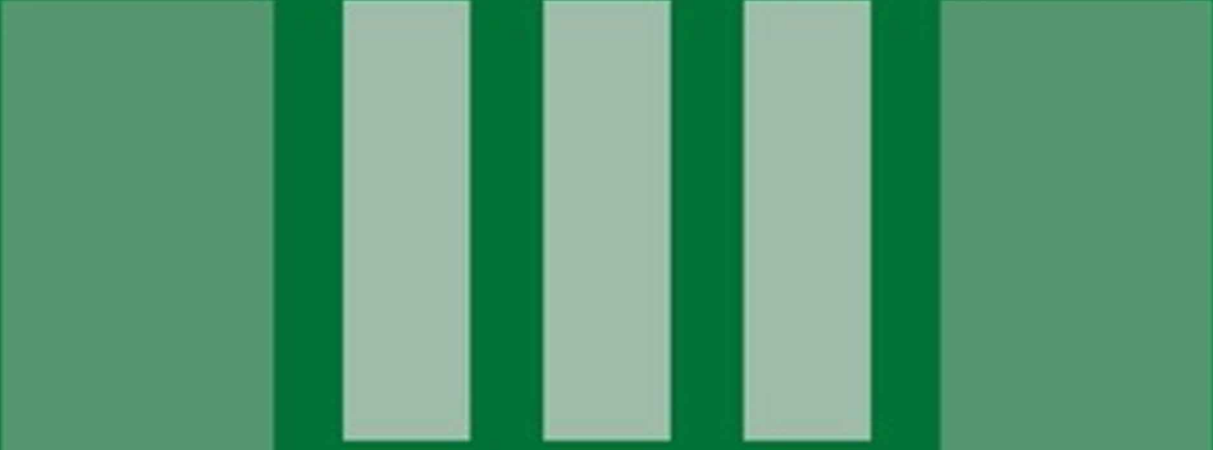




THE FULLNESS OF GOD



WITNESS LEE



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

THE FULLNESS OF GOD

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book is composed of messages given by Brother Witness Lee from January 28 through February 1, 1985, in the young people's training meetings of the church in Taipei. These training meetings covered two lines with messages related to the fullness of God and messages related to life, truth, the church, and the gospel. Chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7 contain the line related to the fullness of God. Chapters 2, 4, 6, and 8 contain the line related to life, truth,

the church, and the gospel. The chapters in this book follow the order in which the messages were given. These messages have been translated from Chinese.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEANING OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD—

THE CREATION OF MAN

BEING FOR THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:7, 18; 3:16, 19; Rom. 9:23; 2:4; Gen. 1:26

OUTLINE

- I. The meaning of the fullness of God:
 - A. The fullness of God being the overflow of God's riches to become His expression.
 - B. The fullness of God being the expression of the riches of God.
 - II. The riches of God:
 - A. The riches of God's grace—Eph. 1:7.
 - B. The riches of God's glory—v. 18; 3:16; Rom. 9:23.
 - C. The riches of God's kindness, forbearance, and long-suffering—2:4.
 - III. The creation of man being for the fullness of God:
 - A. The fullness of God being the expression of the riches of all that God is.
 - B. Man being created in God's image for the expression of all that God is—Gen. 1:26.
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In this series of messages we will use four chapters to consider the fullness of God and another four chapters to consider life, truth, the church, and the gospel. Many newly saved and baptized brothers and sisters may not have a clear understanding of the phrase the fullness of God. It is easier to understand God's power, authority, and greatness. It may also be easier to understand God's mercy, His abundant grace, and His deep love. A believer may also have a partial understanding of some deeper matters, such as God's holiness, righteousness, salvation, and redemption. However, even believers who have been studying the Bible for years find it difficult to understand the fullness of God. After many years of studying the truth and consulting the works of renowned writers throughout the centuries, I discovered that even

Bible expositors have different views of this term, and their understanding is generally not according to the pure divine revelation in the Scriptures.

MAN'S NATURAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE

The Bible was written in human language. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. These were then translated into other languages. A language is a means of communication. It is easy for a person who reads the Bible, whether in the original text or a translation, to have a natural understanding of the Bible if he only understands it literally. This is a common mistake among Bible readers. For example, the Bible speaks about faith. The Chinese translation of *faith* literally means “a believing, trusting heart.” This definition is accurate according to a natural understanding, but it is not accurate according to the revelation in the Bible.

When some people read the word *faith* in the Bible, it is easy for them to understand it as a kind of determination and resolution from a strong will. Hence, they use the example of Columbus to explain faith. They say that during the time of Columbus very few people believed that it was possible to cross the ocean and find land, but Columbus had “faith.” Hence, even after he sailed across the ocean for a long time and was in many storms, and his sailors conspired to kill him, Columbus firmly believed that they would find land and proposed that they sail on. He was unshaken in his faith and therefore kept saying, “Sail on!” According to our natural understanding, that was an example of Columbus’s faith, which was the result of a strong will. His faith together with his courage became an effectual resolve. However, this is not what the Bible means when it speaks of faith.

ENTERING INTO THE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

According to common understanding, faith means to believe, to depend on, and to trust in, but in the New Testament, faith means to receive. This differs from the common understanding of faith. The Bible says, “As many as received Him,...to those who believe into His name” (John 1:12). To believe in Jesus is not merely to believe that He exists and that He is truly the Savior who was crucified to accomplish redemption for us; it is not merely to believe and be convinced of these facts. This type of believing or being convinced is

inadequate. This is not the faith referred to in the Bible. The faith referred to in the Bible is to receive, that is, to receive the One in whom we believe into us, to receive the facts that we believe into us. When we believe, we receive Jesus Christ, and we also receive the redemption that He accomplished for us on the cross. Therefore, according to the Bible, faith means to receive. We believe and are convinced because we have received.

This illustration shows that we should not understand the words in the Bible merely according to their common meaning. After understanding what is written, we still need to go further to see the revelation in the Bible. Let us now apply this principle to the phrase *the fullness of God*.

In everyday language the words *riches* and *fullness* can be similar in meaning. For example, if a person has plenty of food in his house, we would say that his house is rich in food or full of food. In our understanding *riches* and *fullness* are more or less the same.

The book of Ephesians has only six chapters, but it contains the words *riches* and *fullness*. *Riches* is used in 3:8, which speaks of “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and *fullness* is used in 1:23, which speaks of “His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.” In Greek *riches* and *fullness* are two different words. However, because of the similarity of these two words in Chinese, almost everyone who reads the Bible in Chinese understands fullness as riches. But fullness and riches are two different things. I hope that this fellowship will help us to see this matter clearly.

CHRISTIANITY NOT RELEASING THE PROFOUND REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

Some of you may wonder what my intention is in speaking to you concerning these particular and profound words. My intention is to release the profound revelation in the Bible. It is a pity that Christianity releases only ordinary doctrines to people instead of the fundamental and profound revelation and truth in the Bible. When I was young, I studied in a Christian school run by Americans, and every Lord’s Day we had to dress neatly and walk to the chapel for Sunday service. In those days the Chinese people had the impression that Christianity spoke only concerning matters such as “Jesus loves me; this I know,” going to heaven, and going to hell. This aroused much disgust among the Chinese because they had a long history of hearing about

heaven and hell, and therefore, they did not need Western missionaries to speak to them about these things in imperfect Mandarin.

I am a fourth-generation Christian in my family. Hence, the things they taught me in school were fairly clear. When I was twelve or thirteen years old, I heard a British missionary say that the Bible speaks about benevolence, justice, morality, women's submission, and virtues in nearly the same way as the philosophy of China's Confucius and Mencius. After hearing this, I was disgusted and thought that if this was the case, the Chinese did not need the missionaries to teach them; rather, the Chinese should be the ones teaching the missionaries. Therefore, I became annoyed with Christianity, and by the time I was about fifteen years old, I no longer went to the chapel. I felt that the teachings of the Chinese philosophers were more profound than the preaching of the Western missionaries. During those few years, I stayed away from Christianity and did not attend any of their meetings.

SUPPLYING THE BASIC AND PROFOUND REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

By the Lord's power I was saved when I was nineteen, and the Lord planted within me a heart that loves the Bible. Therefore, I studied the Bible diligently for eight years, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-seven. This is the period of time when a person's comprehension and memory are the strongest. I truly loved the Bible, and the more I read the Bible, the more I loved it, because no book in English or Chinese could compare to the Bible. I felt that the Bible is profound and that every verse contains an important meaning. I also collected many Christian books as reference material for the things that I did not understand. I later came across the expository magazines published by Brother Watchman Nee. I thought that he could expound the Bible in such a marvelous way because he was an elderly man. It was only when I began to write to him that I found out that he was only two years older than I. This increased my eagerness and motivation to understand every word and verse in every chapter of the Bible. I asked Brother Nee which book could teach me to understand the Bible. He replied that as far as he knew, the book that was the best exposition of the Bible was the *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible* by J. N. Darby. He added that it was difficult to read because of its long sentences. Hence, a person needed to read it four or five times before he could begin to

understand it; unless a person made an effort to study, he could not enter into it. Brother Nee and I eventually became co-workers.

When I began to serve full time, I visited Brother Nee in Shanghai. One day he came to me with two large sets of books and indicated that they were for me. One of the sets was Darby's *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, and the other was Henry Alford's *New Testament for English Readers*. That was in 1933, fifty-two years ago. During these fifty-two years these two sets of books have always been with me, and they have been a continuous help to me. From the time that I received these books, I have made an effort to study the most particular and profound words in the Bible.

I have been studying the phrase *the fullness of God* for more than forty years. It was not until the last twenty-five years that I began to understand the difference between *the fullness of God* and *the riches of God*. This is a crucial matter that every new believer needs to understand. I want to supply you with the basic and profound truths in the Bible, and I hope that you can obtain light, truth, life, and a rich supply from these truths.

THE MEANING OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Let us begin with the meaning of the fullness of God. The fullness of God is the overflowing of God's riches to become His expression. The fullness of God is also the expression of God's riches. For example, here is a cup with water in it, but you do not know how much water is in the cup. There may be a small amount of water in the cup, or there may be much water. If I pour water into the cup until the water overflows, the cup becomes rich with water to the point of overflowing. This overflowing is the fullness. Inside the cup are the riches, and what flows out is the fullness. The cup first has the riches and then the fullness. Therefore, the fullness is the issue of the overflowing of the riches. This issue is the expression of the riches. Unless the cup overflows, we can only guess concerning what is inside the cup. Once it overflows, we know that water is inside the cup, because the water is expressed.

Hence, we should never consider the riches as the fullness. These two things are absolutely different. The riches are the quantity of an object, whereas the fullness is the flowing out, the overflow, of the object to become the expression of the object. God's fullness is the overflow of His riches, and

this overflow is God's expression. God is abundantly rich. He is so rich that His riches overflow. This overflow is the expression of God.

THE RICHES OF GOD

The riches of a wealthy man are in his abundance of money, and the riches of a wealthy farmer are in his abundance of land. What are the riches of God? In what can God's riches be seen? We can find a few items in the Bible. There are the riches of God's grace (Eph. 1:7), the riches of God's glory (v. 18; 3:16; Rom. 9:23), and the riches of God's kindness, forbearance, and long-suffering (2:4).

According to the revelation in the entire Bible, the riches of God are seen in life. Among the many items of God's creation, life is the richest. Mankind began with one person, Adam, who propagated and multiplied. Now mankind covers the entire earth because the human life is rich. The life of our God is even richer than the human life.

God's riches are also seen in the manifestation of His life and nature. Man possesses love, honesty, endurance, purity, and forbearance as human virtues. Man was made in the image of God and according to God's likeness (Gen. 1:26). This means that God has forbearance, and therefore, He created forbearance in man. God also has long-suffering, and therefore, He created long-suffering in man. All of God's attributes are the source of our human virtues. Man's greatest characteristic is not in having an intelligent mind, in developing huge potentials, or in achieving a great career; the greatest characteristic of man is that his virtues can express God's attributes.

In other words, human virtues are the greatest characteristic of mankind. Philippians 4:8 says, "What things are true, what things are dignified, what things are righteous, what things are pure, what things are lovely, what things are well spoken of,...take account of these things." "These things" are the human virtues that are derived from God and are made according to God's likeness. The source of every human virtue is God. God is rich in love, rich in mercy, rich in forbearance, and rich in many other attributes.

During the past two thousand years of human history, ancient philosophers acknowledge that there is a sovereign "One" in the universe. For example, Confucius said, "He who offends Heaven has none to whom he can pray."

Confucius referred to this sovereign One as Heaven. This is similar to the prodigal son likening God to heaven when he spoke to his father in Luke 15:21, saying, “I have sinned against heaven and before you.” Before the Lord Jesus’ incarnation, before He dwelt among men, mankind always wondered about God. They wondered whether God is forbearing or generous, narrow or broadminded, strict or loving. However, it was not until the Lord Jesus was incarnated, that is, when God was expressed through Jesus Christ, that human beings could see God.

The record in the four Gospels of the Lord Jesus’ life on earth shows that the virtues of the Lord Jesus were the expression of God on earth. The Lord Jesus was meek, caring, compassionate, forbearing, and upright. His love was the love of God, His mercy was the mercy of God, and His compassion was the compassion of God. The life of Jesus on earth was the practical expression of God. Men saw the expressed God in Jesus. Before Jesus came, people did not know God. They wondered whether God was lovely or detestable, generous or narrow, loving or strict. However, in Jesus, God was openly manifested before men. Hence, 1 Timothy 3:16 says, “Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: / He who was manifested in the flesh.” When Jesus came, God was expressed. Everything about the Lord Jesus, what He did, His speaking, attitude, conduct, behavior, and the way He treated others, fully expressed God.

God’s attributes and virtues are His riches. God is so rich that His riches overflow. When God’s riches overflow, they become His fullness, and this fullness is the expression of God.

MAN BEING CREATED IN GOD’S IMAGE AND ACCORDING TO GOD’S LIKENESS TO CONTAIN GOD

Some of the new believers may wonder how the fullness of God is related to them. Concerning this we would present two crucial points. One point is the meaning of God’s fullness, and the other is that man was created for God’s fullness. Genesis 1:26 says, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” God created man in His image. Romans 9:23 says, “In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory.” God not only made man in His image; He also made man as a vessel. This vessel has God’s likeness in order to contain God. Any valuable object is usually contained in a box, and the shape

of the box is determined by the object it contains. Man is a vessel to contain God. It is for this purpose that God created man. Therefore, man is not a coat hanger to be draped with clothes or a food bag to contain food. The meaning of human life is not related to clothing, food, housing, or transportation; it is not related to eating three meals a day and sleeping at night. The meaning of our human life is in the content of our human life.

Man is a vessel created by God to contain God; therefore, man is an empty vessel if he does not contain God. For this reason we need to realize that we are precious vessels, just as a box that contains a diamond is a precious box. As vessels created by God to contain Him, we are very precious. Hence, many believers testify that there was meaning in their human life after they received the Lord.

When I was thirteen or fourteen years old, I had a few good friends, and even though we encouraged one another to strive for the best, we still felt the emptiness of life. Many elderly brothers and sisters have had this feeling. Whether a person is a government official, a teacher, or a businessman, whenever he is calm, he has the feeling that life cannot merely be a matter of food, clothing, and work. People have had many considerations concerning the meaning of human life, but they have never found an answer.

One day God caused the wind of the gospel to blow on the earth. Throughout the past two thousand years this gospel wind has been blowing everywhere on the earth through the continuous preaching of thousands of believers. There was a time when it was considerably difficult for a Western missionary to go to China to preach the gospel. Some of them spent six months sailing in a boat and suffered nausea and illness during their journey only to die after they arrived in China. Today, however, transportation is convenient, and the various means of communication are even more convenient. This environment is favorable for the preaching of the gospel. Hence, the gospel wind is blowing everywhere. When this wind blows on a person, it causes him to receive the Lord, and he immediately feels that life is no longer empty. He feels that life is full of content and meaning. Although there are different races on the earth with different skin colors—yellow, brown, black, white, and red—the need within everyone is the same. Jesus is mankind's common need. He is the all-inclusive dose that is suitable for every kind of person.

Genesis 1 shows that man was created by God and for God. God created man according to His likeness so that man could receive Him. God is now the life-giving Spirit, and all the riches of God are in the Spirit. His love, grace, life, light, holiness, righteousness, kindness, forbearance, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and care are all in the Spirit, and the Spirit is God Himself. We not only need to believe in God; we also need to receive Him. We receive Him simply by opening our mouth to pray. This can be compared to receiving air through breathing. Our calling is our breathing. When we say, “O Lord Jesus,” He enters into us. We can all testify that even when we softly call on the name of the Lord in a meeting, we are changed. It is by calling on the Lord that we receive Him. In this way God enters into us, His vessels, and His riches are contained in us. After God enters into us, He desires to fellowship with us. The more He fellowships with us, the more living we become; and the more we call on Him and breathe Him in, the more He fills us.

THE CREATION OF MAN

BEING FOR THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Man was created in the image of God to express all that God is (Gen. 1:26). All that God is refers to the fullness of God. Hence, man was created for the fullness of God. After we receive God, we continue to take Him into us by breathing Him in until we are filled with all that God is, all His riches. These riches in us eventually overflow. This overflow is the fullness, the expression of God.

Even though some of you are new believers, this message is for you and is focused on your need. If we all receive this word, we will realize that when we believed in the Lord Jesus, we did not receive a philosophy or religion, nor did we learn a different kind of ritual for worship. These are all in vain and are a waste. Instead, we believed into a true and living God who is the living Spirit. We call Him God, Jehovah, Jesus Christ, the Lord, and the Holy Spirit. This One, who entered into us through our believing and receiving, is rich, and His riches are His attributes. His attributes include life, light, holiness, righteousness, grace, meekness, loving-kindness, sincerity, and glory. The more we call on His name, the more He enters into us. The more we gain Him, the more He fills us until He overflows from within us. The issue of this overflow is God’s fullness, His expression.

After some of the young brothers and sisters have been saved for a period of time, their parents notice that they are “different.” After six months their parents say, “Our child is not the same. It seems as though he is both weighty and virtuous.” Although the parents do not know what happened, they see an expression in their children.

**ENJOYING GOD’S RICHES BY CALLING,
AND THE RICHES OVERFLOWING
UNTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD**

What is the expression of God? God’s expression is His fullness. The fullness is derived from God’s riches, and God’s riches are within Him. God is now in us; hence, our need is to daily call on Him. Even though students in Taiwan have much schoolwork and a busy schedule and are exhausted from their studying, they should not forget to call on the Lord. The most important thing in our day is to call on His name every morning. Whether it is a holiday or a school day and whether or not we are busy, we should rise early every day to call on the Lord’s name. Perhaps we do not know how to pray long prayers, but short prayers are sufficient. Furthermore, even while we are in class, we can call, “O Lord Jesus.”

There is an immense difference between calling on the Lord’s name and not calling on His name. When we lack wisdom, we receive wisdom by calling on the Lord’s name. We are able to remember things when we call on His name, and our anger dissipates when we call on His name. We must believe this. If we call on the Lord’s name, our days will not pass by in vain or be wasted. Moreover, we will not speak nonsense, because the Lord within us will keep us calm. We all have the Lord within us; hence, we need to learn to call on His name every moment of every day. Then His riches will become our enjoyment. The Lord is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:12). When we enjoy His riches and are filled with His riches, they will overflow from within us to become God’s fullness. God will thus be expressed through us.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRIST BEING OUR LIFE

Scripture Reading: John 10:10; 1 John 5:12; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Tim.
4:22; Gal. 2:20

Prayer: Lord, in coming to Your Word, we are coming before You. We bow down our heads and worship You. We open our entire being to You. Open Yourself to us, and open Your Word to us. We want to have open fellowship with You in which there is nothing between us and You and nothing between any of us. Lord, remove every veil and shadow so that Your light can shine brightly. Speak enlightening and clear words to us so that we may be brought into the light. We are fallen; we need Your continual salvation. We ask You to show us our inner condition, cover all our shortcomings, and fill up every lack. Give us the ability and the utterance to speak forth Your mystery, and grant us a spirit of wisdom and an open mind that we may understand Your Word and see the mystery in Your Word. We need revelation to see the eternal mystery in Your heart. Lord, we rely on the cleansing of Your precious blood; we take You as our sin offering and trespass offering. Under this cleansing we enjoy Your presence and eat of You. Lord, cover us against all the troubles and attacks from Your enemy. We thank You for sanctifying this time so that we can be gathered quietly before You and learn to know You, the truth, and the way of glory. We worship and exalt You. We love You. Amen.

In the previous chapter we saw that the fullness of God is the overflowing of the riches of God to become His expression. In other words, the fullness of God is the expression of the riches of God. The riches of God are all that God is, that is, God Himself, His attributes. God's attributes are the nature, character, and characteristics that He possesses. For example, God is life, love, light, holiness, righteousness, and power. These are God's attributes, His riches. God is also grace, kindness, and glory. When the riches of God overflow, they become the expression of God.

Furthermore, man was created for God's expression. In explaining this point we need to see that man is created in God's image. Image is a matter of expression. God created man in His image for man to express Him. But how can man express God? In order for man to express God, man must have God's

riches; that is, man must first have all that God is. This includes God's life, love, light, grace, and other attributes. After man has gained, is filled, and overflows with God's riches, these riches become the fullness enabling man to become God's expression. In the beginning of the Bible, man was created in God's image, and at the end of the Bible, man becomes God's fullness, the very expression of God.

CHRIST BEING OUR LIFE

It is crucial for every Christian who is truly saved to know the wonderful truth that Christ is our life. Who can be someone else's life? No one can be life for another person. In the six thousand years of human history no philosopher ever declared that he was life. Moreover, no one ever said that he would become man's life. At the most they were able to say only that they were teachers or masters, but they never said that they were life or that they were life for their disciples. In the past six thousand years only one man, the Lord Jesus in whom we believe, ever said, "I am...the life" (John 11:25; 14:6), and only He said, "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly" (10:10). The Lord came that man would not merely have life but that man would have it abundantly.

Sixty years ago, before I was saved, I heard a famous traveling preacher quote John 10:10: "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly." Although I did not understand what he was saying, I was impressed by this verse. After I was saved, I began to study this verse and to study the topic of Christ being our life, and I bought many books concerning Christ as our life. Although some of the books were concerning the overcoming life and also concerning the secret of taking Christ as life, none of them spoke clearly and thoroughly concerning Christ as life. I studied this matter for at least ten years after I was saved.

Christ in Us Being the Overcoming Life

By 1935 I had been saved for ten years and was serving the Lord full time. From 1933 to 1935 I spent much time working with Brother Nee in Shanghai. During this time we fought the spiritual battle together. In 1935 I returned to Chefoo to spend the summer, and Brother Nee also went to Chefoo for some rest. Our original intention was to rest that summer, but we eventually held a conference. Brother Nee was burdened to speak concerning Christ in us as the

overcoming life. When he spoke, many people's minds were opened, and a revival was brought in.

Brother Nee had intended to stay in Chefoo that summer and then travel to Europe via Manchuria and Siberia. However, because his speaking about the overcoming life brought in a revival, he cancelled his trip to Europe and returned to Shanghai. This brought the revival to Shanghai, and then from Shanghai it spread to Amoy. In addition, from that time onward he began to gradually spread the work of the Lord's recovery. Therefore, I left my hometown, Chefoo, and went to begin the work in Tientsin and Beijing. However, it was only when I was in Brother Nee's conference in Chefoo that my mind was opened to understand the matter of Christ in us as life, but even that understanding was not thorough.

By the summer of 1939 Brother Nee had given many messages concerning Christ as life when he visited Europe. These messages were recorded and edited by a British brother and published as *The Normal Christian Life*. When Brother Nee returned from Europe, he called a conference. At that time I and three to four young brothers were working in the places near the Tsingtao-Tsinan Railway in Shantung Province. When I received Brother Nee's telegram asking me to attend his conference in Shanghai, I immediately went to Shanghai. I was greatly helped in that conference.

Four Stages of Experiencing Christ as Life

Although Christians say Christ is life, few Christians can say "Christ our life" as Paul does in Colossians 3:4. There are even fewer Christians who go further and touch the secret of Christ as life, and still fewer live by taking Christ as life. Among those in Christianity, there are false Christians. We do not need to speak about these people. There are others who are seeking and who know that Christ is their life, but they may not necessarily touch the secret of Christ as life. Still others have touched the secret of Christ as life, but they have not entered into the stage of daily taking Christ as life and living Christ. Finally, some live by daily taking Christ as life just as Paul, who says, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21), and "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

In 1949, when we were working in Taiwan, we composed a short hymn for baptism: "Already dead! And buried too! / With the old man I am through!

/...No longer I! No longer I! / Christ in me I'll testify!" (*Hymns*, #938). On one occasion we baptized over seven hundred people. We baptized people on Saturday night and continued baptizing on the Lord's Day. On those two days we sang this hymn with every person we baptized; we sang this hymn over seven hundred times. However, according to my observation, the people who were baptized were not "through" after their baptism. Although the hymn says, "I am through! / ...Christ in me I'll testify," none of them could say, "I am through," nor could they say, "No longer I! Christ in me I'll testify!" Rather, their condition was the opposite. Therefore, on the one hand, I am glad to see so many young people attending this conference and to know that two to three hundred of the young people have been saved for less than half a year. On the other hand, I am concerned that these young people might not live a life which testifies that "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me."

THE SECRET BEING IN THE SPIRIT

The Bible reveals that Christ wants to be our life (John 10:10). John says, "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:12), and Paul says, "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4). It is not easy to find the secret to taking Christ as our life. I sought in vain for this secret for many years. Eventually, as I experienced Christ and read the Bible, I discovered that the key, the secret, to taking Christ as our life is absolutely in the spirit.

Brother Nee once said that in order to experience Christ, we must enter into Romans 8, because this chapter speaks concerning the Spirit of life. The title *the Spirit of life* is used only once in the entire Bible, and that is in Romans 8:2. The Spirit of life is the Spirit of Christ in verse 9. Furthermore, verse 9 shows that the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of life is the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. In addition, this chapter also shows that the Spirit of Christ is Christ Himself (vv. 9-10).

When traditional Christian theology speaks of the Trinity, it emphasizes the aspect of three to avoid confusion by saying that God is the heavenly Father, Christ is the Son, and the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. This kind of traditional, theological teaching is harmful and has misled many people. For example, when I was young, I often heard people say that Christ is the Son, and the Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. They said that the Holy Spirit and the Son

should not be confused because They are two persons. This affected me and hindered me from finding the key to experiencing Christ as life.

Christ Being the Life-giving Spirit

Brother Nee helped us to see according to Romans 8 that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ and that the Spirit of Christ, who is Christ Himself, is the Spirit of life. We saw that the Spirit of life is life.

In addition, according to 1 Corinthians 15:45, the last Adam, Christ our Savior, became flesh, died, and was resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the Spirit of life, and He can give us life because He is the Spirit of life. The life-giving Spirit is Christ.

As the Lamb of God, our rich Christ accomplished redemption for us on the cross to take away our sin (John 1:29), and He is now living in us to be our life (Col. 3:4). He is living in us, and He is also on the throne in the heavens as the Lord and Christ, the One who is all-inclusive and omnipresent. He is both in heaven and in us. He is the Spirit of life in us who gives us life. Therefore, we need to see that the Spirit within us is the secret to our enjoying Christ as life.

Second Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” The Lord is the life-giving Spirit, and He abides in us in our spirit. The Lord as the life-giving Spirit abides in us. He has become one with our spirit, fellowshiping with our spirit and mingling with our spirit, so that His Spirit and our spirit become one spirit.

Living in the Mingled Spirit

The fact that the Lord Jesus is our life means that He as the Spirit is our life. He is in our spirit as the Spirit. For this reason, 2 Timothy 4:22 says, “The Lord be with your spirit.” The Lord is in our spirit; hence, living in our spirit is the secret to receiving and enjoying the Lord as our life. What kind of spirit do we have? We have a mingled spirit, a spirit that is the mingling of the life-giving Spirit—who is the Lord Jesus—and our human spirit. This mingled spirit is in every one of us. The secret to enjoying the Lord as life is to live in our spirit.

In general, as long as people are not saying anything wrong or not saying something negative about other people, they speak whenever it pleases them.

However, because we enjoy the Lord as life, we should turn to our spirit and speak in our spirit whenever we speak. A person might lose his temper if his wife or a classmate makes him angry. If it would be embarrassing to lose his temper in a particular environment, he may exercise control but lose his temper later. What should we do if we are about to lose our temper, since we have Christ as life and enjoy Him as life? We should not lift up our eyes to heaven and say, “O Lord Jesus, if You want me to lose my temper, I will lose my temper, but if You do not want me to lose my temper, I will not lose my temper.” Instead, we should turn to our spirit and touch the feeling in our spirit by fellowshiping with the Lord and say, “I am about to lose my temper, but what are You doing?” Stanza 1 of *Hymns*, #403 says, “Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me, / For my very life art Thou; / Thee I take to all my problems / As the full solution now.” Whether or not we lose our temper is not for us to decide; the Lord Jesus should be our answer. If after asking Him in this way He is silent within us, we will not have any temper to lose. We can even ask Him if He wants to lose His temper. If we fellowship with Him in this way, we will have no strength to lose our temper. This is not a joke. This is the testimony of many believers. This is the way for us to enjoy the Lord as life.

Let us use buying things as another example. Whether people are in Taiwan or the United States, they like to buy things. When people from Taiwan go to the United States, they like to buy things in the United States, and when people from the United States come to Taiwan, they like to buy things in Taiwan. When I want to buy something, I turn to my spirit and ask the Lord to buy it. If the Lord does not respond, I may again ask Him to buy it, but He may remain silent. It is a great blessing to take Christ as life in this way when we want to buy things. Should the sisters go window-shopping? When we enter a department store, we should take Christ as life and experience “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” We should say, “O Lord Jesus, the department store is having a sale today. Can I buy something?” We should not ask the Lord in heaven; rather, we should ask the Lord in our spirit. He is the life-giving Spirit who abides in us. If we pray in this way, ninety-eight percent of the time we will not be able to buy anything. The Lord lives in our spirit; hence, we will have a feeling within.

These are negative examples. Let us now consider a positive example. Should we open our mouth and testify in a meeting? Some saints seem to be addicted to testifying in the meetings, just as some people are addicted to coffee. If

such a believer can stop speaking in the meeting for three years, Christ will live in him and be his life. When he wants to speak, he should remember *Hymns*, #938: “Already dead! And buried too! / With the old man I am through! / ...No longer I! No longer I! / Christ in me I’ll testify!” When we testify, it should be Christ who testifies in us. If Christ does not testify, we should not testify. We should simply remain seated. This is how we take Christ as our life.

The new believers should not envy those who have been saved for many years, the so-called old-timers, because it is easy for people to rely on their seniority. I often remind myself of this, because I could also do this. Most of the elderly brothers and sisters rely on their seniority. Consequently, when they listen or speak in the meetings, they rely on their old age. The words that are spoken in the meetings should be sweet and fragrant to the new believers and should also be fresh to the saints who have been saved for many years. Therefore, we should all learn to live in our spirit and be in the newness of our spirit. Christ is our life, and it is no longer we who live, but it is Christ who lives in us. This should become our practical experience.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REDEMPTION OF THE BELIEVERS

BEING FOR THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:9; 1:19; John 1:14, 16; Heb. 1:3; John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 3:19

OUTLINE

- I. The fullness of God dwelling in Christ bodily—Col. 2:9; 1:19:
 - A. The fullness of God's grace and reality being in Christ—John 1:14.
 - B. The believers having received of Christ's fullness, and grace upon grace—v. 16.
- II. Christ being the expression of the riches of all that God is—Heb. 1:3.
- III. The believers being redeemed for God's expression:
 - A. The believers being redeemed back to humanity's position at creation.
 - B. The believers being redeemed to become God's children, having the divine life and the divine nature to express God and, thereby, becoming God's fullness—John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 3:19.

Prayer: Lord, under Your precious blood, we worship You as those whom You have redeemed, saved, and visited. Lord, we are not merely gathering in Your name; even more, we are gathering with Your Spirit. Visit us again and come to each one of us. We need Your special visitation. We also need Your Spirit to deliver us daily from death that we may be freed from the old creation, the flesh, the world, and Satan. We believe that Your victorious blood cleanses us and also removes every shadow of the authority of darkness from this meeting place. Lord, refresh, uplift, and enliven our spirit so that You can move freely among us. Give us light, utterance, and a timely word to meet Your need. As the all-inclusive Lord, You are immeasurable, and You are able to meet the need of everyone here. Cleanse our ears with Your precious blood, and anoint us with Your anointing so that our heart may be opened to draw near to Your Word and to enter into the depth of the mystery in Your Word. Lord, have mercy on us and shame Your enemy. We bind him in Your victorious name. We declare once again that Jesus is victorious, and Satan is defeated! Lord,

establish Your kingdom and Your sovereign authority among us. We exalt Your name and give You the glory. Amen.

BEING FILLED WITH THE RICHES OF GOD UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

According to the title of this chapter, “The Redemption of the Believers Being for the Fullness of God,” we are redeemed for the fullness of God. *The fullness of God* is a particular and profound phrase. Throughout the centuries Bible readers have argued and debated concerning this phrase. Some versions of the Bible translate Ephesians 3:19 as, “That you may be filled *with* all the fullness of God.” This translation, however, is not according to the original text, nor is it according to the truth. The meaning of the original text is “that you may be filled *unto* all the fullness of God.”

We need to be filled with the riches of God. The riches of God are the attributes of God, and God’s attributes are what God is. God has many attributes. For example, God is life, love, light, righteousness, mercy, grace, forbearance, kindness, authority, and power. These attributes of God are the riches of what God is. Many Christians say that they are filled with God. This is a very general statement. The New Testament clearly shows that to be filled with God is to be filled with the riches of what God is. Hence, when we are filled with God, we are filled with His life, love, light, grace, forgiveness, forbearance, power, and other riches. In other words, we are filled with all the attributes of God. This is the way we become the fullness of God. The ultimate meaning of fullness is expression. We first have God’s riches, and then we become God’s fullness. God’s fullness is the overflow of His riches from within us. When God’s riches overflow from within us, we become His fullness; we become the expression of God.

THE CHURCH BEING THE FULLNESS OF GOD

If we read Ephesians 3 carefully, we will see that the phrase *unto all the fullness of God* in verse 19 refers to the church. Christians who are cold and do not pursue the Lord in their daily life, but only worship Him on the Lord’s Day, are not filled. They are empty. They do not have anything to say, and they cannot function in their meetings. Therefore, the pastor leads the singing

and the prayer, and a famous speaker is invited to give a sermon. This is not the church; neither is this the fullness of God.

In the book of Ephesians Paul speaks specifically concerning the church. In 3:16-19 he desperately prayed for the saints: “That He would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.” If we are filled with God’s life, love, and light, we will sing joyfully as we walk into the meeting hall, and everyone in our meetings will sing, praise, testify, and say Amen. We will have smiles on our faces, and we will overflow with joy. We will be filled with God. This is the fullness of God. God’s overflowing is His fullness, His expression. Such believers are the church, and this expression is the church.

THE FULLNESS OF GOD

DWELLING IN CHRIST BODILY

There are two verses that we should study for a deeper understanding of the fullness. One verse is Colossians 2:9, which says, “In Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” The other verse is Colossians 1:19, which says, “In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell.” There is only one God, and the Bible shows that when the Lord Jesus was incarnated, He was God manifested in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). The two verses in Colossians show that what dwells in Christ dwells in Him bodily. What dwells in Christ is substantial, not vague or abstract. That which dwells in Christ is God’s fullness. But what is God’s fullness? Even though most people are not careless when they read other books, they are careless when they read the Bible. They skip the portions of the Bible that they do not understand, either because those portions are difficult or because they do not want to understand them. According to my knowledge of the Greek language, Colossians 2:9 definitely says, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” We should not take this verse for granted. Our attitude should not be that it does not matter whether or not we understand *Godhead* and *fullness*. This should not be our attitude. We must spend the time to study these words. The Bible is not

incomprehensible. However, if we desire to understand the Bible, we need to pay the price and make an effort.

The Fullness of God's Grace and Reality

Being in Christ

In addition to Colossians 2:9 and 1:19, John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality." This verse shows that the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, is the Lord Jesus, who is full of grace and full of reality. In the Lord Jesus, who is the Word become flesh, there is not merely a little grace and reality; rather, there is the fullness of grace and reality. Furthermore, this grace and reality are of God. Initially, grace and reality were in God as riches; however, in the Lord Jesus they are the fullness. The riches are in God, and when the riches overflow from God to the Lord Jesus, they are the fullness.

The Lord Jesus is full of grace and full of reality. He is also full of life, love, light, holiness, righteousness, considerateness, endurance, kindness, faithfulness, power, and other virtues. All the attributes of God, His riches, are made full in the Lord Jesus. His virtues are the riches in God. When the riches overflow into the Lord Jesus, they become the fullness. The riches in God become the fullness in the Lord Jesus.

Hymns, #187 has twenty-six stanzas that speak of the fullness in the Lord Jesus. When we read through this hymn, we sense the fullness of the Lord Jesus. Whatever we need He is; He is neither poor nor empty. The Lord Jesus possesses life, but He does not merely have a great measure of life; He has the fullness of life like a waterfall. He does not merely have love; He has the fullness of love. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world." However, the verse does not end here; it continues: "That He gave His only begotten Son." The words *so* and *that* show that the love which was in God entered into the Son. The love of God was rich in God. When the love of God entered into the Son, it became the fullness of love. The love of God with which He loves the world is rich, but when the only begotten Son came, God's love became the fullness. When we receive God's love, we are receiving what is in the Son, not what is in the Father. Hence, the love we receive is the fullness of love.

The Believers Having Received

of Christ's Fullness, and Grace upon Grace

John 1:16 says, "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." It is not easy to understand this verse. A teacher of the Greek language once said that *grace upon grace* can be compared to the waves of the sea, which roll in wave upon wave without interruption. In this verse grace does not refer to the riches of grace but to the fullness of grace. The riches of grace are in God, but the fullness of grace is in Christ Jesus. Hence, the grace that we receive is the fullness of grace. The Jews do not know the Lord Jesus, and they do not receive Him. They only have the Father but not the Son. Hence, the most that they can enjoy is the rich love of God. They cannot enjoy the fullness of the love of God as Christians can.

Now we can understand John 1:16. This verse says that we have received "of His fullness," not "of His riches." *Fullness*, not *riches*, is used in this verse. This can be compared to water within a cup being the riches and to the water that overflows the cup being the fullness. The Lord Jesus is the overflow of God; the Son is the overflow of the Father. Here is an illustration. Before I was married in 1928, I was a bachelor. Even though I was young and strong, I did not have an "overflow." Today, however, my eight children, their spouses, and my third generation add up to more than thirty people. This is my overflow. The riches are seen in the father, and the fullness is seen in the children.

In God the Father love is rich, light is rich, and grace is also rich, but we cannot see the fullness of these items in the Father. When the Son came and walked on the earth, people saw the overflow, something that surpassed the riches. Based on this light, when we read the record of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels, we need to see that His life and walk were not merely rich in life, love, and power; His life and walk were the fullness of life, love, and power. When we describe the Father, we use the word *rich*. God is rich in this, and He is rich in that. However, when we describe the Son, we need to change *rich* to *full*. Christ is full of this, and He is full of that. The Lord is not only rich, but He is also full. The Lord Jesus is the fullness of God, and fullness is expression. *Hymns*, #501 says, "O glorious Christ, Savior mine, / Thou art truly radiance divine." When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was full of grace, full of reality, full of light, and full of life. He was full of the attributes of God; He was full of all that God is. This is God's manifestation, God's expression.

We are now clear concerning the fullness of God dwelling in Christ bodily. In Christ is the fullness of God's grace and reality, and we have all received of Christ's fullness, and grace upon grace. This is like wave upon wave of grace coming upon us. This surely is fullness. The grace we receive from the Lord is the expression of God. Hence, the more grace we receive, the more we express God.

CHRIST BEING THE EXPRESSION OF THE RICHES OF ALL THAT GOD IS

We have seen that Christ is God's fullness; He is the expression of the riches of all that God is. Concerning Christ, Hebrews 1:3 says that He is the effulgence of God's glory. Effulgence is the fullness of glory. It is the overflow of glory; therefore, effulgence is the expression of glory. God is glory. Christ is the effulgence of God's glory; He is the fullness of God and the expression of God.

THE BELIEVERS BEING REDEEMED FOR GOD'S EXPRESSION

The believers are redeemed for the fullness of God. By redemption the believers are brought back to the position of humanity at creation. The original position of man at creation was to be a vessel to contain and express God. After man fell, he lost this position, but in His death on the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished redemption to bring man back to his original position.

The believers are also redeemed to become the children of God who possess the divine life and the divine nature in order to express God and become the fullness of God (John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 3:19). Eventually, not only is Christ God's fullness, but all those who belong to Christ will also be God's fullness. Two thousand years ago there was only one man, Jesus in the land of Judea, who was God's fullness to express God. Today, however, there are countless expressions of God on the earth. Even though our expression falls short, we at least bear some resemblance. We are redeemed, we have believed into the Lord, we are born of God, and we are children of God. We have God's life and nature. The divine life and nature within us will continue to increase

until they become the fullness, and we are “filled unto all the fullness of God” (v. 19).

Many of the young brothers live together in the brothers’ houses. When you sit together around the table after dinner, you should exercise to see how much you express God. As brothers, you should not be political or hypocritical when you speak to one another. Rather, you should consider how much God is expressed among you. You should also consider which aspects of God are expressed, whether it is grace, love, light, or life. You need to express God, and you should remind one another to express God.

There are brothers’ houses and sisters’ houses in the United States and in Taiwan. In the past, most of the testimonies we heard from these brothers and sisters were about washing dishes. If the saints who live in the brothers’ houses can overcome in the matter of washing dishes, they will have the fullness of God. They can overcome by calling on the Lord while they wash dishes. The Lord Jesus is the fullness of God, and the believers who are redeemed by God have the overflowing God within them. In God the divine life is rich; when this life enters into us, it becomes the fullness. When we receive and enjoy the divine nature that overflows from God, we become the fullness of God and His expression.

May the work of the Spirit of the Lord touch us all and enable us to see that being a Christian is not a matter of ethical cultivation or self-improvement; rather, it is a matter of being filled unto all the fullness of God. We need to be filled with the riches of God’s life, love, holiness, grace, and power. When we are filled with the riches of what God is, we will become God’s fullness and spontaneously express Him. As a result, we will be those who enjoy and express God. This is what it means to be a genuine believer; this is the genuine Christian life.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRUTH BEING OUR FREEDOM

Scripture Reading: John 1:14, 17; 8:32, 36; 14:6; 17:17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15;
Titus 1:1

THE LOVE OF GOD PROGRESSING

In the previous chapter we pointed out that according to John 3:16, when the divine love is in the Father, it is rich, but when it is in the Son, it becomes the fullness. The basis for saying this is found in this verse, which reads, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.” In this verse God’s love progresses from the Father to the Son. This is based on the words *so* and *that*. When we read John 3:16, we must not neglect the words *so* and *that*.

The Love of God

Being Manifested in the Son

Before creation the Triune God held a counsel. Then in Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” This shows that God loves man and chose man. God loves man more than anything else that He created. The Bible does not say that God loved the angels, but John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world.” This verse shows God’s love toward man. However, love in the Father cannot produce any effect; man can neither receive it, nor can he be saved by it. Although the love in the Father is rich, this rich love in the Father cannot save man nor cause man to have life. Therefore, it would not be enough if God’s love toward man would remain only in the Father. This love had to be manifested in the Son. At a certain point in time the love in the Father was manifested in the Son. As a result, man could receive the life of God and be saved.

Most Christians have a natural understanding of the phrase *God so loved the world*. They know objectively that God loved the world, and He therefore gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes into Him would not perish but would have eternal life. They do not realize that God’s love can be manifested

in the Son because it progressed from the Father to the Son. When the divine love is manifested, it causes man not to perish. As it continues to be manifested, man receives eternal life, the very life of God. In other words, the divine life enters into man and becomes man's life.

The Highest Manifestation of God's Love to Us Being That He Becomes Us and We Become Him

The highest manifestation of the divine love in the Son is that we will be made exactly the same as He is; we become Him. The last two lines of hymn #130 in the Chinese hymnal say, "Thou become me, I become Thee; / This is Thy love to the utmost." Someone accused me of being heretical because of this hymn. I do not care for their accusation; I care only for the truth, and I hold the truth. The highest manifestation of the love of God is that we become Him. The divine love is more than rich; it is full.

The Word Becoming Flesh and Tabernacling among Us

Previously, when I read John 1:14, I did not understand why John included so many points in this verse. The beginning of verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh." These few words are difficult to understand. What is the Word? What does *became* mean? How did the Word become flesh? What does *flesh* mean? The answers to these questions are fathomless. Even if we were to hold a ten-day conference, we would not be able to adequately cover the expression *the Word*. We would need another conference for the word *became* and still another conference for the word *flesh*. Verse 14 continues, "And tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality." We need special conferences to speak on *tabernacled*, *among us*, *full of*, *grace*, and *reality*. The middle of verse 14 says, "(and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father)."

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word that existed in the beginning is high and far away. Furthermore, verse 1 goes on to say, "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 3 says, "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not one thing came into being which has come into being." This means that all things were created through Him. Creation can be

compared to a ladder that God used to come down to earth. After speaking of creation in verse 3, in verse 4 John says, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” However, when John comes to verse 14, his train of thought seems to jump, and instead of speaking about creation, life, or the light of life, he says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality.” What is the meaning of the word *tabernacled*? The tabernacle referred to in this verse is the dwelling place of God among men.

God has a dwelling place in the heavens, but His dwelling place on earth is called the tabernacle. John made a big jump when he wrote chapter 1. The Word that was in the beginning is high and far away; it was with God, and it even was God (v. 1). Then in verse 14 John jumps from the Word to the flesh: “The Word became flesh.” This is a jump down to the earth. “Tabernacled among us” is a jump up, and “full of grace and reality” is a higher jump.

The Fullness of Love Being the Overflow

What is grace, and what is reality? Grace is God in the Son as our enjoyment, and reality is God in the Son realized by us. Therefore, grace and reality are both God Himself. However, we are not speaking merely about the Father; we are referring to something that has progressed from the Father to the Son. In the Father, God is hidden, but in the Son, God is expressed. Expression indicates progression; it is the fullness, the overflowing of the riches. The riches in the Father are hidden, but in the Son the riches are expressed. This expression is the fullness. In the Father the riches are a matter of existence; in the Son the riches are a matter of expression. Existence becomes expression, the fullness, in the Son.

God is rich. His riches consist of His attributes and all that He is. This is a matter of His existence. When the riches progress to the Son, there is an expression, an overflow; this is the fullness. The riches as a matter of existence are in the Father, but the fullness is not related to the Father. The fullness is in the Son. When the Son is expressed, the riches become the fullness. Therefore, in the Son the riches of grace, truth, and love become the fullness of grace, truth, and love. In 3:16 John was moved by the Spirit to write, “God *so* loved the world *that* He gave His only Begotten Son.” The words *so* and *that* show the overflow of the divine love, and the overflow causes those who believe into the Son not to perish but to have the eternal life of God.

We have become the children of God, possessing the divine life and nature. The fullness of the divine love fills us until we are filled to the brim. We enjoy the eternal God in the eternal life until He makes us exactly the same as He is. This is not only the riches of love but the fullness, the overflowing of love. The purpose of my explaining these truths is to demonstrate the proper principle of studying the Bible.

Christ Being the One Reality of All

At the beginning of 1961 I was in Taiwan and wrote eighty-five hymns. One of these hymns says, “Christ is the one reality of all, / Of Godhead and of man and all things else; / No man without Him ever findeth God, / Without Him man and everything is false” (*Hymns*, #496). We cannot find a hymn with this kind of content in any hymnal in Christianity. Over the past two thousand years, thousands of teachers have expounded the Bible, but no one ever wrote a hymn on Christ being the reality of all. However, an old Chinese man who was born in a small town in Shantung and who has no degree in theology wrote such a hymn.

The title of the first conference we held in the United States was “The All-inclusive Christ.” In this conference I said that Christ is the food that we eat, He is the clothes that we wear, He is the house that we live in, and He is the chair that we sit on and the bed that we sleep in. Some of the people who attended the conference said that this was pantheism. Their criticism proved their ignorance of the Bible, because Colossians 2:16-17 says that eating, drinking, feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths are a shadow of Christ. Christ is our food, our drink, our feasts, our new moons, and our Sabbaths. Christ is the reality of all things. If what I said was pantheism, Paul was the first person to speak in this way.

The truth is the truth. We need to know our goods, to know the treasure we have. I hope that every saint will give his all for this treasure. Fifty years ago I made the decision to give my all for this treasure. After all these years I am delighted to see that I made the right decision. In the matter of knowing the truth, we have much to learn.

THE TRUTH BEING OUR FREEDOM

The title of this chapter is “The Truth Being Our Freedom.” Is the truth concerning Christ as our life deeper than that of the truth as our freedom? After speaking on these two matters for the past fifty years, I can say that neither topic is easy. In a previous chapter I spoke concerning Christ as our life, but I did not cover it thoroughly, because the matter of Christ being our life is too profound, mysterious, and marvelous.

Truth Needing Reality and Teaching

When I spoke on the word *reality* many years ago in Taiwan, I did not give much stress to the matter of teachings. However, after further study, I feel that we need both teachings and reality. Merely having reality without teaching does not constitute the truth, nor does having teachings without reality constitute the truth. The truth must have both reality and teaching.

For example, even though Confucius taught benevolence and righteousness, this teaching does not contain the truth. Rather, this teaching is merely doctrine because he could not give the reality of benevolence or righteousness to people. Confucius did not say, “I am benevolence and righteousness”; neither did philosophers such as Socrates and Plato say this. Throughout human history there was only one person who said, “I am” (John 8:24, 28). When He spoke of life, He said, “I am the...life” (11:25), and when He spoke of truth, He said, “I am the...reality,” which is, “I am the...truth” (14:6).

The Lord Jesus Giving People Reality

The teachings of Confucius concerning the way of the highest learning, developing the bright virtue, loving people, and attaining supreme goodness are doctrines. In contrast, in the New Testament the Lord Jesus did not teach just doctrine; He also gave people reality. He did not say only that we should love other people as we love ourselves; He declared that we should abide in His love (15:9-10). In other words, He is the reality of our love. It seems as if the Lord was saying, “Receive My words and understand them, but if you want to obtain the reality in My words, you must gain Me.”

The Lord Jesus is the Word becoming flesh to tabernacle among us that we may be full of reality. Jesus did not merely speak doctrine; He was the reality of what He spoke. He spoke of love, and He is love. He spoke of truth, and He is truth. The disciples of Confucius could say only that they received the

teachings of Confucius and that they improved their behavior according to his teachings. Confucius never said to his disciples, “If you do not have me, these teachings are empty. You need to open yourselves and let me enter into you, because I am the reality of these teachings.” Confucius did not have this teaching. He could not say this, because he was neither life nor the Spirit. Therefore, he could not enter into men. The Lord Jesus, however, is different. At the end of Revelation, the end of the entire Bible, He said, “Let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely” (22:17). When we drink the Lord by drinking the water of life, we have the truth and also the reality. We have received the reality; the truth is the reality. Everything that is written in a recipe is theory. However, when someone prepares a delicious meal according to a recipe and puts it on the table for everyone to enjoy, the recipe becomes a reality. Thus, we need not only doctrine but also reality, the truth.

Doctrine and Reality Being in the Word of God

John 1:14 says that the Lord Jesus is “full of grace and reality [truth].” Verse 17 says, “The law was given through Moses; grace and reality [truth] came through Jesus Christ.” These verses do not contain teaching; they contain reality. In John 17:17, however, the Lord Jesus said, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” The word includes teachings, but in this verse the Lord says that the word of God is truth. This indicates that the word of God contains not only teachings but also reality. Let us look at another verse: “You shall be holy because I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16; cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7). This verse contains doctrine as well as reality, because God said that He is holy.

The doctrine of sanctification cannot sanctify us. Only the Lord, the reality of sanctification, can sanctify people. Seemingly, the word is composed of teachings, but within the word is reality. Therefore, the word of God can sanctify us. We do not only need to receive the word; we also need to gain the Lord Himself. The New Testament puts the word and the Lord together, as in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word,...and the Word was God.” The words in the Bible are not the same as the words of Confucius. The words of Confucius are merely words, but the words in the Bible are not merely words; they contain reality, and this reality is God Himself.

LIVING BY THE LORD DAILY

I would like to encourage the young brothers and sisters to pay attention to the crucial matter of taking Christ as life after our salvation. We have not believed in a religion or accepted a philosophy. We have received the life-giving Spirit who is real and living. The One who bore our sins and was crucified on the cross two thousand years ago wants to be our Savior. He has ascended to the throne in the heavens, and He is the Lord. This Jesus is our Savior and Lord. He is also the Spirit who is real and living. He lives in our spirit in order to be our life. Therefore, the most important matter after we are saved is to daily live by Him.

Contacting the Lord, Breathing Him In, and Reading the Word of God

The first thing that we should do every morning when we wake up is to contact the Lord and call on His name. We should do this not only in the morning, but we should do this throughout the day, just as we breathe continually. We must take God as our life all day long. We should also read the Bible, the word of God, which is the truth, daily. The words in the Bible are different from philosophy and from the teachings of Confucius. Philosophy and the teachings of Confucius are beneficial to society, but they are merely doctrine. In contrast, the Bible as God's word gives a thorough explanation of God, who is also hidden in the word as the reality. When we read the Bible every day, we contact God through His word. Eventually, we receive not only doctrine but the truth, the reality.

Contacting God to Receive Reality

Ephesians 5:22-25 says that wives should be subject to their husbands and that husbands should love their wives. It is a pity that most Christians, including many pastors, misunderstand submission and love in this chapter. When my wife and I were married, the pastor who married us asked me, "Will you love her?" Then he asked my wife-to-be, "Will you be subject to him?" In this situation everyone must respond, "I will." Everyone must follow the ritual because it is a ceremony. Although we nod our head in agreement, it does not work.

Ephesians 5 is based on chapter 3, which says, "That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (v. 19). Chapter 5 repeats this in verse 18: "Be filled in spirit." To be filled in spirit is to be filled unto all the fullness of God. When

we are filled unto the fullness of God, we can overflow with obedience, submission, and love. Husbands often resolve to control their temper, maintain a proper attitude, and love their wife as the weaker vessel. Wives also make resolutions to submit to their husband. Our resolutions often last for only three hours, and then they become ineffective. Every wife wants to be a submissive, dutiful wife and a loving mother who is gentle, obedient, and sweet. Eventually, the wife is often not soft; rather, she is hard, like a piece of marble. In such a situation we need to call, “O Lord Jesus!” After calling on the Lord, we will be filled within, and we will have submission and love. This is our experience.

Being Earnest in Our Education and Studying the Truth

Although the students in Taiwan are very busy with their school work, I encourage them to work hard, because once they are over twenty-five years old, it will be difficult for them to further their education. They should do their best to spend all their time to study before they turn twenty-two. Around 1976 I discovered that most of the young brothers in the United States had an erroneous concept. They thought that as long as they loved the Lord and were spiritual, it was sufficient to mow lawns and clean swimming pools for a living. I was strong to correct that kind of erroneous concept. I thank the Lord that after my speaking many young people had a change in attitude, and by 1980 many of them had obtained higher degrees as a result of that message. A sister testified to me that she became a certified nurse because of that encouraging word. There are numerous testimonies of this kind.

Therefore, I encourage you to be earnest in your studies and get the best grades. However, you should not study diligently and neglect the Lord and the truth. You must cultivate the habit of daily praying for at least five minutes in the morning and reading the Word for ten minutes. This is not difficult; everyone can do it. Young people should not love their bed. It is more profitable to rise ten minutes earlier than it is to rise ten minutes later. Sleeping an extra ten minutes does not necessarily make you stronger. Seven hours of sleep is sufficient.

In the matter of studying the truth, I would like to recommend the Recovery Version of the New Testament. The young people, especially the newly saved ones, should study the book of Romans. If you want to refer to

the English edition, I encourage you to purchase the Recovery Version in English for reference and comparison.

Reading the Word Sequentially, Not Selectively

When reading the Bible, it is best not to skip around according to our interest; neither should we read the Bible in a religious way. Rather, we should read the Bible sequentially. Every mother knows that a child who is selective in his eating will not be healthy and grow normally. Children should eat whatever their mother prepares for them. This is how mothers in the United States train their children so that they will not be picky in their eating. In order to eat healthy food, we must learn not to be picky. When we study the book of Romans, we should begin with chapter 1 verse 1 and then read verse 2. Even if we do not understand what we are reading, we should continue in this way. We should spend ten minutes every morning on half a verse or one verse. Drops of water eventually make a hole in a rock. You have many days ahead of you. Even if you gain very little in one day, in three hundred sixty-five days you will accumulate much. In this way you will complete the entire Recovery Version of the New Testament, including the footnotes. After many years there will be a result. I believe that after two years the truths will increase in you. If you have a burden to read the *Life-study of Romans*, you may do so. You do not necessarily need to read it in the morning; you can read it at other times. These are a few suggestions.

Seeing with Our Eyes, Understanding with Our Mind, and Receiving with Our Spirit

I hope that the young people will remember my words and begin to read the Bible. To read the Bible is to know, to contact, the truth. We need to be clear that doctrine is merely doctrine; it is not the truth. We do not merely have the words in the Bible; our Lord is one with the Bible. The Bible is the written word of God, and the Lord Jesus is the living word of God. He is God's living word, and the Bible is God's written word. These two must be linked as one. Therefore, we must read the Bible with a praying spirit. We should not merely understand with our mind; we must use our spirit to touch the words in the Bible. Our spirit must be exercised. It is possible for us to read the Bible on three levels: with our eyes, with our mind, and with our spirit. We need our eyes to see clearly, our mind to understand, and our spirit to receive. When

we read the Bible, we should let the words become our prayer and then continue reading.

Reading and Praying Fifteen Minutes Every Morning

The Lord Jesus and the word of God are one. Furthermore, the Lord is the Spirit. The first line of *Hymns*, #815 says, “Christ is the Word and Spirit too.” Christ, the Word, and the Spirit are three, yet these three are one. The Lord is in the Word, and He is the Spirit. Therefore, when we read the Bible, on the one hand, we are contacting black and white letters, and on the other hand, we are touching the Lord Jesus with our spirit. Eventually, the Lord, His word, and the Spirit are mingled with us. By enjoying the Lord in this way every morning, we are daily eating healthy food.

I am physically healthy mainly because of the breakfast that I eat. I also urge you to change your physical breakfast habits. You should eat more for breakfast. It is a pity that most young people wake up late in the morning and consider that eating something quickly is breakfast. People who eat in this way will ultimately have a dull mind, because their food is not healthy. Likewise, if you are willing to spend five minutes to pray and ten minutes to study the Word every morning, you will be fed every day, and you will be spiritually healthy. I hope you will daily take Christ as your life, read His word, receive Him, and be mingled with His Spirit.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCH BEING THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST, AND THE BELIEVERS' TRANSFORMATION BEING FOR THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:22-23; 4:13; 3:8; Rom. 10:12; Eph. 3:19; 5:18;
Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18

OUTLINE

- I. The church being the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all—Eph. 1:22-23; 4:13:
 - A. The church enjoying all the riches of Christ, the riches of God—3:8; Rom. 10:12.
 - B. The church becoming the fullness of Christ, the expression of Christ and the enlargement of the expression of God in Christ—Eph. 3:19.
- II. The believers' transformation being for the fullness of God:
 - A. The believers being transformed by being filled in the spirit with the riches of all that God is—5:18; Rom. 12:2.
 - B. The issue of the believers' transformation being the image of God and thereby becoming the expression of the riches of God—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18.

I would like to add a brief explanation concerning riches and fullness. The words *riches* and *fullness* do not refer to an object. Rather, these two nouns describe two different degrees of development. If we use the love of God as an example, the riches of God's love are in the Father, and the fullness is in the Son. Based on this word, we must see that the love of God is the object and that *riches* and *fullness* are used to describe the degree of the development of God's love. *Riches* refers to the initial development, and *fullness* refers to a further degree of development. Thus, in the Father, God's love is in the degree of riches, and in the Son, God's love develops from the degree of riches to the degree of fullness.

We must also touch a fundamental truth concerning the Divine Trinity. Our God is one, but He is also three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This

mystery has been preached for two thousand years. Bible expositors, teachers, and translators, as well as those who read the Bible have studied this subject extensively. I myself have spent over fifty years studying this matter, and now I can say in brief that the Father is the source, the Son is the course, the flowing out, and the Spirit is the flowing in. The Father is the source, what flows out from the Father is the Son, and what flows into us is the Spirit. This is a matter of development and can be compared to water flowing from an underground source. There is water at the source, there is water in the waterway, and when the water flows into a well, there is also water in the well. These are not three different kinds of water; there is only one kind of water.

In the previous chapter we did not say that God has three kinds of love, with one kind being in the Father, another in the Son, and still another in the Spirit. Instead, we said that God has only one kind of love. In the Father this love is the riches. When this love flows out in the Son, it is the fullness, and when it flows into us as the Spirit, it is bountiful. Hence, Philippians 1:19 speaks of “the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” When God’s attributes are in the Father, they are the riches, and when they are expressed in the Son, they are the fullness. As a result of what the Son accomplished, the riches flowing in the Spirit are applicable to us. As soon as we apply them, they become our bountiful supply.

CHRIST BEING THE FULLNESS OF GOD, AND THE CHURCH BEING THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST

The subject of this chapter is the church as the fullness of Christ. The word *fullness* is used three times in the book of Ephesians. The first time is in 1:22-23, where it says, “The church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.” The second time is in 3:19, which says, “That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God,” and the third time is in 4:13, which says, “Until we all arrive...at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” If my head is big, but my body is small, thin, and weak, then my body is not my fullness. But I thank the Lord that He gave me a body that is somewhat full. My body is my expression, my fullness.

God gained the fullness of His expression in the universe in the person of Jesus Christ. Before Christ came into the world, man could not see God’s

fullness, even though God existed in the universe. Then one day God was incarnated to be the man Jesus Christ. He lived on the earth as a perfect man, and He was the complete God. He was manifested in the land of Judea as the fullness of God. However, the fullness could not be limited to the Lord or to Judea. Therefore, in the Gospel of John the Lord said, “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24). The Lord likened Himself to a grain of wheat that remains as a single grain unless it dies. The Lord had to die in order to multiply; He died for the producing of His fullness.

The Lord Jesus gained His multiplication by passing through death and entering into resurrection, just like a grain of wheat that is sown into the ground dies and then grows out of the ground to bear many grains. The many grains are the multiplication of the one grain. They are the fullness, the expression of the one grain. In other words, the many grains are the thousands of believers who have believed into the Lord over the past two thousand years, including you and me. We are the multiplication of Christ. We are also the fullness of Christ, just as Christ is the fullness of God.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, some people went to the disciples because they wanted to see Jesus. If some people in Taiwan say that they want to see Jesus, where can we take them? We should not merely take them to the church. In addition, we should learn to say, “My friend, do you want to see Jesus? I have been with you for so long, and you still do not know that I am in Jesus, and Jesus is in me. When you see me, you see Jesus.”

When we were in Chefoo, there was a brother who worked at the telegraph office. He did not hold a high position, but when he contacted his colleagues, he gave them a good impression. As a result, his colleagues called him Jesus. It would be wonderful if the young people could contact their fellow students and their professors in such a way that they would be called Jesus. The kind of impression we give people depends on our appearance, our expression. During my initial time in the United States, because of the burden that the Lord gave me and the doors that He opened, I traveled from the east coast to the west coast and from the north to the south. During this time I was given hospitality in the home of an American who told me that I was neither like a Chinese nor like an American, but he could not say who I was like. Our expression gives people a certain impression.

**THE BIBLE REVEALING GOD
AND CHRIST WITH ALL HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS,
NOT THE CULTIVATION OF HUMAN CHARACTER**

The Bible says that the fullness of God dwells in Christ (Col. 2:9; 1:19). It also says that we are the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13). This is the highest and the deepest truth in the Bible. Whether in the East or in the West, all men have natural, religious, moral, and ethical concepts. They think that philosophy, religion, and classical writings are for the improvement of human behavior and the cultivation of our character. However, this is not what the Bible teaches. It is a huge mistake for us to understand the Bible in this way. We must set aside every natural, religious, moral, and ethical concept so that we can be like a blank piece of paper. Then the revelation in the Bible can be written on us.

Some may ask, “If the Bible does not speak about the improvement of behavior or the cultivation of character, what does it speak about?” First, the Bible speaks concerning God and His attributes, including life, light, love, kindness, holiness, righteousness, power, forbearance, considerateness, forgiveness, and tolerance. These attributes exist in God as His riches.

Second, the Bible speaks concerning Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God. In Christ the attributes of God develop from riches into the fullness. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the fullness of God; He is the manifestation of God. Jesus Christ and God are not two separate beings. Jesus Christ is the very God; He is the manifestation of God. He has brought all that God is into the realm of fullness for God to be clearly manifested among men.

Third, the Bible speaks concerning the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. Through His death on the cross He dealt with sin. This includes man’s sinful nature and sinful deeds. He also dealt with Satan and his power, the world, the old man, the flesh, and everything of the old creation. Through His all-inclusive death on the cross the Lord terminated all the negative things in the universe. Then He resurrected from the dead and became the life-giving Spirit. In His resurrection the Lord brought all His believers into resurrection and produced the new creation. Today everyone who believes in the Lord has an organic union with Him in their spirit. Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God, is now the Spirit of life in His believers. He is the fullness of God, the

development of the riches of God, dwelling in the believers. Therefore, believers do not need to cultivate their character or improve their behavior. Believers are people who contact, receive, and gain the Lord daily. The Lord lives in them as the supply of life.

RECEIVING CHRIST DAILY AND BEING FILLED WITH HIM TO BE TRANSFORMED

The Bible is not a book of empty doctrines. It reveals a real person, Christ. He is the real and living Spirit of life within the believers. He is not doctrine, philosophy, or teaching. This Spirit, as the daily inner supply of the believers, is not only rich but is also full. Therefore, believers do not receive messages of doctrine or teachings; we receive the real and living Spirit. As we daily receive Him, He becomes the bountiful spiritual supply within us. This supply is the spiritual element that transforms us metabolically.

If I am sickly and weak and have a pale complexion, I can use powder to change my pale complexion to a rosy complexion. However, my complexion will not be rosy if I do not apply powder every day. This can be compared to cultivating our character, which involves outward self-improvement. The proper way to change our complexion is to eat nutritious food daily so that our metabolism is activated, and our complexion spontaneously becomes rosy. The more nutrients we eat, the more active our blood circulation becomes and the more we are supplied from within.

Some may ask where we can find the word *metabolism* in the New Testament. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” The Greek word for *transformation* implies metabolism. As we behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the glorious image of the Lord. Furthermore, we progress from one degree of glory to another degree of glory. This is transformation.

The Bible does not speak about cultivating our character. Character cultivation is the teaching of ancient Chinese philosophers; it is not the revelation of the Bible. The Bible reveals the metabolic process of transformation, and metabolism requires the addition of a new element. If nutrients are not added to our body, metabolism cannot take place. The Bible

does not speak about cultivating our character; rather, it tells us that we must take in Christ daily and be filled with Him.

I was born in China and received a Chinese education; therefore, I learned the teachings of Confucius and other Chinese philosophers. I was also influenced by Chinese familial and social traditions. These teachings and traditions are good for improving one's behavior. When I was a child, my mother constantly taught and exhorted me not to lose my temper, not to speak too much, not to do this, and not to do that. Even though I accepted her exhortations, I was not always able to apply them. I was saved when I was about twenty. After my salvation, I loved the Bible and read it diligently. Whenever I read the Bible, I was filled with unspeakable joy and peace. I also loved to pray, even though I did not know how to pray. I simply said, "Heavenly Father, You love me. Thank You that Your Son Jesus Christ died for me." Whenever I prayed, I experienced calm.

Through reading the Bible and praying daily, I dropped habits that I had had for more than ten years without others urging me to drop them. Since I was twelve or thirteen years old, playing soccer and watching Peking opera were my two hobbies. I could do without other things, but I could not stop playing soccer. However, because I read the Bible and prayed every day, I stopped playing soccer and watching the opera.

After my salvation I experienced two kinds of Christian life. The first kind was the tradition of self-improvement that I had kept prior to my salvation. Sometimes after being scolded, I lost my temper, but after losing my temper, I would regret and make up my mind never to lose my temper again. However, even the apostle Paul said, "To will is present with me, but to work out the good is not" (Rom. 7:18). The next time my mother scolded me, I would try to endure it, but eventually I would explode. This is the life of cultivating one's character. The second kind of life was to read the Bible in the morning and pray earnestly. When I did this, regardless of how much I was scolded, I enjoyed the Lord. This is transformation.

The young saints need to see that the Christian life is not a matter of cultivating character. The Christian life is a matter of transformation. To be transformed we need a new element. This element is the real and living Lord. In Him God's attributes and the riches of all that God is become the fullness. Furthermore, as the Spirit, the Lord has become our bountiful supply. We

need to love Him, fellowship with Him, read His Word, pray to Him, and always call on His name, which is to breathe Him in. In this way we receive His element into us. This element will have a metabolic effect within us to transform us.

THE BELIEVERS' TRANSFORMATION

BEING FOR THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Through transformation we become the expression of Christ. This means that we are transformed in order to be filled with Christ, and the issue of our being filled is that we become His fullness. Just as Christ is the fullness of God for the expression of God, by being filled with Christ we become His fullness for His expression. This fullness is not individualistic; it is corporate. If you are filled with Christ, I am filled with Christ, and every believer of the Lord Jesus is filled with Christ, then when we gather together, we are the church, the fullness of Christ. This is what Ephesians 1:22-23 says: "The church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all." The fullness and the Body in verse 23 are one thing; the Body of Christ is the fullness, and the fullness is the Body of Christ.

We belong to Christ, and by our receiving Him daily, He fills us until we are transformed into the fullness of Christ. Then we corporately become the church, which is the Body of Christ and the fullness of Christ for His expression. The expression of the fullness is not the result of cultivating our character. It is the result of our enjoying and receiving Christ. As we daily receive and enjoy Christ, our whole being is filled, saturated, with His spiritual elements. These elements are His essence; they are what He is, His attributes, and His virtues. This is expressed in *Hymns*, #501: "Thy Spirit will me saturate, / Every part will God permeate." When every part of our being is permeated with God, we become the fullness of God and of Christ.

This is the Lord's salvation, not our behavior. This is His transformation, not our improvement. We need to see this great revelation. We need to abandon the natural, religious, moral, ethical, and philosophical concepts and receive this revelation. We have God, we have Christ, and we have the Spirit. We have the Spirit within and the Bible without. We can daily read the Bible and constantly receive the Spirit. We breathe in what God is to allow Him to fill us again and again as the fresh, supplying element. By doing this, we will experience a metabolic process and be transformed in our whole being to

become the fullness of Christ for His expression. This expression is the church. Hallelujah! This is salvation, and this is also transformation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

BEING OUR HOUSE

Scripture Reading: Matt. 18:16-18, 20; Acts 2:46; 8:1; Eph. 1:23; Rev. 1:20;
1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:25

In the previous chapters we spoke concerning Christ as our life and the truth as our freedom. In this chapter we will consider the church of the living God as our house. This kind of utterance cannot be heard in Christian groups. I was in Christianity for many years, but I never heard this word.

The Chinese Union Version of the Bible translates *the living God* in 1 Timothy 3:15 as “the everlasting God.” However, the meaning of this word in the original Greek is “living,” not “everlasting.” This word was also used in Matthew 16:16 when Peter said to the Lord, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The church of the living God in 1 Timothy 3:15 is based on the living God in Matthew 16:16.

We all have a physical home that meets our material needs. Hence, we feel that a home is sweet and precious. Without a home we do not have a place to rest when we are exhausted and tired. However, as Christians, we do not only have physical needs, but we also have spiritual needs. Where can we go to find satisfaction for our spiritual needs? The answer is the church. A person without the church is spiritually homeless. We thank the Lord that we have life, freedom, and a home.

THE CHURCH BEING UNIVERSAL

The church is universal. The universe encompasses both time and space. It is the totality of time and space. Therefore, every believer from the time of the apostles until now belongs to the church. The church is the sum total of all the believers throughout time and space. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord said, “Upon this rock I will build My church.” *This rock* refers to Christ, and *My church* refers to the universal church.

THE CHURCH BEING LOCAL

The church is also local. On the one hand, the church is universal, and on the other hand, it is practically expressed in every locality. According to Matthew 18:16-20, whenever two or three believers are gathered into the Lord's name, the Lord is in their midst, and He hears their prayer. Whatever they bind on earth has already been bound in heaven, and whatever they loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven. However, these two or three are not the church, because when they have a problem, they must "tell it to the church." This proves that two or three believers gathered into the Lord's name are not the church. Even though two or three believers can meet together, we cannot say that they are the church simply because the Lord is in their midst. If this were the case, the church would be divided. Two or three gathered together are a part of the church; they are not the church.

According to its universal aspect, the sum total of all the believers throughout the ages is the universal church, but according to its local aspect, the totality of the believers in a city is the church in that locality. For example, the totality of the believers in Taipei is the church in Taipei, and all the believers on the island of Taiwan constitute the churches, the local churches, in Taiwan.

THE CHURCH BEING THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING GOD

In God's eyes the church is the house of the living God. Just as we need a home, God also needs a home. I was raised in Christianity and often heard people say, "Heaven is my home." Many Christians hope that they will go to a home in heaven when they die. For this reason, when a Christian passes away, his friends and relatives often say that he has returned gloriously to the heavenly kingdom or to the heavenly home. Is it even logical to think that Christians who aimlessly wander throughout their lives would have a glorious return to a heavenly kingdom when they die? In contrast to this thought, the Bible shows different degrees of salvation. According to Peter's second Epistle, believers must grow and develop in life by advancing through many steps, which are composed of spiritual virtues, toward the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly and bountifully supplied to them (1:5-11). We should not be foolish and accept what Christianity teaches

concerning believing in the Lord and waiting to go to heaven after we die. This is not the way of God's salvation, nor is it the thought conveyed in the Scriptures.

The House in John 14 Not Being Heaven

In John 14 the Lord said, "In My Father's house are many abodes;...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go..., I am coming again and will receive you to Myself" (vv. 2-3). According to these verses, most Christians believe that the Lord Jesus went to prepare an abode for us and that He will come and receive us to this heavenly home when it is ready. A Brethren teacher once said, "After two thousand years the Lord has still not returned. On the one hand, this proves that the place is not yet ready. On the other hand, this means that it must be a wonderful place since the Lord Jesus Himself has been preparing it for two thousand years, and it is still not ready." However, when we read the Scriptures and consider the depths of the Gospel of John, we see that the house in chapter 14 does not refer to a heavenly home.

A Mutual Dwelling Place of God and Man

According to the context of John 14, the Lord Jesus spoke concerning a mutual abode of God and man. In verses 16 and 17 He said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever...because He abides with you and shall be in you." In verse 23 the Lord said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." These verses show that the abode the Lord spoke of was not a heavenly mansion. Rather, every believer who loves the Lord is an abode. Do we realize that we are a house? This abode is not only for God to dwell in; it is a mutual abode for God and man. If we can say that God has found an abode in us, we can surely say that we have found an abode in God. Therefore, in John 15 the Lord described this mutual abode, saying, "Abide in Me and I in you" (v. 4).

The Abode Prepared by the Lord

The house in John 14 is not a heavenly mansion. It is the house of the living God, which is the church in 1 Timothy 3:15. The Lord said, "In My Father's house are many abodes" (John 14:2). This means that there are many abodes in the church. The Lord's going to prepare a place for us was His going to bear

our sins in order to solve the problem of our sins and to destroy Satan, to terminate the world, and to crucify the flesh and the natural life. His going was His dying, and He returned in resurrection. Everything that the Lord accomplished was for the preparation of a dwelling place.

Therefore, the Lord's going is His death, and His coming is His resurrection, which is recorded in John 20. The Lord did not wait two thousand years to return. The Lord returned in chapter 20 and stood in the midst of His disciples. He then breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22). From that day on, every disciple has become an abode, a dwelling place for the Triune God. Paul even asks, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). The temple is the house, and the house is the temple. The temple of God is the house of God, and the house of God is the temple of God.

THE CHURCH BEING THE HOUSE OF GOD, THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND

In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul says that the house of God is the church of the living God. The church is God's house, and it is our house. Without the church God is homeless, and we also are homeless. Today God has the church, His home, and we have a home. The church is also the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). The Body of Christ is an organism. Just as my body is an organism that carries out and coordinates my every move, so the church is an organism, the Body of Christ, to express Christ and carry out His every move.

In addition, the church is also a golden lampstand. Revelation 1:20 says, "The seven lampstands are the seven churches." The Body of Christ is universal, and the lampstands are local. In Revelation 1 the seven local churches are in seven cities, and each church is the lampstand in its city. The function of a lampstand is to shine, to be a testimony. The house of God is for God to find rest, the Body of Christ is for Christ to be expressed, and the lampstand is to shine forth as a testimony of Christ. In this chapter we will consider the church as God's house.

THERE BEING ONLY ONE CHURCH IN A CITY

The church is universal, and it is also expressed locally in city after city. Regardless of how small or large a city is, there can be only one church in a city. For instance, a church was raised up in a small village in Kansas. There are only about thirty people living in this village, but twelve brothers and sisters were raised up to stand on the ground of locality and meet in the Lord's name.

However, there are also large cities, such as Taipei with a population of about two or three million, New York with about ten million, and Tokyo with more than ten million. Even in large cities there should still be only one church. The Bible gives Jerusalem as a pattern. Two thousand years ago Jerusalem was a large city with a population of more than one million. On the day of Pentecost three thousand people were saved, and later another five thousand were saved (Acts 2:41; 4:4). There were more than ten thousand believers in Jerusalem, but there was only one church, not many churches. The saints there met from house to house, breaking bread, praying, preaching the gospel, and continuing in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles. There were thousands who practiced the way of meeting "from house to house" (2:46). Every household was a small meeting, not a church. We know this because Acts 8:1 speaks of "the church which was in Jerusalem." This verse uses the singular form of the word *church*, not the plural form. There was only one church in Jerusalem. Even though the saints were scattered in thousands of homes, there was only one church.

The church in Taipei is an example. There are at least three hundred and sixty small groups in Taipei, but these groups are not three hundred and sixty churches; they are one church. Although the saints are gathered in many places, there is only one church with one eldership and one administration.

THE LIFE PULSE OF THE CHURCH

BEING IN THE MEETINGS

Meetings are crucial to the church as the house of the living God. We have many meetings in the local churches. The life pulse of the church is in the meetings. Not going to the meetings is equivalent to cutting off our life supply. When a person stops attending the meetings, his church life comes to a halt. This can be compared to a person who is never at home. As far as he is concerned, his home does not exist. Therefore, the church life is a meeting life, and we should never stop meeting.

We need to take care of many needs for our human existence. These needs include food, clothing, housing, and transportation. We should also take care of our marriage and family, including begetting and raising children, and we must take care of education. With these responsibilities how should we take care of our meetings? At present, we have five kinds of meetings. There is the ministry meeting, bread-breaking meeting, prayer meeting, small group meeting, and truth meeting.

The ministry meeting is to minister the word through the release of messages for the edification of the saints. This meeting is held on Lord's Day morning in the different halls so that the saints can meet in their respective halls. The young saints should attend this meeting even if they are very busy. The Lord's Day is the first day of the week, and we should set this day aside to meet.

Not Abandoning Our Assembling Together but Exhorting One Another

Even though the young saints need to sleep less during their final exams, they must enjoy the word that ministers life on the Lord's Day and also break bread to remember the Lord and worship the Father. Since the students must study hard, they do not need to attend the other meetings, such as the prayer meeting and the truth meeting. However, they should do their best to attend a meeting on campus during the week. This will enable them to keep in touch with one another. They should come together in the small group meetings to set one another on fire, just as a hot piece of coal must be placed beside cold pieces of coal. This is the way to exhort and encourage one another according to Hebrews 10:25: "Not abandoning our own assembling together...but exhorting one another." I hope that the young people will earnestly practice this.

The Church Having the Presence of God

The church is Christ and the Spirit. When we speak in the meetings, we need to obey the Spirit. Sometimes, when someone makes an incorrect announcement, a young person can point it out in a proper manner in his spirit. We should not think that we are not in our spirit when we correct other saints. We can correct others in our spirit. Nevertheless, it is not easy to correct others. We should not say, "Brother, you are wrong. Did you not hear

what Brother Lee said? Why was your announcement so confusing?” We should not quarrel, because when we quarrel, we are not the church. This does not mean that we cannot adjust one another, but we need a proper attitude when we adjust others and when others adjust us. As long as we are human, we will make mistakes. Only God does not make mistakes. If we believe that we are never wrong, we must consider ourselves to be God.

I have been giving messages for fifty years. Sometimes certain situations are exposed when I release the word. Once, when I was in the Philippines, the brothers and sisters were concerned that I would mention their names in the meetings. At another time I stayed in the home of an elderly sister and asked her about her prayer, not knowing that she had not prayed. That was the exposing of the Spirit. This is the church life. When unbelievers see this, they will say, “Indeed God is among you.”

Between 1941 and 1943 we held gospel meetings in Chefoo during the Chinese New Year. During this time there was a deaconess who was a widow and who had a son who refused to believe in the Lord. This sister brought her son to a gospel meeting. In that meeting I pointed at him and said, “You say you have not sinned, but you have stolen chalk from school.” This caused him to be saved. The Lord’s presence is real in the meetings.

On another occasion in a gospel meeting in Chefoo, I spoke of how women make their husbands work many hours to support them so that they can have high-heeled shoes. A woman in the audience, who had accompanied a friend to the meeting, was unhappy when she heard this, and she accused her friend of exposing her situation to me. The sister assured her that I did not know who she was and that it was the Lord’s grace to allow someone to point out her sin. These words subdued her, and she confessed that she was a sinner.

When we preach the gospel, we should not give dead messages in a mechanical way. We need to follow the Spirit. When we stand up to speak, we should have the faith to declare, “The economical Spirit has been poured upon the church and is upon me as I speak for the Lord in the Body.” We should believe this. Whenever we meet in the Lord’s name, His Spirit is in our midst.

Actively Preaching the Gospel and Leading People to Salvation

The young brothers and sisters should also preach the gospel. According to the present leading, there will now be co-workers preaching the gospel on the large campuses. We hope that the young people will cooperate with the co-workers. On the Lord's Day the young people are in the ministry meeting and the bread-breaking meeting, and during the week they have a campus meeting. We hope that they can set aside one or two evenings to labor with the co-workers in the gospel. This may be in a Bible study or in a gospel seminar. We hope that the young people who are students, whether in college or in a special trade school, would bring a minimum of two people to the Lord every six months. However, they should not think that they cannot remain in the church if they do not bring two people to the Lord.

The students should encourage one another to attend the meetings on the Lord's Day. The bread-breaking meeting is usually at the meeting hall, and sometimes it may be in the small groups. During the week they should have a small group meeting with other students to fellowship and encourage one another. Furthermore, they should do their best to help with the campus gospel work. On the personal side they should spend five minutes to pray and ten minutes to read the Bible every morning. In this way they will make significant progress every year. During their vacation time they should read a few Life-study messages. By practicing these matters from their freshman year to their senior year, they will advance every year. They will be well nourished and receive a good education in the truth to be proper children in God's house who live a life of loving the Lord.

In conclusion, we must know that Christ is our life, the truth is our freedom, and the church of the living God is our house. Furthermore, we need to see that our living must be a life of preaching the gospel to lead people to receive salvation and turn to the Lord. All the young saints should understand, know, and actively practice and experience these four points.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE NEW JERUSALEM
BEING THE ULTIMATE FULLNESS OF GOD,
AND THE BELIEVERS' GLORIFICATION
BEING GOD'S FULLNESS

Scripture Reading: Rev. 21:11; 4:3; 22:1-2; 21:23; 22:5; Rom. 8:30, 17-18,
21; 1 John 3:2

OUTLINE

- I. The New Jerusalem being the ultimate manifestation of the fullness of God:
 - A. The light of the New Jerusalem being the effulgence of God's image—Rev. 21:11; 4:3:
 - 1. The New Jerusalem being filled with God's life, with what God is—22:1-2.
 - 2. The New Jerusalem being filled with God's light, God's expression—21:23; 22:5.
 - B. The entire New Jerusalem being God's fullness, the ultimate expression of the riches of all that God is.
 - II. The believers' glorification being for God's fullness:
 - A. The created yet fallen man entering into God's glory through redemption and transformation to become God's fullness for God's expression—Rom. 8:30, 17-18, 21; 1 John 3:2.
 - B. The New Jerusalem being the aggregate of God's redeemed, matured, and glorified people throughout the ages, the ultimate expression of the riches of all that God is.
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THE REVELATION OF THE BIBLE
CONSUMMATING IN THE NEW JERUSALEM

In this chapter we will continue the line of God's fullness in order to see the ultimate manifestation of the fullness of God. The sixty-six books of the Bible

contain many items, and in the last two chapters of the Bible the New Jerusalem appears as the conclusion of the development of these items. The structure of the New Jerusalem is simple because it has only three materials: gold, pearl, and precious stones. The city itself is a mountain of gold; the entire city is gold. The city has four sides, and each side has three gates. The twelve gates are twelve pearls (Rev. 21:21). The wall of the city is precious stone, and the twelve foundations of the wall are adorned with twelve precious stones (vv. 18-20). Hence, the city has only three kinds of materials: pure gold, pearl, and precious stones.

Throughout the last two thousand years, since the completion of the New Testament, many Bible students and scholars have spent much time and effort to study the New Jerusalem. There are many different views and opinions concerning this city, and there have been endless arguments and diverging opinions. During the past decades we thoroughly studied most of the different teachings concerning the New Jerusalem, and we have seen that the New Jerusalem is not a physical city.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BEING A SIGN, NOT A PHYSICAL CITY

The entire Bible contains the divine revelation and reveals God's economy, His eternal plan. The Bible also reveals God's person, showing that God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Furthermore, it reveals the process and the goal of redemption. After unveiling these precious things, the Bible concludes with a city in Revelation 21 and 22. This city of pure gold has a wall of precious stones and gates that are pearls. In addition, the length, breadth, and height of the city are equal; hence, it is a cube. How can the consummation of the divine revelation in the Bible be a physical city? If the New Jerusalem were a physical city, it would not bear much significance.

The book of Revelation is a book of signs (1:1). Signs are used to express deep thoughts that cannot be described in words. The first sign in this book is the golden lampstands (v. 12). These are not physical golden lampstands. They are a sign that illustrates the nature and function of the church. The church should be of gold, completely divine, and it should shine brightly in the dark. Therefore, the golden lampstands are a sign. Another sign is the Lion-Lamb (5:5-6). This refers to the Lord Jesus. As the Lamb, He is our Redeemer, and as the Lion, He fights against the enemy. In the eyes of God,

Christ is the Lamb of God for our redemption, and He is the overcoming Lion to defeat God's enemy and bring in God's kingdom.

There are more than ten signs in the book of Revelation, and the last sign is the New Jerusalem. Revelation 1:1 says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show to His slaves the things that must quickly take place; and He made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John." What is presented in this book is mainly in signs rather than plain words. In chapter 1 the seven churches are not spoken of in plain words; instead, seven golden lampstands are used to show the condition of the seven churches. When we see the golden lampstands, we understand the condition of the churches, because a picture is better than a thousand words. It is simple to describe something with a picture. It is difficult to give an accurate description of a person by describing his appearance, features, and demeanor, no matter how many words we use. The simplest and clearest way to give an accurate description is to present a picture.

The book of Revelation mainly uses signs to present its revelation, not plain words. According to this principle, the New Jerusalem cannot be a physical city; it must be a sign. The revelation in the Scriptures is mysterious. The ultimate issue of this revelation appears at the end of the Bible. If this ultimate issue was presented in plain words, thousands of words would not be adequate. God is very wise and uses one great sign, a city, to show the ultimate consummation of the divine revelation.

THE MATERIALS FOR GOD'S BUILDING

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 Paul says, "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...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." These verses show that even before the book of Revelation was written, Paul said that gold, silver, and precious stones are the materials for God's building. He used gold, silver, and

precious stones as a sign to show that once we are saved, we possess the life of God.

Gaining God through Regeneration

For over ten years after my salvation, even though I said that I had God's life and nature, I did not have a deep impression of the divine life. It was not until 1939 in Tientsin that I received a revelation as I was praying and reading the Word in my room. I had a deep sensation that God is in me and that I was made to contain God. We all need to see that to be saved is to have God, to gain God. At the time of our salvation we gained God, and we now have God in our spirit. Gold in the Bible signifies the divine nature of God, which is just God Himself. Therefore, when Paul says that we need to build the church with gold, he means that we need to build the church with God.

Receiving the Element of God Day by Day

How do we build with God? According to the revelation in the Bible, the Christian life is a matter of transformation, not a matter of cultivating one's character or improving oneself. If we are to be transformed, a new element must enter into us. This means that another essence must enter into us. An example of this is petrified wood, which is wood that has become stone. When wood is in flowing water for a long period of time, the element of the wood is carried away and replaced with various minerals from the earth that are in the water. These minerals change the wood and gradually transform it into stone. This example shows that transformation requires the addition of new elements. As Christians, we do not rely on cultivating our character, nor do we depend on outward improvement. We need transformation; we need to receive a new element into us. This new element is God Himself.

When we wake up in the morning, we need to spend five minutes to pray and ten minutes to read the Word. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and we receive Him into us by praying and reading the Word. When we pray, we breathe in the Spirit, and when we read the Bible, the Spirit of God enters into us, because the Spirit is in the Bible. Hence, we need to read the Word and pray daily.

I preach God's word, and I work for the Lord in order to build up the church. If I encourage others to cultivate their character or if I promote

self-improvement, I am building the church with wood, grass, and stubble, which are of no value before God. My burden and the messages that I release are to let God spread in us so that He can fill us and transform us. We are not here to speak to people about cultivating their character, because our quick temper is wood, and our meekness is also wood. Whether we are quick tempered or meek, it is of no value before God. Consequently, our work is not to improve other people; it is not a work of wood, grass, and stubble. We must not do a work that helps people “wear makeup.” Rather, we need to tell people that man needs to have the life of God and to be sanctified. For this reason, after we are saved, we need to breathe in the Lord through prayer every day. We must learn to put aside the self, and instead of cultivating our character or trying to improve ourselves, we only need to be filled in spirit with God. If we live in this way, we are building the church with gold.

Becoming Precious Stones through Transformation

In 1 Corinthians 3:12 Paul says that we should build with precious stones. We can say that stones are created by God, but precious stones are the product of transformation. Precious stones are formed when carbon is transformed through heat and pressure. Before we were saved, we were like a pile of dirt, but we thank the Lord that we are saved. We have received God’s nature into us. We are also precious stones because we have experienced some transformation. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that when we behold the glorious Lord with an unveiled face, we are transformed to bear the Lord’s image. What is the image of the Lord? Revelation 4:3 says, “He who was sitting [upon the throne] was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance.” God is like a jasper stone in appearance. The color of jasper is dark green, which signifies the richness of God’s life. God is sitting on the throne, and His appearance is jasper; He is full of life. The New Jerusalem is a mountain with a height of twelve thousand stadia. The length, breadth, and height of the New Jerusalem are equal. The wall of the city, which is one hundred and forty-four cubits high, is jasper (21:16-18). The jasper wall of the New Jerusalem signifies that the entire city, as the corporate expression of God in eternity, bears the appearance of God. God’s appearance is like jasper, and the New Jerusalem looks like jasper.

In order for us to be transformed into jasper, we need to behold the glory of the Lord day by day (2 Cor. 3:18). The more we behold Him, the more His element is added into us, and we are transformed from glory to glory into His

glorious image. We will be transformed from one degree of glory into another degree of glory until we are like God. This is spoken of in 1 John 3:2, which says, “Now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.” He is a precious jasper stone. For us to be like Him means that we will be transformed into precious jasper stone.

The workers of the Lord who want to build up the church must never build with wood, grass, and stubble. Instead, we must build with God as pure gold and with the Lord Jesus Christ as the element in the Spirit. We must minister the Triune God into people so that they can have an inward change and gradually be transformed into precious stones. When the Lord’s recovery first came to the United States over twenty years ago, the Americans did not feel comfortable with me because I am Chinese. They had the concept that it is Americans who go as missionaries to China to preach the gospel but that the Chinese could never go to the United States to preach the gospel. However, I knew that even though I am a small Chinese man, I had a treasure from the Scriptures that they did not have.

The Americans have the good quality of not holding on to oldness. They may look down on others, but once they see something real, they accept it. They are not proud in this regard. We were able to start the work in the United States because we have a rich store of “precious gems.” One of the gems I presented was the human spirit. I went to many places through the years and preached that man has a spirit. I also quoted Zechariah 12:1, which says, “Thus declares Jehovah, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.” The people who heard this were amazed. They could not believe that this verse is in the Bible, because they never saw it. Now preachers everywhere in the United States say that man has a spirit. This is our treasure.

We also encountered some obstacles. The majority of those whom we gained initially were young people, because it was easy for them to follow us. When we asked them to call on the name of the Lord, they called with much vigor, and when we asked them to pray, they prayed earnestly. There was a young man who called on the name of the Lord at home after his salvation. When his parents heard him and found out that he learned to call on the Lord from a Chinese person, they warned him to be careful and not to get too involved. However, the divine nature, the element of gold, within this brother

increased daily, and he changed. When he went home at the end of the semester, his parents realized that he was not the same. He had the element of God; he had gold as well as precious stones.

About five years ago I went to Berkeley to hold a conference. The university in Berkeley has caused much agitation and unrest concerning human rights, but there is a church there. At that conference the saints gave similar testimonies about how their parents initially opposed them but are now in the church life. This happened because their parents saw God in the saints. There was much gold, and there were many precious stones in that conference. This proved that my labor in the United States was not in vain. I am not building the church with wood, grass, and stubble. Rather, I have God, and I work the divine nature and element into people; I work “gold” into them. My work is not a work of gold plating but of filling people with gold. I also have the Spirit of Christ, the life-giving, transforming Spirit who caused the young people to change and be transformed. The young people were transformed after they obtained the nature of God. This caused their parents to enter into the church life.

The Bible does not wait until Revelation to speak of gold and precious stones. Rather, Paul speaks of gold and precious stones in 1 Corinthians 3. We can boast to the angels that many of our young people have gold within them and are becoming precious stones. They are being transformed. Perhaps their parents only wanted them to study well, but after a few years their parents will see gold and precious stones in them.

The New Jerusalem, which is a mountain of gold, shows the story within every Christian: God grows in us daily, and the element of God increases within us gradually. The mountain of gold is increasing gradually. Those who do research in minerals say that minerals are continually being formed. The gold in us is continually increasing and growing. Even though this is a slow process, the gold is increasing every day. In addition, the carbon within us is being transformed into precious stone.

**Remaining in the Death of Christ and
Experiencing the Resurrection Life
to Be Transformed into Pearls**

The New Jerusalem also has gates of pearl. This is another wonderful aspect of the city. Pearls are produced by oysters in the ocean. When a grain of sand enters an oyster, the oyster is wounded and secretes its life-juice to coat the sand. When the sand is coated with many layers, a pearl is produced. Hence, an oyster depicts Christ, who, as the eternally living God, became a man, entered into the death waters of humanity, and was wounded by sinners, the grains of sand. He is now secreting His life around us to make us precious pearls so that we can be built into God's eternal expression. When we receive Him as our Savior and remain in His death, His resurrection life operates and works within us to continually secrete His life essence around us, the little grains of sand. The more His life surrounds us, the shinier we become, until we eventually become pearls.

When we began the work in Taiwan, I spoke concerning the death and resurrection of Christ. I explained how Christ's death keeps us in His death and how His resurrection operates within us to secrete the divine life. Through His death and resurrection, we are being transformed from grains of sand into pearls. Many saints can testify that this is not Oriental ethics, nor is it Western philosophy; rather, it is the truth contained in the Bible. This truth reveals that the materials of God's building are gold, precious stones, and pearls. This refers to God's nature, the transforming work of the Spirit, and the secreting work of Christ in His death and resurrection. We have gold in us, and we are becoming precious stones and pearls. These are the constituents of the New Jerusalem.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BEING THE ULTIMATE MANIFESTATION OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate manifestation of the church. It is the ultimate manifestation of the totality of all the local churches throughout the ages. This ultimate manifestation is the fullness of God. God as the Father is rich. When He is expressed, He is the fullness in the Son. The Son, as the one grain of wheat, passed through death and resurrection and was reproduced as many grains (John 12:24). We are the multiplication of the Son. We are the fullness of the Son, His expression. The gold within us is increasing daily; hence, we are the church. We are also becoming precious stones, and the secreting work of Christ's death and resurrection is making us pearls. As a

result, in eternity all the believers will become the ultimate manifestation of God, the New Jerusalem. They will be the fullness of God, His expression. Thus, the New Jerusalem is a sign that portrays the believers.

The church in Taipei should be a miniature of the New Jerusalem. The presence of any wood, grass, or stubble shows that we need to be transformed. When we remain in the Lord's death, He can carry out a secreting work within us. He can operate within us as the Spirit and envelop us with His life. In this way the little grains of sand become pearls. This brings us to the ultimate consummation of the Scriptures.

The Bible speaks about God entering into us to be our element of pure gold, Christ the Son passing through death and resurrection to bring us into His death and to carry out a secreting work within us to make us pearls, and the Spirit transforming us into precious stones. The ultimate conclusion of the Bible is the city New Jerusalem. The constituents of this city are pure gold, pearls, and precious stones.

The Light of the New Jerusalem

Being the Effulgence of God's Image

Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is the effulgence of God's glory. However, in Revelation 21:11 the New Jerusalem has God's glory, and the light of the city is like jasper and manifests God's image. This is the outward appearance of the city, the ultimate manifestation of the fullness of God as His expression.

The New Jerusalem

Being Filled with God's Life and Light

There are two elements within the New Jerusalem. One element is God's life, and the other is God's light. Concerning God's life, in the middle of the street in the city flows the river of water of life, bright as crystal (22:1). In addition, on this side and on that side of the river grows the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, and yielding its fruit each month (v. 2). The river of water of life and the tree of life are the nourishing supply in the city. Concerning God's light, the New Jerusalem has no need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun. There is no man-made light in the city, because the Lord God shines as the light. The glory of God is the only light in the city (v. 5). Life refers to what God is, and light is God's expression. Within the city there

are only God's life and God's light. This means that the church should be full of God's life and light; the church should be the full expression of what God is.

Many young people can testify that no social group can compare to the church life. In the church life we sense the flow of life, and we have the life-fruit produced by the tree of life that is full of the life supply. We also have the shining of the light of life. We have often experienced being confused and not knowing what to do, but once we come to a church meeting, our whole being becomes clear and bright. This is the inward condition of the New Jerusalem. According to its outward appearance, the New Jerusalem is the effulgence of God's glory, expressing the image of God who has the appearance of jasper. Within the city there is the river of water of life and the tree of life that produces the fruit of life. There is also the expression of the light of God.

THE BELIEVERS' GLORIFICATION BEING FOR GOD'S FULLNESS

In conclusion, the glorification of the believers is for God's ultimate expression. Man was created by God and then fell. But when we believed in the Lord, we received redemption, and we are now being transformed. The issue of transformation is our maturity and glorification. Romans 8:30 says, "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." Verse 21 says, "In hope that the creation itself will also be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." This indicates that we have a part in the glory that is yet to be expressed. This glory is the consummate expression of God, the effulgence of God's glory. Eventually, we will all be in this glory. We will be glorified.

In this glory we will be God's fullness in order to express God for eternity. Today we are still in time. We have not arrived at eternity future, but we can have a foretaste. The local church is a miniature of the New Jerusalem. As long as we are in the church, we will receive the supply of life and the shining of the divine light. We can also experience the church shining with the light of God's glory to express God's image as jasper. We can enjoy God's glory. The issue of being supplied with and enjoying God's glory is that we become His ultimate expression.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOSPEL BEING OUR LIVING

Scripture Reading: Rom. 1:14-16; 1 Cor. 9:16-17; John 15:1-8, 16

We have seen that Christ is our life, the truth is our freedom, and the church of the living God is our house. In this chapter we want to see the gospel as our living.

There are many ways to preach the gospel. The best way is to sing hymns to people. The young brothers and sisters can use the hymns to preach the gospel to their schoolmates. This kind of hymn singing should be informal. When the young people preach the gospel by singing hymns, their joy will touch their classmates, and when they sing to their classmates a second time, their classmates will easily believe in the Lord.

Since the gospel is our living, we should pay attention to and practice several things related to preaching the gospel.

A BURDEN BEING CRUCIAL IN ORDER TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

When we preach the gospel, it is crucial that we have a burden. Paul was a person who preached the gospel. In Romans 1:14 he said, “I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish.” This verse speaks of owing a debt, which is a burden. Burdens differ in size, but a debt is a heavy burden. If we owe others much money, this will continually be a burden. We will think about the debt when we are studying and working and even when we are sleeping. However, as soon as we pay our debts, this burden will be removed from us, and we will immediately feel lighter. This was Paul’s feeling toward preaching the gospel. He said that he was a debtor not only to individuals but also to the Jews and the Greeks. He was a debtor to different races, and he was a debtor to all men. This shows that Paul had a large capacity.

The young saints should preach the gospel at school because they feel the burden of a “gospel debt” to their schoolmates. Of course, the capacity of the

young people may not be as large as Paul's capacity. Hence, they may not owe all their schoolmates a debt. Nevertheless, they owe a debt to their classmates and especially to the person who sits next to them. As long as we are alive, we will always be indebted to a few persons. We bear the burden of this debt every day.

CULTIVATING A GOSPEL SPIRIT THROUGH PRAYER

After we have a burden for the gospel, we need a gospel spirit. Even though a gospel spirit initially comes from a burden, there is still the need of prayer. We should pray about the gospel debts that we owe. The best way is to make a list of our classmates at the beginning of the semester and pray for them one by one. When we pray, we should seek the Lord's leading. The Lord may give us a burden to pray specifically for certain classmates. The more we pray for our classmates the better.

Our prayer can be compared to placing a piece of paper on a balance. Paper is light and does not weigh much. However, if we pray every day in the morning and in the evening, we will soon place several hundred pieces of paper on the balance. This will eventually be heavier than any weight on the other side of the balance. Brother George Müller ran an orphanage, and he testified that he prayed for many people by name. By the time he died, everyone whom he had prayed for by name was saved, except for one person. Eventually, this person was saved shortly after Brother Müller's death.

LEARNING TO BE "THICK-SKINNED"

We also need to learn to be "thick-skinned" when we preach the gospel. If a person is not thick-skinned, his words cannot move others. However, few people are thick-skinned by nature. We need to practice in order to become thick-skinned. I am thick-skinned because I have practiced for sixty years. I was in primary school the first time that I spoke in public. I stood trembling before the audience and even forgot my speech. The young people should learn to be thick-skinned. Those who are thick-skinned and crazy in spirit can preach the gospel.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL BEING TO BEAR FRUIT

We also need to know that preaching the gospel to save sinners is the way to bear fruit. The Lord's word in John 15 concerning the vine shows that every believer is a branch in the Lord, who is the vine. If we do not bear fruit, we are in danger of being taken away (v. 2). When I was young, I thought that to be taken away meant to go to hell. Later I understood that it means to lose the position to enjoy the riches of the Lord. We are branches, and when we abide and remain in the vine, we are positioned to enjoy the riches of the vine. Once we are taken away, we lose the position to enjoy the riches of the vine. Therefore, if we do not bear fruit or bring sinners to salvation after our own salvation, we are in danger of losing the position to enjoy the riches of the Lord.

This portion of the Bible speaks of another danger. Verse 6 says, "If one does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Being cast into the fire and burned does not refer to going to hell. People usually read the Bible with the understanding of either going to heaven or going to hell. However, this thought does not exist in John 15. Rather, this chapter says that if we do not bear fruit, we will encounter the danger of losing our position to enjoy the riches of the Lord and of being cast into the fire. I have seen many believers who had been saved for a long time but did not bear fruit. These believers gradually lost their enjoyment of the Lord, were captured by Satan, and suffered damage.

Romans 11 says that as the Gentiles we were originally branches of a wild olive tree. However, when we were saved, we were grafted into the Lord, the cultivated olive tree, to enjoy His fatness (vv. 17, 24). If we do not bear fruit, we can lose the enjoyment of Christ and be captured by Satan and suffer damage. This is a word of warning.

FOUR GOSPEL TOOLS

Gospel Verses

In order to preach the gospel we need to be equipped. Just as it is difficult to work without tools, we need gospel tools in order to preach the gospel. We will fellowship concerning four gospel tools. We first need to be equipped with gospel verses. This requires that we be familiar with the Bible. We cannot reap a harvest and bring in the sheaves if we are empty-handed. We

need a sickle. The Bible is our sickle. We need to be equipped with some basic gospel truths and know how to use the relevant Bible verses. We should know verses such as John 3:16, which says, “God so loved the world”; 1 Peter 2:24, which says, “Who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree”; and 1 Timothy 1:15, which says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I also recommend the book *Gospel Outlines*. This book contains two hundred and sixty-four gospel topics as well as Scripture references for every topic. This can help us learn important gospel verses.

Hymns

The hymns are another tool for preaching the gospel. We can preach the gospel to others by singing hymns, such as *Hymns*, #1058. I translated this hymn into Chinese, and Brother Nee polished it and made some improvements, including my translation of the line “Be of sin the double cure.” The first cure for sin deals with the record of our sins before God, for which we should receive eternal punishment. The second cure for sin deals with the law of sin within us, which brings us under the ruling of the power of sin. This hymn also speaks of “the water and the blood” that flowed from the Lord’s side. The blood deals with the record of our sins before God, and the water denotes the law of the Spirit of life. This law enables us to overcome the law of sin and of death (Rom. 8:2). I mention this because I hope that some young people may be raised up to learn to write hymns.

Gospel Hymns

In relation to preaching the gospel, there are two categories of hymns that we should be familiar with. The first category is gospel hymns, and the second is hymns on the assurance of salvation. We have many gospel hymns. *Hymns*, #1080 was written using the thought of the book of Ecclesiastes. There is also #1024, which we used in the gospel marches that we had in the early days in Taiwan. When we sing a gospel hymn, we should not be too concerned about the music; otherwise, we will lose the flavor of the hymn. Instead, we should express the feeling of the hymn.

Many years ago in mainland China Dr. John Sung was powerful in preaching the gospel, and he was full of feeling when he sang a hymn. Once in a gospel campaign meeting, everyone was waiting for Dr. Sung to come to the stage. Suddenly he came in through the main entrance at the back of the hall,

singing, “Down with Satan, down with Satan, / Out with sins, out with sins” to the tune of a popular revolutionary chorus. As a result, everyone was enlivened and received salvation without the preaching of a gospel message. In that meeting Satan was defeated, sins were forgiven, and people were released. Therefore, the young saints should not fear their schoolmates who are knowledgeable in science, philosophy, and other subjects. People who seek knowledge are miserable inside. We should lead the people whom we contact at school or in gospel meetings to sing hymns. In order to do this, we need to be familiar with the gospel hymns by reading the ones in our hymnal and learning to sing them.

Hymns on the Assurance of Salvation

When we preach the gospel, we should also be familiar with hymns on the assurance of salvation, such as *Hymns*, #309. It is not difficult for young people to sing hymns, because many of them have a good foundation in music. It is especially not difficult for the sisters to sing hymns, because God created them in this way. In Ecclesiastes 12:4 Solomon is referring to the vocal cords when he mentions “the daughters of song.” When young people sing, there truly is music.

Among the hymns on the assurance of salvation, *Hymns*, #322, which is about “the Fountain that never runs dry,” is a good hymn. Another good hymn is #296, which was written by Charles Wesley. This is not an emotional hymn; it is very elegant. The first stanza says, “And can it be that I should gain / An int’rest in the Savior’s blood? / Died He for me, who caused His pain? / For me, who Him to death pursued? / Amazing love! how can it be / That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?” The fourth stanza is also very good. When the young saints invite their professors to a meeting, it is good to sing hymns with them. We can choose a stanza that we like and lead our professors to sing with us. This will help them to receive the Lord Jesus. When we sing a hymn, others should be touched. We should then sing with them according to how they are touched. *Hymns*, #499 is also a good hymn to sing. If we are always singing these hymns, it will be difficult for our gospel friends not to be touched and to believe in the Lord.

Distributing Gospel Tracts

Gospel tracts are another tool for preaching the gospel. After we know some gospel verses and hymns, we must pray to the Lord and say that, because we are a branch in the vine, we want to bear fruit by preaching the gospel every day. In addition, the church in Taipei needs to print gospel tracts, and we should all build up the habit of having some gospel tracts with us all the time. Whenever we meet people, we can give them a gospel tract. This practice is effective. When I was young, this was my practice. According to the commercial statistics in the United States, if a person distributes one hundred advertisements and has a three-percent response, he will make a profit. If we distribute one hundred gospel tracts and only one tract is effective, we are making a profit because someone will be saved.

By distributing gospel tracts, we maintain an atmosphere of the gospel, and we can break through our shyness. Sisters and even brothers feel ashamed to distribute gospel tracts. However, if we are willing to distribute gospel tracts, we will be able to break through this bondage. Because Satan has his power of darkness, we are not ashamed to speak about Confucius, but we feel shy to speak about the Lord Jesus. This happens even in a Christian country like the United States. The feeling of shyness comes from the devil, and the way for us to break through this feeling is to distribute gospel tracts.

The great American evangelist D. L. Moody had the practice of preaching the gospel to at least one person every day, even if he spoke only one sentence. One day he was about to go to sleep when he realized that he had not spoken to anyone that day. Therefore, he quickly got dressed and went out to preach the gospel. Because it was late at night, he was unable to find anyone except a policeman who was on night duty. Moody ran to the policeman and told him that he must believe in Jesus to be delivered from perdition. Even though the policeman was offended, Moody was not concerned. Eventually, this policeman was saved. We should all have such an attitude. We should be persistent.

Grasping the Opportunity to Sow Seeds

Last, we should grasp the opportunity to preach the gospel to the people around us. The students should grasp the opportunity to preach the gospel to their classmates. This can be compared to sowing seeds. We are bound to have results if we sow many seeds. Even though our sowing may seem ineffective today, after twenty years a classmate or a friend may remember

what we said and be saved. Many people have this testimony. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, “In this the saying is true, One sows and another reaps” (John 4:37). The young saints should sow seeds today, and it may be that twenty years from now someone in Europe will reap the harvest. God will add the ones who are saved to our account. Therefore, we must sow the seeds. Paul says, “Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; convict, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).

COORDINATING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUSES

There is a new arrangement in the church in Taipei. Every full-timer will preach the gospel on the college campuses. These brothers and sisters should contact the college-age saints when they go to the campuses. These two groups of saints must cooperate with one another. The young people on the college campuses and the full-timers must work together to fight for the gospel. They can coordinate together to lead college students to study the Bible or to have meetings in order to be saved. I hope that every college-age saint can lead two classmates to salvation in one semester. Then they will all have two new ones. The students can bring in four new ones in one year. There are now more than one thousand three hundred students attending the training. According to our calculations, by this time next year there will be more than five thousand students if every student leads four people to salvation in a year. We should not say that this is not easy to achieve; it all depends on us. Some of the young people can lead even twelve people to salvation in a year. We need to make great resolutions in heart and have great searchings of heart (Judg. 5:15-16).

BEARING FRUIT ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC STEPS

In order to experience the gospel as our living, we must follow specific steps in our work. We need to have a burden for the gospel. We should make a list and pray persistently for every person on our list in order to have a gospel spirit. We need to learn to be thick-skinned and crazy in spirit, and we need to realize that preaching the gospel is the way to bear fruit, which keeps us in a position to enjoy the riches of the Lord. We also need gospel tools. We need gospel verses and hymns, we should distribute gospel tracts and contact people every day, and we should grasp every opportunity to sow the seed of the gospel. In addition, the young saints on the college campuses should

cooperate and coordinate with the co-workers who preach the gospel on the campus. If we practice this, it will not be difficult for us to lead four people to salvation every year. If we do not have a good result today, we can practice again tomorrow. By taking this way and by practicing to lead people to salvation, we will grow in life. According to John 15, the branches that bear fruit are those that will bear more fruit, but the branches that do not bear fruit are taken away. Therefore, we must bear fruit.

May we all practice the four items of Christ being our life, the truth being our freedom, the church of the living God being our house, and the gospel being our living. As we daily experience Christ as our life, we will live by Him, until it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. As we daily contact and absorb the Lord's word by reading with our eyes, understanding with our mind, and receiving in our spirit, we will experience the truth as our freedom. We also need to know the ground, nature, and function of the church and to enjoy the church as the house of the living God. Furthermore, on the practical side, we should labor on the meetings in order to experience the God who is really among us. Finally, our living should be to preach the gospel and bear fruit for the Lord. In this way we will gain the full enjoyment of the Lord and cause His Body to increase.

Question: What should a student do if he wants to spend one or two years in the full-time training after he graduates?

Answer: The most precious thing that the young brothers and sisters can do is to join the full-time training in order to be equipped and perfected. Hence, the young people should pray before they graduate and ask the Lord to prepare the environment, their parents' heart, and their family's financial condition so that they can spend two years in the training after they graduate. It is easier for the sisters in Taiwan to go to the training because they do not need to serve in the army. However, the brothers should set aside at least one year to learn to serve the Lord after they serve in the army. On the one hand, this will enable them to be equipped, to learn the truth, and to grow in life. On the other hand, they will practice preaching the gospel and speaking the truth to others. They will also learn other services. If the brothers feel that they need to get a job the second year, they may do so. Their one or two years of training will greatly influence them for the rest of their lives. In this way the service and the testimony of the church will be strengthened.

Moreover, while the young people are in the full-time training, they can determine whether God has called them to serve Him full time. They may finish the training and have the desire to serve for two years. Some of these young people who are gifted may be produced to serve God full time for their whole life. Then the Lord will have a way to advance among us. This practice is beneficial, especially for the young people.