore, in 2 Corinthians we see the process of transformation. First, the transforming Spirit comes into us as the sealing Spirit to seal us. Second, He becomes a foretaste of our enjoyment of God. We can be transformed only by tasting and enjoying God, and this Spirit is the foretaste of the full enjoyment of God. This Spirit is also the life-giving Spirit, imparting life into us. In this way He liberates us, setting us free from bondage, depression, oppression, and suppression. This Spirit transforms us from glory to glory until we are conformed to the very image of the Son of God. By this we become the materials that are good for the building.

In the previous message and in this one, we have dug a rich mine. May we all keep in mind the foregoing titles and aspects of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of life, the Spirit of the divine sonship, the Spirit of building, the manifestation of the Spirit, the Spirit of sealing, the Spirit of pledging, the Spirit who gives life, the Spirit who liberates, and the Spirit who transforms. We need to know all these matters, experience them, and minister them to others. This will be a rich ministry, imparting to people not mere doctrine but something real and living. If we have a vision from the Lord concerning these things, the Epistles will be new books to us.

CHAPTER THREE
THE SPIRIT OF LIFE,
THE SPIRIT OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP,
AND THE SPIRIT OF THE BUILDING UP
OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:3-4; 8:2, 9, 14, 29; 12:2; 1 Cor. 12:3, 7-10,
28-30

God's intention is to be our enjoyment in Christ as the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the creation of man, God presented Himself to man as the tree of life to be his enjoyment in the form of food (Gen. 2:9). Later the Bible reveals that God came to us in the person of Christ the Son. Now as the Holy Spirit He becomes our life and life supply. He is our life-food, life-drink, life-breath, and everything we need to exist spiritually (John 6:55; 7:37; 20:22; 10:10b).

CHRIST BEING THE WORD
AND THE SPIRIT

The New Testament can be divided into two parts. In the first part—the four Gospels—Christ is the embodiment of God as the Word for us to “read” that we may understand who He is and His purpose to be everything to us. As the Word, Christ is the expression, definition, and explanation of God. By this Word, who is the very embodiment of God, we can realize what God is to us. Then the second part of the New Testament—from Acts and the Epistles to Revelation—shows us that Christ was transfigured to be the Spirit through His death and resurrection. He is now the Spirit who gives life to us, and we are enjoying Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17). He is not only the Word for us to read, understand, and know, but He is the Spirit within us for us to realize, touch, enjoy, and experience. He has become one with us, and we are one with Him, as 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Our experience testifies that this oneness is a practical fact.

Today we know Christ as the Word, and we experience Him as the Spirit. If He were only the Word, we could understand Him only outwardly; we could not experience Him inwardly. Praise Him, He is not only the Word but also the Spirit within us for us to realize, experience, taste, and enjoy. Therefore, we are able not only to understand Him but to enjoy Him and experience Him day by day. There is first the need to know and understand Him, but this knowing is not merely for knowing; this knowing and understanding are for enjoying, tasting, and experiencing Him.

We all must know Christ as the Word and the Spirit. This is why we have to spend time to receive the written and living Word. Then by this reading and knowing, we need to experience Him as the life-giving Spirit.

THE OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT FOR THE DIVINE SONSHIP

The Seed of David Designated the Son of God

At the beginning of the book of Romans, Paul introduces Christ in a unique way. Romans 1:3 and 4 say, “Concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Among his fourteen Epistles, it is only in Romans that Paul introduces Christ as the seed of David designated the Son of God. This is because Romans deals with the need for the sons of Adam to be transformed and conformed to the image of the Son of God (12:2; 8:29). This book is not mainly a book on justification by faith, as taught by Luther. Justification by faith is only a minor part of this book, not the major part. The main emphasis of this book is the divine sonship, that we, the human beings, sons of Adam, can be transformed to be the sons of God.

We can see the principle of the divine sonship in chapter 8. Verse 14 of this chapter says, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Then the following verses speak of the work of the Holy Spirit within us to transform us and conform us to the image of the Son of God, that the only begotten Son of God would be the Firstborn among many brothers. This means that God will realize His sonship in all of us. Originally we were only the sons of men, but through transformation we are being designated sons of God. Christ is the example of this sonship, being the seed of David designated

the Son of God through resurrection, in which His humanity was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed to be brought into the divine sonship.

Christ's Transfiguration from the State of the Flesh to a State of Glory

Romans 1:4 speaks of the Spirit of holiness. The title *the Spirit of holiness* is different from *the Holy Spirit*. In many passages, *the Holy Spirit* in Greek is literally “the Spirit the holy.” First Thessalonians 4:8 says, for example, “Who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.” *His Holy Spirit* in Greek is literally, “the Spirit of Him the holy.” This indicates that the Holy Spirit Himself is “the holy,” that is, holiness itself. Holiness is simply the Spirit of God. In Romans 1:4, however, Paul used the term *the Spirit of holiness*. Holiness here indicates a state, condition, or situation. Before His resurrection, Christ was in the state of the flesh. Because of this, people were able to recognize Christ’s flesh more easily than His holiness. After His resurrection, however, Christ was transfigured into another state. In this second state, condition, and situation it is easy to realize His holiness.

Christ, the Son of God, was in the beginning (John 1:1, 18). Then in time, the only begotten Son of God was incarnated to be flesh (v. 14). When people came to Him, they met Him in the state of the flesh. Although He was the Son of God within, it was hard for people to see through the flesh to realize what He was. According to outward appearance, He was only the son of a carpenter. However, one day on the Mount of Transfiguration Christ was transfigured from the state of the flesh into another state, the state of glory (Matt. 17:1-2). We may compare glory to electricity. When it is hidden, it is simply electricity, but when it is expressed, it becomes light. Just as light is electricity expressed, glory is God expressed. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, John, and James beheld Christ in His state of glory.

Christ's State of Glory Being a State of Holiness, in Which He Was Designated the Son of God

Glory is God expressed, and God is “the holy.” When God is expressed, therefore, He is also holiness. Christ’s transfiguration on the mount brought Him into a state of glory, that is, of holiness. Moreover, on the Mount of

Transfiguration God declared, “This is My Son, the Beloved” (v. 5). By Christ’s transfiguration He was declared to be the Son of God.

The transfiguration on the mount was a foretaste of Christ’s resurrection. When Christ was resurrected from the dead, He was fully transfigured into a state of glory. In the same principle of His transfiguration on the mount, through His resurrection Christ was designated the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. This is the proper understanding of Romans 1:4.

Christ is the Son of God who was incarnated to be a man in the flesh. When He was in the flesh, the glory of His divinity was concealed, hidden, and covered by the flesh. However, at the time of His transfiguration and resurrection, His inner glory was released, permeating and saturating His humanity. Originally, He was in the state of the flesh, but after His resurrection, He was transfigured into another state, the state of glory, that is, the state of holiness. In this state of holiness, Christ was designated the Son of God.

Genuine Sonship Being Our Full Sanctification

As the sons of Adam, we were in the state of the sinful flesh. After we are transformed to be the sons of God and conformed to the image of the Son of God, there is holiness in our new state, condition, and situation. This holiness is the real divine sonship. The genuine sonship is our full sanctification. When we are fully sanctified, we are in a state of holiness. Holiness is wrought into us and becomes our sanctification, and full sanctification is equal to sonship. Sonship is different from adoption. In human society, to adopt someone is to give only the position of sonship to one who was not born of us. In contrast to this, the divine sonship means that God has imparted the life of His Son into us. Originally, we were not sons of God, but one day God imparted the Spirit of His Son (Gal. 4:6) into us to make us the sons of God. Therefore, the Spirit of His Son is the Spirit of the divine sonship.

The Spirit of Life and the Spirit of the Divine Sonship

When the Spirit of the Son comes into us, He is the Spirit of life to impart the divine life, the very life of God, into us (Rom. 8:2). This is to impart Christ Himself into us as life. By this imparting of life we are regenerated, that is, we

are born of God. Then from the time of our regeneration, the Spirit of life is the Spirit of the divine sonship to us, working within us to transform us and conform us to the image of Christ. As a result, we will be wholly and thoroughly sanctified; that is, we will be in a state of holiness.

The Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Life
Becoming the Spirit of the Divine Sonship to Us
through His Work of Transformation

Because Christ has become the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), the entire “story” of His resurrection and transfiguration is now in the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Now this Spirit as the all-inclusive dose has come into us to be the Spirit of life for the divine sonship, causing us to become the sons of God. Therefore, this Spirit of life becomes the Spirit of the divine sonship to us. The way He accomplishes His work of sonship is to transform us day by day.

Before we were saved, we were in the state of the sinful flesh, the flesh of sin (v. 3). One day we heard the gospel, and this wonderful Spirit of Christ came into us as the Spirit of life to regenerate us. Now this Spirit is working, moving, and regulating within us (v. 2) for the purpose of sonship, that is, to make sinners the divine sons of God. This Spirit of the divine sonship moves, works, saturates, permeates, and transforms us until eventually we will be thoroughly transformed into the image of Christ. This will bring us into a state of holiness. This is the fulfillment of the divine sonship.

When the Spirit of Christ came into us, the work of sonship began, but it was not yet accomplished. From that time on, the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of life works within us as the Spirit of the divine sonship to accomplish the sonship. Then when we are permeated, saturated, and thoroughly transformed, we will be wholly sanctified, that is, wholly brought into a state of holiness as the accomplishment of the divine sonship.

All of the above is revealed by the main titles of the Spirit in Romans—the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of the divine sonship. This Spirit is also the Spirit of God, who is none other than Christ Himself (vv. 9-10).

THE SPIRIT OF THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Romans shows us that Christ as the Spirit of life comes into us for the purpose of sonship in holiness that we may be completely transformed and conformed to His image to be the sons of God in full. However, God's intention is that we would all be built up together. Therefore, after Romans, 1 Corinthians shows us how we can be built up together. Since 1 Corinthians is a book of building, the Spirit mentioned in this book is the Spirit of building.

The Spirit's Indwelling Being for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

We can see this in at least three chapters of 1 Corinthians—chapters 3, 6, and 12. Verses 9 through 16 of chapter 3 show us that the Spirit indwells us for the purpose of building. Then 6:15, 17, and 19 tell us that the Holy Spirit dwells in us to make us the members of Christ. The Spirit dwells not only in our spirit but also within our body to make it His temple. This corresponds with Romans 12:1, which tells us to present our bodies for the purpose of the Body of Christ. By His indwelling, He is making our bodies fit for Christ's Body. In both chapters 3 and 6 we can see that the Holy Spirit who dwells in us is the Spirit of building, dwelling both in our spirit and within our body for the purpose of building us together as the Body of Christ.

The Spirit of the Operation of the Gifts for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Apparently, 1 Corinthians 12 deals with the gifts. If we look carefully, however, we will see that all the gifts are for Christ the Lord. Verse 3 gives us this general subject: "I make known to you that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed; and no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit." The work of the Holy Spirit through all the gifts is to bring people to realize that Jesus is the Lord. In other words, all the gifts are for Christ.

In this chapter the Spirit is the Spirit of the operation of the gifts. As the Spirit of the operation of the gifts, He gives gifts to the many different members to help people to realize Christ as the Lord for the purpose of the building up of the Body of Christ. Verse 12 says, "Even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one

body, so also is the Christ.” *So also is the Christ* indicates that in this chapter Christ is not only the Head but also the Body. Then verse 13 tells us that in this one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body. The gifts and all the operations of the Spirit are for the building.

Many people consider that the primary gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 are speaking in tongues and healing. However, verse 28 says, “God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” Here we have eight items: apostles, prophets, teachers, works of power, healing, helps, administrations, and tongues. In the list of gifts in verses 8 through 10, helps and administrations are not mentioned. However, at the end of this chapter the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to add these two items. In the list of gifts in verse 28, speaking in tongues ranks last. Speaking in tongues is the last gift, but too many today make it the first and primary gift. Moreover, verses 29 and 30 indicate very clearly that just as not all the members are apostles and prophets, neither should all the members speak in tongues.

Although the church has been degraded, still throughout all the generations there have been, and even today are, all these gifts. No doubt, at certain times there have been apostles, even after the original apostles in the first century. Likewise, there have been prophets, teachers, works of power, healings, helps, administrations, and tongues. Among all these gifts, some are miraculous, and some are not. Works of power, divine healing, and speaking in tongues are miraculous, but helps are not.

Administrations in verse 28 refers to the eldership in the church. *Helps* refers to the services of the deacons and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:8-13). This kind of help is not only in the business of the church. It may also include the help in life, helping the brothers and sisters to grow in life. A sister who moves to this country from abroad may not know how to apply to school or how to get a job or a home. In the spirit some members can render help to her in these practical matters. By helping the sister in this way, they minister life to her. A certain brother may be sick and may not be able to care for himself. Those who give help can visit him and do things for him. By helping the brother in this way, they minister life to him. This will help him to love the Lord more, to fellowship with the Lord, and to realize something more of Christ. This is the meaning of the helps mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.

Similarly, brothers and sisters often come from out of town and call from the airport or bus station. Then a certain brother is needed to pick them up and bring them to the meeting. By doing this, life is ministered to them. Even this practical giving of help is a gift given by the Holy Spirit to certain members in the Body. All the gifts come from the gift-giving Spirit. The Spirit of building is the Spirit of the operation of the gifts, giving different gifts to different members. The members have operations, and all the different operations are for the unique purpose of the building up of the Body of Christ.

We do not emphasize the exercise of the miraculous gifts, because this matter has confused the believers very much. Seeking the miraculous gifts has frustrated the saints from seeking the growth of life. However, we do not oppose the practice of any gift, including the miraculous ones. We simply do not like to have the miraculous things exaggerated or even emphasized, frustrating people from the true knowledge of life and the growth of life. As long as the miraculous gifts are practiced in a proper way to help people to realize Christ and know life, we appreciate them. A certain elderly sister close to Brother Watchman Nee was an example of the proper use of the miraculous gifts. This sister had a genuine gift of healing, but the exercise of her gift was never a frustration to life, and it never distracted the brothers and sisters from life. That elderly sister never emphasized her gift; therefore, we respected the exercise of her gift.

We appreciate all the gifts, but we appreciate them in their proper order. The apostles are the first, and tongues are the last. Tongues are not the first or even the second, and they certainly are not the sum total. According to the context of 1 Corinthians 12, all the gifts and operations of the Spirit are for people to realize Christ as the Lord so that the Body of Christ may be built up. Therefore, the Spirit of the operation of the gifts is the Spirit of building for the building up of the Body of Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPIRIT AS THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL IN GALATIANS

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 16:23-24; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 3:1-3, 5, 8-14; 4:6;
5:25, 22-23; 6:8

THE TRANSMITTING SPIRIT IN SECOND CORINTHIANS 13:14

Before we consider the Spirit in the book of Galatians, we will review the revelation of the Spirit in 1 and 2 Corinthians. At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love in Christ Jesus be with you all” (16:23-24). At the end of 2 Corinthians, he again mentions grace and love, but he adds fellowship. Second Corinthians 13:14 is a significant verse. After everything Paul says in 1 and 2 Corinthians, he closes his writing by saying, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” All the books of the Bible were written in a very specific and meaningful way. No other book ends in the way 2 Corinthians does. Paul’s concluding word indicates that the transforming work spoken of in the two Epistles to the Corinthians requires the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

This verse speaks of three items: the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit. Here we can see the Divine Trinity. God, Christ, and the Spirit are neither three alone nor one alone. Rather, They are three in one. In the same way, grace, love, and fellowship are three items in one. Love is inward, in the heart, so it needs to be expressed. For example, if a brother gives someone a Bible, his love is expressed by that gift. In this sense, the gift of the Bible is a grace to the recipient. While love is the inward source, grace is the outward expression. We may compare love and grace to an object with two ends. It is one object, but what is love on one end is grace on the other end. Love is in God the Father as the source, while grace is in God the Son as the expression. First John 4:8 and 16 tell us that God is love, and John 1:17 says that grace and reality came through Jesus Christ.

Fellowship is the transmission of love and grace. If I love a brother in my heart, I will express this love by grace, but it is by a certain kind of transmission that the grace is brought to him. Love is expressed in grace, and grace with love is in the transmission, the fellowship, of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transmits the grace of Christ with the love of God. Therefore, the transforming Spirit in 1 and 2 Corinthians is the transmitting Spirit, transmitting the grace of Christ with the love of God.

The transforming Spirit is transforming us with a certain substance and element. This substance and element are the grace of Christ with the love of God. The transforming Spirit transforms us by transmitting the grace of Christ with the love of God into us.

Seemingly, love is first, and grace is second. However, this verse mentions grace first. This is because the subject of 2 Corinthians is the grace of Christ (1:12; 4:15; 6:1; 8:1, 9; 9:8, 14; 12:9), and our experience is mainly of grace. What we enjoy is Christ as our grace. Moreover, this grace has a source, which is the love of God, and this grace needs a transmission, which is by the Holy Spirit.

The concluding verse of Galatians says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen” (6:18). Ephesians 6:24 says, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility,” and Philippians ends with, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (4:23). All these books end with grace, because grace, which is Christ Himself, is our enjoyment. This grace has a source, which is God the Father as love, and this grace comes to us by the transmission, the fellowship, of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, grace is transmitted to us in our spirit. All this is revealed to us by the final verses of these Epistles.

The transforming Spirit within us is the transmitting Spirit, transmitting the grace of Christ with the love of God for the purpose of transforming us. We can compare transformation to a chemical reaction. In order to produce a chemical change, one substance needs to be put into another. The transforming Spirit transmits Christ with God into us as our new element. This causes the “chemical change” in which we are transformed.

THE SPIRIT IN GALATIANS

The Gospel Preached to Abraham

The Spirit is not mentioned in Galatians until the third chapter. The subject of Galatians 3 is the gospel, of which the Spirit is the center. When did the gospel begin to be preached? Some may say the gospel began with the preaching of John the Baptist or the Lord Jesus, or even on the day of Pentecost. The beginning of the gospel, however, was at the time of Abraham. Galatians 3:8 says, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles out of faith, announced the gospel beforehand to Abraham: 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" The time of Abraham was about two thousand years before the preaching of the New Testament dispensation. The gospel was preached even before the law was given.

The Promise of the Spirit as the Blessing of the Gospel

The gospel that was preached to Abraham was, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." The center of the gospel is Christ, and Christ is realized as the Spirit. Verses 9 through 14 continue, "So then they who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the law to do them.' And that by law no one is justified before God is evident because, 'The righteous one shall have life and live by faith'; but the law is not of faith, yet, 'He who does them shall live because of them.' Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse on our behalf; because it is written, 'Cursed is everyone hanging on a tree'; in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The promise of the Spirit is the Spirit of the promise mentioned in Ephesians 1:13, the Spirit whom God promised. The blessing of the gospel preached to Abraham is Christ, and Christ is realized as the Spirit. Therefore, the blessing of the gospel preached to Abraham was the promise of the Spirit. God preached the gospel to Abraham by promising him that He would give His Spirit to us as the blessing through faith.

In Galatians 3:1 through 3 Paul asks, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly portrayed crucified?"

This only I wish to learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Then in verse 5 he asks, “He therefore who bountifully supplies to you the Spirit and does works of power among you, does He do it out of the works of law or out of the hearing of faith?” These verses indicate that the center of the gospel eventually is the Spirit of promise who is bountifully supplied to us.

God’s intention is to give Himself as enjoyment to man and to work Himself into man. However, man fell and drifted further and further away from God. In the garden of Eden, man was in the place where God was. However, in Adam’s fall man drifted the first step away from God (Gen. 3:1-6), and with Cain man fell a second step (4:3-8). Originally man was created to live in the human spirit before God, but in the first and second steps of the fall, man fell out of his spirit into the soul, becoming a soulish man, a man living in the soul, like Cain. Then at the time of the flood man fell a third step (6:1-5). According to verse 3, man became flesh at this time, that is, man fell again, this time from the soul to the flesh. Finally at the time of Babel man fell a fourth step (11:1-4), this time into idols and satanic things. Idols are substitutes for God. This means that at this time man gave up God absolutely. After the first and even second steps of the fall, man still had the thought of God. By the time of the fourth fall, however, man gave up the thought of God and took idols as a substitute for God. After all these steps of the fall, man could fall no further; he had fallen to the uttermost, from the spirit to the soul, from the soul to the flesh, and from the flesh into idolatry, into idols, without God and giving up God to the uttermost.

Then one day when man was at the lowest level of the fall, God came to Abraham, who was one man among many. God came to promise to this fallen man that, on the one hand, He would accomplish the necessary redemption to bring man back to his original level and, on the other hand, that God as the Spirit would be the portion of this redeemed man for him to enjoy. The Spirit which God has supplied to us for our enjoyment is the Spirit of this promise. This promise is fulfilled by, in, through, and with Christ so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, that is, that we might receive the Spirit Himself promised to us by God.

The Spirit of the Son of God

As fallen men, we were not on the first or second level of the fall but all the way at the fourth level, fallen to the lowest degree. Praise Him, Christ accomplished redemption for us that we might be brought back from the fall and receive the Spirit as our enjoyment. Then, after we received the Spirit of the promise, He became the Spirit of the Son. Galatians 4:6 says, “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” God sent the Spirit of His Son into us to make us the genuine sons of God in fact and in reality.

The Spirit for Our Living

After coming into us, the Spirit of the Son is now the Spirit for our living (5:16, 25). Verse 25 says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” He is not only the Spirit of life imparting life into us but also the Spirit for our living, the Spirit by whom we live. Galatians is a book that deals with our living and walk. We must live and walk not by the law but by the Spirit.

The Fruit-bearing Spirit

Eventually this Spirit for our living is the fruit-bearing Spirit. Verses 22 and 23 say, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Sowing unto the Spirit and Reaping of the Spirit

Galatians 6:8 says, “He who sows unto his own flesh will reap corruption of the flesh, but he who sows unto the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.” In all our Christian life and walk, we must sow unto the Spirit in order to reap of the Spirit. Eventually we need to do everything in this Spirit.

The outcome of our experience of the Spirit in Galatians is that Christ is revealed in us (1:15-16), Christ lives in us (2:20), Christ is formed in us (4:19) and that we become a new creation (6:15). Galatians is not a book merely on justification by faith or on the crucifixion of our flesh and its lust. Instead, the result of our experience of the Spirit is something very positive.

This book preaches an ancient yet new gospel. This gospel has the promise that God will put His Spirit into the man who is fallen to the uttermost to be the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit for our living, the fruit-bearing Spirit, and the

Spirit unto whom we sow and of whom we reap. Now we simply must live, walk, and do everything in this Spirit. As the outcome, Christ is revealed in us, lives in us, and is formed in us, and we are an absolutely new creation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT

IN EPHESIANS THROUGH HEBREWS

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:13-14; 2:18; 3:16; 4:3-4, 23; 6:17; Phil. 1:19; 3:3;
4:12-13; Col. 1:8; 1 Thes. 1:5; 4:8; 3:13; 5:19; 2 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:14;
Titus 3:5; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15; 6:4-5; 10:29; 9:14

THE SPIRIT FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

IN EPHESIANS

Ephesians 1:13 and 14 speak of the Spirit as the seal and the pledge (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22), or we may say, the foretaste. Ephesians 1:11 says that we were designated as an inheritance to God. We are God's inheritance, possession, and property. Therefore, God sealed us with the Spirit to testify that we are His. On the other hand, God has put His Spirit into us as the foretaste and a guarantee that God is ours. To be sealed proves that we are God's, and the Spirit as the pledge, the foretaste, guarantees that God is ours.

Verse 18 of chapter 2 says of the Jewish and Gentile believers, "Through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father." The Spirit is revealed in Ephesians as the uniting Spirit because this book deals with the Body of Christ. In the Body, the Spirit is the uniting Spirit.

In Ephesians 3 the Spirit is the strengthening Spirit, the Spirit who strengthens us into our inner man (v. 16), and in chapter 4 the Spirit is again the uniting Spirit (vv. 3-4). Verse 23 says, "That you be renewed in the spirit of your mind." This is the regenerated spirit of the believers, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Therefore, this verse implies the renewing Spirit (Titus 3:5). Ephesians 6:17 mentions the sword of the Spirit, indicating the fighting Spirit. Ephesians mentions the human spirit a number of times. In those verses *spirit* should be rendered in lower case, denoting the human spirit. These verses speak of a spirit of wisdom and revelation (1:17), the dwelling place of God in spirit (2:22), the revelation to the holy apostles and prophets in spirit (3:5), being filled in spirit (5:18), and praying in spirit (6:18).

When the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians, he had a particular burden with a certain realization and thought. The particular thought in Ephesians is that the church is the Body of Christ composed of many redeemed ones from both the Jewish and Gentile peoples. These redeemed ones are God's possession, property, and inheritance, so He put the Spirit as His seal on them. In ancient times God promised that He would give His Spirit to His redeemed ones. Now this Spirit has been given as a seal to prove and testify that all the redeemed ones are God's inheritance. This seal is nothing less than God Himself. Moreover, the seal that God puts on His redeemed ones becomes a pledge, a foretaste, a down payment, a deposit, to guarantee that God is our enjoyment and possession. This Spirit as the seal and the foretaste unites all the redeemed ones together as the Body of Christ, of which the redeemed ones are members. He also strengthens us within, renews us, and fills us with Himself. Then the daily walk of the redeemed ones comes out of this infilling, and He becomes the fighting Spirit, equipping us to fight the battle for God in the Body. If we look into Ephesians with this point of view, this book will become new to us.

THE SUPPLYING SPIRIT IN PHILIPPIANS

Philippians 1:19 says, "I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The term *bountiful supply* in Greek is a particular word used in ancient times to denote the leader of the chorus. The leader of the chorus was responsible for supplying all the needs of the members of the chorus. When they needed food, drink, clothing, or a dwelling place, the leader supplied them with those things. When they needed instruments and music, he also supplied them with those. For this reason, the term can be translated as "bountiful supply" or "all-sufficient supply."

The Spirit in 1:19 is not only the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of Christ but the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit today is no longer merely the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, including His divinity, His incarnation, His humanity, His human life, His suffering and death, His resurrection, His ascension, and everything He has attained and obtained. Because He is such a Spirit, He can afford us an all-sufficient supply.

Philippians 3:3 says, "We are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh."

In the book of Philippians the Spirit is revealed as the supplying Spirit who affords us the all-sufficient supply and as the serving Spirit for us to serve and worship God. In addition, 4:12 and 13 say, “I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack. I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.” These verses should be put together with 1:19. The way Christ empowers us is by being the supplying Spirit. If Christ were not the supplying Spirit, how could He empower us? Christ is the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17), and it is as the Spirit that He empowers us.

Philippians is a book on the Christian life and living. The Christian life is a life that always has the all-inclusive, bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and it is a life of always serving and worshipping God by the Spirit. Moreover, the supplying Spirit and the serving Spirit is the very Christ who empowers us within, in whom we can do all things.

THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT IN FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS

The only explicit mention of the Spirit in Colossians is in 1:8, which speaks of the believers’ love in the Spirit. This book does not speak much about the Spirit because it deals with Christ as the Head directly. Thus, we go on to 1 Thessalonians 1:5, which says, “Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.” Then 4:8 says, “Consequently, he who rejects, rejects not man but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.” *His Holy Spirit* in Greek is literally “the Spirit of Him the Holy.” The Holy Spirit given to us by God is the Holy One who sanctifies us, making us holy before God. Verse 23 of chapter 5 says that God Himself will sanctify us wholly in all the three parts of our being—spirit, soul, and body.

Second Thessalonians 2:13 says, “God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Putting all these verses together, the Spirit in 1 and 2 Thessalonians is the sanctifying Spirit. These two books in the New Testament deal thoroughly with sanctification and “the Spirit the Holy,” the sanctifying Spirit. This sanctification is for our preparation for the Lord’s coming. Verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians 3 says, “So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all

His saints.” According to these books, the Holy Spirit within us is “the Holy,” doing the work of sanctification to work holiness into us. Therefore, since this Spirit is always working within us, we must not quench Him (5:19).

THE KEEPING SPIRIT IN SECOND TIMOTHY AND THE RENEWING SPIRIT IN TITUS

Second Timothy 1:14 says, “Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” This is the keeping Spirit, who dwells in us to keep the good deposit. In his Epistles to Timothy, the apostle Paul charged Timothy to keep, by the indwelling Spirit, all the things that he had received from Paul and not to lose them. Thus, the indwelling Spirit is the keeping Spirit.

Titus 3:5 speaks of the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may say that in this book the Spirit is the renewing Spirit (cf. Eph. 4:23).

THE SPEAKING SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT OF WHOM WE PARTAKE IN HEBREWS

The Speaking Spirit

Hebrews first reveals that the Holy Spirit is the speaking Spirit. Verse 7 of chapter 3 begins, “Even as the Holy Spirit says.” Hebrews does not tell us who the writer of this book is, and it presents quotations from the Old Testament without telling us from which books they are taken. Rather, the book begins, “God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets, has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son” (1:1-2). It is God, not a mere human writer, who speaks; that is, the writer is God Himself. In the ancient times God spoke through the prophets, and today God still speaks through the Son. Therefore, this book does not tell us the name of the writer, but simply says, “The Holy Spirit says.” Hebrews 9:8 confirms the thought of the speaking Spirit, saying, “The Holy Spirit thus making this clear.” This means that the Holy Spirit speaks, points the way, and tells us the way. Verse 15 of chapter 10 says similarly, “The Holy Spirit also testifies to us.” Therefore, in this book the Spirit is the speaking Spirit.

The Spirit as an Enjoyment to Us

Verses 4 and 5 of chapter 6 say, “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.” These verses speak of tasting certain items and partaking of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in this book is an enjoyment to us. To be a partaker of the Spirit means that we have tasted the Holy Spirit. Then in 10:29 this Spirit is called the Spirit of grace. Because He is the Spirit of grace, He can be our enjoyment; He can be tasted by us. Therefore, in the book of Hebrews, the Spirit is revealed in two main aspects: He is the speaking Spirit, and He is the Spirit for our taste and enjoyment.

Christ Offering Himself to God through the Eternal Spirit

The main items of the Spirit in the book of Hebrews are the speaking Spirit and the Spirit as our foretaste. There is an additional item, however, in 9:14, which tells us that Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit, “the Spirit the eternal” (Gk.) This means that the Spirit is not only eternal but that the Spirit is eternity. With Christ as the sacrifice, the offering to God, there is no matter of time. We may say that Christ offered Himself to God two thousand years ago, but to speak in this way involves time. Rather, the Bible says that Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit without the limitation of time. Revelation 13:8 speaks of “everyone whose name is not written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.” Christ as the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. This is possible because Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit.

First Peter 1:19 and 20 say that Christ as the Lamb was “foreknown before the foundation of the world but has been manifested in the last of times for your sake.” To be foreknown is to be prepared. Christ was prepared before the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8, however, uses a different preposition, saying that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. He was prepared before the foundation, but He was slain from the foundation of the world.

The last phrase of verse 8 may also be translated, “Written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” It is difficult to decide from the Greek text whether *from the foundation of the*

world modifies the slaying of the Lamb or the writing in the book of life. Certain versions, such as Darby's New Translation, seem to indicate the latter. However, the best translators agree that *from the foundation of the world* refers to both the slaying of the Lamb and the writing of the names in the book of life. It was at the time that Christ as the Lamb was slain for our redemption that our names were put into the Lamb's book of life.

God foreordained us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), but in His foreknowledge He foresaw that His chosen people would become fallen, so He foreordained Christ as the Lamb before the foundation of the world, that is, before creation. Then after creation, at the foundation of the world, man fell. Therefore, in the eyes of God, Christ was slain from that time. We were ordained, foreordained, and predestinated by God, but we became fallen and lost. Therefore, at the time we fell, Christ was slain, we were redeemed, and our names were written in the book of life.

We may illustrate the writing of our names in the book of life in the following way. As long as a group of people are all honest and faithful, there is no need for keeping a record of their status. However, if some people do not behave properly, there is the need of a record to distinguish between them. Before the fall, everything was proper before God, so there was no need for a record of the names of people according to their status. It was after the fall that a distinction arose between men. God made an eternal redemption for man and presented it to him. Now there is the need of the book of life as a record of those who receive God's prepared redemption. In the future when God will judge humanity, He will judge according to this record. This is why the book of life is mentioned several times in Revelation. It became necessary due to man's fall.

Gaining an Eternal Redemption for Us

Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. *Eternal* spans all time. This word is mentioned several times in Hebrews, including eternal salvation (5:9), eternal redemption (9:12), the eternal Spirit (v. 14), the eternal inheritance (v. 15), and the eternal covenant (13:20). Verse 12 of chapter 9 says, "Not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption." The eternal Spirit in verse 14 corresponds to eternal redemption, which is in contrast to a temporary redemption. In

ancient times the people had only a temporary redemption in type. If someone committed a sin, he would go to offer a sin offering. This would afford him a temporal redemption. However, the next day he might commit another sin, requiring him to offer another sin offering. Moreover, if two different persons committed a sin, they would both need to offer two different sin offerings. The redemption they received in type was only temporary, dealing with sins only in specific situations. It was not an eternal redemption.

Christ has now accomplished a redemption which is eternal, dealing with sins wherever there is the need. If we need redemption today, Christ's eternal redemption is here, and if tomorrow we need redemption again, it is here again. If the Jews need redemption, it is there, and if the Gentiles need redemption, it is there for them also. This redemption is always here to deal with all sins, in whatever condition we are and wherever redemption is needed. This is the proper meaning in the Scriptures of eternal redemption. The redemption accomplished by Christ is eternal, and salvation as the issue of this redemption is also eternal. All this is because Christ offered Himself not through a temporary agent but through the eternal Spirit.

We may compare temporal and eternal redemption to the jurisdiction of governments. What the governor of California says applies only to California, and what the governor of New York says applies only to New York. These decrees are narrow in their scope. However, if the President issues an order, it applies to all the fifty states. Only the orders of the President supersede all jurisdiction. Similarly, that something is eternal means that it applies everywhere, regardless of space and time.

Some offerings were made at Shiloh, and later the offerings were made at Jerusalem. These offerings were subject both to space and time. However, one day Christ came and offered Himself to God, not merely in Jerusalem at a point in time but in the eternal Spirit. We should not say that Christ was offered only at Golgotha two thousand years ago. That is the human point of view. The divine point of view is that Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. This offering covers all people, from Adam up to the last one who will be saved, without regard to location or continent and without regard to the generation in which they were born. We have Christ as our offering, who offered Himself through the eternal Spirit.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SPIRIT IN JAMES THROUGH REVELATION

Scripture Reading: James 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:13-14; 1:11; 1 John 2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:13, 15; Jude 20; Rev. 2:1, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 22; 4:5; 5:6

THE SPIRIT OF ENVY IN JAMES

James 4:5 says, “Do you think that the Scripture says in vain: ‘The Spirit, whom He has caused to dwell in us, longs to envy’?” Here the Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of envy. The law in the Old Testament tells us that God is a jealous God (Exo. 20:5), and 2 Corinthians 11:2 also speaks of the jealousy of God. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, is a Spirit of jealousy. James 4:4 says, “Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” To love the world is to commit spiritual adultery. If a wife loves someone other than her husband, her husband will be jealous. In the same way, the Spirit of God is a spirit of jealousy. He is jealous, just as a husband is jealous over his wife. We should not love anything other than the Lord Himself. If we do, the indwelling Spirit will be jealous.

THE SPIRIT OF GLORY IN FIRST AND SECOND PETER

The Spirit of Glory for the Suffering Believers

First Peter 4:13 and 14 say, “Inasmuch as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice exultingly. If you are reproached in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” In the Epistles of Peter, the Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of glory. The Epistles of Peter, especially the first one, deal with the sufferings of the believers. If we Christians suffer something for Christ, then the Spirit within us will be the Spirit of glory. On the positive side, all sufferings work out one thing; that is, they break the outer man. Then when our outer man is broken, the glory in the Holiest Place, that is, in our spirit, will be manifested. The Spirit in verse 14 is the Spirit of

glory for suffering in the name of Christ. The more we suffer, the more the Spirit of glory will be manifest.

A small story may help to make this clear. In 1900, the year of the Boxer Rebellion, a certain young man was about seventeen years old, a young learner in a store in Beijing, the capital of China. One day all the stores were closed due to Boxer activity. No one dared to come out into the street. All of a sudden there was a shouting along the street, and something like a parade proceeded by. This young man watched the procession through the crack of a door. The Boxers were parading with swords in their hand, pulling a mule cart, upon which sat a young girl. This young girl was condemned as a Christian and was being brought to a certain place to be executed by beheading. However, she was singing as she was paraded on that mule cart, and her face was shining. The young man who was watching through the door marveled how, amidst that parade of cruel people, the girl could sit there and sing with a shining face. While that young sister was being brought to be executed, she was suffering, and the Spirit of glory and of God was resting upon her. Later, when the young man sought to find out about the girl, he came to know the gospel. It was through this that he was saved. Many years later he preached the gospel to a second person, who was then saved. It was through this second brother that I learned this story.

The Spirit of Christ in the Prophets

First Peter 1:11 speaks of the Spirit of Christ in the prophets. This refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the ancient times. Here again we see that the Spirit is the eternal Spirit. Even in the ancient times, the time of the prophets before Christ came, the Spirit of Christ was already working. The Spirit worked within the prophets as the Spirit of Christ. As a result, they were inspired by this Spirit to seek to know something about Christ. Today, however, we have the Spirit of Christ indwelling us, as mentioned in Romans 8:9.

THE ANOINTING SPIRIT AND THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL ABIDING IN THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

In the Epistles of John, the Spirit is implied as the anointing Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27). Then 3:24 says, "In this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us." Verse 13 of chapter 4 continues, "In this we know that

we abide in Him and He in us, that He has given to us of His Spirit,” and verse 15 says, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” These verses prove that God is one with us, that God dwells in us and we dwell in God by this anointing Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit in the Epistles of John is the Spirit of mutual abiding. We abide in God by the anointing Spirit, and God abides in us by this Spirit.

THE PRAYING SPIRIT IN JUDE

Jude 20 says, “You, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit in Jude is the praying Spirit.

THE SEVEN SPIRITS IN REVELATION

The Speaking Spirit Being the Lord Himself

In the first three chapters of Revelation we see the speaking Spirit, who is the Lord Himself (2:1, 7-8, 11-12, 17-18, 29; 3:1, 6-7, 13-14, 22). At the beginning of each of the seven epistles in chapters 2 and 3, it is the Lord Himself who speaks, but at the end of each epistle it says, “Hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This proves that the speaking Spirit is the Lord Himself. The Lord is the speaking Spirit who speaks to the churches all the time.

The Spirit Being the Seven Eyes and the Seven Lamps of Fire for Searching and Burning

Verse 5 of chapter 4 says, “Out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” The Spirit here is the seven Spirits as the seven lamps burning before the throne of God. Then 5:6 says, “I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” The seven lamps are the seven Spirits of God, and these seven Spirits are the seven eyes of Christ.

Revelation Being a Book of God’s Judgment

Revelation speaks concerning God's judgment. In his Gospel, John could lay his head on the bosom of Christ. However, when he saw Christ in Revelation 1, he fell at His feet as dead (v. 17). The Jesus in John and the Jesus in Revelation are the same person, but in two kinds of atmosphere. In the Gospel of John He is in an atmosphere of love and grace, but in Revelation He is in an atmosphere of judgment. In the Gospel of John words of grace come out of His mouth, but in Revelation the word out of His mouth is a sword to kill and to judge (1:16).

In Revelation the Spirit judges by enlightening and searching. In this book, therefore, the seven Spirits are the enlightening, searching, and judging Spirit. The lamps of fire enlighten, and the eyes of the Lamb are searching. The Lord has eyes like a flame of fire (v. 14), and these eyes are the seven lamps. The Lord's judging is by burning, through the enlightening, searching, and burning Spirit. This is why the judgments mentioned in this book are a burning, a matter of fire.

The Spirit first enlightens like a lamp; second, He sees through and searches; and third, He burns. This burning is His judging. This is the application of 1 Corinthians 3:12 and 13, which say, "If anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is." If our work is of gold, silver, and precious stones, it will not be burned but will rather be proved by the burning. However, if our work is wood, grass, and stubble, no doubt it will be burned. If what we have and do is only wood, grass, and stubble, the burning will be a real consuming to it all. However, if what we have and do is something of gold, silver, and precious stones, it will be approved through the burning.

Revelation Revealing Two Issues by the Seven Spirits

The book of Revelation reveals two issues of God's judgment. One issue is the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15), and the other issue is a city of water (21:2; 22:1). Both of these issues come out of the seven Spirits. Whatever will be burned and consumed will go to the lake of fire, and whatever will be approved will come into the city of water. Daniel 7:9 says, "I watched / Until thrones were set, / And the Ancient of Days sat down. / His clothing was like white snow, / And the hair of His head was like pure wool; / His throne was flames of fire, / Its wheels, burning fire." A fiery stream issues, comes forth, from before Him.

This is a stream of fire, a fiery stream, coming out of the throne of God. Revelation 22:1 says that a river of water of life proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Therefore, there are two streams out of the throne of God. One stream is the stream of fire, and the other stream is the river of water. One is for judgment, and the other is for nourishment.

The Gospel of John, recorded by the same writer, clearly tells us that the Spirit is living water (John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39). In the book of Revelation the Spirit is both the water of life and fire. Are the seven Spirits fire or water to us? Whenever we have something negative, something of wood, grass, and stubble, the Spirit immediately becomes the burning Spirit, the stream of fire. On the other hand, whenever we are right with God and have that which is positive, He is the living water to water us, nourish us, and bring the tree of life to us.

The Spirit as the river of water of life is typified by the one river in Genesis 2:10 which was divided into four branches to reach the four directions of the populated earth, as represented by the place names in verses 11 through 14. This signifies that the gospel is preached in every direction of the populated earth to reach every kind of people. The gospel is preached even to such a place as Babylon, as implied in these verses by the names *Euphrates* and *Hiddekel* (Tigris).

Today in this universe there are two streams, the stream of fire to judge and burn, and the river of water to water and nourish. The stream of fire will bring all the negative things—sin, the world, the flesh, Satan, and everything of darkness—to one place, the lake of fire, the “trash can” of the universe. On the other hand, everything spiritual and heavenly—that which is of God, Christ, and the Spirit—will be nourished by the river of water and brought by that stream to the city of water. Every house has a trash can, but there will be no trash can within the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is transparent and entirely pure. There is no dust, clay, wood, grass, or stubble there. Rather, what is there is gold, pearl, and precious stones. None of these can be burned. We need a vision to see all of these very meaningful matters.

Dealing with All Negative Matters through Fire

On the negative side, the seven Spirits of God deal with the enemy and all negative matters. As pertains to the children of God in particular, the seven Spirits are for purging and burning. First Corinthians 3:15 speaks of being

saved, yet so as through fire. Hebrews 6 also mentions burning. Verses 7 and 8 say, “The earth, which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and produces vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is cultivated, partakes of blessing from God. But if it brings forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned.” Then 10:27 through 29 tells us that if anyone considers the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace, he will have a certain expectation of judgment and fire.

In Matthew 3:10 and 11, John the Baptist said, “Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. I baptize you in water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is stronger than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.” These verses mention fire twice. It is not logical to say that the first time fire is mentioned it is negative, but the second time the same word is used it is positive. Therefore, baptism in fire does not have a positive meaning; it is not related to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is the fire in the lake of fire. Verse 12 continues, “Whose winnowing fan is in His hand. And He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor and will gather His wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.” If a person is wheat, Christ will baptize him with the Holy Spirit, and he will have life. However, if he is chaff, He will baptize him with fire; that is, He will put him into the lake of fire. The evil ones, the Pharisees and Sadducees, came to John the Baptist in a pretentious way. It is as if John said, “If you do not bear fruit, you will be cut down and cast into the fire. You may fool me because I come only to baptize you with water, but you cannot fool Him. When He comes, He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He will clear up His threshing floor. If you are the real ones, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit for life. If you are the false ones, He will put you into the fire.”

At the end of the New Testament the Holy Spirit is revealed as the burning Spirit. Before this, from Romans to Jude, all the aspects of the Spirit are positive. If we enjoy all those positive aspects and go along with them, that is very good. However, if we do not, the Spirit will be the Spirit of fire to us. If we receive Him, enjoy Him, and experience Him as the Spirit of life, the Spirit of the divine sonship, the transforming Spirit, the renewing Spirit, the speaking Spirit, and the Spirit in so many aspects, that is wonderful. If not, we will have to deal with Him in a different way—He will be the seven Spirits of

God to us. He will search us, burn us, and judge us, and all the wood, grass, and stubble will be burned by His searching. This is a warning. We should not say that the Spirit is only wonderful. Eventually, He may also be fearful.

The Burning of the Seven Spirits Being His Operation upon Us

Many times we are under the burning of the seven Spirits. This is why we often have sufferings. Sufferings are to burn off the things of the flesh, the old creation, and the self. The many sufferings mentioned in 2 Corinthians are also a kind of burning (1:5, 8-9; 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-28). The burning of fire for judgment is a great matter. If we do not understand this concept, we cannot understand the books of Hebrews and Revelation. Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is also a consuming fire." Out of Him there is a stream of fire because He is the fire. The fire mentioned in Ezekiel 1 is the same in principle; it is fire as the judging element.

The Seven Spirits of God Representing the Governmental Aspect of the Holy Spirit

The searching, burning, and judging Spirit in Revelation is called the seven Spirits. Generally speaking, the number seven signifies completeness. In this book, however, seven not only means completeness but also implies judgment. In the entire book of Revelation there are four great sevens. First there are the seven epistles in chapters two and three. Then there are the seven seals (6:1—8:5), the seven trumpets (8:6—11:19), and the seven bowls (15:1—16:21). All these sevens relate to judgment. The seven epistles are judging epistles. They are different from all the previous epistles in the New Testament. All the previous epistles are nourishing epistles; only these seven are judging epistles. Likewise, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls also are for judgment. After these four series of judgments, some things will go to the lake of fire, and some will go to the city of water. It is by this series of four judgments that all things in the universe will be classified as to whether they belong to the lake of fire or to the city of water.

The number seven in this book is not only the number of completeness but also implies judgment. Therefore, the seven Spirits of God represent the governmental aspect of the Holy Spirit. The seven Spirits come out of the

throne of God to judge and work governmentally. The Spirit of God is both the speaking Spirit for the testimony of Jesus, and He is the judging Spirit.

I hope that you would all spend the time to review all the aspects of the Spirit that we have mentioned and pray over them. Then you will see that the Spirit is none other than Christ Himself for us to experience and taste. In the first part of the New Testament Christ is the Word, and in the latter part Christ is the Spirit with many aspects. Christ as the Word is for us to know, to “read,” and to understand, and Christ as the Spirit is for us to realize, enjoy, taste, and experience. If we enjoy Him in a proper way, He is the river of water. If not, He is the stream of fire to us, and something that we have will be brought into the lake of fire. Only when we enjoy Him is He the river of water to us; this river will bring us into the city of water. We need to spend time to pray over all these points, which are very meaningful and helpful.